

CDSC RURAL AND REMOTE COUNCIL MODEL
CANDIDATE AND COMMUNITY INFORMATION STRATEGY

Frequently Asked Questions

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1. What is the recent history of Central Darling Shire Council?

- Central Darling Shire Council was previously governed by a group of councillors elected from across the Shire every four years.
- Central Darling Shire Council had nine councillors in total, three from each of the three wards.
- However, since 2013 Central Darling Shire Council has been governed by a single Administrator instead of a group of elected councillors.

2. Why has Central Darling Shire Council had an Administrator since 2013?

- In December 2013, the Governor of NSW dismissed the elected councillors of Central Darling Shire Council because of major financial and governance issues, and in their place appointed an Administrator.
- Since 2013, the term of the Administrator has been extended because of the risks associated with returning an elected council to Central Darling Shire.
- The NSW Government recognises that the Shire's large size and small populations make it difficult and costly to provide services under the typical local government model.

3. What changes are being made to Central Darling Shire Council?

- New laws have created a new type of local government model for Central Darling Shire called a Rural and Remote Council.
- The new model will perform the same functions as a local council but will have a different structure made up of a mix of three locally elected councillors – one from each ward - and three government appointed councillors.

- The new model will mean that Central Darling Shire Council can represent the community, make decisions easily and provide much-needed local services, while keeping governance and administrative costs low.
- It will make sure the Shire is well-managed and community needs are being met.

4. When will the Central Darling Shire Council election be held?

- An election for the elected councillors will be held on Saturday 20 September 2025.
- In the lead up to the election, the Council will provide information to the community about the election process and what it means to be a councillor.

5. Why was the election delayed?

- It took some time to finalise the laws to establish Central Darling Shire as a Rural and Remote Council.
- The fact there was also a Federal election this year meant the council election had to be delayed longer than planned to avoid confusion having the two elections too close to each other.
- This would also have been an unnecessary impost on the community, particularly as some residents have to travel large distances to vote. Now the council election has been set for 20 September, planning for both the election and the new council can ramp up.

6. Who will the NSW Government appoint?

- Following election of the elected councillors, the Minister for Local Government will appoint people with specialist skills, expertise or attributes that can help the Council run effectively.
- These could be people with financial or local government administration experience, and people that represent the diverse communities within the Shire, such as Aboriginal people.

7. How else will the new Council operate differently?

- The new laws also simplify governance arrangements, such as only requiring four Council meetings per year.
- This will cut costs and red tape so that scarce resources can focus on delivering local services to communities across the Shire.

8. What will the new Council structure look like?



9. What will be the main benefit for the Central Darling Shire community?

- Local people across the Shire will have a say about who represents them on Central Darling Shire Council for the first time in over a decade.
- Councillors elected by the community will work together with councillors appointed by the Minister to make decisions in the best interests of the community as a whole.
- Together they will ensure that scarce council resources are targeted at providing the services and infrastructure that are of the highest priority to the community.
- This will also pave the way to developing a sensible, long term funding strategy.

10. Why have a mix of elected councillors and appointed councillors? How are they different? How are they the same?

- Having a mix of elected and appointed councillors is the best way of making sure the community has both democratic representation and stable, experienced governance.
- Elected and appointed councillors may bring different skills, experience and attributes but will all have the same role, responsibilities and rights.
- All councillors will need to represent the interests of the community and work together for the benefit of the whole community when deciding how to allocate resources and deliver services.

11. How can we be certain there will be fair representation for CDSC residents?

- The three councillors elected by the community will have an important role representing the people of their ward and making the best decisions for the shire.
- They will be elected by the community and will work alongside the three appointed councillors to make sure local government services, infrastructure and facilities are delivered.
- The Minister may also choose to appoint a local person to represent the interests of particular community groups in the area, such as local Aboriginal people.

12. How will the appointed councillors be selected? What will the selection process involve?

- The Minister will appoint three people as appointed councillors just after the election.
- This will enable the Minister to look at who is elected and consider the right people to appoint to make sure there is a good mix of skills, experience and attributes on Council to meet the needs of the community.
- This will ensure both fair and diverse representation and that Council is run effectively.

13. Can a local community member be selected for the appointed councillor positions?

- Yes, the Minister may select local members of the community to be appointed councillors.

14. Will there be Aboriginal representation on Council?

- The new laws require the Minister to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the Council collectively is able to represent the interests of the Aboriginal population of the area.
- There will be three elected representatives, one from each ward. This will provide an opportunity for Aboriginal people in the community to stand for election.
- Council and Government agencies, including the NSW Electoral Commission are working together to get messages out to Aboriginal communities across the Shire through a range of different local channels about the new Rural and Remote Council model; what being a councillor involves; how to enrol to vote; and how to stand for election.
- Following the election, the Minister may also choose to appoint a local person to represent the interests of Aboriginal people.

15. How will the Chairperson be determined? Will they be an appointed councillor or an elected councillor?

- The Chairperson will be appointed by the Minister. This is because of the critical importance of the role in overseeing the governance and decisions of CDSC given the significant financial and other challenges it faces.
- All relevant existing provisions in the Local Government Act relating to a Mayor are applicable to the Chairperson.

16. Is the Chairperson required to be local?

- No. However, the Minister may appoint a local person to be Chairperson, other than an elected councillor.

17. What if the elected and appointed councillors can't agree? Who has the casting vote?

- The Chairperson will have all of the same powers as a Mayor.
- This means they can use their casting vote to ensure that the Council makes and implements an effective decision for the benefit of the community.

18. How will the Deputy Chairperson be determined? Will they be an appointed councillor or an elected councillor?

- The Deputy Chairperson will be chosen by Central Darling Shire Council from among all councillors.
- This means that the Deputy Chairperson can be either an elected or an appointed councillor.
- All existing provisions within the Local Government Act relating to Deputy Mayor will be applicable to Deputy Chairperson.

19. What financial support is provided to councillors?

- All councillors will receive annual fees, set by the NSW Local Government Remuneration Tribunal, paid to each councillor during the council term.
- For 2025/26, current fees for councillors of 'rural councils' (which Central Darling Shire Council is categorised as) range between \$10,530 - \$13,930. Current fees for mayors of 'rural councils' include the above plus between an additional \$11,210 - \$30,390.

- The Tribunal is also required to determine fees for appointed councillors, including the Chairperson, who has the same roles and responsibilities as a Mayor.
- Once in place, the Council must resolve the fees to pay to councillors, including the Chairperson, from within the range set by the Tribunal.

20. What other support is provided to councillors?

- Council will also cover reasonable expenses for travel, accommodation and childcare to attend meetings etc.
- Facilities such as IT equipment and phones that help councillors to do their job will also be provided to councillors in accordance with the Council's expenses and facilities policy.
- Councillors will have an induction when they start on council and ongoing training and development opportunities throughout their term.

21. How long is the councillors' term?

- Councillor terms are ordinarily four years, however the first term for Central Darling Shire councillors will be shorter, concluding at the next general election in September 2028.
- Once appointed, the term of an appointed councillor will align to that of elected councillors. This will ensure both stability and collaboration on Council.

22. What happens if nobody stands for election in a ward, or if there is a vacancy on Council?

- For elected councillors, if no candidates stand for election in a particular ward, this will be treated as a 'casual vacancy'.
- Casual vacancies may be filled through a by-election or a countback of votes, or the vacancy may not be filled, depending on when the vacancy occurs during the Council term and other circumstances.
- If a vacancy occurs amongst the appointed councillors, including the Chairperson, the Minister may appoint another councillor.

23. Will ward boundaries be able to change?

- Ward boundaries were reviewed by Council in October 2023 based on ward boundary rules, and it is understood that Council has no plans to change these boundaries ahead of the election.
- However, if considered appropriate, the new Council may explore changes to the ward boundaries once in office, in consultation with the community.
- The new Rural and Remote Council model provides flexibility to enable populations across wards to vary by more than the 10% cap set by law, if it makes sense to do so.
- This recognises CDSC's very low population and the need for sensible ward boundaries set around communities of interest.
- Council must get agreement from the Minister for Local Government if it proposes changes to ward numbers that in turn would impact the number of elected councillors.
- This is to ensure that there is always an appropriate number and balance of elected and appointed councillors on the Council.

24. How will the new model help Central Darling Shire Council better deal with the significant financial challenges it faces?

- The NSW Government has previously provided a grant of approximately \$475,000 to Central Darling Shire Council to support the Council in the transition to the Rural and Remote Council model, including running the election and supporting the councillors in their new roles.
- Additionally, to support the Council as it comes out of administration, the NSW Government is providing Council with a \$6 million funding boost that will help achieve financial sustainability, supporting capacity building and essential infrastructure projects over the next two years.
- Council will continue to be eligible for Government grants, including Commonwealth Financial Assistance Grants and NSW Government roads grants and contracts. Appointed councillors will be well placed to represent and advocate for CDSC through NSW and Commonwealth Government channels
- Appointed councillors will also bring additional expertise to support Council to develop a funding strategy and to build financial sustainability so that Council can continue to provide services to communities across the Shire into the future.

25. How will the different needs of the CDSC townships be met? Can we have town committees?

- All councillors – regardless of whether elected or appointed – must represent the interests of all people in the Shire and work together for the benefit of the community as a whole.

- Council will decide the best way to engage with different parts of the CDSC community to identify and deliver service and resourcing priorities.
- This may include establishing town committees to bring issues and ideas to Council on a regular basis.

26. What will happen to the administrator, general manager and council staff?

- The administrator was appointed to run the council in the absence of councillors. The current administrator's term has been extended until the first council meeting after election.
- The general manager is a council employee and their employment contract will continue to be a decision for the council. Similarly, the transition to a Rural and Remote Council model will not affect existing council staff employment.

27. Where can I get further information?

- **Council information** - for further information, visit Council's website at www.centraldarling.nsw.gov.au, telephone 08 8083 8800, or email council@centraldarling.nsw.gov.au for more information.
- **NSW Government information on councillors** – for information on becoming a councillor and what councillors do, go to the Office of Local Government website at <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/local-government-elections/become-a-councillor/>, or contact OLG for more information via email olg@olg.nsw.gov.au or telephone 02 4428 4100.

- **NSW Government information on elections** – for information about getting on the electoral roll, and nominating to stand for election, go to the NSW Electoral Commission website at <https://elections.nsw.gov.au/>, or telephone 1300 135 736. Further information about the Central Darling Shire Council local government election will be on the Electoral Commission's website from mid 2025.
- Council also ran candidate workshops and drop-in sessions for locals interested in being a councillor between late November and early December 2024, with further sessions planned for mid 2025.
- Further information from these workshops is available here: <https://www.centraldarling.nsw.gov.au/News-articles/Council-2025-election-information-workshops-drop-in-sessions>.