

Media Release

Three councils to return to democratic representation at local government elections

Tuesday, 10 September 2024

Three NSW councils will return to democratic representation when voters head to the polls for local government elections this Saturday, 14 September.

Central Coast Council, Wingecarribee Shire Council and Balranald Shire Council will all come out of administration, with voters electing councillors for each of the three local government areas.

The councils were placed under the control of an administrator by the former government due to a range of performance and governance related issues.

There are 77 candidates vying for 15 councillor spots on Central Coast Council, where the council was suspended in October 2020 and later dismissed following a public inquiry.

Voters in Wingecarribee Shire will choose from a pool of 60 candidates for 9 councillor positions, where the councillors were suspended in March 2021 and later dismissed, also following a public inquiry.

There are 13 hopefuls for 8 councillor positions in Balranald Shire, which has been under administration since January 2020 after a public inquiry was held.

To ensure the newly elected councillors are supported in the transition out of administration, the Minister has given notice of a Performance Improvement Order to apply for the 12 months following the election.

The Performance Improvement Orders will focus on budget discipline and financial sustainability, ensuring there are strong governance processes in place and that each council continues to implement the changes identified at the respective public inquiries. Each council will be required to:

- Obtain concurrence of the Office of Local Government to make major staffing decisions including the termination of the General Manager, the restructure of the organisation, or budget allocations
- Ensure adopted policies of Council are adhered to, including meeting practice, councillor request systems and councillor/staff interactions
- Engage with Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee before any significant changes to Council's priorities are adopted

The 2024 local government elections will see all but one council return to democratic representation. The government has developed a new Rural and Remote Council model for Central Darling Shire Council in far west NSW which has been in administration for more than a decade. Elections have been deferred with the aim of holding elections in March next year.

Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig said:

“Democracy is an important part of our society, and every resident should be given the opportunity to elect the people they want to represent their local interests.

“The issues that led to these councils being placed under administration in the first place were very serious.

“While the new councils are finding their feet, I want to make sure there is a framework in place to ensure stable and strategic governance which is why I intend to issue each council with a Performance Improvement Order.”

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