

Joe Szakacs MP
Minister for Local Government

Friday, 8 November 2024

Strong new leadership for Coober Pedy

Patrick Conlon has been appointed as the principal administrator of the Coober Pedy Council where he will be tasked with delivering long term solutions for essential services for the township, and returning council to a place where it can once again be led by an elected body.

Mr Conlon's appointment follows the resignation of Geoff Sheridan due to health and personal reasons. Mr Sheridan has served in the role since March 2023 and will provide a period of handover to Mr Conlon to ensure continuity during the transition.

The Council was placed into administration by the former government in 2019 following findings of both the Ombudsman and Auditor-General that revealed serious financial and governance failures.

Mr Conlon will be supported by the two existing supporting administrators, Erika Vickery and John Moyle, to make joint decisions in the interests of the Coober Pedy community, as mayors and elected members do in all other council areas.

He will also be supported by Garry Herdegen, who has recently been appointed as the Council's chief executive officer.

Mr Herdegen brings more than 35 years of senior leadership and management experience within local government, having worked in both regional and large urban councils in New South Wales and South Australia, which will be invaluable as the administrators work towards resolving long-standing issues.

The Malinauskas Labor Government's 2024-25 State Budget invested in a review of the Council's municipal services. This review will clarify the future services the Council will be able to provide through the rates it collects.

Mr Conlon served as a State Government minister for 11 years, and held the energy portfolio for nine years. He also notably held the police, emergency services, transport and infrastructure portfolios between 2002 and 2013.

Mr Conlon begins as principal administrator on Tuesday, 12 November 2024.

Quotes attributable to Joe Szakacs

I thank Mr Sheridan for his service in the role and commitment to the people of Coober Pedy. Under his leadership, progress has been made in launching a services review and identifying a pathway towards long-term stability for the region.

There is no one better qualified than Mr Conlon to complete this work, and assist the State Government to deliver a solution for the people of Coober Pedy that ensures the community has access to the services and governance it deserves.

Quotes attributable to Patrick Conlon, incoming Principal Administrator, District Council of Coober Pedy

Coober Pedy is a unique part of Australia and faces particular challenges. It's relatively young as far as councils go, and plainly has experienced some difficulties in recent times.

I'm confident people there are resilient, and we can get the Council back on track and operating without the need for an administrator in the not-too-distant future.

I'm looking forward to the challenge and to getting up and meeting with the good people of Coober Pedy next week and getting stuck in.

Quotes attributable to Geoff Sheridan, Principal Administrator, District Council of Coober Pedy

I'm sorry that I couldn't complete the work I came up here to do.

During my time I have enjoyed working with a committed staff and developing many personal relationships.

I am pleased that during the short time we were able to address a number of governance and financial reporting shortfalls to improve the operation of Council.

I wish Pat every success, and I know, like me, he will be steadfast in his commitment to helping the community and achieving positive outcomes.

I look forward to working with him during the transition.