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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Flexible community transport scheme proposed as Murray Mallee model dissolves**

In a bid to improve flexibility and provide a more cost-effective service model, the Murray Mallee Community Transport Scheme (MMCTS) will be dissolved at the end 2018.

In working towards cessation of the existing scheme, the three Chief Executive Officers of the constituent Councils (being *Coorong District Council*, *Southern Mallee District Council* and the *District Council of Karoonda East Murray*) have put forward resolutions, which sees them make a commitment to work with key State Government funding bodies to ensure there is no gap in transport services to the region.

In the past two weeks, these resolutions have been formally adopted by the District Council of Karoonda East Murray and Coorong District Council, with a decision from the Southern Mallee District Council imminent.

This outcome follows an intensive review of the MMCTS service, governance and community need.

The MMCTS Board has now agreed to move forward with the recommendations and appointed a consultant to work through issues relating to dissolution and develop a transition plan for handover.

Coorong District Council Chief Executive Officer Vincent Cammell says all three Councils want to ensure that support for rural people with exceptional transport challenges remains a priority, and under new legislation, believes there is a better approach than the MMCTS.

“One key recommendation outlined in the review, noted that a more cost-effective, efficient and flexible service could be delivered by transitioning management of the program to another organisation outside of local government – a move already made by many of our national counterparts,” Mr Cammell says.

“By dissolving the existing program and handing funding over to another independent agency (experienced in the not-for-profit sector), it opens up new opportunities for our community – including competing for funding under the new National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).”

Funding for the MMCTS program comes from the Community Passenger Network (CPN) program – a partnership between local, State and Federal Governments. CPN’s have been created across regional areas of Australia to help coordinate and provide information on transport services for members of their community, particularly those who are ‘transport disadvantaged’.

District Council of Karoonda East Murray Chief Executive Officer Matthew Morgan says work has been done on alternative models, which would likely improve the service.

“Our leadership teams across all three Councils are being proactive and have committed to working with the Department to ensure a smooth transition to a new model,” Mr Morgan says.



“We have proposed that a local community centre is a viable delivery agency for future services, in partnership with the State Government. This model would take multiple layers of governance and administration out of the equation, providing instant efficiencies, allow access more funding opportunities, and provide more flexible management arrangements.

“We hope that the State Government will accept our recommendations.”

Southern Mallee District Council Chief Executive Officer Jason Taylor summarised the move, stating that each Council had the best interest of the community in mind, and wanted to ensure the CPN funding was delivering positive outcomes for the community long term.

“It’s prudent for us to regularly check-in on community service schemes to ensure they’re being delivered effectively. While the MMCTS concept began operating in this manner many years ago, recent changes to legislation and funding models mean we need to explore change,” Mr Taylor says.

“Right now, we’re hamstrung in terms of deliverables, so it’s time for the program to be refreshed and make the most of opportunities for funding and resources already on the market.”

Once a formal decision is made by Southern Mallee, the process will begin to transition the MMCTS back to the Department for Human Services - to award to a new agency, as per due diligence.

All tangible assets of the scheme will be transitioned across to the new provider or distributed across the three Councils proportionately.

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#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Coorong District Council CEO Vincent Cammell  
P: 1300 785 277 | E: [vcammell@coorong.sa.gov.au](mailto:vcammell@coorong.sa.gov.au)

District Council of Karoonda East Murray CEO Matthew Morgan  
P: (08) 8578 1004 | E: [ceo@dckem.sa.gov.au](mailto:ceo@dckem.sa.gov.au)

Southern Mallee District Council CEO Jason Taylor  
P: (08) 8577 8002 | E: [Jason.taylor@southernmallee.sa.gov.au](mailto:Jason.taylor@southernmallee.sa.gov.au)