



PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council extends a warm welcome to you in attending any meeting of the Town of Port Hedland Council.

The Council, as required by the Local Government Act, sets aside a period of 'public question time' to enable a member of the public to put to the Council a question concerning the work or any activity of the Town in any meeting open to the public.

The Local Government Act sets out that the procedures for the asking of and responding to questions raised by members of the public are to be determined by the person presiding at the meeting (normally the Mayor). The intent of the Act is that Public Question Time precedes the discussion of any matter that requires a decision to be made by Council. The intent of the act is also to ensure that questions be directed, in the first instance, to matters to be discussed by Council at that meeting.

The Department of Local Government and Regional Development in its 'Practice Notes' states that "...each member of the public who wishes to ask a question is to be given an equal and fair opportunity to ask the question and receive a response....". Council, through the Presiding Officer, manages the time which is made available for 'Public Question Time' to be effective.

The Department of Local Government and Regional Development also supports the practice of Councils encouraging the public to submit questions in writing, prior to the meeting, to facilitate appropriate and adequate responses to questions.

Having regard for the above requirements and principles, the following procedures will be applied to Ordinary Meetings of the Council of the Town of Port Hedland:

1. All questions are to be submitted in writing and Council will provide a form for members of the public to write out their questions if required.
2. The Presiding Officer will open Public Question Time for the time of 15 minutes.
3. The Presiding Officer will in the first instance give preference to any member of the public who has a question relating to the Agenda of the meeting, and in the second instance give preference to any member of the public who has lodged a question in writing in accordance with these procedures.
4. The person will be requested to come forward and:
 - a) Give their name
 - b) Read out their question.

The question will be responded to, taken on notice or not accepted by the Presiding Officer.

5. In the event that a question is asked verbally, upon the question being placed in writing and lodged with the Council, the question and its answer shall if possible be set out in the next agenda.

As outlined in the Department of Local Government and Regional Development's 'Managing Public Question Time Guidelines' the Presiding Officer will not take questions that:

- a) are considered to be offensive or defamatory in nature and would potentially expose the Local Government to legal action for republishing defamatory remarks (the person may be invited to rephrase their question);
- b) contain defamatory remarks, offensive language or question the competency of staff or Council members;
- c) relate to the personal affairs or actions of Council members or employees;
- d) relate to confidential matters, legal advice or legal proceedings; or
- e) have been answered by earlier questions, or questions at a previous meeting.

Wherever possible a question asked during Public Question Time will be responded to at the meeting. Where questions are taken on notice, the question will be recorded and a written response provided to the questioner as soon as possible.

Where a question is taken on notice, the question will be included in the Minutes of the Meeting at which the question was asked. For reasons of clarity, the question will also be repeated in the Minutes of the Meeting in which the response is recorded.

There is a statutory requirement for a summary of both the question and the response given during Public Question Time to be recorded in the minutes. The name of the person who asked the question will also be included in the summary.

This procedure facilitates the management of Public Question Time and accurate keeping of records. It will also assist in the preparation of summaries of questions for inclusion in the minutes.

Cr Brent Rudler
MAYOR

4 March 2004