



WORKFORCE ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

1. Purpose

The Position Statement has been prepared by the Town of Port Hedland (Town) to assist users in understanding the Town's policy position and rationale concerning the approval, construction and management of workforce accommodation facilities ('workforce accommodation').

The purpose of the Position Statement is to:

1. Outline the Town's rationale when responding to development applications or referrals for workforce accommodation.
2. Provide underlying principles for the community, industry and stakeholders to consider when proposing workforce accommodation.
3. Support the formulation of Local Planning Policies relating to Workforce Accommodation and Social Impact Assessment.

2. Underpinning principles

The Position Statement is founded on the following principles:

- **Corporate social responsibility** – organisations have a degree of responsibility not only for the economic consequences of their activities, but also for the social and environmental implications.¹
- **Collaboration** – development of meaningful partnerships between all levels of government, industry and community in realising the strategic vision for Port Hedland.
- **Genuine community engagement** – a firm commitment to upfront and ongoing engagement relevant to the scale and complexity of the development and management of the workforce accommodation, its impacts and benefits.
- **Transparency and honesty** - in the exchange of information between industry and the Town of Port Hedland on the demand for, and management and lifespan of, workforce accommodation.
- **Community Development** - recognition that economic development is multi-faceted and that industry, government, local government and community are vital to the achievement of economic outcomes.
- **Cultural respect and enhancement** – celebration of the rich culture and heritage of Traditional custodians of this land.

3. Application

The Position Statement applies to the entire municipality of the Town of Port Hedland. It does not bind the Council of the Town of Port Hedland ('the Council') when assessing a proposal for workforce accommodation.

The *Planning and Development Act 2005* empowers the Western Australian Planning Commission ('WAPC') and local governments to prepare planning instruments that establish

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Human Rights Commission. Available at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/corporate-social-responsibility-human-rights>

development controls. The primary planning instruments developed pursuant to the Act that are relevant to, and should be read in conjunction with, the Position Statement, are the:

- *State Planning Strategy 2050*
- *Pilbara Planning and Infrastructure Framework (2012)*
- *Statement Planning Policy 3 – Urban Growth and Settlement Planning*
- *State Position Statement: Workforce Accommodation (January 2019)*
- *Town of Port Hedland Local Planning Strategy (Local Planning Strategy)*
- *Town of Port Hedland Local Planning Scheme ('the Scheme')*
- *Town of Port Hedland Local Planning Policy LPP/05 – Workforce Accommodation (currently under development)*
- *Town of Port Hedland Local Planning Policy LPP/06 - Social Impact Assessment (currently under development)*

The Town recognises that the policy positions within the Position Statement cannot be unilaterally imposed on workforce accommodation approved pursuant to State Agreements which are ratified by Acts of Parliament or the *Mining Act 1978*. It is acknowledged that such proposals are exempt to the extent that the provisions of those Acts override the *Planning and Development Act 2005* and the Scheme.

It is not intended for the Position Statement to be applied retrospectively to existing approved developments, except where development applications are made to vary existing approvals, and these are not considered by the Town to be minor variations.

Workforce accommodation is defined under the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015*² as a premise, which may include modular or relocatable buildings, used -

1. Primarily for the accommodation of workers engaged in construction, resource, agricultural or other industries on a temporary basis; and
2. For any associated catering, sporting and recreation facilities for the occupants and authorised visitors

4. Position Statement

The Town of Port Hedland acknowledges that workforce accommodation is an invaluable housing resource for industry. However, the Town also recognises that accommodation circumstances can vary depending on the characteristics of the workforce, work rosters and changing labour requirements. In acknowledgement of the latter, the Town has focused its policy response on the lifespan of a workforce accommodation facility. When workforce accommodation is well-planned and effectively managed, the individual and cumulative impacts can be appropriately addressed, and benefits realised for both the community, industry proponents, and industry workforces.

The following statements provide the Town's policy position when considering proposals for workforce accommodation:

Demand-driven - To ensure resource sector accommodation requirements are met while limiting the proliferation of workforce accommodation, high residential vacancy rates, and competition with town-based services and facilities, the Town supports workforce accommodation being demand-driven.

Proximity – The Town encourages workforce accommodation for projects in proximity to the Town being located within the townsite boundary, where a safe driving distance to site and return can be achieved. This will ensure these developments realise the immediate and

² *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 (WA)*, Sch 1, Pt 6, Div 2, cl.38

sustainable value for the community and maximise psychosocial outcomes for industry workforces.

Design standard – While periods of operation of workforce accommodation do not automatically dictate lower design standards, the Town is cognisant that projects with a shorter lifespan may not warrant the same level of investment as those subject to long term operations. At its discretion, the Town will require the application of a higher design standard to development that is located within higher activity centres, commensurate with the project lifespan, and resultant timeframe for development approval.

Location - The Town supports long-term workforces being accommodated in permanent residential-style developments, with a preference that these be integrated within higher activity centres to enhance amenity, stimulate local business activity, support town-based services and infrastructure, and encourage community integration.

Social Impact - The Town views analysing, monitoring and managing the social consequences of workforce accommodation as a critical element of the decision making process and a vital part of an upfront and ongoing partnership approach between industry, the community and the Town. This includes consideration of workforce demands on infrastructure and services and potential augmentation and co-location opportunities for industry workforces that develop a sense of place.

5. Background

The Australian mining sector is an integral part of our national economy and national identity. It keeps many aspects of remote and regional Australia flourishing, offering employment opportunities and building communities. The phenomenon of fly-in, fly-out (FIFO)/drive-in, drive-out (DIDO) workforce practices, while not new in this country, is becoming an increasingly widespread feature of workforce provision in Australia.

However, there are warning signs for regional Australia, particularly in those areas of remote Australia that can only be serviced by FIFO/DIDO workforces. Many communities are concerned about the negative impacts on their towns and feel while they may be the site of a resource activity, they are not a major beneficiary. There are extensive arguments from both sides of the debate – the benefits that the high wages and time at home bring to FIFO/DIDO workers and their families, and the damage that the practice is doing to the prosperity of some of those in regional communities.

If not planned for appropriately, workforce accommodation, both individually and cumulatively, can have significant direct and indirect impacts on the economic and social wellbeing of towns by:

- causing deterioration of the community's image, identity and social cohesion, resulting in division between residents and FIFO workers
- negatively impacting the lifestyle of local residents
- temporarily and significantly changing the demographic of the community, making it difficult for long term planning and investment
- placing additional demand on physical and community infrastructure and services, including local government resources, with limited financial offset
- distorting commercial activity through reliance on self-contained facilities, limited wage/salary investment and lack of surety about ongoing business opportunities
- inflating the housing market
- undermining the amenity of adjacent areas through non-complementary building design
- affecting engagement in community life, in part due to the pressure of 12-hour shifts

A well-planned proposal for workforce accommodation benefits the Town, local businesses, industry proponents and FIFO workforces by:

- establishing a process of upfront and ongoing engagement with the community to identify and mitigate/manage impacts, harness project opportunities, respond to community expectations and resolve misunderstandings
- planning for, and offsetting, demand on limited physical and community infrastructure and services, and the community's social structure, through applying a defined process of economic and social impact assessment and management
- revealing issues relevant to land use planning decisions, resulting in a more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable environment
- potentially reducing development approval timeframes and associated costs by applying a consistent and structured planning and approvals process
- collocating workforce accommodation to achieve mutual benefit through community and service integration
- providing transition processes (where relevant) from workforce accommodation to residential settlement within the Town
- enhancing the amenity and safety of the accommodation and ancillary developments for workforces and adjacent residents
- understanding community values, identity and cultural beliefs
- effectively managing the supply and use of accommodation and associated redundancy, including during resource sector economic cycles

In applying this policy framework, the Town of Port Hedland aims to balance industry competitiveness and national and State economic outcomes with regional development aspirations for its communities.

6. Further information

Proponents are encouraged to consult with Town Planning and Development staff, including technical assessment of the proposal on 9158 9300 or eplanning@porthedland.wa.gov.au.

Relevant legislation	<p><i>State Planning Strategy 2050</i></p> <p><i>Pilbara Planning and Infrastructure Framework (2012)</i></p> <p><i>Statement Planning Policy 3 – Urban Growth and Settlement Planning</i></p> <p><i>State Position Statement: Workforce Accommodation (January 2019)</i></p> <p><i>Town of Port Hedland Local Planning Strategy (Local Planning Strategy)</i></p> <p><i>Town of Port Hedland Local Planning Scheme ('the Scheme')</i></p> <p><i>Town of Port Hedland Local Planning Policy LPP/05 – Workforce Accommodation (currently under development)</i></p> <p><i>Town of Port Hedland Local Planning Policy LPP/06 - Social Impact Assessment (currently under development)</i></p>
Delegated authority	Town of Port Hedland
Business unit	Planning & Development
Directorate	Regulatory Services

Governance to complete this section

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