

**Author:** Coordinator Visitor Services

**Authorising Officer:** Principal Economic Development

**Disclosure of Interest:** The Author and Authorizing Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item.

#### **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council:**

- 1. Notes the structural engineering assessment undertaken on the Port Hedland Observation Tower in February 2026 (Attachment 1).**
- 2. Notes that the assessment identifies urgent structural and safety risks that require timely intervention to mitigate unmanaged risk to the Town.**
- 3. Endorses, in principle, the restoration and reopening of the Port Hedland Observation Tower as a managed public attraction as the preferred long-term approach to managing the asset, subject to further investigations to confirm the scope, cost, and compliance requirements.**
- 4. Directs the Chief Executive Officer to undertake the necessary investigations and technical assessments to:**
- 5. confirm the scope of works required to address immediate safety concerns,**
- 6. inform the restoration and reopening of the tower in a manner that meets regulatory and safety requirements, and**
- 7. explore external funding opportunities to support restoration and reopening of the tower as a public and historic attraction.**
- 8. Notes that a further report will be presented to Council detailing:**
- 9. the findings of the investigations,**
- 10. the scope and indicative cost of works required to address immediate structural and safety issues,**
- 11. the scope and indicative cost of works required to restore and reopen the tower to the public, and**
- 12. a recommended approach for project delivery, funding, and long-term asset management.**

***SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE REQUIRED***

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is for Council to note the condition of the Port Hedland Observation Tower and to consider how the asset is to be managed into the future.

## **DETAIL**

The Town undertook a structural engineering assessment of the Port Hedland Observation Tower in early 2026. The assessment identified that the tower currently presents a severe risk to safety due to significant and widespread structural deterioration, with the report recommending immediate remediation of some elements of the tower to address safety issues.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Port Hedland Public Observation Tower is a steel lookout structure located in the West End precinct, adjacent to the Port Hedland Visitor Centre. Although now recognised as a local public lookout, archival drawings indicate the tower was constructed in 1965 as part of the Mount Goldsworthy Mining Associates operation, where it served as a navigation aid during the beginning of the development of Port Hedland's iron ore export facilities. Documentation shows the tower was relocated to the Port Hedland Visitor Centre on Wedge Street around 1990, following the closure of the Goldsworthy mine and removal of associated infrastructure. Following relocation, the tower was repurposed as a public observation asset and operated on this basis for several years.

It is understood the tower was closed in the late 1990's following a health event from a user of the tower and risk assessment that was subsequently undertaken, although there are limited records that can confirm the exact details. Preliminary discussions with the Town's insurers indicate that design treatments and management mechanisms can be put in place to reduce risks to acceptable levels should the tower be reopened for managed access, but further investigations will need to be undertaken. There are similar, higher risk and unmanaged tourist facilities in Western Australia such as the heritage park lookout and Gloucester Tree located in the Shire of Manjimup so it's considered possible to manage any associated risks with reopening the tower.

## **ISSUES**

### Structural integrity

The Town undertook a structural review of the tower in July 2015 at the request of the then Audit & Finance Committee (AF201415/041). Following the delivery of the report, the then Audit, Risk and Governance Committee resolved to install a fence around the tower to ensure public safety and that a fence to be in place until such time as funds could be prioritised to remove the tower (ARG201617/029). Limited attention has been given to the tower since the fence was installed.

In February 2026, the Town of Port Hedland engaged AIE Engineering to undertake a structural assessment of the tower. The assessment concluded that the tower currently presents a severe risk to safety due to significant and widespread structural deterioration. The inspection identified multiple defects requiring urgent intervention, including critically corroded structural bracing, columns, handrails, platforms, and access elements. The report recommended remediation be undertaken within three months to address Priority 1 defects that pose direct safety risks. Further works are recommended within a 6-, 12-, and 24-month timeframe to manage high, medium, and lower risk corrosion issues. A coordinated remediation

program is strongly recommended, including like for like replacement of severely deteriorated elements, renewal of protective coatings, and further structural analysis where specified, to ensure public safety and the ongoing serviceability of the tower.

### Ownership

The tower was previously owned by the Port Hedland Tourist Bureau Incorporated. Records from 1990 indicate that Council approved for the tower to be relocated to its current location at the back of the Port Hedland Visitor Centre, subject to a condition that the Town be indemnified against any claims arising from the tower.

Following the deregistration of the Tourist Bureau in 2014, ownership of the tower reverted to the Town, as the tower is located on Crown reserve land managed by the Town.

### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

To address the issues identified in the structural assessment report, three options were investigated:

#### ***a) Option A. Restore and reopen as a public attraction***

Fully restore the tower and reopen it as a managed attraction via the Port Hedland Visitor Centre, supported by landscaping and interpretive storytelling showcasing Port Hedland's iron ore journey.

#### Benefits

- Addresses immediate safety risks
- Preserves the structure as a heritage asset
- Activates a unique heritage and tourism asset
- Enhances industrial tourism and visitor experience
- Supports placemaking and West End revitalisation
- Strong alignment with Community Plan 2022–2032 and Economic Development and Tourism Strategy

#### Costs

- \$1,050,000 - \$1,200,000 (estimated) to restore access

#### ***Option B. Restore for safety only (No Public Access)***

Undertake targeted restoration to stabilise the tower and address critical safety issues, without reopening it to the public.

#### Benefits

- Addresses immediate safety risks
- Preserves the structure as a heritage asset
- Defers decision on public activation

#### Costs

- \$800,000 (estimated) to maintain the structure

#### ***Option C. Demolish tower and landscape site***

Demolish the tower to eliminate ongoing safety and compliance risks and landscape the site as a public open space.

## Benefits

- Removes all long-term safety and compliance liabilities
- Predictable, capped project cost
- No ongoing maintenance or inspection obligations

## Costs

- \$360,000 – \$550,000 (estimated) to demolish and tidy the site
- Loss of a historically significant asset

It is noted that all cost estimates are a first cost estimate only, and that costs are likely to change following more detailed investigations.

## **RECOMMENDED SOLUTION**

Pending confirmation of the required scope, cost and compliance requirements, *Option A. Restore and reopen as a public attraction* is considered as the most appropriate solution for the tower's long-term management.

## **PROPOSED NEXT STEPS**

### Addressing immediate safety concerns

As a matter of priority, undertake necessary work to define the scope and price the critical safety remediation works (Priority 1 defects) in order to remove unmanaged safety risks, or alternatively, implementation of temporary measures to secure the structure.

### Progressing restoration of the tower and public access

Engagement of the required technical specialists to reduce project cost risk and enable informed decision-making, funded from the existing regulatory services professional services budgets within the economic development cost centre. This includes engaging engineers to undertake intrusive investigations, detailed structural assessments, and compliance reviews (estimated cost - \$25,000).

Engaging a Quantity Surveyor to develop a robust cost estimate inclusive of regional loading, escalation, contingencies, and maintenance, The reports will clearly define the critical works required to address WHS risks and achieve minimum NCC and regulatory compliance (estimated cost - \$10,000).

The tower cannot fully comply with the DAIP (Disability, Access and Inclusion plan); therefore, an access consultant will also be engaged to identify lawful and practical alternative access solutions (estimated cost - \$10,000).

## **LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE**

In accordance with Policy 4/009 'Significant Decision Making', this matter is considered to be of high significance, because:

- Significant - A decision that will significantly affect the capacity of the Council to carry out any activity identified in the strategic plan.
- Significant - A decision that will significantly affect the cost to Council to carry out any activity identified in the strategic plan.

- Significant - Any issue, proposal, decision or other matter that will substantially affect a wide range of people who reside in Port Hedland.
- Significant - The degree to which a decision or issues are difficult to reverse.
- Significant - The matter will have implications for the present and future social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Port Hedland.

## **CONSULTATION**

### *Internal*

- Executive Leadership Team
- Senior Leadership Team
- A/Director Regulatory Services
- A/Manager Planning and Economic Development
- Coordinator Parks & Reserves
- Coordinator Landscape & Irrigation
- Senior Audit, Risk & Insurance Advisor
- Senior Project Manager

### *External Agencies*

- AIE Engineering Consultants – structural engineering assessment and advice
- Pilbara Constructions – budget estimates
- Yurra – budget estimate
- Tecon – building surveyor advice
- LGIS – The Town's insurer

### *Community*

- Nil

## **LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

- *Local Government Act 1995* (WA)
- *Land Administration Act 1997* (WA)
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* (WA)
- *Building Act 2011* (WA)
- Building Regulations 2012
- National Construction Code (NCC)
- Town of Port Hedland Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP)

## **FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

The cost of undertaking necessary investigations is estimated at \$45,000. These works will be funded through the Regulatory Services operational budget.

High level assessments have estimated the total restoration and reopening of the tower to be between \$1,050,000 - \$1,210,000.

Further investigations will confirm the budget required to restore public access to the tower.

## **STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Plan**

The following outcomes of the Town's Council Plan 2025-2035 apply in consideration of this item:

#### 1.3 A unique, vibrant and diverse community lifestyle

Restoration and reopening of the Observation Tower supports community identity, heritage storytelling, and cultural recognition of Port Hedland's industrial history.

#### 1.4 Well-utilised and valued community facilities and services

The Observation Tower is an existing community asset. Restoring and reopening ensures that it is valued, accessible (where practicable), and actively managed rather than deteriorating and unused.

#### 2.1 Business and job growth

Reopening the Observation Tower as a managed attraction supports visitor economy activity and contributes to tourism-led economic diversification.

#### 2.3 Marketing and promotion

The Observation Tower strengthens Port Hedland's destination appeal as a place to live, visit and invest, aligning with Council's place-based marketing objectives.

#### 3.2 Safe and fit-for-purpose-built environment

Restoration works directly address identified structural and safety risks, ensuring the tower meets contemporary safety and compliance standards prior to public access.

#### 3.3 Accessible, attractive and sustainable urban environment

Adaptive reuse of the tower supports sustainable asset management and contributes to the activation and attractiveness of the West End precinct.

#### 4.3 Effective delivery of services and infrastructure to meet community needs

Structured remediation, certification and operational management support safe and reliable delivery of a public facility.

### ***Environmental***

Nil

### ***Economic***

Reopening the observation tower as a managed public attraction supports economic sustainability through enhanced visitor experiences, industrial tourism activation and increased visitation to the west end precinct. The project also protects the town from ongoing unmanaged risk and potential future unplanned expenditure associated with structural failure.

### ***Social***

The Observation Tower is a valued historic landmark with strong community significance. Restoration and reopening supports community identity, local pride, cultural storytelling, and recreational amenities. Improved public safety outcomes also positively contribute to community wellbeing.

## Access and Inclusion

The following outcomes of the Town's *Access and Inclusion Plan 2023-2026* apply in relation to this item:

While full physical accessibility to the Observation Tower cannot be achieved due to structural and heritage constraints, equivalent access opportunities will be explored through alternative measures such as ground-level interpretation, virtual experiences and digital storytelling, consistent with the Access and Inclusion Plan

- Outcome 2 – Buildings and Facilities

### RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

<b>Risk Type</b>	Operational
<b>Risk Category</b>	Health & Safety
<b>Cause</b>	Severe and widespread structural deterioration of the observation tower
<b>Effect (Consequence)</b>	Potential for serious injury or fatality to members of the public, contractors or staff due to structural failure or falling elements, resulting in regulatory non-compliance, legal liability, insurance impacts and reputational damage to the Town.
<b>Risk Treatment</b>	Undertake restoration and remediation works to address all critical structural and safety defects, supported by engineering certification, compliance with relevant standards, and implementation of ongoing operational and safety management controls prior to reopening to the public.
<p>There is an Operational risk associated with this item caused by structural deterioration and non-compliance of the observation tower, leading to a heightened risk of injury or fatality and associated legal, regulatory and reputational consequences.</p> <p>The risk rating is considered to be High (15) which is determined by a likelihood of Almost certain (5) and a consequence of Moderate (3).</p> <p>This risk will be treated by adopting the Officer's Recommendation.</p>	

<b>Risk Type</b>	Operational
<b>Risk Category</b>	Financial
<b>Cause</b>	Estimates do not currently include intrusive investigation, permits or modifications required to achieve NCC compliance additionally no detailed QS cost plan including regional loading escalation or contingencies.
<b>Effect (Consequence)</b>	Potential for significant increase in capital costs beyond current estimate, funding shortfall risk

<b>Risk Treatment</b>	Undertake intrusive investigations prior to finalizing scope, engage a QS to prepare a detailed cost plan.
<p>There is a/an Operational risk associated with this item caused by the absence of intrusive investigations, leading to potential for significant increased capital cost</p> <p>The risk rating is considered to be High (15) which is determined by a likelihood of Almost certain (5) and a consequence of Moderate (3).</p> <p>This risk will be treated by adopting the Officer's Recommendation.</p>	

## **OPTIONS**

Option 1 – Adopt officer's recommendation

Option 2 – Amend officer's recommendation

Option 3 – Do not adopt officer's recommendation

## **CONCLUSION**

This report seeks Councils endorsement to support the restoration and reopening of the Port Hedland public observation tower, to progress with targeted investigation and cost planning and to note that a further report will be presented to council outlining the findings.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Engineering Report AIE Feb 2026

Port Hedland Observation Tower