



# TOWN PLANNING SCHEME NO.8 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY DP10 WORKFORCE ACCOMMODATION

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## 1. OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this Policy is to guide assessment and decision-making on development applications for transient workforce accommodation.

The overarching objective of this Policy is to manage the development of workforce accommodation with a longer term aim to maximise the resident workforce and ensure that where workforce accommodation is provided, that it is designed appropriately and contributes to the City's vision of Australia's most liveable regional City.

The specific objectives of this Policy are to:

- a) Manage the provision of workforce accommodation by requiring proponents of prospective workforce accommodation proposals or renewal requests to **demonstrate an identified need** for the beds and that such proposals are not speculative in nature.
- b) Ensure that the flexibility afforded in the location of workforce accommodation is balanced with controls that facilitate **development appropriate to the location**, and where development occurs within an urban setting, recognises principles of reciprocal benefits that can be realised for the local community and local business from an integrated workforce accommodation facility.
- c) Provide guidance and performance criteria to enable the preparation and assessment of proposals which are **appropriately designed** commensurate to their location.
- d) Facilitate development which enables occupants to integrate with the community and town services, recognising that an **appropriately integrated** workforce accommodation facility has the potential to form the foundation for the development of an urban centre.
- e) Enable decision makers to apply discretion in a responsible manner regarding the **duration (term) of approval** for a proposed development, acknowledging that workforce accommodation should be a temporary and transitional use.

## 2. APPLICATION

This Local Planning Policy (the Policy) is made pursuant to Part V, Clause 5.1 of City of Karratha Town Planning Scheme No. 8 (the Scheme).

This Policy applies to applications for Planning Approval for workforce accommodation made on land in all zones and reserves within the City. This Policy also applies to requests to renew the approval for existing workforce accommodation facilities on time-limited approvals.

This Policy provides further interpretation of the Scheme in terms of how the Council applies discretion to decision-making on applications for workforce accommodation in the City. The Policy also provides guidance for the consideration of workforce accommodation proposals under other legislation referred to the City for comment. The Policy further aims to set out the information requirements and provisions the City shall have due regard to in the assessment and determination of development applications.

The Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Scheme and any other relevant local planning policy.

### **3. CONSEQUENCES**

This policy represents the formal policy and expected standards of the Council. Appropriate approvals need to be obtained prior to any deviation from the policy. Disregard for the policy is likely to result in delays in approval processes and a dissatisfied local community. Elected Members and Employees are reminded of their obligations under the Council's Code of Conduct to give full effect to the lawful policies, decisions and practices of the Council.

### **4. BACKGROUND AND COUNCIL POSITION**

#### **4.1 Background**

The State Planning Strategy 2050 (WAPC, 2014) promotes substantial growth in population in the Pilbara over the next 30 years and seeks to balance competing demands. Statement of Planning Policy No.3 – Urban Growth and Settlement (WAPC, 2006) seeks to promote a sustainable and well planned pattern of settlement across the State, build on existing communities with established local and regional economies and manage the growth and development of urban areas in response to social and economic needs of the community, and in recognition of relevant community values. The Pilbara Planning and Infrastructure Framework (WAPC, 2012) anticipates that fly-in fly-out will have a lesser role in the work-living equation as the level of services, facilities and general amenity increase in cities and towns, making them more attractive places in which to live. There has been substantial investment in making this transformation.

The incorporation of workforce accommodation in a community is a complex issue. The resources sector and its peak bodies (i.e. the Chamber of Minerals and Energy) have a position that access to FIFO labour is an essential element of their operations. Local communities benefit from having workers and their families permanently located in their towns and can suffer negative impacts from a large FIFO presence.

It is acknowledged that the need for workforce accommodation is always changing. Experience shows that workforce accommodation can be established quickly to accommodate sharp spikes in demand but it should not be the preferred long term strategy. The supply of workforce accommodation should therefore be managed. This in-principle position has implications for any existing or proposed workforce accommodation development. The primary implications are that workforce accommodation should be subject to a time limited approval to allow for their need to be reviewed over time and that any workforce accommodation proposal should be justified based on demonstrated need.

Four main categories of FIFO worker can be identified. Each has different requirements for accommodation arising from a combination of the nature of their work, their work hours/shift roster and the specific requirements of the project on which they are working.

1. Construction workforce, major projects. Workforce scale is very large with extended work hours and a temporary workforce.
2. Construction workforce, general projects and sub-contractors. These generally are engaged for a relatively shorter timeframe, with variable shift patterns, and may seek accommodation in general market workforce accommodation facilities provided by independent operators.
3. Periodic maintenance shutdown, major projects. These are characterised by very short term engagements of multi-skilled teams and extended shift patterns. The nature of the project task means that resource companies prefer control for the period of works with a preference for dedicated workforce accommodation facilities.
4. Operation workforce. These are more likely than other categories to include long term FIFO arrangements and for some to have shorter shift rosters.

The Council's preference is for workers to be accommodated in more integrated forms of town-based accommodation wherever possible, preferable dwellings. Operational workers are employed on a long term basis and ideally from a local community perspective, these workers

should be residential. There should at least be plans or options for these workers to transition to residential.

While Council's preference is clear, where FIFO operational workers are to be accommodated on a long term basis, Council expects their accommodation to be: of a high standard; suitably integrated with surrounding development and the community; and not a typical camp design or layout appropriate to an isolated/remote camp. Integration can bring a range of advantages – to the community in the form of an increased population within commercial catchments with consequent commercial and social benefits – and to the FIFO workforce with opportunities for involvement in the wider community on a regular basis.

The objectives of this Policy are consistent with the report on the parliamentary enquiry into FIFO practices by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia which noted:

*...the (FIFO) work practice is eroding the liveability of some regional communities to such an extent that it is increasingly removing the choice to 'live-in' rather than simply 'cash-in'*

and

*Policy makers must develop a policy mix that ensures the FIFO/DIDO (Drive-In Drive-Out) work practice does not become the dominant practice, as it could lead to a hollowing out of established regional towns, particularly those inland.*

In light of the above, workforce accommodation must be managed carefully, with a long term aim to minimise its use and maximise the residential workforce. This is a consistent approach for policy settings across all tiers of government in most if not all communities with a strong resources economy.

## **4.2 Council Position**

The City of Karratha's position on Workforce Accommodation is set out as follows:

- a) The Council acknowledges the critical role Workforce Accommodation plays during the construction phase of major resource projects and to accommodate peak short-term workforce requirements associated with maintenance shut downs;
- b) The Council recognises that there needs to be a base-level supply of WA beds. A base-level supply has been identified (AEC report 2016) which will be regularly reviewed and updated;
- c) The Council acknowledges the need for remote WA camps for specific projects;
- d) The Council's preference is for operational workers to be town-based and the City will work with industry and the State Government to pursue options for increasing town-based workers;
- e) The Council's aspiration is for workforce accommodation needs to be met as much as possible through more permanent forms of town-based accommodation;
- f) The Council is committed to helping to grow and develop the local community and the local economy. Workforce accommodation facilities incur a relative loss of contribution compared to a resident workforce;
- g) It is Council's intention to transition towards a residential workforce over time. Accordingly, workforce accommodation is approved on a temporary basis in all cases. The intention to transition over time towards a residential workforce should be shared;
- h) Only WA developments that are sufficiently integrated into the community shall receive longer term approval provided they meet the requirements of this policy; and
- i) The Council believes a community contribution should be made by WA proponents at the time of initial approval as there is a relative loss of community service and benefit in approving WAs due to association with FIFO working arrangements.

## 5. POLICY MEASURES

### *(MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED IN EXERCISING DISCRETION)*

#### 5.1 Time Limited Approvals

Transient Workforce Accommodation is by its definition a temporary land use and therefore, unless specified otherwise below, any approval will be subject to a time limit. The following provisions apply:

- 5.1.1 Where existing workforce accommodation has a time unlimited approval, works including upgrades and maintenance, shall enjoy the same time unlimited approval rights. Should an increase in the number of beds be proposed, a time limited approval shall be applied to the entire workforce accommodation facility.
- 5.1.2 New workforce accommodation applications can be approved for a maximum period of ten years. Longer term approval periods exceeding ten years, may be approved where performance criteria set out in this policy are met.
- 5.1.3 Extensions of time may be permitted for a maximum period of five years.
- 5.1.4 Construction camp types of workforce accommodation shall be approved for a timeframe based on the timeframe for the related construction project.
- 5.1.5 Applications for new workforce accommodation and/or extensions of time limits will require lodgement of a new planning application. New applications will be subject to the current planning framework at the time of determination.
- 5.1.6 Applications for workforce accommodation will be required to identify the time period for which they are seeking development approval. In considering applications for development approval, decision makers will consider the consistency of the proposal with the planning framework at the date of application.
- 5.1.7 Decommissioning/transition plans are required. As a minimum, a condition will be included on any approval requiring a decommissioning or transition plan to be lodged with the Council 18 months prior to the expiry of the planning approval or a reduced time period considered appropriate at the discretion of Council.
- 5.1.8 At the conclusion of the approved timeframe, the planning approval will expire.

#### 5.2 Need

Proposals for new workforce accommodation facilities, requests to extend approval periods for existing workforce accommodation facilities or proposals to increase the number of beds associated with existing facilities must be accompanied by information that demonstrates need.

Major projects that require review of workforce demands should be the catalyst for review of workforce practices. The potential for existing settlements to accommodate workers should be considered as part of the workforce model for any such project. As such, the need for additional beds must be considered against the capacity of existing settlements to meet the accommodation demands. The following provisions guide how need will be assessed:

- 5.2.1 A proponent of new workforce accommodation, or an increase in the number of beds for an existing facility, must demonstrate a need for the development, as part of their proposal. The need for beds must be demonstrated in the context of workforce accommodation provision across the City and across industry demands.
- 5.2.2 Proponents must demonstrate liaison with the City and evaluation of options regarding capacity in local housing and land supply markets, prior to applying for workforce accommodation facilities associated with major projects.

- 5.2.3 Assertions that there is adequate demand for workforce accommodation to support business investment which are not substantiated with demonstrable demand are not accepted as the basis for demonstrating need for workforce accommodation.
- 5.2.4 Advocating for new workforce accommodation in conjunction with a reduction of workforce accommodation beds elsewhere, is insufficient by itself to demonstrate need for workforce accommodation.
- 5.2.5 Evidence of occupancy, contracts or bookings may contribute to the demonstration of demand for workforce accommodation.
- 5.2.6 Assessment of workforce accommodation proposals must consider the cumulative impacts of multiple WA developments on the sustainability and liveability of affected towns and the City generally.

### **5.3 Location**

Workforce accommodation facilities are to be suitably located to deliver the objectives of this policy, guided by the following provisions:

- 5.3.1 The City encourages the provision of workforce accommodation at locations that lend themselves to providing for community integration. Where the location does not lend itself to community integration, the need for contributions to offset the relative community loss should be considered.
- 5.3.2 A workforce accommodation facility for which a longer term approval is sought (greater than ten years) must be co-located and integrated with an activity centre to support local business, activate public spaces and provide opportunities for occupants to interact and engage with the community.
- 5.3.3 Where a longer term approval is sought, proponents should liaise with the City prior to lodgement of an application to determine the suitability of the location for a longer term workforce accommodation facility.
- 5.3.4 Workforce accommodation proposals in urban environments should encourage occupants to mix and contribute to a strong sense of community.
- 5.3.5 Workforce accommodation proposals in City or Town Centres should foster a diversity of activities within the centre, supported by a legible street pattern and generally contiguous and active building frontages positioned at the street front boundary.
- 5.3.6 Remote WA camps are considered acceptable where it can be demonstrated that it is not feasible or appropriate for workers to be town based.

### **5.4 Design**

The acceptability of workforce accommodation is dependent upon standards associated with the location that it is intended for. When proposed in an urban setting, a seamless integration of a workforce accommodation facility with its surrounds, is the preferred outcome.

Where a proponent intends to accommodate FIFO operational workers in WA on a long-term basis, it is expected that the development to be of a standard commensurate with permanent, high quality residential apartments and suitably integrated with surrounding development. Typical transportable camp buildings and layouts are unacceptable. Proponents intending to provide accommodation for FIFO operational workforces should discuss such proposals with the City to ensure they meet expectations.

The development design guidance provisions are as follows:

- 5.4.1 The standard of development must be commensurate to its location. In this regard, workforce accommodation within existing or proposed urban areas must consider the standard of development appropriate to its location in the design of the facility.

- 5.4.2 Applications for longer term approvals must foster the provision of a balanced and diverse built form which will contribute to the development of an active and interesting character in the public domain.
- 5.4.3 Proposals for longer term approvals must provide contiguous, activated street front development.
- 5.4.4 Proposals for longer term approvals must locate car parking areas behind street front buildings.
- 5.4.5 Proposals for longer term approvals must achieve high intensity land use and built form outcomes, including a range of medium to high density housing, within a walkable catchment of an activity centre.
- 5.4.6 Proposals must consider the compatibility of a use or development with its setting. Associated with this matter are amenity, character, streetscape, scale, integration and similar.
- 5.4.7 Unless an alternative emergency sheltering solution can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the City, each facility must provide a building(s) designed for emergency (cyclone) sheltering purposes. Such building(s) must be designed to a Building Code of Australia importance level four (4).
- 5.4.8 Building design shall demonstrate regard for the guidelines for Australian Public Safety Shelters Report to Emergency Management Australia (2002).

## **5.5 Community Integration**

Workforce accommodation proposed within the City Centre, Town Centre, Commercial, Urban Development and Residential zones are required to integrate and be compatible with, the existing and future planned urban environment, and must meet the following provisions:

- 5.5.1 All workforce accommodation applications are required to be accompanied by a Social Impact Assessment and Social Impact Management Plan in accordance with Council's relevant local planning policy. If the Social Impact Management Plan does not include contributions\*, then other management measures need to be considered satisfactory for the purposes of offsetting any relative net loss in community service and benefit.
- 5.5.2 In considering applications for development approval, the community impacts associated with the development will be considered against DP20: Social Impact Assessment.
- 5.5.3 Contributions may be in the form of:
- The ceding of land for an agreed public purpose;
  - Construction of infrastructure works that are to be transferred to public authorities on completion;
  - Monetary contributions to acquire land, community infrastructure and/or facilities; and
  - Monetary contributions to Council programs and/or services.

In accordance with Clause 9.1 of TPS 8, agreements can be reached between the Applicant and the Council regarding contributions to be made, the basis upon which contributions are made and the application of those contributions.

- \* If a proponent does not believe a contribution is warranted, then the Social Impact Management Plan needs to clearly articulate in detail, and based on evidence/commitments, the reasons why they believe a contribution is not warranted so this can be considered in determining the merits of the proposal. It needs to be noted that the Council's position on the need for contributions is based on the adverse cumulative impacts of workforce accommodation developments on building sustainable local communities and local economies, not just the impact of an individual workforce on community facilities and infrastructure.

## 6. REFERENCES TO RELATED DOCUMENTS

- **Town Planning Scheme No.8**  
Clause 6.5.4 – Transient Workforce Accommodation
- **State Planning Policies**  
State Planning Framework Policy (Variation No 2)
- **Local Planning Policies**  
DP20 - Social Impact Assessment

**Other legislative documents which have potential to influence applications:**

- *Treatment of Sewage and Disposal of Effluent and Liquid Waste Regulations 1974*
- *Roebourne Liquor Accord 2007*
- *City of Karratha Health Local Laws 1996*
- *Health Act 1911*
- *The Health (Aquatic Facilities) Regulations 2007*
- *City of Karratha Local Planning Strategy*

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*This Policy takes effect from the date of adoption by Council and shall remain valid until it is amended or deleted.*