



Transient Worker Accommodation

POSITION STATEMENT

KEY MESSAGES

- ✔ Transient Workforce Accommodation - or 'FIFO camps' - are facilities built by mining and resource companies to house workforces brought in from around the state and nation to work in on sites across the region.
- ✔ In the case of a mine construction workforce of 3,000 - 5,000 workers, it is impractical to expect companies to hire all locals and integrate that workforce into the nearest townsite; the population of the town could be less than 10,000 and could be located hundreds of kilometres away. As such, they are common to the region.
- ✔ This first construction phase of a mining or resource development is very different to the operational phase; once operational, a much smaller workforce is employed either permanently or over a longer period of time. Here, it is equally impractical over the long term to house a regular workforce as a separate community to the regional centre, especially when in close proximity to that centre.
- ✔ The 60km rule - that any operational workforces within 60kms of a regional centre should be integrated into the community - is an appropriate, measured compromise that allows both the development of regional population centres and the important investments in the mining and resource industry to support regional sites.
- ✔ The Pilbara Regional Council asserts that fly-in-fly-out operational workforces that are fully integrated within host communities contribute to the development of sustainable host communities, and preserve the mental health and well-being of the fly-in-fly-out workforce.
- ✔ There is clear intent from the WA incoming State Government to promote local content, local skilled workforces and procurement. Permanent town-based population that supports facilities in a manner that is beneficial to the workers, employers and the broader community will foster the realisation of that intent.

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COMMITMENTS SOUGHT

- ✓ That the State Government's Planning Position Statement reflect the recommended '60km rule' for transient workforce accommodation integration;
- ✓ That the State Government apply a premium to payroll tax as applied to workers undertaking FIFO work arrangements in recognition of the additional environmental and social impact on the State;
- ✓ That the State Government allow Local Government to set and apply differential rating to transient worker accommodation facilities on a three year approval cycle, amending this from the current annual cycle; and
- ✓ That the State Government, through its licensing regime(s), actively preclude transient worker accommodation facilities from offering hotel accommodation and amenities to the general public.

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The Pilbara Regional Council, representing the four local governments of the Pilbara:

1. recognises and acknowledges that fly-in-fly-out work practices are considered a valuable instrument as the resources industry seeks to maximise returns for shareholders; and
2. notes that fly-in-fly-out work practices may be either fully integrated or entirely segregated from host communities; and
3. recognises and acknowledges the difference between construction and operating transient workforces, noting that there are valid arguments for construction transient workforces to be located in segregated facilities where a local host community is unable to provide the requisite level of accommodation or amenity; and
4. asserts that fly-in-fly-out operational workforces that are fully integrated within host communities contribute to the development of sustainable host communities, and preserve the mental health and well-being of the fly-in-fly-out workforce; and

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KEY POSITION STATEMENT CONT'D

5. asserts that fly-in-fly-out operational workforces that are (wholly or partly) segregated from host communities do not properly contribute to the economic and social fabric of host communities, and damage the mental health and well-being of the fly-in-fly-out workforce; and
6. rejects disingenuous arguments that segregated fly-in-fly-out workforce decisions are made in the interests of workforce safety considerations, noting that many metropolitan staff of resource companies travel considerably larger distances to and from work without undue risk; and
7. states that any current or proposed fly-in-fly-out operating workforces located within 60km proximity of an established population centre should be co-located and fully integrated within that population centre to the maximum extent possible.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There has been an ample accrual of anecdotal and empirical evidence, throughout the past quarter-century and most recently to the fly-in, fly-out' (FIFO) workforce practices in regional Australia inquiry. The Pilbara Regional Council asserts that fly-in-fly-out operational workforces that are fully integrated within host communities contribute to the development of sustainable host communities, and preserve the mental health and well-being of the fly-in-fly-out workforce.

Successive State Governments have failed to provide Western Australia adequate policy direction and oversight needed to address the significant economic and social challenges facing local government with regard the issue of transient worker accommodation. Well before the current boom in the middle of the past decade, evidence of the trend toward FIFO was abundant in local government minutes and newspaper letters to the editor.

In the absence of a cohesive state policy, the local government sector responds to the issue in an ad-hoc fashion, and is bound by restrictive red tape requiring any differential rating to be re-approved by the Minister yearly.

The Minister for Planning has appointed former Mayor of Vincent and newly elected Member for Perth, Hon John Kerry MLA, as her Parliamentary Secretary, with responsibilities for strata title reform, planning for thriving, liveable and connected communities, and developing a State Planning Position Statement on transient workforce accommodation locations.

This comes at a time where there is a renewed sense of interest in local government reform, and a new, collaborative relationship forming between State and Local Government. Given the Parliamentary Secretary's extensive local government experience and the State's willingness to review its position on this matter, the Pilbara Regional Council should engage with the State Government to ascertain whether it can be involved in the policy development process underway at the WA Planning Commission.