



**Shire of Esperance**

**ANNUAL ELECTORS MEETING**

**TUESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2026**

**MINUTES**

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## **ETHICAL DECISION MAKING AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

Council is committed to a code of conduct, and all decisions are based on an honest assessment of the issue, ethical decision-making and personal integrity. Councillors and staff adhere to the statutory requirements to declare financial, proximity and impartiality interests and once declared follow the legislation as required.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Please be advised that in order to save printing and paper costs, all attachments referenced in this paper are available in the original Agenda document for this meeting.

## **RECORDINGS**

The Meeting will be live streamed. The recording will be made publicly available as soon as practical following the meeting.

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**SHIRE OF ESPERANCE**  
**MINUTES**  
**OF THE ANNUAL ELECTORS MEETING**  
**HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON 3 FEBRUARY 2026.**

**1. OFFICIAL OPENING**

The Shire President declared the meeting open at 6:00pm and did an acknowledgement to country.

*The Shire of Esperance acknowledges the Nyungar and Ngadju people who are the Traditional Custodians of this land and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and we extend that respect to other aboriginal Australians today.*

The President welcomed Councillors, staff, guests and members of the public to the meeting. The President advised the meeting will be video recorded.

**2. ATTENDANCE**

**Members**

Pres. R Chambers	President	
Cr J Obourne	Deputy President	Town Ward
Cr L de Haas		Town Ward
Cr W Graham		Rural Ward
Cr S Starcevich		Rural Ward
Cr G Harp		Town Ward
Cr C Davies		Town Ward

**Shire Officers**

Mr S Burge	Chief Executive Officer
Mr M Walker	Director Asset Management
Mr R Greive	Director External Services
Mrs F Baxter	Director Corporate & Community Services
Mrs C Hoffrichter	Executive Assistant
Ms C Smith	Manager of Marketing and Communications

**Members of the Public & Press**

Geoff Vivian - Media	Tim Currie
Sue Starr	Colin Ingram
David Fraser	LA Shibus
Deb Allen	Ian Mickel
Rob Turley	Michelle Crisp
Jan Turley	Sue Wilson
Rebecca Hoggart	Thuriyya Ibrahim
Ted Gray	

**3. APOLOGIES & NOTIFICATION OF GRANTED LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Cr G McWilliam	Apology	Town Ward
Cr G Johnston	Absent	Town Ward

**4. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**Moved: Colin Ingram**

**Seconded: Ian Mickel**

**AEM0226-027**

**That the Minutes of the Annual Electors Meeting held Tuesday 4 February 2025 be confirmed as a true and correct record.**

**CARRIED**

**5. PURPOSE OF MEETING**

**Moved: Sue Starr**

**Seconded: LA Shibish**

**AEM0226-028**

**That the 2024/2025 Annual Report be received.**

**CARRIED**

**6. GENERAL BUSINESS**

**Questions - Sue Starr:**

I would like to commend all Councillors and all staff; we are so lucky to live in a place like Esperance. I have read through the Annual Report today and I came here with the question why are all the trees being chopped down over the last year? We've seen a lot of trees disappear and of course I always worry when I see a tree chopped down.

So that was the question that I came here with, but having found the draft strategy for street trees, I've read through that as well, and I've found that you are in the process, and you do appreciate what trees do. You know they don't just look pretty they do a lot of work including keeping us cool. I want to commend you for that.

When will the draft strategy for street trees be passed and put into action?

*The Shire President advised, as far as I am aware that strategy has already been passed through Council.*

Sue responded, I couldn't find the endorsed strategy only the draft strategy online and I hope to see all of that in place.

I have also highlighted a section in the strategy that states for the removal of trees, exceptional circumstances exist relating to public risk and safety, if the tree species is not an approved variety and is not acceptable to the Shire or the tree precludes redevelopment of an adjoining site with no other reasonable alternative to removal.

What does that mean? Does it mean if a tree that's been there for a long time historically is that removed because something is going to happen in that space? Is that a reason for removal of a tree?

*Mr Walker advised, it relates to driveways and developments on some properties and if there is no other alternative then we will consider moving a tree based on the land development, but as it states it's our last resort, it's not our preferred option.*

Sue responded, so what about the trees on Brazier Street, the show grounds/agricultural grounds and the Civic Centre? What about those trees that went down last year?

*Mr Walker advised, that isn't relating to driveways and the like, that's a part of the Shire's developments. The strategy it is to phase the removal of Tuart Trees, they have a risk factor depending on how they're going, when the risk becomes intolerable, we will remove them. For example, the Civic Centre when holding events like Winter Wonderland, the risk tolerance has changed. We need to consider that we have to look to remove them and replace them with an appropriate species. I understand it looks bare now, but we will replant that area.*

Sue responded, I did note in this strategy that there is a perceived fear of trees, I don't know what the percentage of chances that a tree branch is going to fall on a person is, but I wouldn't have through it was as high as not having a tree that's providing shade and habitat and coolness. I'm just questioning as we get a bit carried away by this safety risk with trees, but it's so important that if one is going to be taken, it gets replaced.

I hope they are replaced with flowering shade trees so wildlife can be encouraged back. I am sad to see them all go without any community consultation, maybe I missed it, but I wasn't aware of any consultation. Can the public be informed when lots of trees are removed like that?

*The Shire President advised, there is no reason why the public isn't involved, it's only that our processes currently don't include that, but we can certainly look at how we update that to make sure we have members of the community are involved in those removals. We do have an extremely good arborist that works within the Shire, he is very much a person that does not like to remove trees unless absolutely necessary.*

*Unfortunately, with the Tuart Trees here they have a lot of inclusions where the branches divide, which means the bigger the tree gets the greater the risk.*

*Mr Walker advised, because we need traffic management for a few of these tree removals, it becomes opportunistic as well when we can free up some traffic management so we can actually get in and do the works. We could have worked schedules for a couple of months, but if we can get traffic management freed up so we can do it sooner we will. We need to work on that timing to get the information out to the community.*

Sue asked, is the wood and mulch able to be reused in some capacity?

*Mr Walker advised we donate the Tuart Tree wood to the RFDS – Firewood Wood Cutters, and the rest gets mulched up and taken to our landfill site.*

Sue asked the following question, there are a lot of weeds around town, and I know tea tree is the main one but out near the old tip there is a lot of aniseed weed. There is lots of different names for it, but it is absolutely going ballistic. I have tried over the years; you literally have to get down on your hands and knees to cut it off at the base paint it with glyphosate. It's the only way to get rid of it. I can see that it's moving around into all the verges where I am and I'm unsure how to fix it, unless that area is slashed in one hit and then sprayed straight after. I'm worried if it gets into the bush it is going to take over.

Is that particular weed on the list of yuck?

*Mr Walker advised, I'm not 100% sure, we are going through the process to develop a draft weed strategy which is with the environmental team now and we will hopefully get a draft out for public comment in the coming months. I will have a chat with the environmental team and get their thoughts on it.*

*The Shire President advised, he understands that the tea tree is an issue, and I know last time they did some work out at Myrup Road the team slashed a heap and treated it. I think the plan is to continue to see whether we can control it in that method and if we can then that will be moved around where we can. we understand the issue around that particular tree, and we are trying to find ways to mitigate it.*

*The Shire President thanks Sue for her questions.*

**Question - Debbie Allen:**

My question is about the overflow, how many campers were booked in, how much did the shire take in fees and where will the money be spent.

*The Shire President advised, we have had 10,831 people stay on a total of 4,178 sites in the overflow. So far, this financial year we have collected \$280,637 the projected budget profit out of that will be \$53,000 once we take the costs of doing the overflow out.*

*This money goes back into the extra ranger programs that we run during the tourist season when we have tourists here. We normally only have three rangers, and they have to patrol with two per vehicle, so we train up additional staff to assistant rangers and go on patrols which means instead of having one a half patrols go out we actually have three.*

*We also increased the amount of rubbish collected in key areas such as the foreshore where the rubbish has built up. The money goes back into managing tourists that Esperance get, unfortunately while we would never knock having tourists come into Esperance, it is one of the issues we have around the Shire. Tourism is fantastic for the community, and we love to see tourists going to small businesses and we can see the benefits of that, people appreciating our beautiful place, even the work of the Esperance Promise to try and make sure that tourist visit responsibly is important.*

*From a Shire point of view, it does load up our infrastructure, and we don't get any direct funding as such for the increase. The money that we do makes from the overflow goes back into trying to make sure that we maintain those services whilst we have the influx of people in town.*

*The Shire President thanked Debbie for her question.*

**Questions – Jan Turley:**

We all agree in this town we have the most amazing foreshore, thanks to the Shire for doing all of that work. What would be the chance of continuing that work right past the RAC Caravan park, so we have this flow of it continuing around? We have been here 19 years, and I have spoken to people here today who have lived here a lot longer and they have said the carting of sand has gone on longer than the 19 years I have lived here.

Are you able to tell us what the cost is of sand being carted every year and being replaced, and what are the chances down the track you could extend the amazing foreshore and take it all the way around?

*Shire President advised, Shire previously spent around \$350,000 per year on sand renourishment by trucks with assistance from the State Government. The Shire has been working on a coordinated Bandy Creek Boat Harbour dredging and sand back passing with the Department of Transport which we trialled six years ago. In Esperance there is literal sand movement from West to East, so sand moves along the coastline. Since the inclusion of the Port in town that has interrupted the flow of sand, but it still erodes from west to east, so in the bay it continues to still be eroded even though the sand doesn't come around the headland anymore like it used to prior to the Port.*

*The rock wall that was put in there protect that part of the beach, but all of the plans and all the research and consultation that we have done, shows that if we continue that rock wall around all we will do is push the erosion further around the beach. The only way to fix that is to build a rock wall the whole way around to Bandy Creek Boat Harbour and then you will find most of the beach will disappear and we wouldn't have a beach.*

*So, what we've done after the sand back pass trial is because a lot of the sand ends up in Bandy Creek, every two years the Department of Transport dredges about 60 to 70 thousand cubic meters of sand out of Bandy Creek and they pump it further East which it then continues Eastwards along the beach. You would have seen some black pipes there a few years ago and we now pumped that sand back to the beginning of where the rock wall finishes in front of the RAC Caravan Park to replenish the sand.*

*Since we have done that, we've received a considerable amount of funding through State Government and Federal Government approx. \$3.5 million dollars. This has allowed us to be able to put in permanent pipe infrastructure, so every two years when the Department of Transport dredges Bandy Creek Boat Harbour they will pump the sand back and allow us to put a lot more sand back there every two years.*

*Other than specific or unusual environmental storm surges or other erosion events, that should last every two years so we don't have to truck sand in anymore, that cost is offset by the Department of Transport doing the dredging.*

Jan asked, what about the garden? Is there a chance you can improve the garden or the greenery, so it doesn't look so dry along the foreshore? Or is that because of the sand so it couldn't be done?

*Mr Walker advised, we have done preliminary work to extend the foreshore through to that corner near RAC to beautify it, but we need to fix and stabilise the sand in front of it first. So, the idea is do those works, put the pipe in, do some back stop work and then we've got some plans. This is a medium-term project, we will tick away at it, but we won't get there straight away we need to fix the sand erosion because we don't want to do all this work and then have it erode.*

Jan thanks the staff and Councillors for answering her questions.

**Questions – Rebecca Hoggart:**

I'm here to talk about the Duke or Orleans Bay. The two items that I would like to address are repairing the access path from the carpark to the beach and restricting vehicles on the beach.

If you aren't familiar with the Duke or Orleans Bay, it is a beautiful south facing bay with the Orleans Bay Caravan Park to the West along with Table Island and Daily River to the East. The beach itself may not be as popular as Wharton's, but it's a treasure of wildlife and tranquillity. The Sealife consists of seals, dolphins, stingrays, countless fish, cape baron geese, hooded gulls and even the odd pelican.

Table Island itself is a haven for echidnas, bandicoots, blue crested wrens, sea eagles, osprey and many small birds. It's because of these things and many more as to why I love this beach. For the past eight months it's been particularly hard to access after the storms in late May. The access path from the carpark has been washed away leaving a steep drop of a meter or so. Although my family and I can scramble up and down it's particularly difficult for young kids, families and older people.

I've reported this through the snap, send and solve app in early October and yet it remains in a terrible state and getting worse. It's my hope that it will be fixed as soon as possible and to encourage people to park and walk. It's also worth mentioning that both Wharton and Nares Beach were also washed away at the same time and have both been swiftly repaired.

As we all know Wharton's has increased in popularity over the last few years, and my fear is the same thing happens to the Duke of Orleans Bay. The problem is the beach is not big enough for cars and people to work together. The beach is steep and narrow which causes visitors who are on foot or towels having to move out of the way for vehicles.

There is also the issue of vehicles trashing vegetation and plantings which have been undertaken by local school kids and the Shire, it is having a negative impact on rehabilitated areas. Antisocial behaviour is also increasing with multiple occasions of drivers cutting up and doing burnouts on the sand between the island and the beach. I understand most people drive responsibly and slowly, but there is a car park to utilise if you want to access the beach.

I would like to see vehicle access to the beach restricted to keep at least one of our beaches safe for recreation. My suggestion would be to fix or improve the pedestrian access from the carpark and restrict vehicle traffic from the beach at the carpark keeping the boat launch area unaffected.

*Mr Walker advised, yes, our beaches and our coastline have taken a beating over the last winter period, we have had two or three one in 25-year storm events. We've been scrambling to fix up the accesses. Obviously, we have prioritised the more popular beaches, and there are other accesses we haven't got too. I wasn't aware of the path access down to the beach so we will get that looked at and see what maintenance we can do there.*

*As for vehicle access it's been a tricky one out there. We've done a lot of work there as you have seen, we've done planting and revegetation, closed off tracks and unfortunately some people haven't respected that, and we are having to go back and do reworks. I will have a chat with the environmental team and work out what management strategies are possible regarding that.*

Rebecca asked if there could be signage out there?

*Mr Walker advised signage only works for the people who want to read it. The people that we are trying to address won't read it, that's what we have found. I will have a chat with the team and see if we can work out any other management options or get another access so people can get on further around the beach and stop access on that section. We will have to work through that, I can't give a definite answer. I encourage you to contact the Shire directly if there are any issues, Snap, Send Solve isn't integrated into our system it would be much better to send an email or give us a call so it's in our system.*

*The Shire President thanks Rebecca for her questions.*

**Questions – Tim Currie:**

Esperance Care Services has been a part of the community for 30 years. We've been in Gilpin Street for the last 10 and a half years and we are currently having issues around parking. I'm sure you have all driven pasts; we get approx. 300 customers or clients per day between Tuesday and Saturday. With the construction site on the other side of us, it's becoming dangerous and it's quite a big issue so I am hoping we could look into what options are available for parking or extending the angle parking?

*The Shire President advised, I'm glad you brought this up because we actually discussed it this morning during our Councillor catch-up about the amount of cars that end up congregating around that particular corner. The answer is we will need to find some money in the budget, but I'm going to hand over to Mr Walker to give a further update.*

*Mr Walker advised, we are about to start some footpath works and shared path works along Harbour Road, and we are going to see if we can factor in extending the car park into that. If we can't, potentially we will need a budget bid to come back to Council, but it's on our radar. We've just got to do some design work around that.*

Tim Currie thanks Councillors and staff for their time.

**Questions - Colin Ingram:**

In January 2025 I attended Council and inquired about the status of planning for improving road safety and vehicle movements at three major intersections in Esperance. They include the intersection of South Coast Highway and Harbour Road, Barney Hill realignment both of which are the responsibilities of main roads.

I note that Council provided information about Stage 2 of the Esperance Port Access Corridor project in November 2025 Shire Flyer. The Stage 2 project forms part of the Esperance Economic Development Plan, which is to be commended, great that it's moving forward.

Now it's been some time since we've had an update in respect to those intersections, it does appear that Main Roads is dragging the chain or perhaps looking for further funding or finding it difficult to find funding. Council advised during a meeting in January 2025 there had been discussions with

Main Roads and that Main Roads had commenced primary concept design work for the project. It would be great to get an update, if possible, on where that planning and funding is at?

The Stage 2 project also includes improvements to the Harbour Road/Pink Lake intersection which I hadn't raised but was raised in the economic development plan as a priority as well, which I completely agree with so it's good that it has been included. However, the intersection of Norseman Road and Shelden Road is the sole responsibility of the Shire. It's a dangerous intersection because of traffic coming out of Phyllis Street turning into Shelden Road. Adding complexity to navigating this intersection is traffic going north and west (onto Sheldon St) from the town centre on Norseman Road combined with regular traffic heading south on Norseman Road. Together this creates congestion and a challenge for traffic turning south onto Norseman Road from Shelden Road.

I asked whether council would consider closing the Phyllis Street access onto Norseman Road? Creating a no through Road at the end of Phyllis would seem like a sensible short-term solution. I might add that there was a serious collision at this intersection in late 2025 and a series of near misses reported, it's a disaster waiting to happen and I think that's something Council should look at and it'll be good to get an update.

*The Shire President advised, I know that we have had numerous discussions with Main Roads, but I will pass over to the CEO and Mr Walker for further comment as I know the CEO has done a bit of consultation with Main Roads.*

*The CEO advised, we are looking for an update from Main Roads too, later this month we are having a meeting with Main Roads and hopefully they can give us an update as to where the consultation has got them with their designs. We will be in a better position after that meeting to provide feedback as to where it's at. It's fair to say they would be chasing money, it would be a significant project at either of those intersections costing a significant amount of money. We will keep you in the loop on those.*

*In relation to Norseman and Shelden intersection, that has been identified by our staff as being an issue. We have looked at a number of ideas and concepts and I don't think we have fallen on what the solution is at this point. We have taken on board your idea about closing Phyllis Street, however we think that could have some unintended consequences for some of the other intersections that people will then use for their rat runs. We just aren't sure what the solutions for that one is at this point in time unless Mr Walker has a better option for it.*

*Mr Walker advised, we have come up with a number of options, we are narrowing down to our preferred option but it won't be a cheap exercise. We are progressing in the background it won't happen overnight, it's not going to happen next year, but we are going to keep progressing because we need to do something with that intersection. With the CEO's position on closing Phyllis Street, I agree it will have unintended consequences on other roads so that needs to be taken into consideration. Yes, it could fix one issue, but what other issues are we creating? We are trying to look at it holistically and what options are available for that whole area.*

Colin responded, it might be fixing a deadly issue but creating an inconvenient issue somewhere else that would be my opinion, I think it's a disaster waiting to happen. Thank you I really appreciate what Council is doing to continue to press those issues with Main Roads.

My second issue related to Lake Warden. Lake Warden Nature Reserve encloses Lake Warden and forms part of the Lake Warden System Ramsar site. The site provides significant waterbird habitat and refuge for waterbird species listed under (Commonwealth designated) international migratory agreements. Significant hydrological changes have occurred in the Lake Warden catchment because of extensive historical land clearing resulting in secondary salinity.

The salinity levels in Lake Warden are so high it has caused significant decline in the ecological character of the Lake Warden System Ramsar site. Long term property owners neighbouring Lake Warden describe a lake in the 1990's teeming with bream and a diverse waterbird and large wader populations. Today water bird abundance and diversity has declined.

The high salinity restricts the growth of macro invertebrates, reducing the production of critical food sources. While the management of Lake Warden is the responsibility of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) the restoration of Lake Warden's ecological values is directly linking to the restoration of Pink Lake's ecological values. In recent years a significant body of work has been undertaken by the Shire to determine the potential to move salt from Lake Warden to Pink Lake.

Salt was mined in Pink Lake from 1896 to 2007 which led to the decline in *Dunaliella salina* (*D. salina*), the species that creates the pink colour in Pink Lake. The previous work undertaken by the Shire is to be commended. However, individual efforts have reached their limits. It is now time where only joint action between the Shire, and State and the Commonwealth Governments will drive the project to reach the desired objective – i.e. restoring the pink in Pink Lake and reducing the salinity in Lake Warden to allow waterbirds to thrive once again. It's a win-win outcome.

Planning has already been achieved by the Shire. What we need now are funds to undertake the engineering feasibility and subsequent implementation. So, I'd like to ask the Shire if it's willing to prepare a business case to present DBCA and the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water to source funds to transfer saline water from Lake Warden to Pink Lake?

*Mr Walker advised, as you have alluded to, we have done quite a bit of work in this space. What that has suggested as you've said earlier that we can transfer saline water from Lake Warden to Pink Lake and we will have a win for the environment. We'll have a win for Pink Lake. We reduce the salinity and stop Lake Warden being the terminal lake in the system. It will reduce the salt loads and that will bring back the critters and that will bring back the birds.*

*We have costed up the project its about \$2 million dollars. We put funding into a DEC program but didn't receive funding. We thought it was a very strong application, ticked all the boxes, but it didn't receive the funding. We are currently waiting for other grant funding rounds to come up so we can put a funding application in, we will put some Shire money into that even though it's not our land, it's not our responsibility.*

Colin asked, is it's worth writing to other bodies that have responsibility both Commonwealth and State and making them aware rather than throwing a hat in to a grant program, make them aware through that process but be more direct by writing to them and outlining the importance of undertaking this project from an ecological point of view but also from a tourism point of view. I think it's going to be driven by tourism in the end.

*The Shire President advised he is happy to do that, we are happy to write to both Federal and State. We've got a new Government Minister for the State after the last election and its well within DBCA land. We did quite a bit of consultation a few years ago now, not long after I got on Council and the issue is around land clearing but also the implementation of the roads and the rail that stopped then being the terminal lake.*

*So, we would like nothing more than to partner up with someone and get that job done, like you said it would do wonders for the tourism in town. We are happy to write a letter to those Minister and even the district officer for DBCA, he resides in Albany. Its RAMSA wetland as well.*

Colin responded, I think the benefits will come to the Shire through people so thank you for that.

My last question is about our local newspaper, it's very sad to see the end of the Esperance Weekender. Newspapers are probably for the baby boomer type, not many young people tend to read local newspapers these days, but newspapers do have a very important role in our community. They provide news to people that are on social media, they provide information that is well researched, doesn't necessarily have an agenda, and a whole heap of things that just don't get onto social media.

I do note there is a new newspaper magazine, the first edition came out last week which is great to see that we will still have something that allows information other than the stuff we see on social

media platforms. The older people don't read social media, there are farmers and other sectors of our community that rely on that information, it's a really important asset to have for our community.

I understand that the Shire has in the past supported the Esperance Weekender through advertising and that a budget item exists for that purpose. So, I am asking the Shire because I think it's a community asset and I think rate payers deserve information and would be happy to support the information that would come through that particular avenue. So is it possible to maintain that budget item and ensure that magazine newspaper that's now started has the support of Council because I think it's a risk to Council if the information we had to rely on was totally social media.

*The Shire President advised, yes, I completely agree with you. It is important to have a local newspaper, I know that we can't do some of our advertising though it because it's a monthly subscription and won't fall within the statutory requirements that we have for advertising, but I will hand you over to the CEO for further comment.*

*The CEO advised, yes, we have certain statutory advertising that we need to do in a registered newspaper, and I don't think that one would meet the requirements. So, all the money we put through the Weekender, we wouldn't be able to continue to do with this one. However, I think there is certain elements of the monthly newspaper that we can definitely still use where it's appropriate to do so.*

*We will still need to use a newspaper like the Kalgoorlie Miner for a lot of our statutory advertising to meet the requirements of the Local Government Act. We can definitely use the monthly for items that are relevant for our community.*

*The Shire President thanked Colin for his questions.*

**Questions – Michelle Crisp:**

I agree with Sue and her sentiment about trees and the perceived risk with limbs falling off and fire risk, I see there are lots of Councils in Perth that really encourage people to plant native trees in their garden and to provide habitat for local birds and animals. I don't know how that aligns with our fire risk policy, so I'd be interested to know how that could be done. There has been land for wildlife programs in the past and they have all fallen over.

We are all encouraged now to have parkland areas around our houses because of the fire risk, but in doing that I think we are losing a lot of our natural habitat for our local wildlife. I know my garden has local birds that nest in the area and that wouldn't be happening if I had parkland area there. Again, I just wonder what is the real risk to our town for fire, I have lived here for 30 years and enjoyed the beautiful bush. If we had to clear that it would be a real loss to our community. So again, with the significant trees that are around, I don't know what the rules are.

In Perth you can't even touch a limb on a significant tree without having consequences. Is there any clarification around that? I know in Perth with climate change they encourage people to plant significant trees. Trees are really important they provide oxygen, without trees we wouldn't have that. I think estimates would be nice, see if we can encourage greening of the township. So that's my first question.

My other question is about the erosion on Dempster Head. I have been sending emails to the environmental department at the Shire about the erosion on Dempster Head, I've sent 3-4 emails over the past 18 months, and I haven't received any responses until last week. This was frustrating because we've had two Dempster Head management plans that I'm aware of highlighting how special that area is with local habitat and environment. It's like the King's Park of Esperance a lot of people refer to it as. Over the 30 years I have been here it's incrementally been eaten away.

We used to get beautiful orchids in spring, and the four-wheel drive access up there means that people are pushing through paths, and we don't get the orchids anymore. It would be great if we can block access and have walking access between the two water tanks there. The drivers that go up generally have quite unsociable behaviour, and the mountain bike users up there are huge resulting in environmental impact.

The Shire's density management plan has recommended against having the mountain bike users using that area. There have been Shire signs up there for a number of years, but there is no consequences that I've seen, users don't take notice of the signs and even recently I've witnessed people take saws into the bush and cut down native bush and construct ramps and things. I think the Shire in the past blocked off access to a lot of those trails but apparently all of those have been opened again. I've been told by the environmental officers that there is no budget for that, and I would really like to see that as a priority as it's a special area for future generations.

The other topic I'd like to discuss is illegal camping and beach access, its rife and they usually dump rubbish and break glass etc. In West Beach we've got two great access points with stairs onto the beach, so we don't have to destroy the environment. There are still two historic tracks down Chapmans end that people are still using to access the beach. If you go down onto the beach and look back towards the escarpment you can actually see the damage that's done by people walking down those tracks.

I'd really like to see those two tracks blocked off with signage, I know you say signage doesn't work, but I think the people going down there are actually locals, and I've pulled them up a couple of times and let them know there is a designated access area 300 metres away that's a lot better for the environment.

My last point is about the protection of listed buildings and what responsibility the Shire is, particularly on the OTC station. We don't have a lot of heritage buildings in Esperance, but the ones have are really special. I remember the OTC building operating when I first came to town and it was a beautiful building, but all the old fences have been pulled down. I know it's a private property, but the fences being down means youth get in and spray paint, throw rocks through the roof etc.

So, I asked the State Heritage Office, and they said there is a pending approval to have it listed. It is on our Shire listed building, and they said it would be really beneficial if the Shire put through a proposal encouraging that process to happen to get it protected. I didn't know what the Shire's responsibilities are, the lady who got back to me said the Shire didn't have any budget to do anything to protect it but would put it on the list at one of their meetings.

*The Shire President advised, the Shire does take full responsibility and are very cautious about the trees they cut down. There is a stringent assessment program that goes into getting those cut down. The Shire is also a part of the Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils this is a group of Councils between here and Wiluna. Within that group there is a urban greening program run by Nikki – Regional Climate Alliance and it was originally set up for Perth but we've managed to get it through GVROC to incorporate the Shires from Wiluna to Esperance. 34,000 trees, they just received a \$400,000 grant over three years and I know they have done a lot of work with some of the Northen towns, including organising water and the trees being planted.*

*The whole idea is to continue green, they are continuing to roll that out even further so we can get it all the down here because again it comes back to those trees that are not native to here, like to Tuart Tree they grow really well in their own environment but in sandy soil like Esperance they aren't a great tree to have here. I know when we talk to the works guys where they do take out the trees, they are replanting trees, so we don't lose canopy, because it is vitally important. Everybody knows the benefits of canopy.*

*Mr Walker advised, we have a street tree strategy, it's based around natives and around planting the trees and the right species. As President Chambers said, we have got funding to do an urban canopy program, we started rolling that out with the school kids. We have done Victoria Street Park and planted a section with native trees, and we will be rolling that out in quite a few parks to bring a bit more tree canopy into those parks. As for bushfire mitigation it's just the balance of property, live and the like. Thers some pretty clear information around buffers, so it's not a case of go into the bush and mulch everything. Its working out those buffers and the risk mitigation, they have fairly stringent mitigation programs that have to balance those priorities.*

*As for Dempster Head, yes, we do have a management plan. It's probably fair to say we haven't done a lot in that space, we've done a few of the key actions, but we haven't progressed a lot further. Some of them were seeing if we can get other facilities for mountain bikers to so they aren't using Dempster Head. It is disappointing if they have gone back and started doing what they did five years ago. I will work with the team to see if we can close those tracks and block off those tracks again. If we need more budget, we will go through the Council process and get some additional budget.*

Michelle responded, Doc Reynolds and their team did a huge job regenerating that area 10-20 years ago and it was wonderful what they did, you can see the benefits of what they did. It would be great to see regeneration done again.

*Mr Walker responded, it's definitely a fragile environment that needs protecting. As for the four-wheel drive access, it's easier said than done. We will have a look at it and what the management plan says. We need to have access or maintenance access to the radio tower, so we can't just block everything off. Worst or best case is you would have a gate there, but we would have to have access onto there for that facility. We will get the team to have a look at it and see what we can do. If we need additional it will be in the next financial year budget which is just around the corner.*

*Happy to look at closing the historic tracks down to West Beach. I've seen them before; I am happy to make it a priority and see what we can do there.*

*The point around the protection of listed buildings, and the OTC building, I will hand over the CEO.*

*The CEO advised, as you have said it's a privately owned building. There isn't much we can do apart from encourage the owner to take some responsibility themselves. We wrote to them back in November 2025 and we haven't received a response as yet. With the heritage council, the issue is they have a lot of pending applications, and they only get a small amount of funding for them to assess. So, it takes a while for everything to get to the top of the list with them.*

Michelle thanks Councillors and Staff for answering the questions.

The Shire President called for last questions.

**Question – Sue Starr:**

I said yes to passing this report, but I did notice on page 30 that it's got the cemetery master plan. The cemetery master plan has been long in the making. I was on the cemetery working group and it does say in that report that it's still functioning, but it actually isn't. There's no cemetery working group and there is lots of work that needs to be done out there. Lots of trees were planted, but where the ashes are in front of that wall where the rose garden is are terrible. Worst place for roses. So, I'd like to know when the cemetery working group is going to start up again so we can have a say in the cemetery.

*Mr Walker advised, so we've allocated some budget to do the master plan, and we've engaged H&H architects who we've worked with previously on a lot of CBD landscaping, they are working with us at the moment to develop that master plan. Council has reestablished the cemetery working group and once we are in a position to have those conversations we will call a meeting of the cemetery working group and hopefully get some traction to get that master and then from there we can follow on with the strategy and actions out of that. We need to get this master plan right with the full layout and then we can work towards bits and pieces over the next 10 year progressively improving it but working towards that overall plan.*

The Shire President thanked the community Councillors and Exec Staff for attending this evening.

7. **CLOSURE**

The President declared the meeting closed at 7:12pm.

**These Minutes were confirmed at a meeting held on \_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_**

**Presiding Member at the meeting at which the Minutes were confirmed.**

**Dated \_\_\_\_\_**