

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

OBJECTIVE:

To provide for and support open and accountable local government through provision of a public question period at all Council meetings.

PROCEDURE:

To ensure correct recording of questions electors are requested to submit questions in writing at or prior to the meeting. The Shire of Quairading retains the right to summarise the questions and responses in the minutes. Statements and claims to support the question may not be published in the minutes.

Note: Operational and administration matters should be referred directly to the Chief Executive Officer as and when issues arise for immediate response and action rather than refer them to the governance format of Council Meetings.

The Local Government Act (Section 5.24(2)) and the Local Government (Administration) Regulations prescribe the following:

"Procedures for question time for the public – s. 5.24(2)

Reg 7. (1) *Procedures for the asking of and responding to questions raised by members of the public at a meeting are to be determined –*

- (a) by the person presiding at the meeting; or*
- (b) in the case where the majority of members of the Council or Committee present at the meeting disagree with the person presiding, by the majority of those members,*

having regard to the requirements of subregulations (2) and (3).

- (2) The time allocated to the asking of and responding to questions raised by members of the public at a meeting is to precede the discussion of any matter that requires a decision to be made by the Council, as the case may be.*
- (3) Each member of the public who wishes to ask a question at a meeting is to be given an equal and fair opportunity to ask the question and receive a response.*
- (4) Nothing in subregulation (3) requires –*
 - (a) a Council to answer a question that does not relate to a matter affecting the local government;*
 - (b) a Council at a special meeting to answer a question that does not relate to the purpose of the meeting*

Question time during Council Meetings will be for a minimum time of 15 minutes and no longer than 45 minutes.

If there are no Questions submitted (either in Writing or Verbally by Members of the public present), the Presiding Member will proceed to the Next Item on the Council Agenda Paper.

Where questions are not submitted in writing, the Presiding Member or the Chief Executive Officer shall phrase the question to be recorded in the minutes.

COMMENT:

Public Question Time is provided to complement the role for the Council, which is to:

- Direct and control the local government's affairs;
- Be responsible for the performance of the local government's functions;
- Oversee the allocations of the local government's finances and resources;
- Determine the local government's policies.

The Presiding Member will be responsible for the conduct of public question time. Questions should relate to the business of the Council and should not be in the form of a statement or a personal opinion. Members of the public are not permitted to interrupt or enter into any conversation or debate during the meeting.

Written questions submitted prior to the meeting will be given priority and verbal questions will be addressed if time permits.

The Presiding Member may limit verbal questions from individual members of the public at the Council meeting within the time allocated for public question time and the Shire President will determine the order of questions taken.

Questions asked that contain defamatory remarks, offensive language, innuendo or inappropriate intent will be deemed inappropriate and not answered.

Where a person does not comply with these objectives, or behaviour is deemed inappropriate by the Presiding Member, they may be asked to leave the meeting.

The person asking the question shall state their name and address.

The Presiding Member will determine if the question is in order and endeavour to have every question answered. The Presiding Member may answer or may direct the question to an appropriate Councillor or Officer for a response. However, if the answer is not known or requires further research or detail, then the question will be taken on notice and a response will be supplied in writing to the individual. This response will be published in the minutes of the next Council Meeting.

It is the intention that all members of the public at the meeting shall be given equal and fair opportunity to ask questions and receive a response, rather than the opportunity for debate. The Presiding Member or majority of Councillors may determine when an individual has had an equal and fair opportunity.

Please note:

For Public Question Time at Special Council Meetings, questions are restricted to items that are on the agenda.

GRAEME A FARDON
Chief Executive Officer

Thank you for taking an interest in your Council.



PUBLIC QUESTION TIME QUAIRADING SHIRE COUNCIL

To ensure that questions submitted to Council meetings are recorded correctly and responded to appropriately, residents, electors and attendees are requested to utilise this form as follows:

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NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

SUBJECT: _____

1.

2.

3.

4.

Note: It is preferable for questions to be submitted two (2) working days prior to a meeting to enable the issue to be properly researched and a formal response prepared. Matters which require research and which are presented at a Council may be taken on notice.

Public Question Time should be related to the governance function of Council, being policy and direction setting and not operational matters which should be forwarded directly to the Chief Executive Officer as these do not need to wait for a Council Meeting.

