



Shire of **Ngaanyatjaraku**
ON A JOURNEY

Council Policy

Policy 1.9 – Managing Public Question Time

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Council Policy 1.9 – Managing Public Question Time

Policy Objective

To provide procedures to assist the presiding member in managing public question time at Council meetings where members of the public are provided an opportunity to seek responses to their queries relating to local government issues.

Policy Statement

Legislation provides for members of the public the opportunity to ask questions at Council meetings relating to matters concerning the Shire. It is not a platform for making statements or addresses, which is provided for separately within meeting agenda.

Principles

Where standing orders do not provide, the following principles will guide the management of public question time:

- a) Questions at special council meetings must relate to the purpose of the meeting;
- b) Questions at ordinary council meetings may relate to any matter within the jurisdiction of the Shire;
- c) Debate and / or discussion is not permitted in response to any question or answer;
- d) Members of the public are encouraged to submit their question in writing to the CEO at least 24 hours prior to the meeting;
 - Procedures noted by this Policy will assist in ensuring members of the public each have equitable opportunities to ask questions;
 - Questions may be taken on notice where a response is not practicable at the meeting;
 - Questions are encouraged to be directed to an issue, rather than individuals; and
- e) The presiding member may rule questions inappropriate and may refuse to accept those questions, particularly where public questions:
 - Contain defamatory, offensive or derogatory content;
 - Call into question the competency of staff or elected members;
 - Have been responded to previously; or
 - Relate to confidential matters.

Procedures for Managing Public Question Time

In accordance with legislation, a minimum of fifteen minutes will be made available for public question time at Council meetings. The following procedures will apply:

- a) Thirty minutes prior to the meeting commencing, the CEO will arrange for members of the public to register and record their questions, noting the following details to be recorded in the minutes:
 - Their full name; and
 - Brief detail of the question/s.
- b) Each member of the public, in the order they have registered, may ask three (3) questions with a limit of three (3) minutes allocated to make a short preamble and ask their question;
- c) Questions are to be directed to the presiding member who may (with his/her decision being final):
 - Determine if the question is appropriate, and accept or reject the question;
 - Nominate an elected member or the CEO to respond to the question;
 - Take questions on notice to responded to through the minutes of the next meeting; and
- d) Treat questions as correspondence to be dealt with through administrative processes.
- e) No discussion or debate will take place on any question or answer;
- f) If allotted time remains after each member of the public has asked their questions, the presiding member may allow additional questions (with the same limitations), or may allow for new questions to be presented;
- g) After the allotted public question time has expired, and questions of the public still remain, the presiding member may:
 - Invite elected members to resolve to extend public question time in additional fifteen minute increments; or
 - Request questions to be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive Officer to be responded to through administrative processes.
- h) Summary information detailing the name of the person asking the question, the question and the answer is to be recorded in the minutes.

Policy History

Amendments to this Policy

Amendments to this policy require a simple majority decision of Council.

History

Policy adopted: 24 June 2020

Policy reviewed: 28 June 2023

Previous Policy

N/A