SUMMARISED PUBLIC FEEDBACK AND RESPONSES

Bulgarra Apartment Development

WHAT WE MAKE IT

1. Traffic and Congestion

Many residents expressed concerns about increased traffic, particularly on Ridley Street, Gregory Way and Nairn Street, citing safety risks for children, congestion, and inadequate infrastructure to support higher density.

Response

The proposed developments are consistent with the densities outlined in the City's Local Planning Scheme and approved Structure Plans, which considered road capacity at the time of approval. While all new development generates additional traffic, recent assessments confirm that the local road network can accommodate the additional traffic associated with these projects.

Vehicle access points have been designed to meet Residential Design Code requirements. In addition, conditions of development approval require developers to obtain further City approvals for final crossover design and to submit Parking Management Plans prior to commencing works. These measures ensure compliance with safety standards and provide for efficient on-site parking, helping to manage traffic impacts effectively.

2. Loss of Privacy

A recurring concern was the loss of privacy due to multi-storey buildings overlooking existing homes and backyards, especially in quiet residential streets like Cowrie Court and Gregory Way.

Response

The proposed developments comply with the visual privacy provisions of the Residential Design Codes (R-Codes) applicable to the zoning of each lot. These standards are set by the State Government to ensure an acceptable level of amenity for all developments.

Privacy concerns are understandable, particularly given the change from a vacant parcel to a developed site. While multi-storey developments are not yet common in this suburb, they are present in other areas with similar densities where privacy concerns have not materialised. This demonstrates that, when designed in accordance with planning standards, such developments can successfully integrate into the local context without significant impacts on residential amenity.

Nearby property owners who wish to enhance privacy further can consider measures within their own boundaries, such as tree planting or installing screening structures.

3. Incompatibility with Suburban Character

Residents emphasised that high-density apartments are inconsistent with Bulgarra's low-density, family-oriented character, and that the development would erode the suburb's appeal and lifestyle.

Bulgarra Apartment Development

Response

Housing is a critical issue for the City, local businesses and the community. Not all people are looking for a single house on a large block. A mix of housing needs to be provided. Increasing the amount of housing in an area increases housing supply, introduces new housing stock, improves service efficiency and supports activation and surveillance.

Increasing residential densities needs to be done in a planned and coordinated way, guided by the Scheme and approved Structure Plans. The proposed developments are consistent with densities provided for under the City's Local Planning Scheme and approved Structure Plans for the respective properties, ensuring that the suburb's growth aligns with established strategic objectives.

Due to high construction costs that exceed market valuations for completed properties, Karratha is currently not an attractive market for private property developers. To improve the financial viability of residential projects, it is essential to maximise lot yield, thereby reducing the cost per dwelling. This approach also aligns with one of the key objectives of the City's Housing Development Expression of Interest (EOI) process—maximising housing yield on available development-ready land.

The design of the developments complies with the Residential Design Code (R-Code) provisions relevant to the applicable density code, ensuring that design and amenity standards are maintained.

4. Property Value and Liveability

Property owners identified concerns that the development would decrease property values and reduce liveability, particularly due to noise, overcrowding, and visual impact.

Response

It is difficult to establish a clear and direct relationship between these proposed developments and property values for nearby properties. Broader market factors are more likely to influence property values. Additionally, the impact of proposed developments on property values is generally not considered a valid or material planning consideration. The potential for noise, the implications of density increases, and visual impacts have all been factored into the assessment of these proposed developments against the relevant development standards.

There is currently a significant unmet demand for quality housing in the area. These developments are intended to help address that shortfall, supporting broader community and economic needs.

The product being proposed is distinct from the majority of existing single-storey housing stock. As such, it is not expected to compete directly with current rental properties or negatively affect existing investment returns. *Continued on next page.*

Bulgarra Apartment Development

The expected tenant profile includes a mix of private and corporate tenants, with no social housing component.

The proposed dwellings will be high-specification builds, designed to a standard that enhances the overall quality of the housing stock and complements the surrounding area.

This is anticipated to support a stable and well-managed residential environment.

Overall, the development is designed to enhance liveability and housing diversity, while supporting the City's long-term growth and sustainability goals.

5. Social and Safety Concerns

Several submissions raised concerns about potential increases in crime, antisocial behaviour, and the impact of public housing, referencing existing issues in nearby complexes.

Response

The completed developments will be managed by the proponent, with dwellings made available for lease on the private market. It is anticipated that the tenant mix will include both corporate and individual lessees. No social housing component is proposed. The introduction of additional housing in the area is also anticipated to increase the level of street surveillance.

6. Infrastructure Strain

Residents noted that existing infrastructure (e.g., drainage, parking, waste management) is already under pressure and would be further strained by the proposed developments.

Response

There is capacity within existing infrastructure to provide for these additional developments. It is a more efficient use of infrastructure (e.g., utilities and waste services) to increase density where capacity exists.

As for all other development in Karratha, these developments will need to appropriately drain into the common drainage system. Each of these developments is required to provide an acceptable amount of off-street parking as per the relevant parking standards. It is not anticipated that the proposed developments will result in unacceptable impacts on drainage, parking, or waste management.

During the assessment process, the City reviewed these matters and retains the ability to require the developer to modify plans to mitigate any identified impacts.

Conditions of development approval also require the developer to implement and maintain approved Waste Management Plans and Stormwater Management Plans.

Should there be non-compliance with these plans or conditions throughout the life of the development, relevant planning legislation enables the City to take compliance action.

7. Alternative Locations Suggested

Many suggested that Mulataga, Madigan Estate, or near the Red Earth Arts Precinct would be more suitable for such developments, as they are less populated and better suited for growth.

Bulgarra Apartment Development

Response

Planning for the next stage of subdivision at Madigan Estate focuses on single houses. Some lots from earlier stages are now being considered for higher-density development.

While Mulataga Estate includes provision for higher-density housing, the land remains unsubdivided and is not development-ready. Similarly, although development approval has been granted for the Walgu Apartments site, its future is uncertain. These projects, if progressed, would help meet the growing housing demand. From the City's perspective, all developments contribute to addressing the housing shortage—there is no preference for one over another.

The Council's Housing Development Expression of Interest (EOI) aimed to enable rapid delivery of housing on undeveloped, development-ready land, particularly City-owned parcels. Currently, neither Mulataga nor Walgu meet this criterion, as both are unserviced and not ready for development. There are also no grouped dwelling lots available within Madigan, and the City does not own land at Mulataga or Walgu.

To tackle the region's critical housing shortage, the City is pursuing a broader strategy: advocating for and facilitating the release of additional residential land in Madigan and Mulataga, while advancing plans for the Walgu city centre site. These initiatives complement the housing projects proposed under the EOI.

8. Opposition to Use of Public Funds There was strong opposition to the City of Karratha using ratepayer funds for what some see as a private or commercial venture, arguing that housing should be left to the private sector.

Response

Due to high construction costs that exceed the market value of completed properties, Karratha currently presents a challenging environment for private property developers.

As part of its Housing Development Expression of Interest (EOI), the City explored a range of incentives to enhance project feasibility. These included access to low-cost or no-cost land and discounted financing options.

Under the proposed development model, the City anticipates a net cash outflow of $9.1 million over a 20-year period, funded through its Infrastructure Reserve. This reserve is supported by revenue generated from City-owned enterprises such as Karratha Airport and a portion of rates from Transient Workforce Accommodation facilities. Notably, it does not include rates from residential, commercial, or industrial properties.

In return for this investment, the City expects to acquire a strategic asset with a projected book value of $46.6 million at the end of the 20-year term.

Bulgarra Apartment Development

9. Concerns About Long-Term Sustainability and Economic Timing

Several residents questioned the timing of the development, citing Karratha's boom-bust economic cycle. They warned that by the time construction is complete, demand may have dropped, leading to vacant units and wasted investment. This was especially noted in relation to past overbuilding during resource booms.

Response

The City's Cumulative Impact Model (CIM) forecasts increased demand in both temporary and permanent residential populations by accounting for approved and proposed major industrial developments.

Current modelling indicates a shortfall of approximately 900 residential dwellings, which could increase to around 2,000 over the next five years.

This projected gap reflects the anticipated housing demand driven by operational workforces, supporting industries, their families, and additional service workers associated with major developments such as Woodside's Pluto Train 2, Perdaman's Urea Plant, BCI Minerals' Mardie Salt Project, and the Pilbara Hydrogen Hub.

10. Design and Aesthetic Compatibility There was frequent feedback about the visual impact of the proposed developments. Residents expressed that multi-storey buildings would be unsightly, block scenic views, and clash with the existing architectural style of Bulgarra. Many preferred single-storey, low-density housing that blends with the suburb's established look and feel.

Response

The proposed development will deliver high-quality, architecturally designed apartments built to a premium specification.

While property owners value private views, these are not protected under planning controls or policies and therefore cannot be guaranteed.

Housing remains a critical issue for the City, local businesses, and the community. Not everyone seeks a single house on a large block —there is a clear need for diverse housing options. Increasing residential supply introduces new stock, improves service efficiency, and supports activation and passive surveillance.

Higher-density development must occur in a planned and coordinated manner, guided by the Local Planning Scheme and approved Structure Plans. The proposed development aligns with these frameworks and the densities they provide for.

Low-density, single-storey housing on these sites would not generate sufficient yield to be financially viable, nor would it deliver the scale of housing required to address the region's shortage. In contrast, the proposed apartments will enhance the visual character of the area, contributing positively to the streetscape and urban aesthetic.