



OUR REF: GR/S/1

YOUR REF:

DATE: 25 June 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

Submission on the Draft Fitzroy – Derby Water Plan 2026

The Shire of Derby/West Kimberley considered the plan at its ordinary June Council meeting and would like to make the following comments on the Draft Fitzroy–Derby Water Plan 2026. The Shire acknowledges the importance of protecting the river system and recognises the significant cultural, environmental and economic values it holds for Traditional Owners, residents and pastoralists within the Shire and beyond.

The Shire supports the intent of the draft plan, noting the prior consultation undertaken. The Shires understands and acknowledges the conservative approach taken, one that safeguards the resource while still allowing for measured and sustainable economic development opportunities across the region. This position is reflected in the views of Traditional Owners across the catchment.

While there is also interest within parts of the community in increasing overland flow offtake and groundwater extraction to support further development, we consider that any such expansion should be deferred until a more comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of the catchment is available. This is also reflected in the outcomes contained within the report as follows;

Expected Environmental outcomes

1) The Fitzroy River and its tributaries remain free flowing and protected from the adverse impacts of surface water and groundwater abstraction.

2) Water regimes (quantity and quality) of all water sources and connectivity between sources are maintained within their natural range and in line with a changing climate, so that:

- natural groundwater discharge to river pools, wetlands and springs is maintained
- aquifer-to-aquifer connectivity is maintained, particularly in the dry season
- biodiversity and ecological integrity of water dependent ecosystems are protected
- sites of cultural significance are protected, including Aboriginal heritage and the West Kimberley national heritage place

- people can continue to rely on the Fitzroy River and its tributaries for recreation, food and cultural connection, now and into the future.

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Shire of Derby / West Kimberley

3) Inland movement of the naturally occurring saltwater interface is monitored and managed in aquifers along the King Sound coastline and estuaries.

These three outcomes are supported by the Shire

Expected Water Use outcomes

4) The water regimes of all water sources (quantity and quality) are maintained, to:

- provide a sustainable water supply to water users
- ensure salinity levels are maintained within the same salinity class in bores and aquifers in the Derby Peninsula subarea.

5) Groundwater meets the needs of current and future communities, for:

- existing and future drinking water supplies for towns and Aboriginal communities (as a priority)
- existing licensed entitlements
- an ongoing, resilient pastoral industry
- ongoing uses exempt from licensing, including household and gardens, stock watering, and firefighting
- ongoing native title purposes^ that are non-licensable
- public amenity demand for future urban growth of the Derby township and community.

6) Economic development is supported through considered groundwater allocations and development, with groundwater available in the Plan Area for:

- general licensing purposes, such as irrigating crops to support diversified pastoral operations and other commercial activities.
- native title parties' economic development or benefit (the Fitzroy–Derby Aboriginal Water Holding^)

The Shire notes in this section that the existing users requirements are maintained, also noting that there is potential for increased potential for aboriginal business opportunities.

Expected Community outcomes

7) Collaboration and partnerships are encouraged and help strengthen knowledge sharing, transparency, monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management.

8) Aboriginal interests, cultural values, heritage, and custodianship of Country are recognised in water resources management. This includes that:

- Traditional knowledge is considered alongside contemporary science
- Traditional Owners are engaged early and ongoingly in water licensing

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- Traditional Owners' responsibilities are recognised (their responsibilities to prevent damage to Country and to ensure community wellbeing).

These two outcomes are supported by the Shire

The Shire believes that decisions regarding the future of the water management should be guided by robust data and demonstrated outcomes, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the water resource for all stakeholders and therefore would like to raise the following points and questions;

1. Noting that robust data is required, that a greater scientific basis be provided for allocation limits, particularly relating to estimated recharge and the extraction based on the recharge assumptions and climate change moving forward;
2. The Shire supports adaptive management but considers that adaptive management should be supported by clearly defined trigger-response mechanisms which have not been defined;
3. Has the effect of climate change been incorporated into the plan?
4. Has there been a mechanism for the public reporting of data and management outcomes of the plan into the future?

The Shire would like to thank the Department for the opportunity to comment and the collaborative approach taken by the department over this journey to this point and look forward to any further discussions regarding the plan. If responses could be provided to the points above it would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any further queries of the Shire could you please contact Wayne Neate [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Tamara Clarkson
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