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Shire gets a say on FIFO

ROURKE WALSH

SUBMISSIONS to a Parliamentary standing committee inquiry into the use of fly-in, fly-out workforces in regional Australia closed last Friday, with the Shire of Roebourne making a submission.

Shire of Roebourne president Nicole Lockwood said the council was concerned about the effect of FIFO workforces on established communities.

"While the Shire recognises the requirement for construction-based FIFO, the Shire's principal concern is operational-based FIFO communities located close to townships wherein the occupants are transient, but the beds

are permanent," Ms Lockwood said.

She added the Shire also noted a lack of studies on the impact of FIFO settlements on the social, economic and culture of communities and the absence of a legislative requirement for resource companies to conduct detailed social, economic or cultural impact assessments for major FIFO projects.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Australia, chaired by independent MP Tony Windsor, announced in August it would look at what effect a FIFO workforce has on individuals, communities and companies.

Member for Durack Barry Haase sits on the committee, which also looked at drive-in, drive-out workforces.

Karratha and Districts Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive Brent McKenna said while the chamber had not made a formal submission it was ready to work with industry to move to a more local workforce.

"We would like to see private and public policy settings that begin to match an expectation of Pilbara cities of the future," he said.

"This is to say Pilbara residents in ongoing sustainable communities as opposed to transient fly-in, fly-out populations. The city of the

future is about well developed well rounded communities that have people that really want to live here and have their families here," he said.

WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy chief executive Reg Howard-Smith said FIFO work rosters were gaining in popularity as demand for skilled workers in WA's dynamic resources sector increased.

In its submission to the inquiry, CME highlighted choice, demand for skills, labour mobility and regional hubs, in support of the work practice.

"At the most basic level, FIFO is about providing choice for workers," Mr Howard-Smith said.

"While some are happy to live locally or from a regional hub, thousands more prefer to reside in the city where they have existing homes and social networks... and partners have jobs in the city."

Mr Howard-Smith said in the next few years, the vast majority of FIFO workers would be involved in construction of resource projects.

"Industry is very supportive of viable, liveable communities and focuses on improving the regions in which they operate," he said.

"It's important to understand however that construction work is short-term and expecting workers to take up permanent residence is unrealistic."

Solo man walks by

Andrew Cadigan is walking around Australia, solo, to raise money for the Leukaemia Foundation. He is 290 days into the journey, after starting in Sydney last December. Cadigan hopes to raise \$100,000 and stopped in Karratha for a rest at the weekend.
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Picture: Cameron Myles



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