| 13.1 | Community Centre Update |
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| **Author:** | **Manager Infrastructure Projects & Assets** |
| **Authorising Officer:** | **Director Infrastructure Services** |
| **Disclosure of Interest:** | The Author and Authorising Officer declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest in relation to this item. |

**OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council note the detail of this report regarding the status of the Port Hedland Community Centre.**

***SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTE REQUIRED***

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the status of the Port Hedland Community Centre.

## DETAIL

*Background*

The purpose of this report is to inform the Elected Members about the impact of Tropical Cyclone Zelia on the Port Hedland Community Centre (PHCC), with a focus on its current status, design, and construction. This document outlines both the effects of the cyclone and historical issues that have contributed to the centre's challenges.

TC Zelia crossed the coast on Friday, 14 February 2025. Although Port Hedland largely missed the full brunt of the cyclone, Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) weather reports confirm that the area received a total of 255 mm of rain from 12 to 15 February, with the highest rainfall of 93 mm recorded on Thursday, 13 February. In addition, maximum wind gusts peaked at 120 kph, which, alongside the heavy rain, led to notable damage, including water ingress—the underlying cause of which is still under investigation.

Before the weather event, PHCC had experienced some defects during the Defects Liability period, mainly involving various types of leaks—from water and sewer systems to AC condensate lines. These issues ranged from minor leaks to a moderate in-wall water service leak. Additionally, construction dust was discovered in the HVAC ducting, which requires sanitation. Despite identifying this problem, Decmil has not responded, prompting the Town to seek to expedite the work by procuring a suitably qualified contractor and pursue cost recovery under the contract provisions.

Furthermore, since the end of the Defects Liability period and prior to the cyclone, there was one reported leak in the ground floor ceiling related to the HVAC condensate lines. Other concerns include the presence of mould, reported in December 2024. Given these compounding issues and the recent impacts of TC Zelia, the centre

currently remains closed, and a third-party review is underway to address all concerns and determine the necessary remedial actions.

*Design & Construction Standards*

The Port Hedland Community Centre has been designed with a dual purpose in mind: to function as a modern community centre and to serve as a safe evacuation shelter during a cyclone event. In alignment with the Queensland Government Department of Public Works – Design Guidelines for Public Cyclone Shelters (September 2006), the facility has been specifically built to withstand the harsh conditions associated with cyclone events. Additionally, following the Australian Red Cross Preferred Sheltering Practices for Emergency Sheltering in Australia (Nov/Dec 2012), the community centre is also designed to serve as a welfare centre after a cyclone, providing a safe haven for the public in times of need.

The design includes several community spaces, specifically Community Spaces 1 to 4 and Function Rooms 1 and 2, which are designated as shelter areas for public use. During events like Race Day, the facility will be utilized by the Turf Club to accommodate its members, jockeys, trainers, stewards, and broadcasting crews. To ensure security and prevent unauthorised access, certain spaces will be locked and restricted for specific users only.

The overarching goal of the design was to create a contemporary, highly functional, and well-planned facility that integrates seamlessly into its local environment. The design process focused on ensuring that the building complements the site, providing a space that meets the needs of the community while maintaining a sense of harmony with the surrounding area.

The facility complies with the National Construction Code (NCC) 2019, Volume One (Amendment 1) and the Building Code of Australia, as well as the relevant Australian Standards. These include but are not limited to the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*, Safe Design of Buildings and Structures (2008), and a comprehensive set of structural and safety standards such as AS/NZS 1170.0 to AS/NZS 1170.4 for structural design actions, AS 3600 for concrete structures, AS 4100 for steel structures, and various fire, lighting, and electrical standards like AS 1670.1 and AS 3000. The facility has also been designed in compliance with the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation, and Safety (DMIRS) Plumbers Licensing Board (PLB) requirements, as well as other relevant standards.

In terms of approvals, the project has secured all necessary certifications, including development approval, Certificate of Design Compliance, DFES approval, building permit approval, Certificate of Construction Compliance, and the Occupancy Permit. The facility has been designed to meet Importance Level 4 standards, ensuring that it is capable of withstanding the most severe events, such as cyclones, with an appropriate level of resilience.

Wind design criteria have been carefully considered, with the facility situated in Region D, Terrain Category 2. The exterior walls and glazing elements have been designed to meet impact resistance standards in accordance with Clause 2.5.8 of the relevant cyclone shelter guidelines. Furthermore, the structure has been designed to

accommodate full internal pressure, as per the "Design Guidelines for Queensland Public Cyclone Shelters."

The building's earthquake design criteria have also been accounted for, following AS/NZS 1170.4 standards. The site has been classified with subsoil class Ce, and a hazard factor of Z = 0.12 has been applied to ensure the structure's seismic resilience.

Regarding the HVAC system, the facility employs dedicated 100% outdoor air DX ducted units to provide pre-treatment to outside air before it enters the return mixing plenum of each unit. This design ensures that the building remains positively pressurised with dehumidified outside air, preventing the infiltration of humid air. The air conditioning systems have been designed to operate with all doors closed, and the well-sealed building envelope contributes to the neutralisation of any external humid air, providing a comfortable and safe environment for occupants.

*Approvals pre and post construction*

*Development Application*

An application for development approval for the Port Hedland Community Centre was approved subject to Conditions on 25 August 2021 for the project. Development applications do not consider matters such as structural integrity or suitability for a cyclone shelter, which is assessed at Building Permit Stage. In relation to storm surge and potential flooding, an inundation risk assessment was prepared by Cardno for the development, and a ground floor 6.7m finished floor level (FFL) was determined as suitable (section 3.5.2 of the Cardno report) which is consistent with State Planning Policy 2.6 – Coastal Planning and is suitable for a 1 in 500 year event. It was not considered appropriate to design the facility to a 1 in 10,000 year event (7.9m FFL) as this did not align with multi-user facility needs and other project related considerations. The first floor of the building achieves a 10.7m FFL which is considerably higher than the 10,000 year event. Consultation with Department of Communities and Department of Fire and Emergency Services was undertaken to arrive at the FFL for the building. Development Condition 1 requires the development is constructed in accordance with approved plans, which highlights a ground floor minimum 6.7m FFL and first floor 10.7m FFL.

*Building Permit*

A building permit was issued for the construction of the development on 7 February 2022 for a Class 9B structure (Public Community Centre) which was accompanied by a Certificate of Design Compliance (CDC) undertaken by private certifier MODUS on 7 February 2022. The design criteria for the building certification is Importance Level 4 under the National Construction Code (NCC), for a public cyclone shelter which has debris impact resistance and designed for full building internal pressures. Buildings that are classed as importance level 4 are "buildings that are essential to post-disaster recovery or associated with hazardous facilities" as per the NCC 2019. As part of the certification process, CDC was issued by issued by Peritas Consulting Pty Ltd that states the structure has been designed to meet the design criteria for Wind Region D – Regional Wind Speed ultimate limit state 99m/s (356.4km/h).

Wind region D – Regional Wind Speed

-Serviceability limit state of 53m/s (190.8Km/h)

-Ultimate limit state of 99m/s (356.4km/h)

According to the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) a Category 5 cyclone will have gusts of 280Km/h and above. The design life for the building is expected to be 50-100 years depending on how it is maintained over time. It is considered suitable to be occupied for cyclones where there is a predicted storm surge that is equal to or less than a 1 in 500 year event, which equates to flood levels that do not exceed 6.7m AHD.

*Public Building Approval*

On 18 May 2023, Environmental Health services conducted an inspection of the Port Hedland Community Centre to assess its compliance with the Health (Public Building) Regulations 1992. These regulations address critical aspects of public facility safety, including safe occupancy rates, emergency procedures, ablution provisions, and egress requirements. During the inspection, the officer was advised that the facility was incomplete, with only the ground floor nearing completion, and that partial approval was necessary due to the imminent critical use of the Centre for the Port Hedland Races. The inspection confirmed that the ground floor was sufficiently complete for occupancy on the condition that access to the first floor and all connecting thoroughfares was restricted. Consequently, a temporary Public Building Certificate was issued.

Subsequently, as the facility reached practical completion, the Environmental Health team carried out a further inspection on 25 September 2023. Although minor works such as painting and finishing were still underway, all essential structural elements required for a complete assessment were in place. The inspection revealed that all critical elements met the minimum compliance standards, resulting in the issuance of a Final Public Building approval dated 25 September 2023.

*Use of Emergency Storage Space by other agencies*

Since the final commissioning of the PHCC, a secure space has been available to the Department of Communities allowing them to pre-deploy critical items necessary for an Evac Centre activation. Both DFES and DoC emergency staff had toured the facility and inspected the available space advising that it provided ideal capacity for the expected amount of equipment and non-perishable goods. As to why this space had not been utilized, the Town has not been advised.

*Defects at Practical Completion (Handover)*

On 26 October 2023, practical completion was achieved for Separable Portion 2—encompassing the main building works—and Separable Portion 3, which included the perimeter landscaping and carpark. The Practical Completion certificate mandated that the contractor address all defects listed in the punch lists from 3 October 2023 and 27 October 2023. The architect's punch list from Hodge Collard Preston recorded 244 items, while the ToPH punch list noted 376 items; with overlapping entries, this resulted in approximately 500 defects that required remediation.

Throughout early 2024, the majority of these defects were rectified, with the Town conducting inspections to verify the corrective works and closing out most items by April 2024. For remaining items, the Town's project team also coordinated several visits during the year to review the rectified works and confirm overall progress toward completion. On 22 October 2024, the Town's Construction Supervisor completed a final walkthrough for defect rectification and issued further correspondence to the contractor, ensuring that any outstanding issues were addressed before the end of the Defects Liability Period.

Some major defects required additional time to resolve, including the installation of debris impact-resistant sheeting on the first-level soffits (completed on 18 October 2024), the replacement of access control tongue detectors/door hardware (completed on 18 November 2024), and the internal strip lighting replacement (completed on 30 January 2025).

*Defects During Defects Liability Period*

During the Defects Liability Period, a number of additional defects were identified once the facility became operational and the various services and components began to be regularly used. The defects primarily involved minor and intermediate water leaks, with a minor issue concerning access control also noted. One significant defect included a ground floor ceiling leak, which was determined to be the result of a poor waste connection in the first-floor plumbing system.

In January 2024, an air conditioning leak was reported, attributed to a broken PVC condensate pipe. Subsequently, in June 2024, an in-wall water service leak was detected in the first-floor kitchen area. Additionally, tundish leaks have been identified due to poor connections. Various other water leaks have also been observed at different points since the facility's handover, with the majority of these issues being identified during the Defects Liability Period.

While the roof and structure were regularly inspected by suitably qualified sub consultants during the construction of the facility. The 2024 calendar year was a very dry year, and the facility did not incur a significant rain event to test the water tightness of the roof during the defect liability period.

*Outstanding Defects Pre-Cyclone*

Prior to the weather event, the only outstanding defect recorded during the Defects Liability Period was the sanitisation of the mechanical ducting to prevent mould growth. A mould expert's inspection of both the rigid and flexible ducting within the Community Centre identified significant builders' dust and debris throughout the system—likely resulting from the mechanical system being operational during extensive construction activities. The contractor was first contacted on 23 October 2024 regarding this issue, with follow-up correspondence issued on 3 December 2024 and again on 5 February 2025. Despite these efforts, the defect has not been resolved to the Town's satisfaction.

Multiple meetings were coordinated between Decmil, MPS, and HBS; however, no remedial action has been taken by any contractor to address the defect. The Town has also issued formal notices to Decmil, yet there has been no response regarding the necessary rectification.

In addition to the ducting issue, on 6 January 2025, a leak was reported on the ground floor ceiling. An inspection by an HVAC contractor revealed that the leak was due to an inadequate gradient in the condensate lines. Although adjustments have been made, a comprehensive review of the condensate drains by a Mechanical Engineer is currently underway to ensure the issue is fully resolved.

*Preparations in lead up to TC Zelia*

With the formation of TC Zelia, a site assessment of the facility was undertaken on the 11th of February to assess its suitability for activation as an Evacuation Centre if required. The inspection included senior MPS technicians and Town staff including representatives of the Building Maintenance, Bookings and Environmental Health staff. This inspection was called as a follow up to a preliminary site visit that highlighted significant issues on the 29th of January 2025.

The inspection focused on a substantial mould proliferation impacting ducting and internal ceiling panels surfaces primarily in the 1st floor function rooms. An internal assessment of the ducts showed that mould had become established within the duct vents, the internal duct surfaces and extended to the duct cushions. The mould had spread along internal facing ceiling panels following areas that were clearly impacted by moisture. Condensation across ducts and visibly following internal framing was evident providing conducive conditions for mould.

Summary advice and observations provided by the inspecting technicians included the following points:

- The extent of the mould included proliferation throughout the ducting outlets extending to the Air Duct cushions.
- Mould will remain an endemic issue at the facility because the air handling system is supplemented with 10-20% external air prior to chilling.
    - Failure to dehumidify external air supply results in the air handling system collecting humid moist air with no means to remove this prior to admission to the building. This moisture then collects on chilled surfaces generating increased condensation.
    - Assessments will be undertaken to confirm dehumidifier is functioning adequately on the air handling system.
- The perforated ceiling design which features in the function spaces allows for the ingress of warm air from the ceiling cavity. The point at which warm air meets chilled surfaces results in increased condensation.
    - This factor is demonstrated by the way the mould presented on the internal surface of the ceiling sheeting following the line of the ceiling cavity and

internal framework where condensation was forming along metal framing within the cavity.

- The management of the internal airspace was further impacted by hirers leaving external doors open for extended periods, and poor post hire cleaning leaving organic matter which is a critical factor in mould growth.
- The cassette air conditioning units within the kitchen were set to an extremely low temp and high power but the room ducted air conditioning was set to a much warmer level with reduced power.
    - Visible condensation was present across the cassette units indicating that a conflict between air treatment existed.
- The external servery roller doors on the upstairs kitchens had gaps in weather seals allowing the entrance of outside air which readily contributes to mould proliferation and challenges managing internal air conditions.
- Alternative controls could have been integrated into the design if ducted air conditioning was essential which could include:
    - Air locks at each separable space entrance
    - Air curtains on external doors to reduce warm entering when opened.

For the facility to be available for activation as an Evac Centre, immediate remediation was required. As the cause and extent of the mould could not be resolved in the available time, advice from the Technicians suggested that a temporary solution could be achieved. It was proposed that the ducting outlets within the impacted function spaces would be sealed off, the mould present on the internal surfaces would be effectively destroyed and hygienically removed, and portable air conditioning units would be procured and installed to manage temperatures for the extent of the activation period as an interim measure.

This was implemented, effectively making the space suitable and available for use from the morning of the 13th of February.

*DFES Notification of Facility Availability*

Upon the formation of TC Zelia, the commencement of Operational Area Support Group (OASG) meetings began. This meeting forms the incident command structure and provides the collective preparation and response centre involving critical stakeholders across government, emergency response, industry, health and community services.

The initial OASG meeting occurred on the 7th of February, at which time all intelligence regarding the impending event and necessary response requirements are addressed and collated. As part of an agency preparedness brief, Town of Port Hedland staff advised that the JD Hardie Youth Centre was fully equipped and available for activation as an Evac Centre. Further, DFES were advised that the Port Hedland Community Centre was undergoing maintenance, was not presently available for activation but it was expected that the works would be completed quickly and further updates about availability would be provided.

On the evening of the 12th of February, the corrective works at the community centre function rooms were completed and as such, DFES were formally advised that the PHCC would be available for activation if required from the morning of the 13th of February. All keys and documents to support facility hand over were collected and available at this time.

Concurrently, TC Zelia had commenced progressing on a path West of Port Hedland and began to pose a threat to Karratha. DFES and DoC advised that they had directed the initiation of an Evac Centre in Karratha and all available assets were deployed to stand that up. DoC advised they no longer had assets that could stand up a second Centre in Port Hedland. Further they advised that the facility would not be an option for this weather event as the JD Hardie presented a safer solution (15kms away from coastal impact point resulting in lower winds speeds and lower risk of tidal surge issues). The process for selecting and activating an Evacuation Centre remains the remit of DFES as the lead Hazard Management Agency for Cyclones.

*Cyclone Impacts on the Building*

On 12 February, water leaks were reported on the first floor of the Port Hedland Community Centre (PHCC). A contractor was dispatched to the site, and while the initial source of the leakage was not immediately clear, an inspection of the roof revealed that the top of an HVAC vent had been dislodged. The contractor reinstalled the vent top but was unable to identify any further causes for the leaks. It is worth noting that contractor availability prior to the cyclone was limited, as many were preoccupied with securing their own yards and construction sites.

Following the weather event on 15 February, a subsequent inspection identified water ingress on both levels of the building. The exact cause of the ingress remains under investigation. Preliminary assessments suggest that the issue may be a combination of HVAC condensate leaks, potential roof leaks, and wind-driven rain being forced under door seals and the roller door seal to the bar servery windows. With no conclusive cause determined to date, a consultant is being mobilised to conduct a comprehensive review of the roof's water tightness and the operation of the HVAC condensate lines. Cleanup operations were completed on 17 and 18 February, although the water ingress did cause isolated damage to certain ceiling areas and the vinyl plank flooring in the upstairs multifunction room.

*Independent Assessment*

To address questions raised by elected members and community concerns, an external consultant has been engaged to conduct a comprehensive review of the facility. The consultant's mandate includes assessing the structural integrity of the building, evaluating the water tightness of the roof, reviewing the installation and operational performance of the HVAC system and recommendations of remedial work if any. This assessment is anticipated to take approximately four weeks. Once complete, the final report will be provided to elected members for their review.

*Next Steps and Opportunities for Cost Recovery*

Upon receipt of the third-party report, any identified defects and the associated recommended remediation actions will be reviewed in detail. This review will determine the necessary steps to address each defect effectively. Based on our current assessment, we believe that the defects are not substantial and do not significantly impact the overall safety of the facility.

While the AS 4000 standard contract specifies a process for rectifying defects within a defined defects liability period, the Town retains the right to pursue a common law claim even after this period if the defects are considered substantial or cause significant damage. Any substantial defects identified will be referred to the contractor for remediation.

Should the contractor fail to resolve identified substantial defects, the Town can explore its options to pursue a defective work claim under common law. To succeed in such a claim, the Town must demonstrate that the contractor did not comply with the contract terms—specifically, the required quality of workmanship—and that this breach directly resulted in the defects. If a common law claim is successful, the Town may be entitled to recover damages, which could include the costs of rectifying the defects, expenses associated with the inconvenience caused by the defects, and any loss of value in the property resulting from these issues.

Additionally, the costs associated with repairing damage caused by the weather event are recoverable under the Town's insurance policy.

*Previous Evacuation Centers in Port Hedland*

Until approximately 2011/12, The Town had provided the Andrew McLaughlin Centre as a Port based evacuation centre. In 2014, an assessment of the facility identified that the Centre had deteriorated and no longer met a suitable standard for activation as an evacuations centre. The facility required significant structural repair, and the Town should consider the benefits and costs associated with repair verse demolition and construction of a new facility.

No works were undertaken to return this facility to a condition that would allow for activation as an Evac Centre and now private leasing for community use remains its only function.

A clause remains in the lease that the facility may be commandeered for use as a Welfare Centre but only in events that are not in response to cyclone or extreme weather.

*Community Education*

While education regarding cyclones, preparedness and how to safely evacuate if required remains the remit of DFES as the lead Hazard Management Agency, the Town is in a unique position to provide direct community information through media and events. To support efforts to increase community preparedness and resilience, the Town’s Emergency Services Team will hold stalls at upcoming events providing current information on emergency response, how to prepare and what to expect after an emergency. This would align with information provided by the Town Environmental

Health Team regarding post emergency risks to health such as mosquito borne disease, contaminated waters and food safety.

## LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE

In accordance with Policy 4/009 'Significant Decision Making', this matter is considered to be of low significance, because:

- Exception - The proposal or decision is not of a nature or significance that requires engagement.

## CONSULTATION

*Internal*

- Director Infrastructure Services
- Director Regulatory Services
- Manager Environmental Service
- Manager Planning and Economic Development

*External Agencies*

- Hodge Collard Preston (HCP)

*Community*

- Nil

## LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant legislation in relation not this item include:

*Building and Construction Industry Payment Act*

*Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*

*Local Government Act 1995*

## FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Financial and resource implications are unknown at this stage.

## STRATEGIC SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

### Strategic Community Plan

The following sections of the Town's *Strategic Community Plan 2022-2032* are applicable in the consideration of this item:

Our Community:

1.4.3 Facilities and community infrastructure are well maintained, managed and fit-for-purpose to provide a range of lifestyle opportunities.

Our Built and Natural Environment:
3.2.2 Prepare, educate, respond and recover in partnership with key agencies from emergencies such as cyclones.

There are no significant identifiable environmental, social or economic impacts relating to this item.

**Access and Inclusion**

The following outcome of the Town's *Access and Inclusion Plan 2023-2026* apply in relation to this item:

Nil

**Corporate Business Plan**

The following services of the Town's *Corporate Business Plan 2023-2027* apply in relation to this item:

Our Infrastructure Services:
**Projects and Assets** - Effective and efficient project and asset management.

Our Regulatory Services:
Emergency Planning and Preparedness - Emergency management preparedness, response and recovery.

**RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

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|---|---|
| **Risk Type** | Operational |
| **Risk Category** | Reputational |
| **Cause** | Inaccessible welfare centre |
| **Effect (Consequence)** | Members of the community are displaced |
| **Risk Treatment** | Use secondary welfare centre (JD Hardie) |
| There is a reputational risk associated with this item.<br>The risk rating is considered to be High (12) which is determined by a likelihood of Possible (3) and a consequence of Major (4). | |

**OPTIONS**

Option 1 – Adopt officer's recommendation
Option 2 – Amend officer's recommendation
Option 3 – Do not adopt officer's recommendation

## CONCLUSION

The Port Hedland Community Centre has been designed and constructed to serve as a critical community facility and cyclone shelter, meeting high structural and safety standards. However, ongoing defects, compounded by the impacts of Tropical Cyclone Zelia, have necessitated a thorough review to ensure its long-term functionality and resilience.

A third-party assessment is currently underway to determine the root causes of water ingress and other outstanding issues. The Town will review the findings and take appropriate action to rectify defects, pursue cost recovery where applicable, and implement necessary repairs under insurance coverage.

Despite these challenges, the facility remains a vital community asset. The Town is committed to ensuring that the centre meets its intended purpose and remains a safe and accessible space for the community. A further update will be provided to the Council following the completion of the independent review.

## ATTACHMENTS

Nil