Representative Review Committee
GPO Box 2419
DARWIN NT 0801

Email: secretariat.ntec@nt.gov.au

Submission 2026 Northern Territory Local Government Representative Review

Wagait Shire Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the 2026 Northern Territory Local Government Representative Review. The review assesses electoral boundaries, ward structures, and the number of elected members to ensure fair representation. It also enables councils and other interested parties to comment on the arrangements affecting their local government areas.

Council's position is that any boundary adjustment should be limited, practical, and partnership based. Council supports inclusion of closely adjoining parcels where this improves accountability and planning but does not support amalgamation or broad incorporation of unincorporated land into Wagait Shire.

The Council submission makes two key points:
(a) support in principle for a modest boundary adjustment to bring land closely adjoining the existing shire – being NT Freehold, Larrakia Development Corporation, Kenbi Land Trust and unalienated Crown Land on the Cox Peninsula within the Wagait Shire boundary.
(b) Strong opposition to any amalgamation of Wagait Shire with another council or to incorporation of unincorporated land not specified in (a) into Wagait Shire.

Community Profile

Wagait Shire was established in 1995 as Cox Peninsula Community Government Council, prior to being renamed Wagait Shire Council. Today, it remains one of the smallest councils in the Territory, with a population of approximately 480 residents. It is a small but growing rural beachfront community, valued for its pristine environment and quiet lifestyle. The community is connected to Darwin by a 15-minute ferry journey across the harbor or a 90-minute drive. Residents are committed to preserving the shire's distinctive character while supporting economic sustainability and carefully planned future growth.

The Kenbi Land Claim was finalised with the granting of final parcels to the Kenbi Land Trust and Larrakia Development Corporation on 5 December 2024. Approximately 52,000ha is held by the Kenbi Land Trust as an unalienable Aboriginal freehold: approximately 13,000ha of freehold is administered through the Larrakia Development Corporation. Currently the Kenbi Ranger Group undertakes land management, and conservation works across the peninsula.

The new Mandorah Marine Facility opened in mid-2025, creating improved access to and from Wagait Beach and the surrounding region for locals, visitors, and tourists.

Proposal

The Council proposes a boundary adjustment to include closely adjoining parcels of NT Freehold land, Larrakia Development Corporation freehold land, Kenbi Land Trust land and unalienated Crown Land that are currently outside, or fragmented within, the shire boundary. The relevant parcels are shown on the map.

Advantages:

- Removing a portion of unincorporated parcels and enclaves, one council is clearly accountable for roads, waste, fire management, weed, and feral animal control.
- The expansion of boundaries creates a single, cohesive community of interest (ferry, road network, facilities, including fuel-load/wildfire management, coastal and habour, foreshore management, and sea country conservation.
- Opportunity for Township growth and future development at Wagait Beach and Mandorah can be planned.
- Opportunity for tourism and land-use development on LDC freehold; inclusion gives the LDC a single government counterpart and gives Council a future rates base as development proceeds.
- Formalizes the existing relationship with Kenbi Land Trust and Kenbi Rangers
- Negligible enrolment effect, zero changes required to Councillor numbers or Wards required.

Disadvantages:

- Kenbi Land Trust is not ratable; inclusion must be developed in genuine partnership with Traditional Owners and impose no unwanted services of obligations.
- Cost per capita-larger area with limited added population will require a phased service introduction.
- Although LDC land is ratable in principle, rating arrangements should be negotiated - potentially through phased or voluntary arrangements - recognises strategic development.
- Crown Land – unratable unless it is unalienated Crown Land, and only then is yields little until leased -request audit for liabilities

External Boundaries and Unincorporated

- In 2022, a discussion paper was released proposing inclusions of the unincorporated areas of the Cox-Daly and Marrakai-Douglas area.
- In March 2023, the NT Government announced it would not continue with the proposal.
- In July 2026, a discussion paper was circulated seeking changes that may improve community representation.

The Cox-Daly unincorporated area comprises approximately 1,549 allotments, some of which adjoin Wagait Shire. A comprehensive infrastructure report, road audit, and assessment of public facilities in the unincorporated area are necessary to identify funding requirements and potential liabilities.

Number of Elected Members – economics, logistics and operations

Wagait Shire Council has five elected members—two women and three men—who contribute their time and expertise to support the community and manage complex responsibilities. The Shire currently has no wards.
The Wagait Shire is considered by some, as an isolated region, with goods, services and logistics being costly by comparison. There are limited services provided in the shire, with most residents travelling to Darwin or Palmerston to access work, schools, health and support services and other social amenities. Most essential services, including water supply, infrastructure, animal management, facilities and community events, are managed by the Wagait Shire Council.

A review of the current Rates Structure is necessary to ensure that rates are equitable, transparent, and sustainable into the future. A fair and well understood rating structure is essential to fund the services our community relies on while ensuring every property owner contributes to an appropriate share.

While population numbers indicate there has been a minor increase over time, the Shire can expect continued growth, with recent property sales well above median prices. Regardless of this growth, there is no immediate plan to increase the number of elected members.

Requested Outcome

The Committee is respectfully asked to recommend that;

(1) The Wagait Shire boundary is adjusted to include closely adjoining NT Freehold, Larrakia Development Corporation, Kenbi Land Trust, and Crown Land parcels within the area.

   a. Subject to a partnership with the Kenbi Traditional Owners and land Trust
   b. A document rates/service arrangement with LDC, *and*
   c. No unfunded service obligations;

(2) No amalgamation involving Wagait Shire be recommended

(3) No incorporation of unincorporated area (including the broader Cox-Daly) into Wagait Shire be recommended, noting the NT Government's existing position; *and*

(4) Current elected member numbers and (nil) ward arrangements be retained

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Neil White

President

[redacted]

Michelle Walker

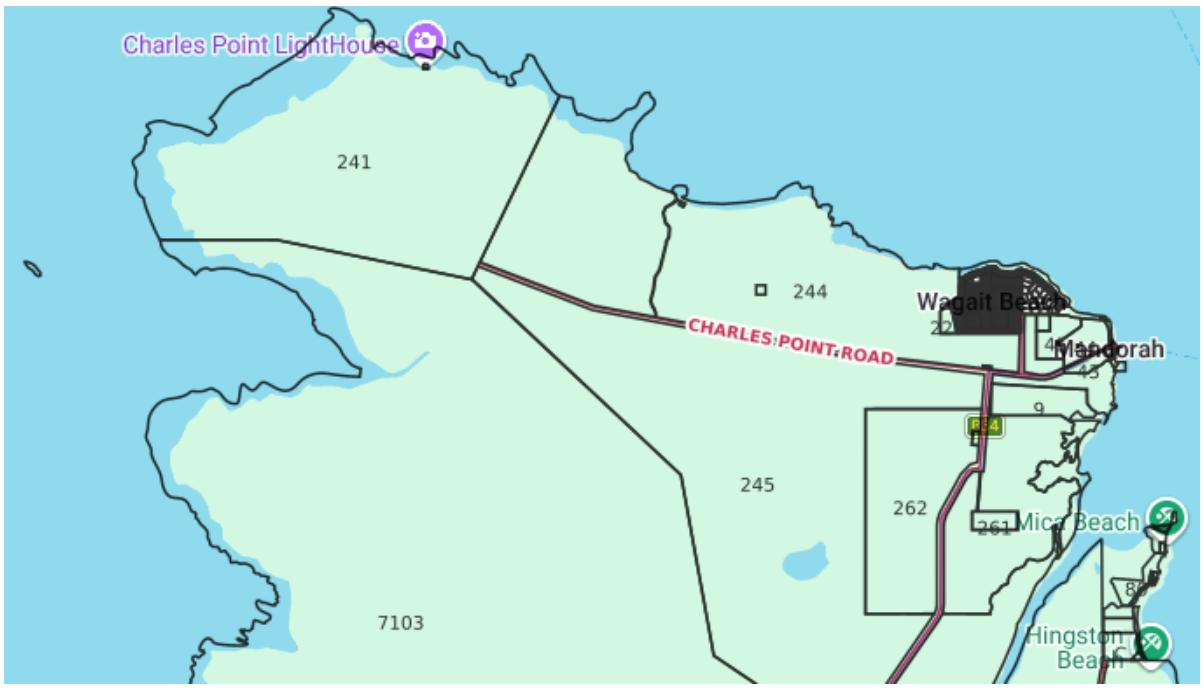
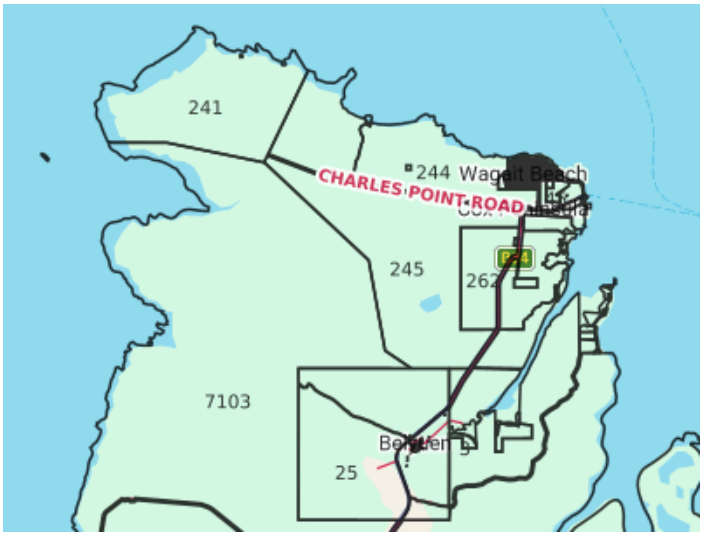
Chief Executive Officer

Additional clearer maps are included below:

Black line boundary around the Cox Peninsula directly through (7103) above Belyuen. Includes Hingston Beach, Mica Beach, Charles Point

Part

- 7103
- 9
- 24
- 35
- 33
- 40
- 42
- 43
- 44
- 50
- 56
- 103
- 104
- 110
- 116
- 227
- 241
- 244
- 245
- 262
- 261
- 263
- 274



Larger portion showing Belyuen (25) (excluded)