OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

city of PALMERSTON
'A Place for People'

ID: 701807 – APB: at

1 October 2026

NT Local Government Representation Review Committee
PO Box 2075
PARAP NT 0804

Email: submissions@lgrr2026.com.au

Dear Committee

Local Government Representation Review 2026 – City of Palmerston Submission

City of Palmerston welcomes the opportunity to provide the following submission to the NT Local Government Representation Review Committee for the 2026 Representation Review.

About City of Palmerston

Palmerston is a welcoming vibrant family city that fosters diversity and unity. The youngest but fastest-growing Northern Territory city, it has a median age of 31 and many families call it home. Established in 1980, it became a municipality in 1985 and was declared a city in 2000. It includes the residential suburbs of Archer, Bakewell, Bellamack, Driver, Durack, Farrar, Gray, Gunn, Johnston, Marlow Lagoon, Mitchell, Moulden, Palmerston City, Rosebery, Woodroffe and Zuccoli; and industrial and serviced commercial areas in the suburbs of Pinelands, Yarrawonga, Wishart, Tivendale and parts of Berrimah.

Ward Structure

City of Palmerston strongly supports the retention of its current undivided electoral structure and does not support the introduction of wards, or changes. City of Palmerston considers that the existing structure continues to provide fair, effective and whole of city representation for the Palmerston community.

Palmerston's suburbs form part of a highly interconnected urban community, with residents routinely accessing employment, education, recreation, retail, community facilities and Council services across suburb boundaries and across the municipality. City of Palmerston considers that the municipality continues to demonstrate a strong whole of city community of interest rather than a series of geographically distinct communities requiring separate electoral representation.

Under the current structure, all Palmerston electors can vote for all councillor positions, regardless of where candidates or electors reside within the municipality. This enables communities of interest that are dispersed across Palmerston to collectively support candidates whom they consider best represent their interests. Introducing wards would fragment that electoral base by restricting electors to candidates contesting their ward.

For example, Palmerston's senior community (according to the Community Satisfaction Survey is 14%) is distributed throughout the municipality rather than concentrated within a particular geographic area. Under an undivided system, seniors across Palmerston may collectively support a candidate who understands and advocates for matters important to older residents, irrespective of the suburb in which that candidate resides.

The same principle applies to other communities of interest that extend across Palmerston. Geographic wards assume that location is an appropriate representation of community interest. In Palmerston, Council does not consider that assumption reflects how the community functions. For example, members of Palmerston's numerous sporting clubs, cultural groups and community organisations may live in different suburbs but are connected through shared interests beyond their location.

The existing structure therefore provides communities of interest with the largest possible electoral base from which to seek representation. Candidates can seek support from electors throughout Palmerston who identify with their priorities, experience or perspective. Similarly, the current model encourages councillors to consider the interests of Palmerston as a whole, instead of being concerned for only their area. This provides better support and service for the community, as the Council focuses on specific issues rather than their ward.

Number of Elected Members

Council acknowledges continued population and enrolment growth across the municipality. The Discussion Paper records Palmerston's current population as 42,748, compared with 39,032 in 2020, representing growth of 9.5%. Electoral enrolment has increased by 12.1% between 2021 and 2026 to 26,412 electors.

During the 2017 Representation Review, City of Palmerston sought approval from the Department of Housing and Community Development to increase the number of Elected Members, inclusive of the Mayor, from seven to eight. This request was subsequently approved by the Minister and took effect from the 2018 Local Government Election. Council sought this increase during a period of significant population growth, with Palmerston's population increasing by 10.57% between the 2014 and 2018 elections. The introduction of an additional Elected Member provided increased representative capacity while retaining the benefits of an undivided electoral structure.

Since that time, Council's Community Satisfaction Survey results have shown an overall improvement in community satisfaction, which on average has been maintained in recent years. This provides a practical indicator that population growth has not diminished the community's ability to access its elected representatives under the current structure.

The 2025 Community Satisfaction Survey results also indicated that 37% of residents surveyed had contacted Council in the last 12 months, the highest rate in the last 7 years, with 68% rating Council making it easy for you to interact with them as 'very good' or 'good'.

The Discussion Paper identifies Palmerston as having 26,412 enrolled electors and eight Councillors including the Mayor, equating to 3,773 per councillor. This ratio sits within the range of representation currently operating across the Northern Territory's municipal councils. By comparison, Darwin has 4,343 voters per councillor, Litchfield 2,328, Alice Springs 2,133 and Katherine 1,142.

While Palmerston has experienced population and enrolment growth, Council considers that the current number of Elected Members continues to provide an appropriate level of representation.

Should Palmerston experience significant population and enrolment growth prior to a future general election, Council considers that the adequacy of the number of Elected Members could be reviewed at that time.

External Boundaries of Local Government areas

East Arm

City of Palmerston requests consideration of extending its boundary to include the unincorporated area of East Arm as nominated in the attachment provided. The inclusion of East Arm would extend the existing boundary from Wishart and Tivendale, providing a logical and coherent municipal boundary that strengthens the strategic and economic relationship between this area and Palmerston. East Arm is predominantly industrial and commercial in nature and supports employment, freight, logistics and other economic activity that has connections with Palmerston and its broader growth.

The inclusion of East Arm would support the diversification and long-term sustainability of Council's rate base by increasing the proportion of industrial and commercial properties within a municipality that remains predominantly residential. A broader mix of ratepayers would reduce Council's reliance on residential rates and residential growth, while strengthening its capacity to sustainably fund services and infrastructure into the future. The importance of the composition and sustainability of a council's rate base was a significant consideration during previous discussions about the future of Northcrest, highlighting the need for future boundary decisions to consider not only geographic and community connections, but also the equitable distribution of residential, commercial and industrial areas between local government areas.

Bringing the remaining area within City of Palmerston would also provide greater consistency in local government planning, service delivery and infrastructure management across this strategically important area. Importantly, as East Arm is predominantly non-residential, its inclusion would not result in a significant increase in Palmerston's residential population or electoral enrolment and would therefore have minimal impact on the existing elector-to-Elected Member ratio or Council's current representation model.

Berrimah Farm future development (Northcrest Stage Two)

During the 2022 Representation Review, City of Palmerston continued to advocate for Palmerston's municipal boundary to be extended to include the unincorporated area of the Northcrest Stage One development in Berrimah, noting that Northcrest Stage Two (part of the Berrimah Farm area plan) was included within Palmerston's boundaries as of 1 July 2022. This recommendation was not supported through the previous Representation Review.

Since that time, Northcrest Stage One has been announced as being incorporated within the City of Darwin's boundaries. City of Palmerston acknowledges this outcome; however, Council strongly supports Northcrest Stage Two remaining within the City of Palmerston's boundary and considers there is no demonstrated community, operational or representation benefit in altering the existing boundary.

Northcrest Stage Two forms part of Palmerston's existing local government area and its future development should be considered in the context of Palmerston's broader growth and service planning. Retention within Palmerston provides continuity and certainty for Council's long-term infrastructure, service delivery and strategic planning and avoids unnecessary alteration of an established local government boundary in anticipation of future development for non-residential areas.

Importantly, the location of Stage One within another local government area does not, of itself, provide a sufficient basis for transferring Stage Two. The appropriate boundary should be determined by the community of interest and functional relationship of the land with the respective municipality, together with future servicing, access, development and representation considerations. Council considers that Northcrest Stage Two can continue to be appropriately planned for, serviced and represented as part of Palmerston.

Greater Holtze Area

Council considers that the incorporation of the Greater Holtze area, including Kowandi, into the City of Palmerston boundary should be considered as part of this Representation Review. While the area is currently located within the Litchfield municipality, Council considers it important that the benefits of recognising the communities of interest between Greater Holtze and Palmerston are considered as part of any future boundary arrangements. An appropriate boundary would be Howard Springs Road, including its proposed future extension indicated on the Greater Holtze Area Plan as the eastern boundary, the planned Glyde Point arterial as the northern boundary and Thorngate Road as the western boundary.

Holtze (and Kowandi) is a neighbouring development area in its early stages that will have a strong functional relationship with Palmerston, with future residents expected to rely on and access services, facilities, employment, retail and community infrastructure within the Palmerston municipality. It is important that the relationship between Greater Holtze and Palmerston is recognised as development progresses and the community of interest and service requirements of the area become more clearly established.

Consideration of the incorporation of Greater Holtze into the City of Palmerston boundary should also include the Palmerston Regional Hospital and Palmerston Regional Fire Station, recognising their strong connection to and role in servicing the Palmerston community.

Council can provide additional supporting information to the identified potential boundary expansion areas of East Arm and Greater Holtze if requested.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Local Government Representation Review 2026. We appreciate your careful consideration of City of Palmerston's feedback.

Yours sincerely

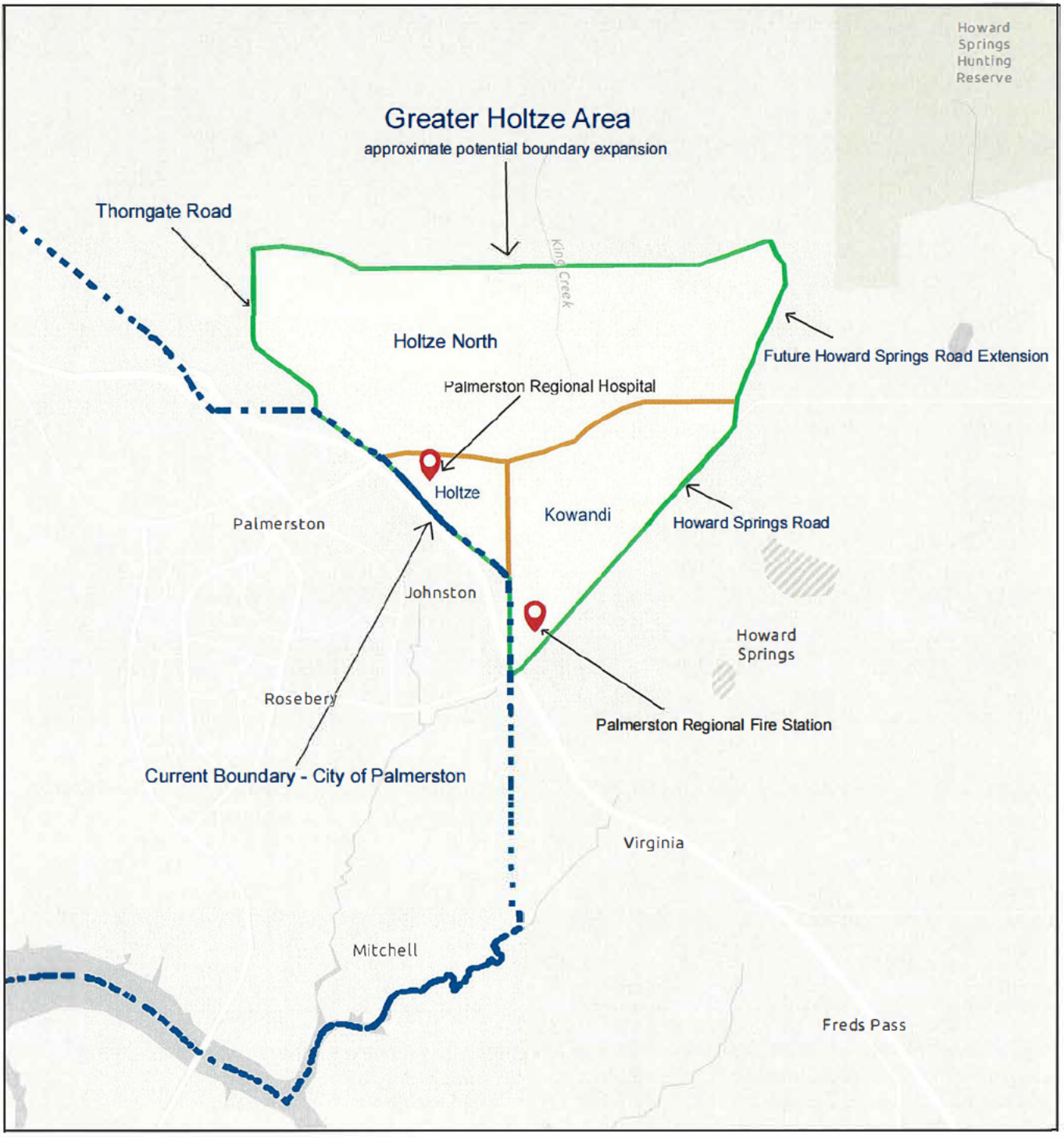
[redacted]

Athina Pascoe-Bell
Mayor

Encl.

Potential boundary expansion map – East Arm
Potential boundary expansion map – Greater Holtze

Potential Boundary Expansion Map - Greater Holtze



30/09/2026

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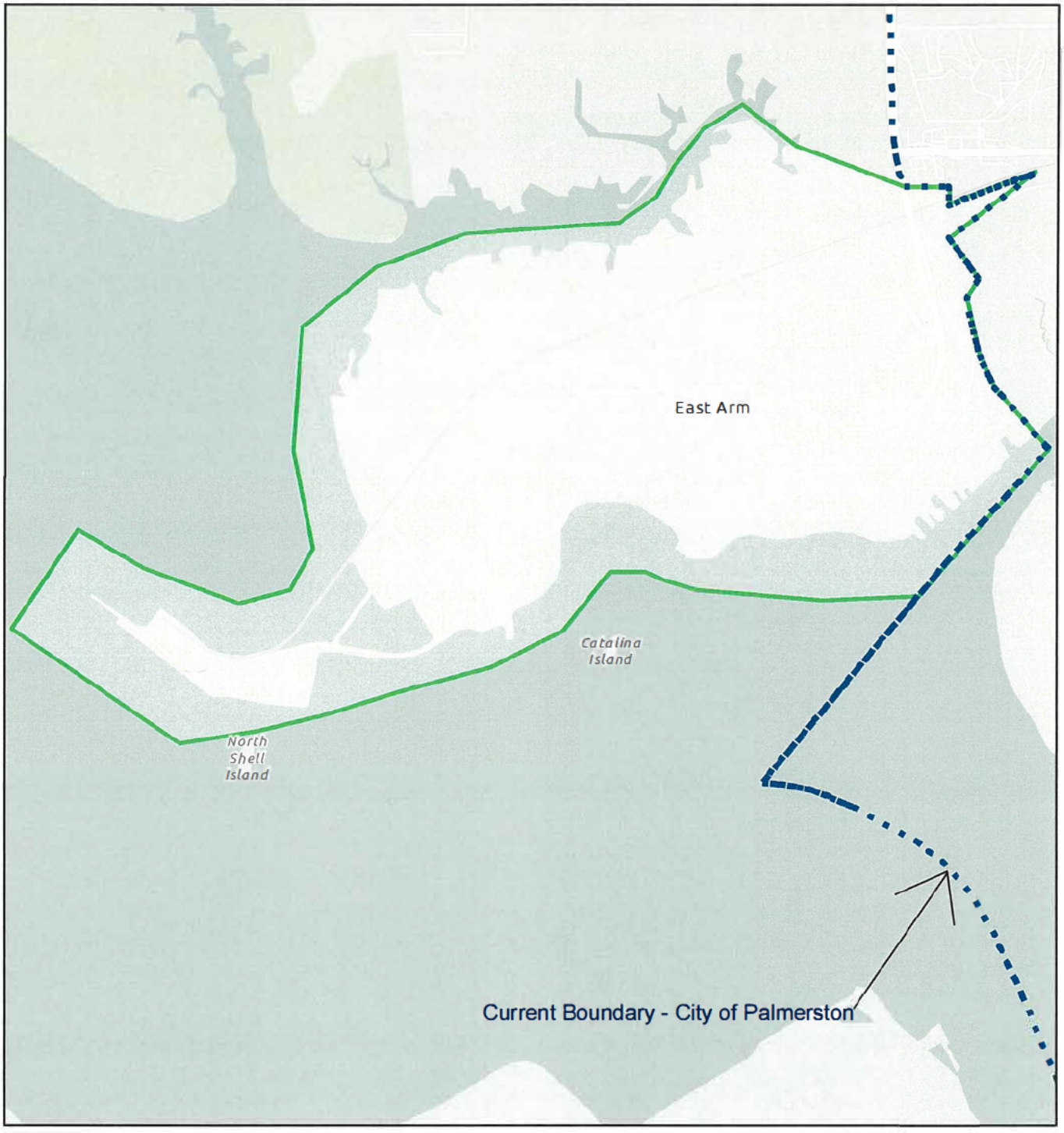
Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Potential Boundary Expansion Map - East Arm



29/09/2026

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Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community