

Dear Mayor and fellow Council Members,

We are writing to you today to discuss the outcomes and recommendations from the panel of Jurors in the 2020 Community Voice Project, of which we were both participants.

As you are aware, in February this year, a Citizens Jury of 30 randomly selected residents of the City of Greater Geraldton were called upon to participate in the Community Voice Project to review the City's services. The Jurors varied in age, race, gender and residential suburbs covering a wide range of socioeconomic, demographic and cultural diversities. This ensured that the opinions given about current levels of services in the City of Greater Geraldton and suggestions for change were fair and unbiased.

Initial surveys of how members of the Jury felt about the City of Greater Geraldton were not positive. Only 58% of the jurors felt that they had a sound understanding of the workings of the council. As well as this, only 39% of the jury trusted that the council had their best interests at heart and 19% had little to no trust in our Council. Some jury members felt as though there was a lot of revenue raising, rates hiking and poor decisions being made that were not reflecting the wants and needs of the community members.

However, by the end of the Community Voice Project, more surveys were held and it was clear that the Jury members' opinions of the City of Greater Geraldton's operations had changed. The information sessions gave the Jurors an insight into the reasons why certain decisions were made and therefore developed a sound understanding and greater level of trust in our Mayor and fellow Council members. The number of Jurors who said their views on the City and Council had changed or broadened increased to 70% and number of Jurors whose level of trust in the City and Council increased to 78% whereas the level of distrust had decreased to only 9%. Overall, a positive result.

The Community Voice Project was a fantastic way to hear varying opinions on important matters within our City and it was also a great way to get information to our community about how the Council works. We were all so grateful to the presenters who gave up their time to speak about their services. They were non-biased, very informative and responded to the Jury's questions respectfully and patiently.

The Jury decided upon four new services that they would like to see implemented by the City of Greater Geraldton. These are:

- A) A recycling processing plant
- B) A homelessness plan and implementation
- C) A recycling education program
- D) A snake/reptile removal service

It is important to the community that our voices are heard and that our recommendations for new services are responded to by the Council. We hope that all four services could be implemented by the City of Greater Geraldton but realise that this may not be feasible. However, the Jury would greatly appreciate getting the Council's feedback regarding these new services, whether they are approved or not. This will reassure the Jurors that they are being listened to and it will go a long way in ensuring that their trust in the Council remains at a high level and can further promote that level of trust to other members of the community.

You will see in the report the recommendations of service level changes that the jury voted on. Although some services were voted to an increased level of service at an increased cost, the Jurors strongly felt that they were already paying a considerably higher amount in residential rates than other towns and cities and strongly urged that their rates do not increase astronomically to cover the new services and service level increases.

We believe that community input towards the effective functioning of the Council is of great importance. Community input allows for our City to grow and expand in ways that are meaningful to us. It helps make our City a place that we want to live and are proud to call home. We believe that being a part of the Community Voice Project was not only beneficial to the Council, but also to its Jurors, the hard working members of our community. It was a wonderful experience for us all and we felt privileged to be part of such an important project. We found it to be enjoyable, educational and an enlightening experience. We highly recommend that the City of Greater Geraldton continues to run the Community Voice Project and we would be more than happy to participate a project like this again in the future.

Sincerely,

Tara Curtin

Community Voice Project Juror

Chad Watson

Community Voice Project Juror

**COMMUNITY
Voice**
Shaping  our future