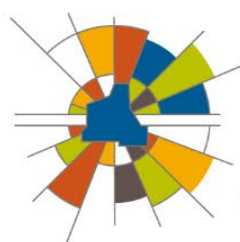




INFORMATION STATEMENT

2023/24



SHIRE OF
MERREDIN
INNOVATING THE WHEATBELT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* (FOI Act) are to:

- a) Enable the public to participate more effectively in the governing of the State; and
- b) Make the persons and bodies that are responsible for State and Local Government more accountable to the public.

Under Part 5, section 94 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* (FOI Act), the Shire of Merredin (the Shire) is required to prepare and publish an annual Information Statement. This document has been created to comply with that requirement, and is correct as at July 2023.

The Information Statement includes information on:

- The structure and functions of the Shire;
- Decision-making functions;
- Community participation in the formulation of the Shire's policy and performance of the Shire's functions;
- Description of the kinds of documents generated and held by the Shire and which documents may be viewed, purchased or obtained free of charge;
- How to access documents and personal information held by the Shire; and
- How to amend personal information in documents held by the Shire.

This document can be obtained by accessing the Shire's website: www.merredin.wa.gov.au.

Further information can be provided by contacting the Freedom of Information Coordinator via:

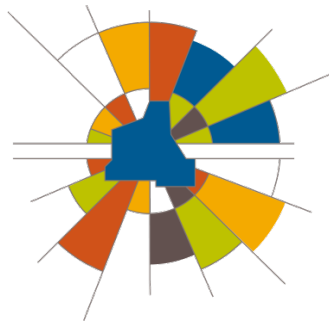
Shire of Merredin
Cnr King & Barrack Street
MERREDIN WA 6415

Telephone: (08) 9041 1611
Email: admin@merredin.wa.gov.au

2. STRATEGIC VISION AND VALUES

Our Vision

'Merredin is the commercial and cultural heart of the eastern wheatbelt region.
A place people are proud to call home and where visitors are always welcome.'



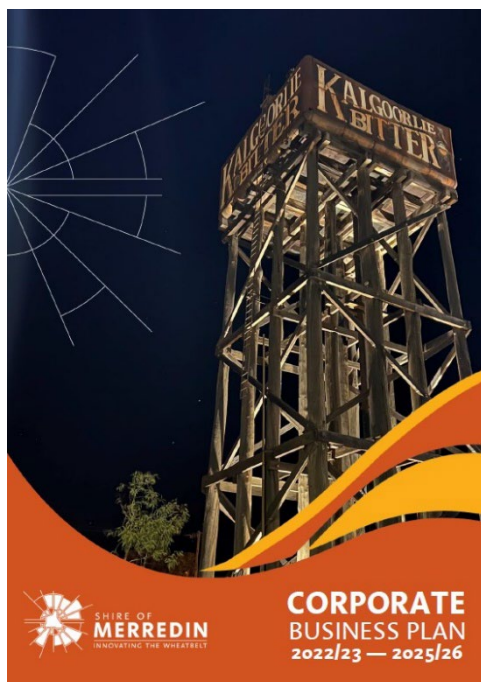
Our Values

Integrity	Act in an honest, open and accountable manner in all of our activities ensuring they are equitable and social just.
Participation	Provide genuine opportunities for informed community participation in decision making in a framework of local democracy.
Service	Be sensitive and responsive to the needs and aspirations of our community and focus on customer satisfaction and value for money.
Learning	Continue learning from training, our actions and experiences and continually seek better and more innovative ways of doing things.
Valuing People	Value the contribution that people inside and outside the organisation make to the achievement of the Shire's vision.
Commitment	Ensure our actions serve the people of Merredin and their long-term interests
Sustainability	Have a global perspective and ensure our actions minimise the impact on the environment and the resources available for future generations.

3. STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The Shire of Merredin's 10-Year Strategic Community Plan 2020-2030 (SCP) is the result of a major review of the previous 2018-2028 plan, following extensive community consultation undertaken throughout 2020 and 2021.

The SCP assists the Shire in its planning by ensuring that the activities and services that the Shire delivers are prioritised in line with expectations of our community. This document not only guides the future projects and activities undertaken by the Shire, but also provides other levels of government and the business community with a clear view of the Merredin's community's aspirations for its future.



The Shire of Merredin Corporate Business Plan (CBP) 2022/23 – 2025/26 was developed in partnership with the Council during 2022 and 2023.

The document outlines Council's key priorities and projects for the coming few years, in alignment with the community aspirations set out in the SCP.

The CBP serves as a crucial internal planning tool that facilitates the Shire's progress towards achieving the community's vision. The purpose of the document is to provide a roadmap for how the Shire plans to achieve the strategic objectives outlined in the SCP and deliver on its commitments to the community, while making the best use of available resources.

The SCP and CBP can be accessed by visiting the Shire Administration Building or from the Shire website via the following link:

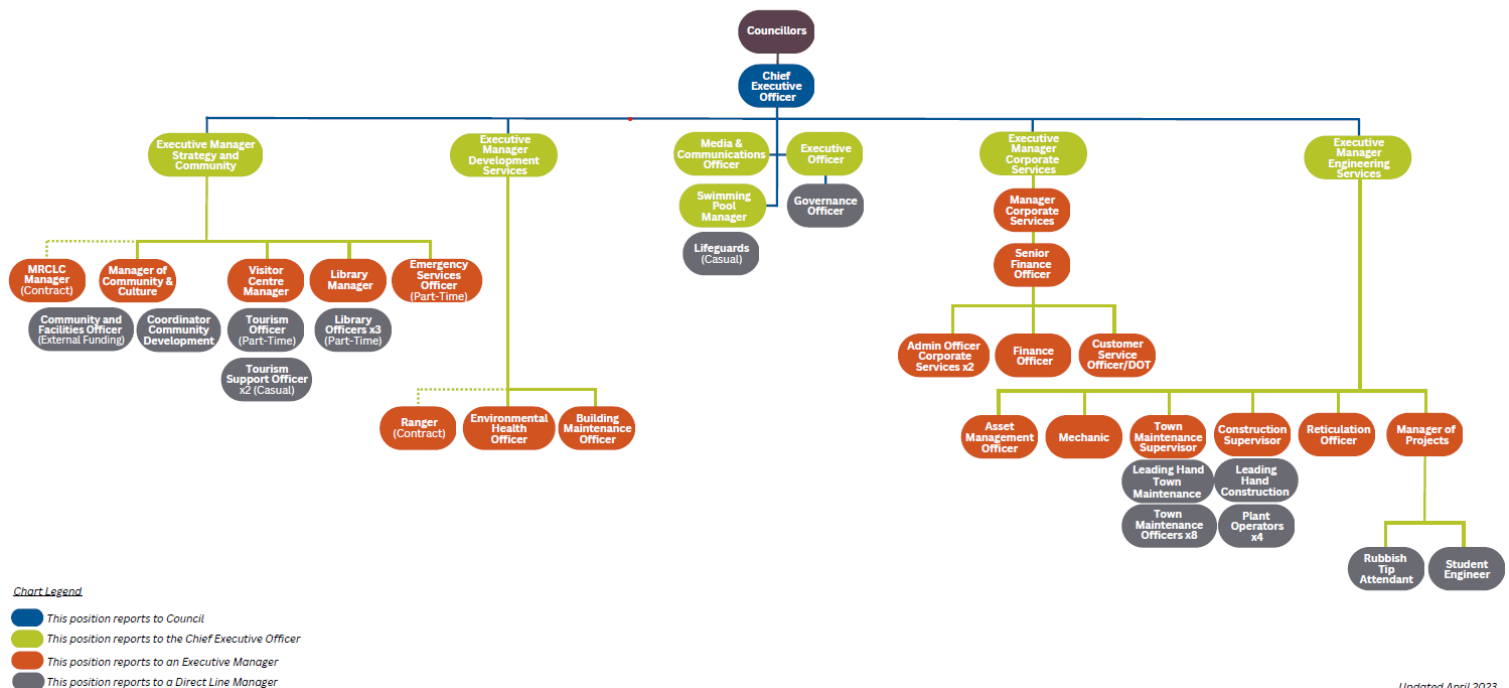
www.merredin.wa.gov.au/documents/integrated-planning-and-reporting-ipr.

4. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

The Shire of Merredin Council is the overall decision-making body. The Council employs a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is charged with the responsibility of putting into effect the decisions of Council. The organisation is structured into five business units:

- Office of the CEO;
- Strategy and Community;
- Corporate Services;
- Development Services; and
- Engineering Services.

Organisational Structure



Updated April 2023

5. COUNCIL AND ELECTED MEMBERS

The Shire is served by the Shire President, Deputy Shire President and six Elected Members. Shire Elected Members are elected for a four-year term, with the role of President and Deputy President being considered every second year, in line with the election cycle. In 2025, in line with the *Local Government Amendment Act 2023*, the total number of elected members will reduce from eight to seven.

The Elected Members (ie Shire President, Deputy Shire President and Councillors) form a corporate body working for the community and do not have the authority to act or make decisions as individuals. Decisions are made by Council in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act).

Role of the Council

- Directs and controls the local government affairs;
- Responsible for the performance of the local government functions;
- Oversees the allocation of the local government's finances and resources; and
- Determines the local government's policies.

Role of the Shire President

- Presides at meetings in accordance with the Act;
- Provides leadership and guidance to the community in the district;
- Carries out civic and ceremonial duties on behalf of the local government;
- Speaks on behalf of the local government;
- Performs such other functions as are given to the Shire President by the Act or any other written law; and
- Liaises with the CEO on the local government's affairs and the performance of its functions.

Role of Elected Members

- Represents the interests of electors, ratepayers and residents of the district;
- Provides leadership and guidance to the community in the district;
- Facilitates communication between the community and the council;
- Participates in the local government's decision-making processes at Council and Committee meetings; and
- Performs such other functions as are given to an Elected Member by the Act or any other written law.

6. DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

The Framework

The Local Government Act 1995 (the Act)

The Act provides a system of Local Government, creating a constitution for elected local governments in the State. It describes the functions of local governments, provides for the conduct of elections, and provides a framework for the administration and financial management of local governments and for the scrutiny of their affairs.

The Act is intended to result in better decision-making, greater community participation in the decisions and affairs of local governments, greater accountability to their communities and more efficient and effective local government.

Standing Orders Local Law

Standing Orders are the local laws by which Council and committee meetings are run. They relate to the conduct of proceedings of the business of the Council and committee meetings.

A copy of the *Standing Orders Local Law* is available for perusal on the Shire of Merredin's website: www.merredin.wa.gov.au/documents/local-laws.

How Council makes Decisions

Council Meetings

Unless otherwise advertised, Council meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month, commencing at 4:00pm in the Council Chambers.

Members of the public are welcome to attend and may either submit questions online up until 2:00pm on the day of the Council Meeting, or ask questions during 'Public Question Time'.

When considering recommendations, either from a Committee meeting or presented in a Shire officer's report, Council may:

- Accept the recommendation put forward and adopt it en bloc without further debate/discussion;
- Propose an alternative resolution for consideration and discussion;
- Withdraw a particular item for further discussion or modification, or propose that another course of action be taken; or

- Defer making a decision on an item, pending further consideration/discussion at an appropriate meeting.

The CEO and Executive Managers also attend Council meetings to provide Elected Members with information and advice as required.

Committee of Council

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee comprises of selected Elected Members and its meetings are open to the public. The role of the Audit Committee is to make recommendations to Council on all matters dealing with Risk, Audit and Compliance.

A list of some of its functions is below:

- Shire-wide risk management planning;
- Providing advice and assistance to Council as to the carrying out of the functions of the Shire in relation to audits;
- Meeting with the auditor at least once in every year and provide a report to Council on the matters discussed and the outcome of those discussions;
- Ensuring that the Shire assists the auditor to conduct the audit and carry out their duties under the *Local Government Act 1995*, and that audits are conducted successfully and expeditiously;
- Examining reports of the auditor after receiving a report from the CEO on the matter, and determining if any matters raised require action to be taken by the Shire;
- Reviewing reports of internal audits and by monitoring the implementation of recommendations made by the audit and reviewing the extent to which management reacts to matters raised;
- Reviewing the level of resources allocated to internal audit and the scope of its authority;
- Monitoring the Shire's compliance with relevant legislation;
- Reviewing internal control mechanisms; and
- Receiving and reviewing reports from the CEO regarding the appropriateness and effectiveness of the Shire's risk management, internal controls and legislative compliance, at least every three years.

7. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There are a number of opportunities provided for ratepayers and residents to provide feedback and put forward their views on particular issues affecting the Shire. These include:

Community Consultation

The whole community may be asked to comment or provide feedback on a particular issue, while in other instances, only the community members directly affected by an issue will be consulted.

The consultation process may take many forms and some of the more commonly used methods are:

- Online and hard-copy surveys;
- Information sessions;
- Social media;
- Workshops;
- Expressions of interest;
- Advertisements in the local and State newspapers;
- Leaflet drops;
- Consultative committees and working groups; and
- Displays.

The Shire conducts community engagement to understand the needs and aspirations of its community.

Public Question Time

In accordance with the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*, at each Committee and Council meeting, a minimum of 15 minutes is available for Public Question Time. During Public Question Time, members of the public are given the opportunity to ask questions about an issue concerning the meeting at which it is raised.

So that officers can provide a full response to questions, members of the public are requested to complete and submit in advance a Public Question Time form. If a response cannot be provided at the meeting, the question will be taken on notice and a response provided in writing to the person raising the question. The responses to questions taken on notice are also included in the following meeting's agenda.

Information regarding Public Question Time, along with the Public Question Time online form, can be obtained from the Shire's website:

www.merredin.wa.gov.au/council-meetings.aspx.

Petitions

In accordance with the Shire's Standing Orders Local Law, written petitions can be presented to Council meeting on any issues within Council's jurisdiction and in accordance with Council's Standing Orders. Further details on this are available on the Shire's website at www.merredin.wa.gov.au/documents/local-laws.

Written Requests

A member of the public can write to the Shire on any Council policy or activity/ service it provides. A response will be provided within reasonable business timeframes.

Shire President and Elected Members

The Shire President and Elected Members, with their wealth of experience and commitment, serve to meet the requirements of the community at all times and are readily available to residents. They can be contacted to discuss any issue relevant to Council. Their contact information is available on the Shire's website here: www.merredin.wa.gov.au/councillors.

8. ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS HELD BY THE SHIRE

For the purposes of the Act, there are two categories of documents held by the Shire. These can be broadly categorised as those available for inspection or purchase outside the constraints of the Act and those which through their content, must be held confidentially with public access considered only through the provisions of the Act.

The Shire is mindful of its obligations and the Act provides general right of access to documents. If possible, the Shire will initially try to provide you with the requested documents outside of the Freedom of Information process.

The following schedule categorises documents that are available for inspection only at the Shire of Merredin, and those documents that are available on the website.

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION	INSPECTION ONLY	WEBSITE
Age Friendly Community Plan		✓
Agendas/Minutes of Council or Committee Meetings		✓
Annual Budget Documents		✓
Annual Report		✓
Annual Returns	✓	
Code of Conduct		✓
Corporate Business Plan 2023-2026		✓
Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2020-2025		✓
Gifts Register		✓
Information Statement		✓
Municipal Heritage Inventory		✓
News and Events (News, Events, Projects)		✓
Notice papers and agendas relating to any Council or Committee meeting, and reports and other documents that have been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tabled at a Council or Committee meeting; or - Produced by the local government or a Committee for presentation at a Council or Committee meeting and which have been presented at the meeting. 		✓
Policies		✓
Proposed local laws of which the local government has given State-wide public notice under section 3.12(3) of the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i>		✓
Rates Records	✓	
Register of Delegated Authority		✓
Register of Financial Interests		✓
Schedule of Fees and Charges		✓

Register of owners and occupiers under Section 4.32 (6) of the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> and electoral rolls	✓	
Strategic Community Plan 2020-2030		✓
Subsidiary legislation made or adopted by the local government under any written law other than the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i>	✓	
Tender (awarded) Register		✓
Local Planning Scheme		✓
Such other information relating to the local government: - Required by a provision of this Act to be available for public inspection; or - As may be prescribed in the form or medium in which it may for the time being, be held by the local government.	✓	

*Note: Personal Information collected in Covid-19 registers during 2021/22 have not been listed as these records have not been retained by the organisation.

Additionally, the Shire's Annual Report is also available for inspection by members of the public at the Shire's Administration Building located on the corner of King and Barrack Streets, Merredin.

Available for a Fee

Details of documents available for purchase are included within the Fees and Charges Schedule available on the Shire's website:

www.merredin.wa.gov.au/documents/budget-and-fees.

Local Studies Collection

The Shire has a Local Studies Collection located at the Merredin Library situated at 22 Coronation Street, Merredin. The following is a brief overview of the contents of the collection.

Monographs

The collection holds a number of monographs detailing the history of Merredin and the Wheatbelt region. Some of the monographs are self-published, or photocopies of manuscripts, reports or thesis.

Reports

The collection holds numerous reports produced by Government and other agencies (Local, State and Federal) that contain information pertaining to the Wheatbelt region.

Newspapers

The collection holds microfilms of local newspapers and articles dating from 1909-1991 with some gaps in the 1950s and 1960s. The collection also holds the bound copies of the Merredin Mercury from 1964-2015, and the Phoenix from 2016 to present.

Maps/Posters

The collection holds numerous maps of the Wheatbelt region. These vary in age, size, and content. The collection also contains copies of posters from local events, promotions, etc.

Vertical File

The collection includes a vertical file of newspaper clippings and other ephemeral materials that relate to the Wheatbelt region.

Photographs

The collection includes indexed photographs, both historical and recent, relating to the Wheatbelt region. These are held both in hard-copy and electronic formats.

Oral Histories

This is a collection of oral histories created through a funded project in 2009-2010. The histories are of several prominent Merredin community members and a series of histories from local indigenous people.

Memorabilia Room

This is a collection of items highlighting social history in the Wheatbelt including some sporting paraphernalia, farming implements, bottles, radio valves, sandalwood samples and more.

Since its inception the collection has been available for the public to access. A proportion of the collection (monographs and some reports) is catalogued with subject access on the library's automated catalogue. Photographs and maps can be located using the Museum section of the library catalogue. If a search of the catalogue is conducted, the location of items can be found. Staff members and volunteers are available to assist with access to the collection, including vertical files and newspapers. Photocopying and photographic reproduction charges apply to any copies required.

Memorabilia Room/Library Operating Hours

- Monday to Wednesday, Friday – 10am – 5pm
- Thursday – 10am – 6pm
- Saturday – 10am – 12 noon

Retention and Disposal of Council Records

The Shire's records are retained in accordance with the General Disposal Authority for Local Government Records (DA 2015-001/1). This schedule stipulates how long a record must be kept.

9. DOCUMENTS SUBJECT TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1992

The *Freedom of Information Act 1992* (the FOI Act) gives people the right to seek access to documents held by the Shire.

The Shire is required to:

- Assist applicants in making an application;
- Assist applicants in obtaining access to documents at a reasonable cost; and
- Ensure that personal information captured in documents is accurate, complete, up-to-date, and not misleading.

The right to apply is not affected by any reasons a person may have to obtain access.

The Shire is mindful of its obligations and the general right of access the FOI Act provides to documents. If possible, the Shire will initially try to provide you with the documents outside of the FOI process.

While the FOI Act provides a general right of access to documents it also recognises that some documents require a level of protection and these documents must meet specific exemption criteria in Schedule 1 of the FOI Act: Exemption Clauses. The FOI Act can be viewed on the Western Australian Legislation website: [WALW - Freedom of Information Act 1992 - Home Page \(legislation.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/documents/details.do?id=WA_1992_101).

Amendment of Personal Information

The Act gives a person the right to apply for amendment of personal information which is inaccurate, incomplete, out of date, or misleading. The agency may make the amendment by altering, striking out, deleting or inserting information, or inserting a note in relation to the information. If you are requesting access to personal information, the Shire will require you to produce identification.

Submitting a Freedom of Information Application

The use of an application form is not mandatory, however, an application must:

- Be in writing;
- Give enough information to enable the requested documents to be identified;
- Give an address in Australia to which notices under the Act can be sent;
- Give any other information or details required under the Regulations; and
- Be lodged at the Shire with the application fee.

Applications may be lodged at the Shire (with an application fee):

By post - address to:

Freedom of Information
Officer Shire of Merredin
PO Box 42
MERREDIN WA 6415

In person - Visit:

Administration Centre
Cnr King & Barrack
Street
MERREDIN WA 6415

Freedom of Information Fees & Charges

Listed below are a scale of fees and charges set under the *Freedom of Information Regulations 1993*. Apart from the application fee, all charges are discretionary and are set by the Council as part of the annual review of Fees and Charges. Fees and charges are GST exempt.

Regulatory Charges	
Application fee for Personal information	No fee
Application fee for non-personal information	\$30.00
Council Charges	
Charge for time dealing with application (per hour, or pro rata)	\$30.00
Access time supervised by staff (per hour, or pro rata)	\$30.00
Photocopying staff time (per hour, or pro rata)	\$30.00
Per photocopy	\$00.20
Transcribing from tape, film or computer information	Actual Cost
Duplicating tape, film or computer information	Actual Cost
Delivery, packaging and postage	Actual Cost

The Shire may require an advanced deposit on charges payable.

Notice of Decision

A notice of decision must be issued within 45 days (calendar days) from when the application was received. The Shire aims to respond as soon as practical to any application and will negotiate with the applicant on an extension to the 45 day limit, should the application be unusually large or require consultation with a significant number of Third Parties.

The written "Notice of Decision" will include:

- The day on which the decision was made;
- The name and the designation of the officer who made the decision;
- The reason why a document is considered exempt or the fact that access is given to an edited document;

- If access is refused, the reason for claiming the document is exempt; and
- Information on the rights of review and the procedures to be followed to exercise those rights.

Access Arrangements

Access to documents can be by way of:

- Inspection;
- A copy of a document;
- A copy of an audio or video tape, or computer disk; or
- A transcript of a recorded document or of words recorded in shorthand or encoded form, or a written document in case of a document where words can be reproduced in written form.

It should be noted that the Shire is not obligated to provide the information in a form that is not held in at the time of the application or would not be practicable to provide.

Review Process

The FOI Act provides for a review and appeal process, as follows:

Internal Review

Applicants who are dissatisfied with a decision of the Shire are entitled to ask for an internal review. An application must be made in writing within 30 days of receiving the notice of decision and must provide particulars of the decision to be reviewed.

There is no lodgement fee for an application for internal review, and there are no charges for dealing with an internal review request. The application will not be dealt with by the person who made the initial decision, or by any person who is subordinate to the original decision maker. The outcome of the application for internal review may result in a confirmation, variation or reversal of the initial decision under review. The applicant will be notified of the outcome within 15 days of the application.

External Review

If still dissatisfied with the Shire's decision after the internal review has been completed, a review by the Information Commissioner can be sought. External review requests must be made in writing within 60 days of the original decision, to the Information Commissioner and give details of the application decision to which the request relates.

There is no charge for lodging a request for an external review with the Office of the Information Commissioner and details for contacting the office are:

By post - Address to:

Office of the Information
Commissioner Albert Facey House
469 Wellington Street
PERTH WA 6000

In person - Visit:

Office of the Information
Commissioner Albert Facey House
469 Wellington Street
PERTH WA 6000

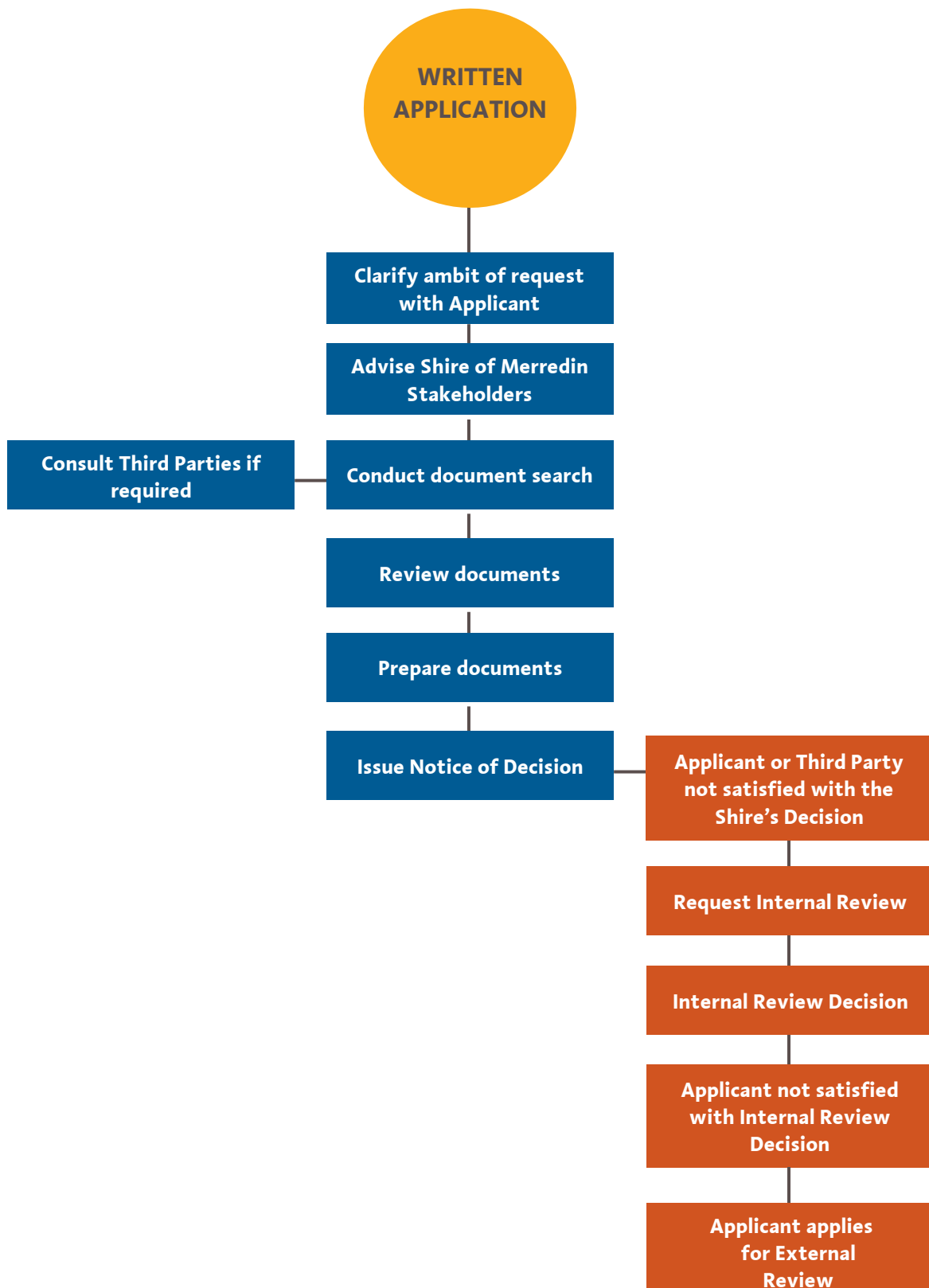
Phone: (08) 6551 7888

WA Country Callers: 1800 621 244 (free call)

Email: info@oic.wa.gov.au

Should you wish to obtain a copy of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992* or associated Regulations, please visit the State Law Publisher website at [WALW - Freedom of Information Act 1992 - Home Page \(legislation.wa.gov.au\)](http://www.walw.gov.au) where a full copy of the Legislation is available.

Freedom of Information – Flowchart of Process



APPLICATION FOR ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

(Pursuant to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*, Section 12)

APPLICANT DETAILS

Surname		Given Names	
Organisation Name			
Postal Address			
		Postcode	
Telephone		Mobile	
Email			

REQUEST

Type of Request *(please tick)*

- ☐ Personal Documents (incurs no fees and will contain information pertinent to applicant **only**)
- ☐ Non-Personal Information (incurs \$30 application fee and additional charges may apply)

Details of Request

I am applying for access to document/s concerning:

(Please provide as much information as possible to identify the documents i.e. location/address, subject matter, date(s))

--

Specify Dates – From:		To:	
-----------------------	--	-----	--

CONSULTATION

Please tick if you give consent.

- ☐ I consent to all “Personal Information” and or “Commercial Information” of third parties being deleted from the requested document/s
- ☐ I consent to third parties being given my name as the applicant requesting the information

FORM OF ACCESS

Please tick your preferred Form of Access

- ☐ Email (the Shire’s preferred form of access *where applicable*)
- ☐ Inspection of the document/s
- ☐ Physical Hard Copy (**charges will apply**)

Signature		Date	
-----------	--	------	--