

11.1 Boddington Medical Centre | Housing Request

File Reference:	1.004
Applicant:	Not applicable
Previous Item:	Item 8.6.1, November 2021
Author:	Chief Executive Officer
Disclosure of Interest:	Nil
Voting Requirements:	Absolute Majority
Attachments:	11.1A Community Feedback Health and Medical Services

Summary

Council is requested to approve the use of a residence and the Old Police Station accommodation for General Practitioner (GP) Registrars, at the request of the Boddington Medical Centre, to encourage the attraction and assist with the retention of medical professionals in the Shire.

Background

The Shire has been working to assist with the increased availability of medical professionals in the area, due to pressure on local health services. The Boddington Medical Centre (BMC) has recently become an accredited training organisation for Registrars. This provides a significant opportunity to increase the availability of health services in Boddington.

The availability of suitable accommodation is a key factor in attracting and retaining GPs, and as such, the BMC practice has requested assistance with accommodation. They plan to offer 2 Registrars an appointment in Boddington from 12 January 2025.

Comment

The Shire is acutely aware of the shortage of General Practitioners in Boddington. This shortage has impacted the community, with health and medical services being ranked as the second highest priority in the 2024 community survey. Attachment 11.1A details the community concerns in this area.

The BMC have proactively been working to attract additional services to Boddington. The Practice aims to open from Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm, which is expected to reduce the waiting list, currently being 4 weeks. A key component of making this viable is the availability of housing, which is extremely limited. This has resulted in the direct approach to the Shire for assistance. The BMC has advised that it is planned for one Registrar to reside in Boddington, and the other to commute to Perth on weekends.

In November 2021, Council approved the Shire of Boddington entering into a lease agreement with Newmont Boddington Gold for two residential houses, one of which (3 Prussian Way) is currently vacant. This lease was extended in February 2024, with the new Agreement set to expire on 30 January 2026. The base weekly cost for each residence is \$300, with the Shire needing to cover additional expenses such as insurance and minor maintenance.

The focus of the Agreement was on the provision of staff housing, however, in anticipation of the request from the Medical Practice, contact was made with Newmont about the possible variation of the Headlease so that it could accommodate the Medical Practice needs. Newmont have agreed that the scope of the agreement can be extended.

While allocation of one of the houses will create an impact on overall staff housing availability, it is considered that the provision of medical services is a higher priority for the community. It

is therefore proposed that one of the residences currently leased to the Shire by Newmont, is offered to the Boddington Medical Centre (Bouldermed Pty Ltd) for \$350 per week, being the base cost plus additional lease expenses. This would meet the needs of the Registrar who is planning to reside in the town.

In relation to the Registrar who would commute back to Perth on weekends, it is possible to offer weeknight accommodation in the Old Police Station at the Boddington Caravan Park. This furnished accommodation would be suitable for this purpose, and also provide the opportunity for visitors/tourists to still book the accommodation for weekends.

The nightly rate for the Boddington Old Police Station is \$175. Assuming the accommodation will be utilised for 4 nights per week, the total weekly cost would be \$700. It is recommended that a reduction in rate be approved to \$100 per night, equating to a weekly cost of \$400. This would provide an income of approximately \$20,800 over a 12 month period.

Providing accommodation for medical professionals is a practical solution to address the challenges faced by rural and regional health services. By utilising a house allocated for Shire staff, and offering a discounted rate at the Old Police Station, the Shire will be able to support the local GP practice and ensure the community has continued access to healthcare services.

Consultation

Boddington Medical Practice
Newmont Boddington Gold

Strategic Implications

Aspiration	People
Outcome 2	A healthy and active community
Objective 2.1	Improve access to health facilities and services
Action 2.1.2	Advocate for increased health services in Boddington, including an in-person Doctor service at the Hospital.

Legislative Implications

Nil

Policy Implications

Nil

Financial Implications

The financial implications of this proposal are manageable within the Shire's current budget.

In relation to 3 Prussian Way, this is not expected to have any impact to the Budget, as the arrangement would be in line with a lease entered in for an employee, seeking full cost recovery.

The Old Police Station revenue from the proposition (\$100/night) equates to \$20,800 per annum. The Police Station was booked for 53 weeknights (Monday to Thursday) between 1 January 2024 and 21 October 2024. This equates to approximately 60 nights for a full year, generating an estimated revenue of \$10,500.

The overall proposal would therefore have a positive impact to the Shire, of approximately \$10,300.

Economic Implications

Supporting the local GP practice through accommodation incentives may have positive economic implications by attracting and retaining medical professionals in the region. A stable healthcare service can improve the local economy by increasing population stability and supporting other local businesses.

Social Implications

Access to reliable medical services is vital for the well-being of the community. By providing accommodation to medical professionals, the Shire will help to ensure continuity of care, reduce the burden on overworked GPs, and enhance the overall quality of life for residents.

Environmental Considerations

Nil

Risk Considerations

Risk Statement and Consequence	The key risks associated with this recommendation include the lack of housing for staff, and the impact the weekday bookings will have on the Old Police Station availability. If the recommendation is not approved, there is a risk of a shortage of medical professionals in the region, which could negatively impact community health outcomes.
Risk Rating (prior to treatment or control)	High
Principal Risk Theme	Reputational
Risk Action Plan (controls or treatment proposed)	Nil

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Approve a sub-lease for the premise located at 3 Prussian Way Boddington at \$350 per week ending 30 January 2026, to Bouldermed Pty Ltd or its Representative, to facilitate additional General Practitioner services within the Shire of Boddington.
2. Approves weeknight use of the Old Police Station accommodation for General Practitioner services, at a nightly rate of \$100, for the period 12 January 2025 to 30 January 2026.

Community driven actions

- Advocate for funding to provide more health care services throughout the Shire, to reduce wait times and the need to travel to Narrogin and beyond for treatment. Specific mentions include:
 - more permanent GPs (particularly bulk-billing);
 - a range of specialists;
 - dentists;
 - allied health services (physios, OTs, speech therapists, podiatrists etc);
 - mental health services.
- Advocate for funding for upgrades to the Boddington Hospital, particularly emergency and ambulance services.

Community Voices

"More doctors so we don't have to go to Perth/Mandurah just see a GP. Onsite doctor at hospital."

"Public family doctors that are actually open and don't charge through the roof and use Medicare."

"We can encourage people to settle in town with the two previous points, but when a family is ready to make a decision prior to settling things like the school and the local health services are crucial, unfortunately it takes two weeks to see a doctor and if you present to emergency 95% of the time you have to go to Perth."

"Permanent doctors, more than one. A dental surgery. Boddington's own physiotherapist."

"More access to outreach services on a more regular basis. Therapists, OT, speech therapists, counselling."

"More facilities available at our local hospital to enable actual treatment. Engagement with more specialists to travel to town and have facilities to use."

"We need access to GP appointments without having to wait 1 - 2 weeks. We need the hospital to treat us when we present to emergency, rather than be told to drive to Narrogin or Perth because they have no available doctors."

"More funding for our amazing hospital and ambulance. They are honestly the best humans and work so hard for us all."

"Major changes to the Hospital. Need to be able to have doctor access and admissions. Not the Telehealth as there is no review or connection."

"Hospital. Please consider opening up the hospital more. The Hospital auxiliary keep funding our hospital. Also, the ambulance drivers leave Boddington and do not return for about 4 hours, at all hours of the day or night. These drivers always want to look after Boddington area, and especially the aged. Too many being transferred to Perth, instead they could be dealt with in our hospital. Some of their cases could be put into our hospital. Please think about this."