WALGA
Annual General Meeting

Agenda

Tuesday, 23 September 2025

Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre
21 Mounts Bay Road, Perth WA

Bellevue Ballroom 1 & 2

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4 ADOPTION OF AGM STANDING ORDERS

The Annual General Meeting Standing Orders are contained within this Agenda (Attachment 1).

MOTION

That the WALGA Annual General Meeting Standing Orders be adopted.

5 CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the 2024 WALGA Annual General Meeting are contained within this Agenda (Attachment 2), along with a report on the action taken on the 2024 AGM resolutions (Attachment 3).

MOTION

That the Minutes of the 2024 WALGA Annual General Meeting be confirmed as a true and correct record of proceedings.

6 ADOPTION OF ANNUAL REPORT

The 2024-2025 Annual Report, including the 2024-2025 Audited Financial Statements, will be distributed to Members separately.

MOTION

That the 2024-2025 Annual Report, including the 2024-2025 Audited Financial Statements, be received.

7 CONSIDERATION OF EXECUTIVE AND MEMBER MOTIONS

7.1 PROVISION OF MEDICAL SERVICES IN REMOTE AND VERY REMOTE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Shire of Lake Grace to move:

MOTION

That WALGA calls on the Western Australian Government and WA Grants Commission to:

1. **increase the Medical Facilities Cost Adjuster component of the Financial Assistance Grants to Local Governments; and**
2. **recalculate distributions to those Local Governments in remote and very remote locations that are providing block cash payments to attract and retain general practitioners to allow affected Councils to redirect ratepayer funds to Local Government responsibilities.**

IN BRIEF

- Remote and very remote Local Governments are filling a critical gap in primary healthcare.
- The Medical Facilities Cost Adjustor under the Financial Assistance Grants in WA is calculated and distributed by the WA Grants Commission.
- The Adjuster does not reflect actual costs, leaving a significant funding gap for Local Governments.
- The Shire of Lake Grace is requesting block funding and a recalculation criterion to remote and very remote local governments, distributed via the Financial Assistance Grants (Medical Facilities Cost Adjustor).

MEMBER COMMENT

The Shire of Lake Grace is the lead Shire in the "Local Government Rural Health Funding Alliance" which also consists of the Shires of Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe, Narembeen, Jerramungup and Kojonup.

The Shire of Lake Grace, on behalf of the Alliance successfully presented a motion at the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly, calling on the Australian Government to increase Financial Assistance Grants and recalibrate their distribution to better support rural councils funding general practitioner (GP) services. The motion was carried unanimously.

Remote and very remote Local Governments are filling a critical gap in primary healthcare. Local Governments are the third sphere of government yet are delivering on behalf of the State and Commonwealth. These Local Governments are stepping into primary healthcare provision due to insufficient Commonwealth and State financial support to GPs and specific incentives for remote and very remote communities. This is not their legislated responsibility, yet these six Local Governments are contributing over $1.475 million annually in cash, plus housing, vehicles, and surgeries to attract and retain GPs where there is geographical isolation, small populations and diverse health needs.

The Medical Facilities Cost Adjustor under the Financial Assistance Grants in WA is calculated and distributed by the WA Grants Commission. It recognizes only 82% of a 3-

year rolling average, capped at $85,000–$100,000. It does not reflect actual costs, which often exceed $200,000–$300,000 per GP per community. It then leaves a significant funding gap (e.g. Shire of Kojonup received $0 despite spending $250,000 as it was provided to a third party local not-for-profit to engage the GP and Practice).

The Shire of Lake Grace is requesting block funding and a recalculation criterion to remote and very remote local governments, distributed via the Financial Assistance Grants (Medical Facilities Cost Adjustor). This would reduce the unsustainable burden on ratepayer funds, ensure continuity of care and return ratepayer funds to core local government services.

These Local Governments are not creating the problem — rather they are solving it. They are collaborating regionally, implementing multi-site rural generalist models that requires economies of scale as a group, and ensuring reasonable travel distances for locals to GPs. Without their intervention, communities would face worsening health outcomes and risks to their economic viability.

This motion aligns with the top four priorities identified by band 4 WALGA member Local Governments as requiring solutions in 2025.

The comparative Government health spend between major city residents and rural and remote Australia is $848 per person less in the regions (NRHA). People in the bush are 2.9 times more likely to be hospitalized; 2.8 times more likely to be hospitalized for reasons that are potentially preventable and 2.7 times more likely to die from potentially avoidable causes.[1]

Life expectancy in remote areas, compared with major cities is 13 years less for males and 7 years for females.[2] Telehealth is not a viable substitute for resident GPs — it risks deskilling local clinicians and eroding continuity of care.

The Alliance of Councils has prepared a position paper to raise awareness and suggest a solution to attract and retain GPs in their rural and remote communities, where current Commonwealth and State government policy settings are inadequate.

Reference Document

- January 2025 Position Paper – Provision of Remote GP Services

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

Access to primary healthcare is the responsibility of the Australian and State Governments. In some rural and remote areas, the current health system does not provide equitable service. Access to primary health is a critical issue for a large proportion of WALGA members. Local Government support of primary healthcare services creates a financial impost and diverts funding from other Local Government services and functions.

In 2023, WALGA commissioned Rural Health West (RHW) to survey WA Local Governments to ascertain the extent to which Local Governments were providing financial or in-kind support to secure primary healthcare services. The Survey Report provides a

[1] Royal Flying Doctors Service, 2023
[2] Royal Flying Doctors Service, 2023

comprehensive dataset on the cost, nature, and geographical location of Local Government support, as well as evidence that Local Government support was predominantly focused on General Practice services.

This issue has also been identified as a priority for the sector at a number of forums, including the October 2024 Band 4 Local Governments meeting and the May 2025 Zone meetings. WALGA has also been working with the Local Government Rural Health Alliance in the development of their advocacy.

WALGA has begun a renewed advocacy campaign, with targeted asks of the Australian and State Governments to improve access to primary health services in rural and remote areas, to remove the need for Local Government intervention.

A revised Rural and Remote Health Advocacy Position aligned to the finding and recommendations of the Survey Report is tabled for the September 2025 State Council. The proposed revisions provide a stronger position on the responsibility of the Australian and State Governments for primary healthcare provision and addressing the cost impost on Local Government, compelled to intervene where the current health system is failing.

The revised position aligns with the wider healthcare reform platform to enable advocacy partnerships and to provide a level of flexibility for the advocacy campaign in response to Government announcements.

The Lake Grace motion and WALGAs ongoing advocacy align on the need for financial reimbursement for Local Government support for essential primary health care services. WALGA's approach, does not specifying how reimbursement to Local Governments should be undertaken, or which Local Governments should be eligible. This approach aims to provide flexibility to achieve the same outcome, such as utilising the upcoming renewal of the National Health Reform Agreement.

7.2 HOMELESSNESS – SHORT-TERM ACCOMMODATION SOLUTIONS

City of Kalgoorlie Boulder to move:

MOTION

That WALGA advocate to the State Government to provide culturally appropriate short-term accommodation options and wrap-around support services that provide sustainable homelessness solutions in regional centres across Western Australia.

IN BRIEF

- The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder's motion aligns with Western Australia's All Paths Lead to Home - 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030. The Strategy prioritises place-based responses for Aboriginal people, including culturally appropriate short-term accommodation and wrap-around support.
- The motion addresses a critical gap in current policy by focusing on temporary homelessness or street presence which is not covered in state or national strategies.

MEMBER COMMENT

Shelter WA's Policy Position on Ending Homelessness in WA highlights the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in homelessness services and calls for short-stay options and self-determination in service delivery. The motion reinforces the importance of Housing First principles and the need for coordinated responses; specifically, that all governments ensure people with lived experience of homelessness are central to the design and delivery of homelessness services.

The motion highlights a growing disconnect between the practical realities faced by Local Government in the requirement for short-term accommodation for First Nations people in their communities. WALGA's advocacy position on homelessness acknowledges that Local Governments can support responses to homelessness through planning, health, and community development functions, it does not consider them as lead agencies. Local Governments are increasingly forced to lead this space due to the lack of a coordinated state-wide response and support.

Historically, many regional centres and cities have been meeting places for different Aboriginal communities with these areas offering a place where individuals can meet to conduct cultural business, socialise with family and friends, shop, and attend medical and other appointments. While some stay with family and friends, in many cases in overcrowded conditions, others are street present. Additional risks are posed for those with a limited experience of living in larger regional cities.

Homelessness data is typically captured through the Australian Census which does not accurately capture short-term or seasonal homelessness. Discussions with other WA regional Local Governments has identified that significant numbers of remote Aboriginal community members travel to regional centres and cities especially during the summer period. These Local Governments and their stakeholders are ill-equipped to support their needs ranging from temporary culturally appropriate and safe accommodation to food provision.

Typically, when Local Governments step up in this area, state-funded systems often pull back, particularly in regional cities. This is an understandable consequence of under-resourced and failing systems but does not advance efforts to solve street presence or seasonal homelessness.

While Local Governments interact closely with people experiencing homelessness and have valuable local knowledge, they do not have the resources, funding, or specialist workforce to lead homelessness responses especially in regional areas when street present people increase during particular times of the year. In the All Paths Leads to Home, State Government acknowledges this and views Local Governments as key partners in coordinating local, place-based efforts and facilitating referrals to appropriate services.

The State Government, primarily through the Department of Communities, is responsible for leading and funding homelessness responses, including the provision of social and affordable housing and specialist services. It coordinates with other State agencies across justice, health, mental health, and education to address the systemic causes of homelessness — functions that are beyond the capacity and remit of local governments. However, homelessness is not included in this remit as, by definition, the Department provides homes in remote communities.

The State Government recognises that effective responses require partnerships. It seeks to leverage the local knowledge, planning tools, and community connections of Local Governments, while retaining responsibility for funding, policy, and service coordination which does not include short-term accommodation for visiting Aboriginal community members across regional WA.

In 2021, the Australian Local Government Association co-signed a landmark national agreement to close the gap, setting targets in education, employment, health, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and Indigenous language preservation. The agreement includes a target to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%.

The 2021 Census showed there were 122,000 people in Australia experiencing homelessness on Census night – 48 people per 10,000. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were disproportionately homeless – 307 out of 10,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were experiencing homelessness.

However, neither the Closing the Gap agreement, the Closing the Gap 2024 Annual Report and Commonwealth 2025 Implementation Plan, nor the 2024 National Housing and Homeless Plan Summary Report include any consideration for addressing transitional homelessness – only overcrowding issues.

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder recently completed a collaborative, landmark national study on Anti-social Behaviour and Transitional Aboriginal Homelessness. The research project included engagement with local and state government agencies and key providers in over eight locations in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, and South Australia, to assess existing strategies, pinpoint gaps, and explore potential solutions that enhance local government efforts in this regard.

A Housing and Homelessness motion was raised by the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder at the 2025 Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly in

Canberra in July and was approved for submission to the Federal Government for consideration.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation (Short Stays) are designed to provide safe, culturally appropriate and affordable short-term accommodation for Aboriginal people who travel to regional centres to access services, or for business, cultural or family reasons.

There are three existing Aboriginal Short Stays operating in regional Western Australia: Broome, Derby and Kalgoorlie. The State Government acknowledges that these Short Stays are in high demand. Planning is underway by the Department of Housing and Works to develop an additional three new Short Stays in Geraldton, Kununurra and Perth.

Short Stays are a response to homelessness. WALGA does not currently have an advocacy position on short-stay accommodation, but does have a Homelessness Advocacy Position. WALGA is currently reviewing the Homelessness Advocacy Position as part of a regular advocacy position review process. To inform the review, WALGA is currently surveying all Local Governments to gather information on the extent of Local Government engagement with homelessness and the extent of services, including accommodation options, available within their Local Government areas.

7.3 REVISION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ADMINISTRATION) REGULATIONS 1996 IN RELATION TO THE HOLDING OF AND ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS BY ELECTRONIC MEANS

Shire of Dardanup to move:

MOTION

That WALGA advocates for a change to the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 in relation to the holding of and attendance at meetings by electronic means to allow elected members to attend more than 50% of meetings remotely, only if each instance more than 50% in the rolling year is justified and approved by the Shire President or Deputy Shire President.

IN BRIEF

- This motion addresses the need for greater flexibility for Councillors in the Shire of Dardanup (and potentially other local governments) who, due to work (e.g. FIFO), family, or personal commitments, may be away from the local area for extended periods.
- The motion seeks to:
  - ensure Councillors can still represent and serve the community effectively during such absences;
  - reduce disruption to Council operations by expanding access to remote and electronic meeting participation;
  - reflect the evolving demographic of Elected Members, including new parents, FIFO workers, shift workers, and those with disabilities or mobility issues;
  - remove logistical and bureaucratic barriers that limit participation by some Councillors; and
  - promote equity, inclusivity, and engagement by adapting Council practices to meet modern workforce and lifestyle realities.
- Ultimately, the motion supports more inclusive and efficient Council operations by enabling all elected members to participate fully, regardless of their personal circumstances.

MEMBER COMMENT

The Local Government Administration Regulations 1996 provides as follows:

> *14C. Attendance at meetings by electronic means may be authorised (Act s. 5.25(1)(ba))*
>
> *(3) The mayor, president or council cannot authorise a member to attend a meeting (the proposed meeting) under subregulation (2)(b) if the member's attendance at the proposed meeting under that authorisation would result in the member attending more than half of the meetings (including the proposed meeting) of the council or committee, in the relevant period, under an authorisation under subregulation (2)(b)*

Additionally, the regulations also set out:

> *14D. Meetings held by electronic means (Act s. 5.25(1)(ba))*
> *(2A) The council cannot authorise a meeting (the proposed meeting) to be held under subregulation (2)(c) if holding the proposed meeting under that authorization would result in more than half of the meetings (including the proposed meeting) of the council or committee, in the relevant period, being held under an authorization under subregulation (2)(c).*

(Emphasis added)

Therefore, under the current regulations neither a Council nor a Councillor can hold or attend more than 50% of the meetings electronically.

This motion is proposed in response to the unique circumstances within the Shire of Dardanup, and potentially other local governments, who due to their professional commitments, such as FIFO (Fly In Fly Out), or other circumstances, may be required to work away from the local area for extended period - sometimes up to 50% of their time.

The motion seeks to address the challenges faced by Councillors when taking leave or managing personal, family or work commitments. It aims to ensure that these circumstances do not hinder their ability to effectively represent and serve the community. By supporting this motion, the Council can implement measures that provide flexibility in these situations, ultimately allowing Councillors to fulfil their duties without unnecessary disruption.

The intent of the motion it to ensure that the work of the Council continues to operate effectively and efficiently during periods when individual Councillors may be temporarily unavailable (in person) i.e. having a Councillor/s who works away from time to time or even 50% of the time. This motion will also assist with when Councillors who already work away go on leave or have other family commitments.

By implementing greater flexibility, such as expanding access to remote and electronic Council and Committee meeting participation, the Council can support ongoing engagement, reduce disruption to Council operations, and ensure inclusive representation from a broader demographic of elected members.

The demographic of elected and potential elected members to Shire Councils has changed and is evolving. If we want to encourage participation, we need to adapt to the way we engage and allow engagement.

Financial, physical, employment and locational restrictions need to be taken into account for the engagement ability of elected members to advocate for their rate payer base.

The current percentage provision of remote / electronic meeting ability available, while acceptable for the majority of elected members, is insufficient for the minority of elected members who are engaged, though restriction to contribute through logistical or bureaucratic barriers.

Key considerations should be given to workforce realities i.e. FIFO or workers with demanding employment schedules; diverse demographics, equity in participation and encouraging engagement.

This demographic change includes new mothers and parents of young children, FIFO workers, Shift workers & Disabled or Mobility impaired. All of these groups can and do provide diverse opinions and experience to the overall group of elected members.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

Regulations 14C and 14D of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996* were introduced in 2022 to provide flexibility for the sector but reflect an expectation that Local Governments should prioritise in person meetings and in person Council Member attendance. Under regulation 14C a Council or Committee Member may attend a meeting by electronic means only if authorised by the Mayor / President or Council. Electronic attendance cannot be authorised if it would exceed the 50% cap.

It is important that Council Meetings remain accessible for members of the community to attend and participate. In many cases, in person meetings may best achieve this outcome. However, the introduction of livestreaming requirements for Class 1 and 2 Local Governments, and widespread adoption by many smaller Local Governments, has changed the way the community accesses and engages with Council Meetings. In addition, Local Government experience to date indicates that Council Members are able to effectively participate in meetings when attending electronically.

Removing the 50% cap on electronic attendance could enable Councils to make a policy decision regarding the balance of electronic and in person attendance that best meets the expectations of their community and the needs of Council Members. This could support greater diversity in candidates and Council Members and may also assist Local Governments seeking independent persons as members of their Audit Risk and Improvement Committees. Council, and the Mayor or President as the decision maker, would be accountable to the community for the decision to authorise additional electronic attendance.

7.4 RATION EXEMPTION ADVOCACY MOTION

City of Bunbury to move:

MOTION

That WALGA, in addition to its current advocacy positions 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 relating to rating exemptions, advocate to the WA Government for the introduction of a reimbursement model, whereby the WA Government repays Local Government the greater of:

1. **75% of the value of rates lost in applying the charitable purposes exemption; or**
2. **1% of the total rate revenue of the Local Government.**

IN BRIEF

- City of Bunbury Impact:
  - 443 properties (85 organizations) receive rate exemptions
  - $1.67M annual revenue loss (3.4% of rates)
  - Significantly affects City's ability to fund community services
- Scale of Charitable Exemptions:
  - 407 properties ($1.23M) are specifically for charitable purposes
  - Represents majority of exempted properties under Section 6.26(2)
- Current System Issues:
  - Exemptions extended beyond original intention
  - Includes non-charitable purposes
  - Creates unfair burden on other ratepayers
- Proposed Solution:
  - Better definition of 'charitable purposes' needed
  - Recommend WA Government establish reimbursement system
  - Suggest threshold based on local government band levels

MEMBER COMMENT

The City of Bunbury faces significant financial impacts from rate exemptions granted under Section 6.26(2) of the *Local Government Act*, with 443 properties currently exempt due to charitable or religious purposes. This represents a substantial annual revenue loss of $1.67 million (3.4% of total rates), affecting the City's capacity to deliver community services and facilities.

WALGA has established advocacy positions calling for reform, particularly focusing on the need to review rating exemption categories and address the expanding scope of charitable purpose definitions. Of particular concern is that exemptions have extended beyond their original intention, now encompassing non-charitable commercial activities of charitable organizations.

This matter requires urgent attention as the current system creates an inequitable burden on other ratepayers and impacts the financial sustainability of Local Governments in delivering essential community services.

The City of Bunbury currently has 443 properties with 85 organisations that have a rate exemption under Section 6.26(2) of the *Local Government Act* due to properties being used for charitable or religious purposes. This equates to a loss of rate revenue of $1,667,522 in

2024/25, or 3.4% of rates which has a significant impact on the City to fund services and facilities for the Bunbury community. Of these properties, 407 ($1,227,021) are used for charitable purposes.

The following is a comparison with other known Local Governments (as at October 2024).

Council	Number of Rate Exempt Properties	Total Number of Properties	Percentage of Rate Exempt Properties	Loss of Revenue from Rate Exemptions	Total Rate Revenue	Percentage of Loss Revenue
City of Bunbury	443	17,194	2.6%	$1,667,522	$49,690,996	3.4%
City of Busselton	171	25,327	0.7%	$1,296,212	$64,960,318	2.0%
City of Geraldton	158	19,487	0.8%	$1,700,000	$54,080,426	3.1%
Shire of Harvey	44	13,245	0.3%	$99,000	$29,482,269	0.3%
City of Wanneroo	374	88,589	0.4%	Not Provided		

WALGA already has four documented Advocacy Positions relating to this matter, the two most applicable being:

2.1.1 Rating Exemptions Review
A broad review be conducted into the justification and fairness of all rating exemption categories currently prescribed under Section 6.26 of the Local Government Act 1995; and

2.1.2 Rating Exemptions Charitable Purposes
1. *Amend the Local Government Act 1995 to clarify that Independent Living Units should only be exempt from rates where they qualify under the Commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997;*
2. *Either:*
    a. *amend the charitable organisations section of the Local Government Act 1995 to eliminate exemptions for commercial (non-charitable) business activities of charitable organisations; or*
    b. *establish a compensatory fund for Local Governments, similar to the pensioner discount provisions, if the State Government believes charitable organisations remain exempt from payment of Local Government rates.*
3. *Request that a broad review be conducted into the justification and fairness of all rating exemption categories currently prescribed under Section 6.26 of the Local Government Act 1995.*

Exemptions under this section of the Act have extended beyond the original intention and now provide rating exemptions for non-charitable purposes, which increase the rate burden to other ratepayers. It is considered that in the absence of amendments to better define 'charitable purposes', that the WA Government considers reimbursement to local governments once exemptions exceed a defined threshold, which could be set based on Local Government band levels.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

In addition to the WALGA Advocacy Positions 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 as mentioned in the Member comment for this item, WALGA also has the following relevant positions on rating exemptions:

2.1.3 Rating Exemptions – Department of Housing: Leasing to Charitable Organisations

Position Statement	That WALGA advocate to the Minister for Housing to include in the lease agreements with charitable institutions that they must pay Local Government rates on behalf of the Department of Housing recognising the services Local Government provides to its tenants.

2.1.4 Rating Exemptions – Rate Equivalency Payments

Position Statement	Legislation should be amended so rate equivalency payments made by LandCorp and other Government Trading Entities are made to the relevant Local Governments instead of the State Government.

2.1.5 Rating Restrictions – State Agreement Acts

Position Statement	Resource projects covered by State Agreement Acts should be liable for Local Government rates.

7.5 RATEABILITY OF MISCELLANEOUS LICENSES

Shire of Mount Magnet to move:

MOTION

That WALGA:

1. **Formally oppose any move by the Local Government Minister to introduce amendments to the *Local Government Act* to restrict the application of rates on Miscellaneous Licenses.**
2. **Develop an advocacy position on sector consultation prior to any amendment to the *Local Government Act*.**
3. **Undertake a financial analysis of the cost to the Mining Industry of the rating of Miscellaneous Licenses compared to the benefit to the Local Government sector.**

IN BRIEF

- The Supreme Court determined on 8 July 2025 that occupied Miscellaneous Licenses are rateable under s 6.26(1) of the *Local Government Act*.
- The Minister for Local Government announced on 1 August 2025 that an amendment of the *Local Government Act* would be swiftly introduced to Parliament to provide certainty to Local Governments and the resources sector that Miscellaneous Licenses are not rateable.

MEMBER COMMENT

The *Local Government Act 1995* s 6.26 (1) sets out the intent that all occupied land utilized for purposes other than charitable, benevolent, or other purposes of the Crown is rateable.

Subsequent to the enactment of the *Local Government Act 1995*, significant amendments were made to the terms of a Miscellaneous License in the *Mining Act 1978* through the *Mining Amendment Act 1998*.

Miscellaneous Licenses are one of a number of tenement types granted in respect to mineral resource recovery by the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS). The defined purposes for the grant of a Miscellaneous License is set out in the Mining Regulations 1981 r 42B, of which constitute significant infrastructure and construction necessary for the operations necessary to a mining enterprise.

The *Mining Amendment Act 1998* amended the term of the Miscellaneous license from a 5-year term with further two 5-year possible extensions; to a 21-year term with two possible further 21-year term extensions.

This amendment was made to explicitly facilitate the construction of permanent infrastructure – an evolution that clearly signals a shift in their functional and economic significance.

The introduction of the Fringe Benefits Tax in 1986 had a devastating impact on regional communities across Australia as Fly in Fly out work took hold, and unrated remote work camps replaced local workers, while often increasing traffic on Local Government owned assets such as airports and short stay accommodation intended for tourists, but used to house overflow crews.

Justice Solomon stated in his deliberations that:

> *"It is also noteworthy that the local government has a substantive role to play in the grant of a miscellaneous licence over any land (including Crown land). Given that a miscellaneous licence is often used for the development of significant infrastructure, the need for the involvement of local government is self-evident. Even a cursory perusal of the items listed in reg 42B indicates that it refers to facilities and infrastructure that would ordinarily be of direct concern to a local government.*
>
> *It is noteworthy that the role of local government in the granting of other mining tenements is more limited. That feature of the Mining Act 1978 suggests that local government is likely to be more concerned or directly engaged with the activity on a miscellaneous licence than on other mining tenements."*

Road Agreements

The Local Government in which a Miscellaneous License is held for the purpose of road construction, will often enter an agreement for maintenance of that road. The agreement is voluntary in basis, however, the cost of drafting and regulating compliance with the agreement is reported by many Local Governments to be both financially and resource hungry.

There have been reports made by Local Governments of agreements taking years to be completed, of costs to take legal action to enforce compliance, and the regular inspections to ensure undertaking are met.

These costs are outside the scope of road agreements and borne by the Local Government.

Much of the resource fields of Western Australia are located in Band 4 Local Governments, in very remote areas. While the Mining Company has access to legal and corporate resources, Local Governments are under-resourced and inequal in the negotiations.

Mining Camps

Significant environmental health services are provided to remote Mining Camps by Local Government, including commercial kitchen licensing, inspection and regulation; sewerage/wastewater treatment systems and monitoring, inspection and compliance; swimming pool inspections including water monitoring; all other services offered to a town-based business, with the cost of distance to travel and the complication of many more residents.

During an epidemic or outbreak of communicable disease, the Local Government in remote areas holds the statutory responsibility for incident control.

This service is increasingly difficult to resource with qualified officers choosing not to live and work remotely.

Mining Camps situated on a Miscellaneous License or Mining Lease have on occasion been approved by the Minister as rateable under the GRV methodology, upon application by the Local Government. This area of land is excised from the tenement for the purpose of the valuation.

The process for this to occur is protracted, requires the Mining Camp to have been operational for 12 months already and is at the discretion of the Minister. The Mining Company is required to provide input to the decision in the interest of fairness.

These already GRV-rated camps would be exempt from any rating of miscellaneous licenses as they have already been excised from the tenement.

Pipelines, powerlines, conveyor systems, tunnel, bridge, aerodrome, communications facilities, power generation and transmission facilities, storage or transportation facility for minerals or mineral concentrates, and pump stations
Each of the above purposes conveys a restricted access to the land on which they are constructed by tourists, small prospectors and local Traditional Owners. In many cases they are constructed on an underlying pastoral property which also pays rates on the same parcel.

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These purposes require less restriction of access, but are also valued at a lower rate under the *Valuation of Land Act* than other purposes.

On this one piece of land, for each of the purposes above, the pastoral activity is curtailed despite the cost of the pastoral lease remitted to the State Treasury, and the rates to the Local Government.

The rateable value of a Miscellaneous License under the *Valuation of Land Act* is five times the rent on the tenement which is set out in the Mining Regulations 1981. Currently the rent on a Miscellaneous License is $27 per ha, with the exception of a license granted for the search of ground water which is valued at $1.12 per ha.

Rent payable on an underlying exploration license is $1.55 per ha.

Tenement holder remits to -
- **Treasury** – rent on the exploration license, for the Miscellaneous License, (in addition to royalty applicable on the principle Mining Tenement activity).
- **Local Government** – rates on the exploration license only.

The Pastoralist remits to –
- **Treasury** – rent on the pastoral lease
- **Local Government** – rates on the pastoral lease.

On occasion the Mining Company will provide extra funds through a Community Benefit scheme to a community through philanthropic gifting which is spent in accordance with the ideological values of the board, land access purposes, and often to charities or causes that are outside of the regions in which the minerals are extracted through ESG programs. These donations do not correlate to rigorous statutory Integrated Planning and Reporting process undertaken by the Local Government.

The Local Government is increasingly constrained financially and further burdened by compliance with regulations – particularly in the regions where the minerals are extracted. Service provision that falls within the statutory scope of the State Government is being devolved to Local Government, including housing for State employees, medical services, security to community, provision of agency services such as Transport, Health, Human Services. These are by and large unfunded and under resourced by the State Government.

Planning options are significantly constrained through land banking of Mining Companies with tenements in townsites and on town commons.

Conversely, the GDP provided by the Mining Industry in Australia for quarter 1 of 2025 alone reached $84.1B.

This inequity of wealth distribution has been evidenced through recent actions taken by Councils to increase rates to adequately fund the deficiency in their budget in accordance with the *Local Government Act* requirements. At that time, the Minister for Local Government publicly stated that the proposal "did not meet the values of consistency, equity and fairness".

In handing down his decision, Justice Solomon concluded with

> *"It is plain from the terms of the provisions referred to above [s6.26] that the object of imposing rates is to raise revenue for local government to undertake its activities. Specifically, the imposition of rates allows a local government to make up any budget deficiency. The Act thus reflects a direct link between the imposition of rates and the local government's ability to undertake its activities. As noted above, the local government plays a direct role and function in the grant of a miscellaneous licence. Plainly, the more significant the infrastructure proposed to occupy the miscellaneous licence, the greater will be the role played and the activity undertaken by the local government. In my view, a construction that exempts land from rates which is the subject of a miscellaneous licence and is occupied by significant infrastructure, sits most uncomfortably with the plain object of the statutory provisions concerning the local government's power to impose rates.*
>
> *The second factor stems from the wording of s 6.26(2) itself. The exemptions in s 6.26(2)(a) - (k) relate overwhelmingly to charitable, benevolent, religious and public or civic purposes. That sits harmoniously with the theme of s 6.26(2)(a)(i). A construction that would exempt from rating, land that may be occupied by critical infrastructure facilitating the creation of profits for private interests, runs counter to the charitable and civic theme of s 6.26(2).*
>
> *In my view, the Shire's construction provides greater harmony with the relevant object of the rating provisions of the LGA. "*

The judiciary—our independent and impartial arbiter of legislative intent—has clearly affirmed the rateability of Miscellaneous Licenses, not only through statutory interpretation but also through a reasoned understanding of their practical implications.

To disregard this position through swift legislative action, without sector wide consultation is to undermine the very principles of legal clarity and administrative fairness upon which our governance is built.

The AGM is requested to support the actions taken by the Shire of Mount Magnet to rate Miscellaneous Licenses in accordance with the judgement recently handed down by the Supreme Court, and further request WALGA to undertake a full financial analysis of the cost to the mining industry of this action, and the financial benefit to Local Government in Western Australia.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

At the time of the distribution of this Agenda, State Council has not considered an item relating to Miscellaneous Licences.

However, item 8.2 in the September 2025 State Council Agenda relates to rating of Miscellaneous Licences. The recommendation in that report is that WALGA:

1. Advocate for Local Governments to continue to have the ability to rate miscellaneous licences under the *Mining Act 1978*; and
2. Oppose legislative amendments that seek to exempt occupied miscellaneous licence land from rating.
3. Continue to advocate for a broad review to be conducted into the justification and fairness of all rating exemption categories currently prescribed under section 6.26 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

This item will be considered by State Council at the meeting on 5 September.

In relation to point 2 of the motion –
As a matter of course WALGA always advocates for consultation on legislative and regulatory amendments, however formalising this position has merit.

In relation to point 3 of the motion –
WALGA would need to determine the scope and cost of this analysis before considering in the context of WALGA's existing budget.

8 CLOSURE

Upon the completion of business, the Chair will close the meeting.

Attachment 1: AGM Standing Orders

WALGA Annual General Meeting Standing Orders

1. INTERPRETATIONS

For the purposes of these Standing Orders, if not inconsistent with the context, the following words shall have the following meanings:

1.1 ***"Absolute Majority"*** means:
a majority of delegates of the Association whether present and voting or not.

1.2 ***"Association"*** means:
all or any part of the Western Australian Local Government Association.

1.3 ***"Delegate or Deputy Delegate"*** means**:**
those persons duly nominated, from time to time, to represent a Member Local Government at a meeting of the Association.

1.4 ***"Deputy President"*** means**:**
the Deputy President for the time being of the Association.

1.5 ***"Meeting"*** means:
an Annual or Special General Meeting of the Association.

1.6 ***"Member Local Government"*** means**:**
a Local Government admitted to ordinary membership of the Association in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

1.7 ***"President"*** means:
the President for the time being of the Association.

1.8 ***"Simple Majority"*** means:
a majority of the delegates from the Association that are present and voting**.**

2. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

The proceedings and business of meetings of the Association shall be conducted according to these Standing Orders.

3. NOTICE OF MEETING

3.1 Annual General Meeting
The Chief Executive Officer of the Association shall give at least ninety (90) days notice of an Annual General Meeting to all Member Local Governments, advising of the closing date for submission of motions for inclusion on the agenda.

3.2 Special General Meeting
A Special General Meeting of the Association is to be held if a request is received by the Association President, in accordance with the requirements of the Association's Constitution. No business shall be transacted at a Special General Meeting other than that for which the Special General Meeting was called.

3.3 Notice shall be given at the destinations appearing in the records of the Association.

Notice will be deemed to have been delivered immediately if transmitted electronically or on the second working day after posting.

4. QUORUM

4.1 The Association shall not conduct business at a meeting unless a quorum is present.

4.2 At any meeting of the Association greater than one half of the delegates who are eligible to vote must be present to form a quorum.

4.3 The Association is not to transact business at a meeting unless a quorum is present.

4.4 If a quorum has not been established within the 30 minutes after a meeting is due to begin then the Association can be adjourned –

(a) by the President or if the President is not present at the meeting, by the Deputy President;

(b) if neither the President nor Deputy President is present at the meeting, by a majority of delegates present;

(c) if only one delegate is present, by that delegate; or

(d) if no delegate is present, by the Chief Executive Officer or a person authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

4.5 If at any time during a meeting a quorum is not present, the President shall thereupon suspend the proceedings of the meeting for a period of five (5) minutes and if a quorum is not present at the expiration of that period, the meeting shall be deemed to have been adjourned and the person presiding is to reschedule it for some future time.

4.6 Notice of a meeting adjourned because of absence of a quorum is to be given to all Member Local Governments.

5. MEETINGS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

The business of the Association shall be open to the public except upon such occasions as the Association may by resolution otherwise decide.

6. ORDER OF BUSINESS

Unless the Association should decide otherwise, the order of business at meetings of the Association, with the exception of special meetings or an adjourned meeting, shall be as follows:

(a) Record of attendance and apologies;

(b) Announcements;

(c) Confirmation of minutes of previous meetings;

(d) President's report;

(e) Financial report for the financial year; and

(f) Consideration of Executive and Member Motions.

7. VOTING ENTITLEMENTS

7.1 Each Member Local Government shall be entitled to be represented at any meeting of the Association.

7.2 Only eligible and registered delegates may vote.

7.3 A delegate shall be entitled to exercise one vote on each matter to be decided. Votes are to be exercised in person.

7.4 A delegate unable to attend any meeting of the Association shall be entitled to cast a vote by proxy.

7.5 A proxy shall be in writing and shall nominate the person in whose favour the proxy is given, which person need not be a delegate. Proxy authorisations shall be delivered to the Chief Executive Officer of the Association before the commencement of the meeting at which the proxy is to be exercised and shall be signed by the delegate or by the Chief Executive Officer of the Member Local Government that nominated the delegate.

8. SPECIAL URGENT BUSINESS

At any time during a meeting a delegate may, with the approval of an absolute majority, introduce a motion relating to special urgent business that calls for an expression of opinion from the meeting.

In presenting an item of special urgent business, a delegate shall have sufficient copies of the motion in writing for distribution to all delegates present at the meeting and, where practicable, give prior notice to the President of such intention.

9. PRESIDENT

In the construction of these Standing Orders unless the context requires otherwise, the word *"President"* shall in the absence of the President include the Deputy President or the delegate chosen by resolution to preside at any meeting of the Association.

10. DELEGATE AND DEPUTY DELEGATE

10.1 In the construction of these Standing Orders unless the context requires otherwise, the word "delegate" shall in the absence of the delegate include the deputy delegate.

10.2 A deputy delegate acting in the capacity of a delegate unable to attend a meeting of the Association shall exercise all rights of that delegate.

11. PRESIDENT TO PRESIDE

11.1 The President shall preside at all meetings of the Association, but in absence of the President, the Deputy President shall preside.

11.2 In the absence of the President and the Deputy President, the delegates shall choose by resolution, a delegate present to preside at the meeting.

12. SPEAKING PROTOCOL

12.1 Only registered delegates and members of the Association's State Council shall be entitled to speak at meetings of the Association.

12.2 The first person that is entitled to speak at a meeting who attracts the attention of the person presiding shall have precedence in speaking.

12.3 Speakers are to use the microphones supplied.

12.4 When addressing a meeting, speakers are to:

(a) rise and remain standing unless unable to do so by reason of sickness or disability;

(b) address the meeting through the person presiding;

(c) state their name and Local Government before otherwise speaking;

(d) refrain from reading comment printed in the agenda paper in support of a motion, but may identify key points or make additional comment; and

(e) refrain from using provoking or discourteous expressions that are calculated to disturb the peaceful current of debate.

12.5 Mobile phones shall not be switched on while the meeting is in session.

13. DEBATE PROCEDURES

13.1 A delegate moving a substantive motion may speak for –

(a) 5 minutes in his or her opening address; and

(b) 3 minutes in exercising the right of reply.

13.2 Other speeches for or against motions are to be limited to 3 minutes unless consent of the meeting is obtained which shall be signified without debate.

13.3 No delegate, except the mover of a motion in reply, is to speak more than once on the same motion except by way of personal explanation.

13.4 As soon as the right of reply has been exercised, the motion is to be forthwith put to the vote without further comment.

13.5 No discussion shall take place on any motion unless it is moved and seconded. Only one amendment on any one motion shall be received at a time, and such amendment shall be disposed of before any further amendment can be received. Any number of amendments may be proposed.

13.6 The provisions of these Standing Orders applicable to motions apply mutatis mutandis to amendments, except that the mover of an amendment shall have no right of reply.

13.7 When a motion has been moved and seconded, the person presiding shall at once proceed to take a vote thereon unless a delegate opposes it or an amendment is proposed.

13.8 No more than two delegates shall speak in succession on one side, either for or against the question before the meeting, and if at the conclusion of the second speaker's remarks, no delegate speaks on the other side, the motion or amendment may be put to the vote.

13.9 Notwithstanding clause 13.7, where a composite motion is moved which embodies the core aspects of subsequent motions listed on the agenda, a delegate whose motion has been superseded shall have the opportunity to speak on the question of the composite motion before it is put.

Once a composite motion has been carried, no further debate shall be permitted in respect of the superseded motions.

13.10 At any time during a debate, but after the conclusion of a delegate's comments, a delegate who has not spoken during the debate may move, without discussion, "that the question be now put". If that motion is seconded and carried by a majority, the question shall be submitted at once to the meeting, after the mover has replied.

14. QUESTIONS

Any delegate seeking to ask a question at any meeting of the Association shall direct the question to the President.

15. POINT OF ORDER

A delegate who is addressing the President shall not be interrupted except on a point of order, in which event the delegate shall wait until the delegate raising the point of order has been heard and the question of order has been disposed of, whereupon the delegate so interrupted may, if permitted, continue.

16. MOTION - SUBSTANCE TO BE STATED

A delegate seeking to propose an original motion or amendment shall state its substance before addressing the meeting thereon and, if so required by the President, shall put the motion or amendment in writing.

17. PRIORITY OF SPEAKERS

If two or more delegates wish to speak at the same time, the President shall decide who is entitled to priority.

18. PRESIDENT TO BE HEARD

Whenever the President signifies a desire to speak during a debate, any delegate speaking or offering to speak is to be silent, so that the President may be heard without interruption.

19. WITHDRAWAL OF MOTION

A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the mover with the consent of the meeting, which shall be signified without debate, and it shall not be competent for any delegate to speak upon it after the mover has asked permission for its withdrawal, unless such permission has been refused.

20. PRESIDENT MAY CALL TO ORDER

The President shall preserve order, and may call any delegate to order when holding an opinion that there shall be cause for so doing.

21. RULING BY PRESIDENT

The President shall decide all questions of order or practice. The decision shall be final and be accepted by the meeting without argument or comment unless in any particular case the meeting resolves that a different ruling shall be substituted for the ruling given by the President. Discussions shall be permitted on any such motion.

22. RESOLUTIONS

22.1 Except as otherwise provided in the Association Constitution and these Standing Orders, all motions concerning the affairs of the Association shall be passed by a simple majority.

22.2 Any matter considered by the Association at a Special Meeting shall not be passed unless having received an absolute majority.

23. NO DISCUSSION

Where there is no discussion on a motion, the President may deem the motion to be passed unless the meeting resolves otherwise.

24. PERMISSIBLE MOTIONS DURING DEBATE

24.1 When a motion is under debate, no further motion shall be moved except the following:

(a) that the motion be amended;

(b) that the meeting be adjourned;

(c) that the debate be adjourned;

(d) that the question be now put;

(e) that the meeting proceed with the next item of business; or

(f) that the meeting sits behind closed doors.

24.2 Any delegate who has not already spoken on the subject of a motion at the close of the speech of any other delegate, may move without notice any one of the motions listed in clause 24.1 (b)-(f) and, if the motion is seconded, it shall be put forthwith.

24.3 When a debate is adjourned, the delegate who moves the adjournment shall be the first to speak on the motion when the debate is resumed unless the delegate advises of no desire to speak on the motion. Where this occurs, the President shall then call for further speakers, with the exception of those delegates who have previously spoken (unless the meeting otherwise agrees).

25. RESCISSION OF RESOLUTION

25.1 At the same meeting

Unless a greater majority is required for a particular kind of decision under the Standing Orders (in which event that shall be the majority required), the Association may, by simple majority at the same meeting at which it is passed, rescind or alter a resolution if all delegates who were present at the time when the original resolution was passed are present.

25.2 At a Future Meeting

Unless a greater majority is required for a particular kind of decision under the Standing Orders (in which event that shall be the majority required), the Association may rescind or alter a resolution made at an earlier meeting:

(a) by simple majority, where the delegate intending to move the motion has, through the Chief Executive Officer, given written notice of the intended motion to each delegate at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting; or

(b) by absolute majority, in any other case.

26. METHOD OF TAKING VOTES

The President shall, in taking a vote on any motion or amendment, put the question first in the affirmative, and then in the negative and may do so as often as is necessary to enable formation and declaration of an opinion as to whether the affirmative or the negative has the majority on the voices or by a show of hands or by an electronic key pad voting system.

27. DIVISION

The result of voting openly is determined on the count of official voting cards and, immediately upon a vote being taken, a delegate may call for a division.

28. ALL DELEGATES TO VOTE

28.1 At meetings of the Association, a delegate present at the meeting when a question is put shall vote on the question.

28.2 Each delegate shall be entitled to exercise one deliberative vote on any matter considered.

29. PRESIDENT'S RIGHT TO VOTE

The President shall have a casting vote only.

30. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

30.1 In cases of urgent necessity or whilst the Association is sitting behind closed doors, any of these Standing Orders may be suspended on a motion duly made and seconded, but that motion shall not be declared carried unless a simple majority of the delegates voting on the question have voted in favour of the motion.

30.2 Any delegates moving the suspension of a Standing Order shall state the object of the motion, but discussion shall not otherwise take place.

31. NO ADVERSE REFLECTION ON ASSOCIATION

A delegate shall not reflect adversely upon a resolution of the Association, except on a motion that the resolution be rescinded.

32. NO ADVERSE REFLECTION ON DELEGATE

A delegate of the Association shall not reflect adversely upon the character or actions of another delegate nor impute any motive to a delegate unless the Association resolves, without debate, that the question then before the Association cannot otherwise be adequately considered.

33. MINUTES

33.1 The Chief Executive Officer of the Association is to cause minutes of the meeting to be kept and preserved.

33.2 The minutes of a meeting are to be submitted to the next Annual or Special General Meeting for confirmation.

33.3 Copies of the minutes will be supplied to all delegates prior to the meeting.

WALGA
Annual General Meeting
Minutes

Wednesday, 9 October 2024

Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre
21 Mounts Bay Road, Perth WA

1 OPENING

The Chair declared the meeting open at 2:58pm.

2 RECORD OF APOLOGIES

- Shire of Dowerin
- Shire of Carnarvon
- Shire of Merredin
- Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nil

4 ADOPTION OF AGM ASSOCIATION STANDING ORDERS

The Annual General Meeting Association Standing Orders were contained within the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Moved: **President Chris Mitchell JP, Shire of Broome**
Seconded: **President Cr Laurene Bonza, Shire of Dundas**

That the Annual General Meeting Association Standing Orders be adopted.

CARRIED

5 CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Minutes of the 2023 WALGA Annual General Meeting were contained within the Agenda, along with a report on the action taken on the 2023 AGM resolutions.

RESOLUTION

Moved: **Cr Karen Wheatland, City of Melville**
Seconded: **President Chris Antonio, Shire of Northam**

That the 2023 WALGA Annual General Meeting be confirmed as a true and correct record of proceedings.

CARRIED

6 ADOPTION OF ANNUAL REPORT

The 2023-2024 Annual Report, including the 2023-2024 Audited Financial Statements, was distributed to Members separately.

RESOLUTION

Moved: **President Paige McNeil, Shire of Mundaring**
Seconded: **President Chris Antonio, Shire of Northam**

That the 2023-2024 Annual Report, including the 2023-2024 Audited Financial Statements, be received.

CARRIED

7 CONSIDERATION OF EXECUTIVE AND MEMBER MOTIONS

7.1 AMENDMENTS TO THE CAT ACT 2011 - ALLOW LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO MAKE LOCAL LAWS TO CONTAIN CATS TO THE OWNER'S PROPERTY

Shire of Esperance and Shire of Dardanup

ALTERNATE MOTION

Moved: **President Cr Tyrell Gardiner, Shire of Dardanup**
Seconded: **President Cr Ronald Chambers, Shire of Esperance**

That WALGA:

1. **Advocate to the State Government to make changes to the *Cat Act 2011* to permit local laws to be made to the following effect:**
   a. **Cats are to be confined to the cat owner's residence premises;**
   b. **Cats within public places are to be under effective control and not to create a nuisance;**
   c. **Cats are not allowed on other private properties where the cat does not have the expressed permission of the occupier of that premises, and are not to create a nuisance;**
   d. **Cats are prohibited from ecologically sensitive areas designated as Cat Prohibited Areas by Absolute majority of Council, and clearly demarcated as such on a sign displayed at the area, without the need to modify the local law.**

2. **Develop a model Cat Local Law in consultation with and agreement with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, The Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, and the WA Feral Cat Working Group that provides for the following:**
   - **Cats are to be confined to the cat owner's residence premises, unless under effective control;**
   - **Cats within public places are to be under effective control and not to create a nuisance at all times;**
   - **Cats are not allowed on other private properties where the cat does not have the expressed permission of the occupier of that premises, and are not to create a nuisance; and**
   - **Cats are prohibited from ecologically sensitive areas designated as Cat Prohibited Areas by Absolute Majority of Council, and clearly demarcated as such on a sign displayed at the area, without the need to modify the local law.**

AMENDMENT

Moved: **Cr Karen Wheatland, City of Melville**
Seconded: **Cr Chontelle Stone, City of Cockburn**

Insert the words "Subject to Part 1", at the start of Part 2.

THE AMENDMENT WAS PUT AND CARRIED

THE SUBSTANTIVE MOTION AS AMENDED WAS PUT

That WALGA:

1. **Advocate to the State Government to make changes to the *Cat Act 2011* to permit local laws to be made to the following effect:**
   a. **Cats are to be confined to the cat owner's residence premises;**
   b. **Cats within public places are to be under effective control and not to create a nuisance;**
   c. **Cats are not allowed on other private properties where the cat does not have the expressed permission of the occupier of that premises, and are not to create a nuisance;**
   d. **Cats are prohibited from ecologically sensitive areas designated as Cat Prohibited Areas by Absolute majority of Council, and clearly demarcated as such on a sign displayed at the area, without the need to modify the local law.**

2. **Subject to Part 1, Develop a model Cat Local Law in consultation with and agreement with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, The Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, and the WA Feral Cat Working Group that provides for the following:**
   a. **Cats are to be confined to the cat owner's residence premises, unless under effective control;**
   b. **Cats within public places are to be under effective control and not to create a nuisance at all times;**
   c. **Cats are not allowed on other private properties where the cat does not have the expressed permission of the occupier of that premises, and are not to create a nuisance; and**
   d. **Cats are prohibited from ecologically sensitive areas designated as Cat Prohibited Areas by Absolute Majority of Council, and clearly demarcated as such on a sign displayed at the area, without the need to modify the local law.**

CARRIED

Two Local Governments submitted items on this matter. In accordance with WALGA's criteria for motions, when motions of a similar objective are received, they are to be consolidated.

CONSOLIDATED MOTION

That WALGA advocate to the State Government to make changes to the *Cat Act 2011* to permit local laws to be made to the following effect:

1. **Cats are to be confined to the cat owner's residence premises;**
2. **Cats within public places are to be under effective control and not to create a nuisance;**
3. **Cats are not allowed on other private properties where the cat does not have the expressed permission of the occupier of that premises, and are not to create a nuisance;**
4. **Cats are prohibited from ecologically sensitive areas designated as Cat Prohibited Areas by Absolute majority of Council, and clearly demarcated as such on a sign displayed at the area, without the need to modify the local law.**

SHIRE OF ESPERANCE SUBMISSION:

MOTION

That WALGA request the State Government make changes to the *Cat Act 2011* to allow Local Governments to make local laws to contain cats to the owner's property.

MEMBER COMMENT

The Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation has advised the Shire of its reasons why a Local Government cannot create a local law to deal with wandering cats or cats that are creating a nuisance.

Local Governments are therefore unable to enact local laws to effectively deal with cats to meet the expectations of the community due to inconsistencies with the *Cat Act 2011*.

Amendments therefore need to be made to the *Cat Act 2011* to allow the effective management of cats.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

The Motion generally aligns with current WALGA advocacy in relation to a review of the *Cat Act 2011*:

> *That the Local Government sector advocates for a commitment from the State Government…to prioritise reforms to the Cat Act 2011, in accordance with the Statutory Review undertaken and tabled in the State Parliament on 27 November 2019.*

The 2019 Review included proposals that penalties should be incurred when cats wander/trespass on property without consent or cats should be confined to their property.

SHIRE OF DARDANUP SUBMISSION:

MOTION

That WALGA develop a model Cat Local Law in consultation and agreement with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation and the WA Cat Feral Working Group that provides for the following:

1. Cats are to be confined to the cat owner's residence premises, unless under effective control;
2. Cats within public places are to be under effective control and not to create a nuisance at all times;
3. Cats are not allowed on other private properties where the cat does not have the expressed permission of the occupier of that premises, and are not to create a nuisance;
4. Cats are prohibited from ecologically sensitive areas designated as Cat Prohibited Areas by Absolute Majority of Council, and clearly demarcated as such on a sign displayed at the area, without the need to modify the local law.

MEMBER COMMENT

The Shire of Dardanup in 2022 attempted to bring its local law in line with that of other Local Governments where provisions have been included that expressly require cat owners to have effective control of their cats, and that makes it an offence for a cat to be in other places, where the occupier of that place has not given approval.

At its meeting of 25th of January 2023, the Shire of Dardanup resolved [09-23] as follows:

THAT Council:

1. *In accordance with Section 3.12 of the Local Government Act 1995 approves the advertising of the proposed 'Shire of Dardanup Cats Local Law 2023' [Appendix ORD: 12.4.2C] in order to seek community comment.*
2. *Provides a copy of the proposed Local Law and public notice to the Minister for Local Government; and*
3. *After the close of the public consultation period, requests the Chief Executive Officer to submit a report on any submissions received on the proposed Local Law to enable Council to consider the submissions made and to determine whether to make the Local Law in accordance with section 3.12(4).*

The Local Law was advertised, and no public submissions were received. A Submission from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries were received and considered by Council in November 2023. Council resolved [273-23] as follows:

THAT Council:

1. *Receives the submission received from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries in respect of the Shire of Dardanup Cats Local Law 2023.*
2. *Notes that there were no public submissions received in respect of the Shire of Dardanup Cats Local Law 2023.*
3. *By Absolute Majority decision, adopts the Shire of Dardanup Cats Local Law 2023 [Appendix ORD: 12.4.1D] inclusive of the following minor amendments:*
   - *Clause 1.1: Citation changed to italics;*
   - *Clause 1.4: Changed both the citation title and "Government Gazette" to italics.;*
   - *Clause 1.5: In the definition of Act, changed the citation to italics;*
   - *The words ", in the opinion of an authorised person," deleted from Clause 2.1(1); Clause 2.2(1)(b) and Clause 2.4(2).*
   - *Clause 3.1(1) Amended to give clarity that the Shire acknowledges the local law process in the designation of cat prohibited areas by adding the words "after following the process for amending a local law pursuant to the Local Government Act." after the words 'Schedule 3';*
   - *Clause 4.8 Conditions – amend subclause (1)(a) to read: (a) each cat kept on the premises to be kept so as not to create a nuisance; and*
   - *Clause 4.8 Conditions – deletes subclause (1)(b) that read "(b) that the premises must be adequately fenced (and premises will be taken not to be adequately fenced if there is more than one escape of a cat from the premises);" ; and renumber the following subclauses accordingly.*
4. *Publishes a copy of the adopted local law in the Government Gazette.*
5. *Gives a copy of the adopted gazette ready Local Law to the Minister for Local Government.*

6. *After the local law has been published in the Gazette, gives local public notice as per section 1.7 of the Local Government Act 1995 advising:*
    - *The title of the local law;*
    - *Summarizing the purpose and effect of the local law;*
    - *Specifying the day on which the local law comes into operation; and*
    - *Advising the location of copies of where the local law may be inspected or obtained.*
7. *Supplies copies of the local law, Explanatory Memorandum, Statutory Procedures Checklist and other supporting material in accordance with Ministerial Directions, to the WA Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation within 10 working days of the gazettal publication date of the local law.*

The Joint Standing Committee in Delegated Legislation (the Committee) considered the Shire of Dardanup Cats Local Law 2023 at its meeting held 13th of March 2024 and outlined that the Committee believed the proposed local law is contrary to the *Cat Act 2011*. The Committee therefore requires that Council agree to undertaking amendments to the Local Law at its meeting on 27th of March 2024 and by 3rd of April 2024.

The Committee requests the following undertakings:

1. *Within 6 months:*
    - *delete the definition of **effective control** in clause 1.5*
    - *delete clause 2.2*
    - *amend clause 4.4(f) to ensure it is not inconsistent with the Cat Act 2011*
    - *correct the typographical error in the clause reference beneath the heading to Schedule 3.*
2. *All consequential amendments arising from undertaking 1 will be made.*
3. *Clauses 2.2 and 4.4(f) will not be enforced in a manner contrary to undertaking 1.*
4. *Where the local law is made publicly available by the Shire, whether in hard copy or electronic form, ensure that it is accompanied by a copy of the undertaking.*

Whilst Council in March resolved to undertake the changes required by the Committee, Council in July 2024 when presented with the amendment local law, did not initiate the making of the amendment local law.

Officers have written to the Committee, providing it with the outcome of the Council decision. At the time of writing this report the Committee's response had not yet been received.

There are no direct legal implications of seeking WALGA form a position on the local law, however, should the motion be successful and WALGA is able to convince the State Government of the merits, then the motion may lead to possible changes to State Government Policy and Legislation.

Cat Act 2011

The authority for a Local Government to create a local law under the *Cat Act 2011* is provided in section 79 of the *Cat Act 2011*. The *Cat Act 2011* sets out the requirements inter alia for registration and sterilisation of cats, as well as the requirements for cat management

facilities. The Cat Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for cats to be microchipped and registered, as well as the approval requirements for cat breeders.

In the paragraphs that follow, the Shire of Dardanup will not name any of these Local Governments that have Cat local laws in place, so as to not dob these Local Governments in with the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation (the Committee). The Shire understands that the Committee may require those Local Governments that have local laws with such provisions, to amend these local laws in future, in order to ensure it is in line with the Committee's direction as given to the Shire of Dardanup. For that reason, this report will refer more broadly to other Local Governments within Western Australia that have such local laws.

Within Western Australia there are a number of Local Governments that have Cat Local Laws that require cats to be under effective control when in a public place. Some of these Cat Local Laws also make it an offence for a cat to be in a place, other than a public place, without the express permission of the occupier of that place. These local laws also require cats not to create a nuisance in either a public place, or other places. There are also Property and Public Places Local Laws, that allow Council's to make designations of areas, by absolute majority and to erect a sign to give effect to such designations.

These provisions seem sensible and require that a cat cannot simply go onto someone else's private property without their permission, that cats are under effective control in public places and are prohibited from entering areas of sensitive ecological values. The WA Feral Cat Working Group provided the Shire of Dardanup with an information sheet with reference to existing Cat Local Laws (names of Local Governments redacted), and a legal opinion received from Castledine Gregory in relation to this. This also includes reference to the WA Labor Party's party Platform for 2023.

WALGA's support for the development of a model Cat Local Law that incorporates these provisions as standard provisions are sought so as to ensure this is accepted in advance by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation. By doing this, it will save a lot of frustration for Local Governments having to go through a local law development and/or review process and will also ensure that adequate provisions to control cats are included in the local law. This will assist greatly in dealing with complaints from residents in relation to the nuisances caused by cats and will also assist greatly in enforcement efforts by Local Government rangers.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

Many Local Governments have made Cat Local Laws prohibiting cats from being on land under the care, control and management of the Local Government, as currently provided for under the *Cat Act 2011*.

It is established through numerous disallowance motions by Parliament's Delegated Legislation Committee that the *Cat Act 2011* does not provide the requisite heads of power for a Local Government to make Cat Local Laws requiring cats to be confined to the owner's residence or being prevented from roaming in any public place throughout the district.

Although not currently achievable, the intent of this Motion can be considered upon successful advocacy for a review of the *Cat Act 2011* and provision of the necessary heads of power that allow Cat Local Laws to prevent cats from wandering.

7.2 ADVOCACY FOR LEGISLATIVE REFORMS TO COUNTER LAND-BANKING

Town of Bassendean

RESOLUTION

Moved: **Mayor Kath Hamilton, Town of Bassendean**
Seconded: **Cr Jennie Carter, Town of Bassendean**

That WALGA:

1. **In line with its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan to provide a Sector Vision that enables Local Governments to be agile enhancing community wellbeing and economic prosperity, develops a draft Advocacy Position for Legislative Reforms to address Land-Banking practices including, but not limited to consideration of the following:**
   a. **Prohibiting demolition of habitable housing until a Development Application (DA) has been approved;**
   b. **development applications that result in the demolition of existing habitable housing be time limited so that reasonable time periods for project commencement and project completion are conditions of the development application.**
   c. **provide Local Authorities with the ability to apply a "penalty fee" over and above any differential rating on vacant land, where the time conditions on the development application in (b) have not been met.**
   d. **Development of a mandatory register of unoccupied residential properties, with the ability of Local Governments to apply rates or levies on long term unoccupied residential properties, which could increase incrementally over time.**

2. **Distributes the draft "WALGA Advocacy Position for Legislative Reforms to counter Land-Banking" to all West Australian Local Authorities for comment, and that a subsequent report be provided for consideration by WALGA Zones.**

CARRIED

MEMBER COMMENT

The Victorian Government recently introduced the ability to tax long term unoccupied residential properties (i.e. a residential property left vacant for six months or more in a year). Victorian Councils welcomed these changes to "Vacant Residential Land Tax" (VRLT) emphasising that it is a significant step forward in addressing longstanding land-banking issues that plague many municipalities.

Tighter controls that prevent the demolition of viable housing stock prior to Development Approvals (DA) assists in closing a loophole, that has to date, increased the numbers of long term unsightly vacant blocks negatively affecting the amenity of suburbs and towns. The introduction of a levy on long term unoccupied residential homes is designed to encourage occupation or rental of those homes. In turn DA approvals that subsequently require the demolition of viable housing stock should require commencement and completion of the new development within reasonable timelines.

This will alleviate the strain on the housing market by avoiding premature demolition with the intention to retain viable housing for occupancy for as long as possible, leading to a positive impact on rental availability and affordability. All of this can be accomplished without negatively affecting the development potential of a site.

Reference Documents
Link to media "New legislation to boost housing supply and combat land-banking" by Shire of Maribyrnong: https://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/News/New-legislation-to-boost-housing-supply-and-combat-land-banking.

Link to media "How the world is tackling issue of empty homes" by The Guardian: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/02/how-the-world-is-tackling-issue-of-empty-homes .

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

Part 1a and 1b
Under Schedule 2 Clause 61 (1) of the Planning and Development (Local Planning Scheme) Regulations 2015 (LPS Regulations) the demolition of a single house, and any associated structure, are exempt from requiring development approval, unless the proposal is located in a heritage-protected place. Further demolition works are regulated by the *Building Act 2011* and the Building Regulations 2012, and thus the removal of a dwelling would require the issuance of a building permit before demolition is undertaken. Local Governments as permit authorities are required to issue building permits within statutory timeframes. There are limited reasons why a Local Government can refuse to issue a building permit, including where the necessary development approval has not been issued. The proposal outlined in the Town of Bassendean's motion would require amendments to both the planning and building regulatory frameworks.

It should also be noted that under the LPS Regulations and State Planning Policy 3.1 Residential Design Codes (SPP3.1) most proposals for single houses are also exempt from requiring development approval. Most proposals for grouped and multiple dwellings do require development approval.

Local Governments are able to limit the validity period of a development approval and a building permit, with substantial commencement being required before the expiry date to ensure the ongoing validity of the approval. Common lengths of approval are 24 and 48 months.

Part 1c
The LPS Regulations Schedule.2, cl.71 provides that an approved development must be substantially commenced…if no period is specified in the approval, within the period of two years commencing on the date the determination is made or the period specified or as approved, with the approval lapsing if development is not substantially commenced within the determined period.

Part (c) of the proposal, appears to seek a modified penalty to be prescribed in Planning and Development Regulation 42, enabling an infringement notice to be issued, where residential development is not substantially commenced before expiry of the approval period.

It should be noted that if the time period for commencement of development expires, the approval expires and the development application process would need to restart if the developer so chooses to proceed. Applying a penalty to an expired application would likely require amendments to the LPS Regulations and potentially the *Planning and Development Act 2005*. The modified penalty under the planning framework is currently set at $500.

Part 1d

Proposal for mandatory register of unoccupied residential properties

Implementing the proposed register would require legislative amendment and regulatory provisions to enable collection of evidence that a habitable residential property is unoccupied continually for a prescribed period, to inform entry of a property into the register.

Proposal for application of a differential rate to residential improved and long-term unoccupied properties

- Local Government Act section 6.33(1)(b) already enables a differential rate to be levied for a purpose for which the land is held or used as determined by the Local Government e.g. Some Local Governments currently levy a differential rate for "residential improved and vacant" property.
- It is unclear if section 6.33 provisions can be interpreted as enabling Local Government to levy scaled differential rates applicable to specified timeframes that an improved residential property has been unoccupied. This may require confirmation from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries subject to advice from the State Solicitor's Office. If section 6.33 cannot be interpreted to enable this, then a legislative amendment would be required.

Proposal for a "levy" to be applied to long term unoccupied residential properties.

Local Government Act section 6.16 limits Local Government imposition of fees and charges to goods or services provided the Local Government.

This proposal intends a penalty for long-term unoccupied residential property, which under written law would require legislative amendment to create an offence and prescribe a modified penalty / court proceedings.

7.3 ADVOCACY FOR EXPANSION OF DIFFERENTIAL RATING TO INCLUDE LONG TERM UNOCCUPIED COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS (PROPERTY ACTIVATION LEVY)

Town of Bassendean

RESOLUTION

Moved: **Mayor Kath Hamilton, Town of Bassendean**
Seconded: **Cr Dakota Krispyn, Shire of Harvey**

That WALGA:

1. **Explores expanding Item 2.1.8 Differential Rates of its Advocacy Position Statement to consider inclusion of the following:**
   a. **Advocating for Local Authorities to have the ability to apply a differential rate to long term unoccupied commercial buildings; and**
   b. **Developing legislation that requires commercial property owners to demonstrate that in order to avoid the imposition of a differential rate on unoccupied commercial property the property;**
      i. **is commercially habitable with annual investment in maintenance**
      ii. **remains connected to essential services**
      iii. **is undergoing periodic compliance checks and,**
      iv. **has a plan in place to redevelop or make operational.**
   c. **Develop legislation that enables Local Government to provide exemptions to the above differential rating based on an approved periodic activation program for the vacant commercial property by the Local Government.**

2. **Distributes the draft expanded WALGA Advocacy Position for Differential Rates to counter long term unoccupied commercial buildings to all West Australian Local Authorities for comment, and that a subsequent report be made available for consideration by WALGA Zones.**

CARRIED

MEMBER COMMENT

The Northern Territory Government enabled Darwin to apply a "*Property Activation Levy"* to address long term vacant land or unoccupied commercial buildings, endeavouring to activate or beautify properties that generally have a negative impact the overall amenity and vibrancy of streetscapes. The Property Activation Levy incorporates the following:

- Owners of unoccupied commercial property are provided a reasonable grace period to activate their property without incurring the levy.
- Any property meeting the minimum number of listed activation options does not incur the surcharge levy applicable only to long term unoccupied commercial buildings.
- Revenue raised from the Property Activation Levy, is used on revitalisation projects of public places and land.

The purpose of the property activation levy is to encourage owners of unoccupied commercial buildings to activate and maintain their properties to improve commercial precincts with a focus on the following objectives:

- To improve the amenity of commercial precincts for residents, workers and visitors / tourists.
- Support adjoining business operators by encouraging activation of all commercial premises within precincts.
- Improve the liveability, attractiveness, safety and cultural activity of these precincts.
- Encourage the commercial precincts to thrive.

Some of the suggested activation (that must include ongoing maintenance) for unoccupied commercial premises are listed below, noting this list is not exhaustive:

- Inset graphics, art displays or other visual installations on ground level external windows and walls.
- Repaint or retile and improve ground level frontage and associated awnings over the footpath.
- Include rotating shop displays (for example Christmas, Easter, local events) or community spaces, such as for group activities, classes or study areas.
- Where setback from the road reserve exists, undertake improved landscaping.

Reference Documents:

Link to the "*Property Activation Levy*" document is below, and outlines a diverse number of suggested options for the activation and beautification of vacant land or unoccupied mixed use premises:
https://treasury.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/901495/derelict-vacant-property-levy.pdf.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

WALGA's Advocacy Position 2.1.8 Differential Rates is below:

Position Statement	Section 6.33 of the *Local Government Act 1995* should be reviewed in contemplation of time-based differential rating, to encourage development of land.
Background	Concern at the amount of vacant land remaining in an undeveloped state for an extensive period of time and holding up development opportunities.

Local Government Act section 6.33(1)(b) already enables a differential rate to be levied for a purpose for which the land is held or used as determined by the Local Government e.g. Some Local Governments currently levy a differential rate for "residential improved and vacant" property. This can be extended to "commercial improved" and "commercial undeveloped".

7.4 ACTION ON ASBESTOS FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Shire of Dundas

RESOLUTION

Moved: **President Cr Laurene Bonza, Shire of Dundas**
Seconded: **Cr Erin Sergeant, City of Kwinana**

That WALGA advocates for the state and federal governments to take urgent action to assist Local Governments and their communities in safely removing asbestos, including providing targeting funding programs.

CARRIED

MEMBER COMMENT

The Asbestos Safety and Eradication Agency (ASEA) 2024-2030 Strategic Plan identifies, more than in previous plans, the risk posed by the increasing degradation of asbestos and the need for action. State governments are currently considering the plan, but any adoption of the plan must be supported by additional funding and support from Local Governments and their communities.

There are a range of ways that asbestos management impacts Local Governments. In WALGA's Submission on the ASEA Strategic Plan, it was identified:

> *Asbestos management is an ongoing and increasing challenge for Local Government, particularly asbestos management during and following emergency events, illegal disposal of asbestos into the environment through Local Government services, and the regulation of the asbestos removal industry.*
>
> ***Local Governments in regional and remote areas face additional significant and complex challenges**, including the limited availability and cost of suitably qualified contractors, large areas of asbestos contaminated land requiring remediation and limited ability to fund asbestos removal and communities where property with asbestos is under, or not, insured.*

A whole government package of support and funding is needed to address this issue and ensure that communities are not impacted and that asbestos is removed and not just managed through legislation.

The Asbestos National Strategic Plan (ANSP) for the 2024-2030 consultation aims to address the pressing issue of asbestos-related diseases in Australia. However, the current focus of the consultation is primarily on compliance rather than actively pursuing the funding and comprehensive removal of asbestos, which is crucial for safeguarding public health.

Australia grapples with one of the highest rates of mesothelioma globally, primarily caused by asbestos exposure. Western Australia faces a higher incidence rate of mesothelioma compared to other regions, emphasising the urgency of effective asbestos management.

The ANSP endeavours to enhance asbestos awareness and promote its safe management, removal, and disposal nationwide; it is all compliance-based. It aims to eliminate asbestos-related diseases through collaboration between the Australian government, states, and territories. The plan's key objectives include eradicating asbestos-related diseases, supporting affected individuals, and advocating for a global ban on asbestos production and trade.

To implement the ANSP for 2024-2030, the Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency (ASSEA) seeks endorsement from states and territories, including Western Australia. Should Western Australia endorse the plan, a jurisdictional action plan aligned with the ANSP would be devised to address state-specific priorities and challenges.

However, the current consultation lacks a strong emphasis on funding and actively pursuing asbestos removal to improve the ANSP and ensure a more comprehensive approach; it's imperative to advocate for increased funding and prioritise the active removal and safe disposal of asbestos across affected areas of Western Australia.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

The ASEA Strategic Plan has identified an increasing need to take action on asbestos. As the material degrades over time there is an increasing human health risk and costs associated with removal escalate. As identified in the AGM item, WALGA's recent Submission on the ASEA Strategic Plan noted that Asbestos management is an ongoing and increasing challenge for Local Governments, particularly in regional areas, and additional focus is needed. The approach of providing targeted funding and support would assist regional Local Government to address issues such as limited availability and cost of suitably qualified contractors and ability to fund asbestos removal.

7.5 ADDRESSING THE IMPRACTICALITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FUNDING DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND GOVERNMENT REGIONAL OFFICER HOUSING

Shire of Dundas

RESOLUTION

Moved: **President Cr Laurene Bonza, Shire of Dundas**
Seconded: **President Cr Kirrilee Warr, Shire of Chapman Valley**

That WALGA advocates to the State Government for the State Government to fully fund construction and maintenance of Department of Communities (Social) and Government Regional Officer Housing.

CARRIED

MEMBER COMMENT

All remote and regional Local Governments face challenges in attracting and retaining staff which is also true of State Govt Depts, such as Police and the Education Dept. The provision of good housing is critical in attracting staff to these areas. Any Local Governments that are exposed to the boom-bust cycle of mining, face significant challenges related to the funding and provision of the Department of Community and Government Regional Officers' Housing (GROH). The volatile boom and bust cycles of the mining industry creates an even more financially risky environment for Local Governments to invest in housing. Most remote and regional Local Government areas are smaller and have the least capacity to raise funding through rates due their smaller population bases. Budgets are already stretched to provide community infrastructure for these communities.

- Boom and bust cycles in resource-dependent communities: The mining industry is inherently volatile, with periods of rapid growth (booms) followed by significant downturns (busts). This cycle profoundly affects local economies and property values. When Local Governments invest in housing during a boom, they face the risk of property values plummeting during a bust. Currently, the nickel crisis is an example of how quickly and severely property values can decline, leaving Local Governments with significant financial losses and underutilized assets.
- Impractical Investment: Local Governments are not in a position to absorb the financial risks associated with building houses with a long-term, 'lease back' agreement to recover their investment. Housing investments should be stable and predictable, (which is not the case in resource-dependent communities). If smaller Local Governments are seeking to borrow funds for these builds, they are then denied an opportunity to borrow for other community infrastructure projects that may be more of a local priority.
- State Responsibility: The function to supply and maintain Department of Communities and GROH housing in remote communities is a State Govt responsibility and should be funded through state taxes and royalties.

All remote and regional Local Governments urge WALGA to advocate for the State government to fully fund construction and maintenance of Department of Communities and GROH housing. Local Governments should not bear the financial risks associated with the provision of social and State agency housing. Funding of this housing by Local Governments impacts their sustainability and ability to fund their core responsibilities for their communities such as, asset management, staff retention, and roads.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

The GROH Program provides housing for public sector employees providing essential services in regional and remote locations to attract and retain staff. The Department of Communities uses partnerships to increase supply of GROH housing in addition to its own capital investment and refurbishment programs. Partnerships include build to lease agreements, which Local Governments are eligible to apply to. The Department of Communities also provides subsidised rental accommodation to eligible low-income households across Western Australia commonly referred to as public or social housing. Public housing is owned and managed directly by the Department of Communities. Social housing can be owned and or maintained by a third party, typically Community Housing Providers.

In a 2024 WALGA survey, 100 percent of respondents viewed housing as a major challenge in their Local Government area and 64 percent stating that the lack of Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH) housing is “very challenging” or “extremely challenging”.

Housing supply continues to be a priority issue for both the Australian and State Government. The Australian Government’s 2024-2 budget included an additional $1 billion to states and territories to deliver new housing including for connecting essential services such as water, power, sewerage and roads. This investment underpins the Federal Government commitment to increasing housing supply through the National Housing Accord, Housing Australia Future Fund and Social Housing Accelerator initiatives. The WA Government committed an additional $43.8 million to the GROH program in the 2024-25 State Budget. The State budget also included $400 million to expand the Social and Affordable Housing Investment Fund and $179 million for maintenance of existing social and GROH housing.

WALGA is advocating for the State Government to work with the Local Government sector on the delivery of these investments, including ensuring member views are considered in relation to critical housing need. WALGA’s 2025 State Election platform calls for State Government to create a comprehensive long-term strategy to address the entrenched shortage of social, affordable and key worker housing and to undertake a review of the GROH program to improve coordination and responsiveness to regional housing needs and provide Local Government’s with greater scope to invest in GROH housing.

7.6 ADVOCACY FOR ACCESSIBILITY

Town of Victoria Park

RESOLUTION

Moved: **Mayor Karen Vernon, Town of Victoria Park**
Seconded: **Cr Jordan Wright, City of Wanneroo**

That WALGA develops an Advocacy Position calling for the WA Government to adopt the Liveable Housing Design Standards for accessibility as part of the National Construction Code, consistent with WALGA's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan Sector Vision to enable inclusive Local Governments enhancing community wellbeing and economic prosperity.

CARRIED

MEMBER COMMENT

Advocacy for adoption of National Construction Code minimum accessibility standards:

- Several years ago, at the direction of Commonwealth and State Ministers, the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) undertook a rigorous consultation process with experts and stakeholders to develop minimum accessibility requirements for Class 1a buildings (houses) and Class 2 sole-occupancy units (apartments) in the National Construction Code (NCC). The objective was to ensure that housing is designed to meet the needs of the community, including those with disability and older Australians.
- In 2021, minimum accessibility provisions were introduced for residential housing and apartments into the NCC based on Liveable Housing Design Guidelines (LHDG) silver standards.
- The NCC 2022 has seven minimum standards ensuring all new homes are accessible, with modifications including step-free entrances and showers, and wider doors and corridors that can accommodate wheelchairs and walking aids.
- The 2023 Disability Royal Commission Report recommended that all states and territories should adopt the minimum LHDG standards as soon as possible.
- In 2024, the ABCB has estimated that the additional cost to implement the minimum accessible design standards is between $2,900 and $4,400 per home, depending on the type of dwelling. The features covered by the LHDG standards are not a big ask and our communities will end up with better quality housing that is future-proof.
- To date, the WA Government, along with NSW, are the only states who have not adopted the NCC minimum LHDG silver standards.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

The National Construction Code (NCC) is a uniform set of technical provisions for the design and construction of buildings and other structures, and plumbing and drainage systems throughout Australia.

The NCC is produced and maintained by the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) on behalf of the Commonwealth and all State and Territory government and is given legal effect through legislation at the state and territory level. The NCC is reviewed every 3 years, based on required regulatory practices, industry research, public feedback and policy directions.

The goal of the NCC is to enable the achievement of nationally consistent, minimum necessary standards of relevant safety (including structural safety and safety from fire), health, amenity and sustainability objectives efficiently. The NCC has traditionally included a part focused on access for people with a disability, setting out deemed-to-comply solutions and general building requirements for buildings based on their classification, for class 2-9 buildings. For the 2022 edition of the NCC new requirements titled the 'livable housing design' requirements, based on the Livable Housing Design Guidelines (silver level), were incorporated into both volumes of the NCC.

These requirements apply to all dwelling types, including new Class 1a (single house) buildings. The purpose of these changes was to help increase the stock of housing that is adaptable and better able to meet the needs of older people and people with mobility limitations. The Deemed-to-Comply provision of the new requirements, called the ABCB Livable Housing Design Standard, covers:

- Providing step-free access to the home.
- Making doorways and hallways easier to use for people with reduced mobility.
- Providing extra space in the bathroom and toilet.
- Wall reinforcing in the bathroom and toilet, to make it easier to install grabrails if needed in the future.

The NCC is implemented into Western Australia's building regulatory system through amendments to the Building Regulations 2012, with the NCC 2022 commencing operation in WA on 1 May 2023, following a 12-month transition period. In announcing the implementation of the NCC 2022, the State Government indicated that it had considered the current challenges facing the building and construction industry and as a result decided that some provisions, including energy efficiency, would have a longer transitional period and that the mandatory liveable (accessible) housing provisions would not be applied in Western Australia. In making this determination the Government indicated it would continue to monitor the situation in the building industry and the housing market. New South Wales and South Australia also determined to not support the new requirements. There is no indication, at time of writing, that the State Government has progressed in its consideration of the livable housing design requirements.

WALGA's Building Act and Regulations Advocacy Position

Assessments of the effectiveness of building control systems across Australia have recognised that there is diminishing public confidence in the building and construction industry, and that change is required to ensure buildings are safe and perform to expected standards. Now more than ever the focus is on Local Government building departments to deliver good governance, local leadership and sustainable services that meet the needs of their communities whilst supporting local jobs and economic growth.

The Association has the following endorsed positions:

1. Support the retention of Local Government as the primary permit authority in Western Australia for decisions made under the *Building Act 2011*.
2. Supports mandatory inspections for all classes of buildings, however, Local Government should not be solely responsible for all mandatory inspections.

3. Advocate for the State Government to urgently prioritise legislative reform that addresses systemic failures in the current building control model and to provide clarification on the role of Local Government in building control to ensure building legislation supports the following objectives:
    a. Quality buildings that are cost efficient.
    b. Functional, safe and environmentally friendly buildings.
    c. Good decision making in all aspects of building.
    d. Efficiency and effectiveness in building management, administration and regulation.
    e. Openness and accountability with respect to all building matters.
    f. Recognition of the rights and responsibilities of all parties in building matters in an equitable manner.
4. Existing and proposed building control related fees and charges to be cost recovery for Local Government.
5. WALGA will work with members, state agencies and industry groups to develop training opportunities and to promote the Local Government building surveying profession to ensure sustainability of Local Government building control services.
6. WALGA supports the Australian Building Codes Boards Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings by supporting Local Governments to meet community strategic objectives of a net zero carbon future by 2050 through work with members, state agencies and industry groups.

8 CLOSURE

Upon the completion of business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3:51pm.

Attachment 3: Action Taken on Resolutions of the 2024 Annual General Meeting

Resolution	Comment/Update
7.1 Amendments to the *Cat Act 2011* – Allow Local Governments to make Local Laws to contain cats to the owner's property **That WALGA:** **1. Advocate to the State Government to make changes to the *Cat Act 2011* to permit local laws to be made to the following effect:** **a. Cats are to be confined to the cat owner's residence premises;** **b. Cats within public places are to be under effective control and not to create a nuisance;** **c. Cats are not allowed on other private properties where the cat does not have the expressed permission of the occupier of that premises, and are not to create a nuisance;** **d. Cats are prohibited from ecologically sensitive areas designated as Cat Prohibited Areas by Absolute majority of Council, and clearly demarcated as such on a sign displayed at the area, without the need to modify the local law.** **2. Subject to Part 1, Develop a model Cat Local Law in consultation with and agreement with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, The Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation, and the WA Feral Cat Working Group that provides for the following:** **a. Cats are to be confined to the cat owner's residence premises, unless under effective control;**	State Council endorsed this item in December 2024. WALGA's relevant Advocacy Position (position 2.12.1 Review of the *Cat Act 2011* and *Dog Act 1976*) has been updated. Correspondence has been sent to the Minister for Local Government requesting the CAT Act be reviewed to provide Local Governments with the ability to contain cats on an owner's property. In addition, work has commenced on developing a template Cat Local Law to assist Local Government to make local laws to the extent of the current local law-making powers.

b. Cats within public places are to be under effective control and not to create a nuisance at all times; c. Cats are not allowed on other private properties where the cat does not have the expressed permission of the occupier of that premises, and are not to create a nuisance; and d. Cats are prohibited from ecologically sensitive areas designated as Cat Prohibited Areas by Absolute Majority of Council, and clearly demarcated as such on a sign displayed at the area, without the need to modify the local law.	
7.2 Advocacy for Legislative Reforms to Counter Land-Banking **That WALGA:** **1. In line with its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan to provide a Sector Vision that enables Local Governments to be agile enhancing community wellbeing and economic prosperity, develops a draft Advocacy Position for Legislative Reforms to address Land-Banking practices including, but not limited to consideration of the following:** **a. Prohibiting demolition of habitable housing until a Development Application (DA) has been approved;** **b. development applications that result in the demolition of existing habitable housing be time limited so that reasonable time periods for project commencement and project completion are conditions of the development application.** **c. provide Local Authorities with the ability to apply a "penalty fee" over and above any differential rating on vacant**	This item was referred by State Council to the Environment Policy Team and the Governance Policy Team for further work in December 2024. Regarding the planning related items within this resolution: The demolition of single houses is generally a form of development exempt from requiring development approval, and only a demolition permit is required for the complete or partial demolition, dismantling or removal of a building or an incidental structure. The current planning and building legislation do not allow the conditioning of approval or refusal of a building permit in a manner proposed by the AGM resolution. In respect to items 1. c and d and item 2, a legal consultant has been contracted to review the legislation and suggest ways to address these recommendations. A combined meeting of the Governance and Environment Policy teams has been scheduled for 12 September 2025 with a view to prepare a State Council Agenda item for the December 2025 meeting.

land, where the time conditions on the development application in (b) have not been met. **d. Development of a mandatory register of unoccupied residential properties, with the ability of Local Governments to apply rates or levies on long term unoccupied residential properties, which could increase incrementally over time.** **2. Distributes the draft "WALGA Advocacy Position for Legislative Reforms to counter Land-Banking" to all West Australian Local Authorities for comment, and that a subsequent report be provided for consideration by WALGA Zones.**	
7.3 Advocacy for Expansion of Differential Rating to include Long Term Unoccupied Commercial Buildings (Property Activation Levy) **That WALGA:** **1. Explores expanding Item 2.1.8 Differential Rates of its Advocacy Position Statement to consider inclusion of the following:** **a. Advocating for Local Authorities to have the ability to apply a differential rate to long term unoccupied commercial buildings; and** **b. Developing legislation that requires commercial property owners to demonstrate that in order to avoid the imposition of a differential rate on unoccupied commercial property the property;** **i. is commercially habitable with annual investment in maintenance** **ii. remains connected to essential services**	This item was referred by State Council to the Governance Policy Team for further work in December 2024. A legal consultant has been contracted to review the legislation and suggest ways to address these recommendations. A combined meeting of the Governance and Environment Policy teams has been scheduled for 12 September 2025 with a view to prepare a State Council Agenda item for the December 2025 meeting.

iii. is undergoing periodic compliance checks and, iv. has a plan in place to redevelop or make operational. c. Develop legislation that enables Local Government to provide exemptions to the above differential rating based on an approved periodic activation program for the vacant commercial property by the Local Government. 2. Distributes the draft expanded WALGA Advocacy Position for Differential Rates to counter long term unoccupied commercial buildings to all West Australian Local Authorities for comment, and that a subsequent report be made available for consideration by WALGA Zones.	
7.4 Action on Asbestos for Western Australia **That WALGA advocates for the state and federal governments to take urgent action to assist Local Governments and their communities in safely removing asbestos, including providing targeting funding programs.**	This item was referred by State Council to the Environment Policy Team for further work in December 2024. WALGA is engaging at the State and National level on this issue, including through membership of the WA Interagency Asbestos Group and nationally the Asbestos Safety Eradication Agency reference group and has raised the issues impacting Local Governments in relation to safe removal and disposal, including ensuring statewide options.
7.5 Addressing the Impracticality of Local Governments Funding Department of Communities and Government Regional Officer Housing **That WALGA advocates to the State Government for the State Government to fully fund construction and maintenance of Department of Communities (Social) and Government Regional Officer Housing.**	This item was referred by State Council to the People and Place Policy Team for further work in December 2024. The People and Place Policy Team considered this item in March and resolved to address the item as part of WALGA's advocacy approach on this issue.

7.6 Advocacy for Accessibility **That WALGA develops an Advocacy Position calling for the WA Government to adopt the Liveable Housing Design Standards for accessibility as part of the National Construction Code, consistent with WALGA's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan Sector Vision to enable inclusive Local Governments enhancing community wellbeing and economic prosperity.**	This item was referred by State Council to the Environment Policy Team for further work in December 2024. Liveable Housing Design Standard as part of the National Construction Code provides a set of technical provisions that if complied with enable dwellings to better meet the needs of the community, including older people and people with mobility limitations. The code specifies seven minimum standards to ensure all new homes are accessible with modifications including step-free entrances and showers and wider doors and corridors that can accommodate wheelchairs and walking aids. All states enact the NCC through state legislation and regulation. A range of states are taking different approaches in terms of adopting the liveable housing requirements, but at time of writing all states except NSW and Western Australia have adopted the liveable housing provisions. The NCC 2022 only became operational in WA on 1 May 2025. With the appointment of a new Commerce Minister following the 2025 State Election, WALGA again raised the prospects of WA adopting the standard at its meeting with the Minister in July 2025.