

# Central Country Zone

## Minutes

**Friday, 17 April 2026**

Hosted by the Shire of Cuballing  
191 Campbell St, Cuballing

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## ATTACHMENTS

The following are provided as attachments to the Minutes:

1. Item 5.1.2 - Telstra Presentation
2. Item 5.1.3 - Australian Bureau of Statistics Presentation
3. Item 7.4 - Main Roads Presentation

The State Council Agenda can be found on the WALGA website [here](#).

## 1. OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

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### 1.1. OPENING

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The Chair opened the meeting at 9:29am.

### 1.2. ATTENDANCE

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| <b>MEMBERS</b>             | <b>2 Voting Delegates from each Member Council</b>   |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Shire of Beverley</b>   | Mr Stephen Gollan, Chief Executive Officer   |
| <b>Shire of Brookton</b>   | Deputy President Cr Lachlan McCabe<br>Cr Gary Crouch<br>Mr Gary Sherry, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting            |
| <b>Shire of Corrigin</b>   | President Cr Sharon Jacobs<br>Cr Des Hickey ( <b>Chair</b> )<br>Ms Natalie Manton, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| <b>Shire of Cuballing</b>  | President Cr Adrian Kowald<br>Deputy President Cr Rob Harris<br>Mr Chris Paget, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting    |
| <b>Shire of Dumbleyung</b> | President Cr Amy Knight<br>Mr Gavin Treasure, Chief Executive Officer  |
| <b>Shire of Kulin</b>      | Cr Robbie Bowey<br>Mr Alan Leeson, Chief Executive Officer   |
| <b>Shire of Lake Grace</b> | President Cr Len Armstrong   |
| <b>Shire of Narrogin</b>   | President Cr Leigh Ballard<br>Cr Clive Bartron   |
| <b>Shire of Pingelly</b>   | President Cr Jackie McBurney<br>Cr Robert Howell   |
| <b>Shire of Quairading</b> | President Cr Trevor Stacey<br>Deputy President Cr Jo Hayes   |

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
|                             | Mr Nic Warren, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting   |
| <b>Shire of Wagin</b>       | President Cr Phillip Blight<br>Dr Kenneth Parker, Chief Executive Officer                                      |
| <b>Shire of Wandering</b>   | President Cr Sheryl Little<br>Cr Peter Latham<br>Dr Alistair Pinto, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting        |
| <b>Shire of West Arthur</b> | President Cr Karen Harrington<br>Cr Neil Morrell<br>Mr Rajinder Sunner, Manager Corporate Services, non-voting |
| <b>Shire of Wickepin</b>    | President Cr Julie Russell<br>Mr David Burton, Chief Executive Officer   |
| <b>Shire of Williams</b>    | Cr Heidi Cowcher<br>Peter Stubbs, Chief Executive Officer  |

#### **GUESTS**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Wheatbelt Development Commission Main Roads WA</b> | Ms Renee Manning, Acting Chief Executive Officer  |
| <b>Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)</b>          | Mr Julian Ford, Acting Network Manager<br>Ms Vicky Eckersley<br>Ms Kristy Cochrane, WA Operations Lead<br>Mr Callan Hertnon, Generalist LEO Manager |
| <b>Telstra</b>  | Ms Eva Colic, Regional Engagement Manager WA  |

#### **MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT**

Nil

#### **WALGA**

Ms Kathy Robertson, Manager Association and Corporate Governance  
Ms Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager Environment and Waste  
Ms Sammy Jones, Member Services Executive Administrator

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### **1.3. APOLOGIES**

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#### **MEMBERS**

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Shire of Beverley</b>   | President Cr Dee Ridgway<br>Deputy President Cr Alan Sattler |
| <b>Shire of Brookton</b>   | President Cr Rod Wallis                                      |
| <b>Shire of Dumbleyung</b> | Deputy President Cr David Head                               |
| <b>Shire of Narrogin</b>   | Mr Dale Stewart, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting         |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Shire of Kulin</b>                    | President Cr Grant Robbins   |
| <b>Shire of Lake Grace</b>               | Deputy President Stephen Hunt<br>Mr Alan George, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting           |
| <b>Shire of Pingelly</b>                 | Deputy President Cr Peter Wood<br>Mr Andrew Dover, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting         |
| <b>Shire of Wagin</b>                    | Cr Bryan Kilpatrick  |
| <b>Shire of West Arthur</b>              | Mr Vin Fordham Lamont, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting<br>Deputy President Cr Duncan South |
| <b>Shire of Wickepin</b>                 | Deputy President Cr Tyrone Miller  |
| <b>Shire of Williams</b>                 | President Cr Jarrad Logie  |
| <b>GUESTS</b>                            |  |
| <b>CBH Group</b>                         | Ms Kellie Todman, Manager Governance and Industry Relations                                    |
| <b>Main Roads WA</b>                     | Mr Mohammad Siddiqui, Regional Manager Wheatbelt   |
| <b>Regional Development Australia WA</b> | Mr Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development  |
| <b>WALGA RoadWise</b>                    | Rodney Thornton, Regional Road Safety Advisor  |
| <b>National Broadband Network (NBN)</b>  | Ms Bethany Findlay, Regional Development & Engagement Manager                                  |

**Apologies have been received from the following Members of Parliament**

|                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Hon Klara Andric, MLC     | Hon Anthony Spagnolo, MLC  |
| Hon Sandra Carr, MLC      | Hon Michelle Hofmann, MLC  |
| Hon Nick Goiran, MLC      | Hon Andrew O'Donnell, MLC  |
| Hon Jackie Jarvis, MLC    | Hon Dr Brian Walker, MLC   |
| Mr Lachlan Hunter, MP     | Hon Jackie Jarvis, MLC     |
| Hon Ayor Makur Chuot, MLC | Hon Matthew Swinbourn, MLC |
| Hon Brad Pettitt, MLC     | Hon Rita Saffioti, MLC     |
| Hon Michelle Boylan, MLC  | Hon Klasey Hirst, MLC      |
| Hon Stephen Dawson, MLC   | Hon Steve Martin, MLC      |
| Hon Tjorn Sibma, MLC      | Hon Alanna Clohesy, MLC    |
| Hon Lauren Cayoun, MLC    | Hon Maryka Groenwald, MLC  |

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil.

**3. HOST COUNCIL PRESENTATION**

President Cr Adrian Kowald, Shire of Cuballing, extended a welcome to Delegates and guests and provided a presentation on the Shire of Cuballing including details on current works being undertaken or recently completed within the Shire.

Cr Kowald also spoke about the planning and preparation work currently being undertaken by the Shire for their upcoming annual [Cuballing Groove Fest](#) held from 18 – 20 September 2026.

#### 4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Nil.

#### 5. GUEST SPEAKERS / DEPUTATIONS

All Deputations have a time limit of 20 minutes, which includes time for questions.

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##### 5.1. SPEAKERS FOR THE APRIL ZONE MEETING

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###### 5.1.1. NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK (NBN)

Ms Bethany Findlay Regional Development and Engagement Manager at the NBN was scheduled to provide an update to the Zone. Bethany provided her apologies prior to the meeting. WALGA will liaise with Bethany to reschedule her deputation to a future Zone meeting.

**Noted**

###### 5.1.2. TELSTRA

Ms Eva Colic, Regional Engagement Manager WA provided an update to the Zone. A copy of this presentation is attached to the Minutes. **(Attachment 1)**

**Noted**

###### 5.1.3. AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS (ABS)

Ms Kristy Cochrane, WA Operations Lead Generalist from the ABS provided a presentation to the Zone in preparation for the upcoming Census. A copy of this presentation is attached to the Minutes. **(Attachment 2)**

**Noted**

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## 5.2. SPEAKERS FOR THE JUNE ZONE MEETING

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The Zone has received three requests for presentations at the June meeting in Dumbleyung.

### **Mr Tony Brown, Local Government Inspector**

The Local Government Inspector division of the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety has requested that the inaugural Local Government Inspector, Tony Brown, attend the June Zone meeting to provide a brief presentation of the Local Government Inspector, his priorities and expectations, as well as allow time for questions.

### **Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)**

DFES has requested to attend the June Zone meeting to provide a presentation summarising the 2025/26 Fire Season and significant issues, observations emerging from Regional Grain Harvest Fires conventions, an update on bushfire mitigation support to Zone Members and any other issues that the Zone may raise.

### **Ms Lanie Chopping, Director General of the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS)**

The office of Lanie Chopping, Director General of LGIRS, has requested that Ms Chopping attend and speak at the June Zone meeting to provide an update on the recent activities of LGIRS.

## RESOLUTION

**Moved: President Cr Leigh Ballard**

**Seconded: President Cr Karen Harrington**

**That the Central Country Zone support the following deputations for the June 2026 Zone meeting:**

- 1. Mr Tony Brown, Local Government Inspector**
- 2. Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)**
- 3. Ms Lanie Chopping, Director General of LGIRS**

**CARRIED**

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## 5.3. SPEAKERS FOR THE AUGUST ZONE MEETING

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### **Water Corporation**

The Executive Officer has been liaising with the Water Corporation to request their attendance at an upcoming 2026 Zone meeting. Mr Adrian Stewart, Regional Manager, Great Southern Region indicated that they would like to attend either the June or August meeting. This request was approved by the Zone at the February meeting.

As there are already three deputations arranged for the June meeting, the Executive Committee agreed to ask the Water Corporation to attend the August meeting.

**Noted**

## 6. MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Any Members of Federal and State Government in attendance are invited to provide a brief update on matters relevant to the Zone. No Federal or State Government Members were in attendance at the meeting.

## 7. AGENCY REPORTS

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### 7.1. DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY REGULATIONS AND SAFETY

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The DLGIRS report was attached to the Agenda.

**Noted**

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### 7.2. WHEATBELT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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*Ms Renee Manning, Acting Chief Executive Officer*

This item was considered later in the Agenda (see prior to item 12.2).

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### 7.3. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA WHEATBELT

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*Mr Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development*

Mr Pomykala was an apology.

**Noted**

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### 7.4. MAIN ROADS WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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*Mr Julian Ford, Acting Network Manager*

Mr Ford provided an update and a presentation to the meeting. A copy of the presentation is attached to the Minutes. **(Attachment 3)**

**Noted**

## **8. MINUTES**

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### **8.1. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2026**

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The Minutes of the Central Country Zone meeting held on 13 February 2026 have previously been circulated to Delegates. A copy of the Minutes were attached to the Agenda.

#### **RESOLUTION**

**Moved: President Cr Phil Blight**

**Seconded: President Cr Jackie McBurney**

**That the Minutes of the meeting of the Central Country Zone held on 13 February 2026 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.**

**CARRIED**

## 8.2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2025

| Item Number  | Resolution   | Action   |
|--|--|--|
| 9.6.1 Cost Shifting Compliance Report Project Update   | <p><i>That the Central Country Zone:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>resolve to action each Position as follows:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Position 1 be referred to State Council for consideration as a WALGA Advocacy Position.</i></li> <li>b. <i>A letter be sent to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum in relation to Position 2</i></li> <li>.....</li> </ol> </li> </ol> | Resolution 1(b) resolved for a letter to be sent to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum. A letter was prepared and sent to Hon David Michael on 19 December 2025 and a response was received on 5 January 2026 to advise that as this is a matter within the remit of the Minister for Local Government. A response has since been received from Hon Hannah Beazley. Copies of each letter were attached to the Agenda. |
| 10.5 Consideration of Correspondence to Minister for Local Government regarding Local Government Elections | <i>That the Central Country Zone write to the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Wheatbelt and Shadow Minister for Local Government stating the Zone's opposition to compulsory voting and full Council elections every four years.</i>   | A letter was sent to the Minister for Local Government in December 2025 and a response was received in February 2026. A copy of the letter was attached to the Agenda.   |
| 10.6 Telstra Site Firebreaks   | <i>That the Central Country Zone write to the Federal Minister for Communications raising the matter of bush fire mitigation in communications facilities in regional Australia.</i>   | A letter was sent to the Federal Minister for Communications in December 2025 and a response was received from the Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts in March 2026. A copy of the letter was attached to the Agenda.   |
| 10.7 Regulations Working Group.  | <i>That the Central Country Zone write to the Minister seeking that representation on the Regulations Working Group be extended to include two representatives from each local government band and include representation from both elected members and officers as well representation from remote and regional Western Australia</i>   | A letter was sent to the Minister for Local Government in December 2025, and a response was received in February 2026. A copy of the letter was attached to the Agenda.  |

### Noted

### 8.3. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2026

| Item Number  | Resolution   | Action  |
|--|--|---|
| 8.3.1 – Standing Invites for Members of Parliament     | <p>For noting only.</p> <p>The Executive Committee resolved to send personalised invites to Members of Parliament to provide an overview of current Zone priorities and encourage more attendance from MPs. These invites will be signed by the Zone Chair and sent by the Executive Officer prior to each meeting.</p>  | <p>On 18 March, the Executive Officer sent invites to the identified Members of Parliament for the April Zone meeting. A copy of one of the letters and emails sent and received were attached to the agenda.</p> <p>Unfortunately, all MPs invited to the April Zone meeting have declined due to conflicting prior engagements. The Executive Committee have considered how best to proceed with invitations to MPs. An item has been included in the April Zone Agenda <b><i>(Item 8.4.1)</i></b>.</p> |
| 8.3.2 Zone Strategic Priorities                        | <p>The Zone AGREED that each Delegate would take this item to Council and seek feedback on the current Strategic Priorities of the Zone.</p>   | <p>No responses from Zone Delegates or Member Local Governments were received. The item was returned to the Executive Committee for consideration, and an item has been included in the April Zone Agenda <b><i>(Item 8.4.2)</i></b>.</p>   |
| 9.1 – Wheatbelt Freight Network Submission for Funding | <p><i>That the Central Country Zone:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Requests a review from the Minister of the decision to discontinue funding of the WSN in the upcoming State Budget;</i></li> <li><i>2. Supports the Shire of Narrogin's advocacy efforts to encourage Minister Saffioti to reconsider the decision; and</i></li> <li><i>3. Writes to Minister Saffioti on behalf of all Local Governments in the Zone asking for the Minister to reconsider and this letter by signed by the Zone Chairman.</i></li> </ol> | <p>Letters have been sent to both Minister Saffioti and Minister Dawson. A response has been received from Minister Saffioti and was attached to the Agenda. No response has been received from Minister Dawson at this time.</p>   |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   | <i>4. Request two meetings with Minister Saffioti and Minister Dawson</i>  |  |
| 9.2 – Renewable Energy Planning Code                          | <i>That the Central Country Zone:<br/>1. Adopts the draft submission to the Draft Renewable Energy Planning Code; and<br/>2. Provides the submission to WALGA and the Western Australian Planning Commission.</i>  | The Zone's submission was provided to the Western Australian Planning Commission on 19 February 2026. A copy of the submission was attached to the Agenda.   |
| 9.4 – 2026 Regional State Council Meeting – Shire of Pingelly | <i>That Zone Delegates provide suggested presentation topics to the Executive Officer by 23 March for consideration and determination by the Executive Committee.</i>  | The Executive Officer emailed all CEOs and Zone Delegates after the February Zone meeting to request suggestions by 23 March. One suggestion was received and was attached to the Agenda.<br><br>The Executive Committee considered possible presentation topics and an item has been included in the April Zone Agenda <b><i>(Item 8.4.2)</i></b> . |
| 9.7 – Consultation on Draft Climate Change Advocacy           | <i>That the Central Country Zone:<br/>1. Reiterates its position resolved at the February 2025 Zone meeting that the WALGA Advocacy Position on Climate Change should be that:<br/>WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to:<br/>1. provide the necessary climate leadership, coordination, and action to deliver a climate change response that improves and maintain quality of life for all Western Australians for generations to come<br/>2. provide funding and resources and support to Local Government to enable local communities to respond to the effects of climate change</i> | Letters have been sent to all WALGA Zones advising of the Central Country Zones position. A copy of one of the letters was attached to the Agenda.   |

|                      |  |   |
|----------------------|--|---|
|                      | <p>2. <i>Rejects any WALGA Advocacy Position or policy that binds or attempts to bind Local Governments to a course of action or actions; and</i></p> <p>3. <i>Writes to all other WALGA Zones to advise them of the Central Country Zone's position on matters 1 and 2 above.</i></p> |   |
| 13 – Emerging Issues | <p><i>President Cr Dee Ridgway raised for the Central Country Zone to write a letter to outgoing WALGA President, Karen Chappel, acknowledging her work and commitment to Local Government throughout her tenure as President for WALGA.</i></p>                                       | <p>A letter was sent to outgoing WALGA President Cr Karen Chappel, a copy of the letter was attached to the Agenda.</p> |

**Noted**

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## 8.4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 APRIL 2026

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### 8.4.1. STANDING INVITES FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

At the February Zone meeting, it was resolved to extend invitations to the following Members of Parliament to attend Zone meetings:

- Hon Sandra Carr, MLC – Member for Western Australia; Deputy Chair of Committees
- Mr Lachlan Hunter, MLA – Member for Central Wheatbelt; Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food; Racing and Gaming
- Hon Steve Martin, MLC – Member for Western Australia; Shadow Minister for Transport; Ports; Communities
- Mr Peter Rundle, MLA – Member for Roe; Shadow Minister for Water; Sport and Recreation
- Hon Sabine Winton, MLA – Member for Wanneroo; Minister for Education; Early Childhood; Preventative Health; Wheatbelt
- Mr Rick Wilson, MP – Member for O'Connor; Deputy Chair, Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth
- Hon Stephen Dawson, MLC – Minister for Regional Development; Ports; Science and Innovation; Medical Research; Kimberley
- All Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs) within Western Australia

Unfortunately, no invited MPs were available to attend the April meeting.

The Executive Committee considered how best to increase the likelihood of attendance and engage MPs in future Zone meetings. The Committee agreed to provide all meeting dates for the remainder of the 2026 calendar year to invited MPs. Should this approach not result in improved attendance, the Executive Committee suggested that the Zone consider hosting a future Zone meeting at Parliament House (or elsewhere in Metropolitan Perth).

### RESOLUTION

**Moved: President Cr Sheryl Little**

**Seconded: President Cr Phil Blight**

**That the Central Country Zone:**

1. **requests the Executive Officer to write to each MP listed above, providing the remaining meeting dates for 2026; and**
2. **supports, in principle, the proposal to host a future Zone meeting in Metropolitan Perth to encourage greater attendance from MPs.**

**CARRIED**

#### **8.4.2. ZONE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

At the February Zone meeting, and it was agreed that each Delegate would consider the current Zone Strategic Priorities with their respective Councils to seek feedback. Delegates were requested to provide any feedback to the Executive Officer by 23 March.

No feedback was received by the nominated date.

The Executive Committee have recommended that the Zone hold a Strategic Planning Workshop prior to the August Zone meeting. The workshop would be facilitated by an external consultant, with the aim of reviewing and updating the current Priorities.

At the direction of the Executive Committee, the Executive Officer has requested a quote from Caroline Robinson of 150 Square to facilitate the workshop. Caroline is an enthusiastic advocate for rural communities and has previously worked with the Zone to compile the Cost Shifting and Compliance Report. At time of publishing the Agenda, a quotation had not yet been received. However, consideration for the fees (based on an estimate) has been included within the draft 2026-27 budget at **item 8.4.4.**

#### **RESOLUTION**

**Moved: President Cr Karen Harrington**

**Seconded: President Cr Julie Russell**

**That the Central Country Zone:**

- 1. Supports the holding of a Strategic Planning Workshop immediately prior to the August Zone meeting in the Shire of Kulin; and**
- 2. Endorses the engagement of an external consultant to facilitate the workshop.**

**CARRIED**

#### **8.4.3. 2026 REGIONAL STATE COUNCIL MEETING – SHIRE OF PINGELLY**

The Zone is hosting the 2026 Country Regional State Council Meeting in Pingelly on Wednesday-Thursday, 6-7 May.

The Country Regional State Council Meeting is a two-day event and includes a Zone Forum. The Zone Forum is an initiative of State Council designed to promote meaningful discussion and the exchange of information between Zone members and State Councillors. The Forum is an opportunity for the Zone to speak directly to State Council on local, regional and statewide issues. It is also a chance for the Zone to present on its recent work and advocacy priorities.

At the February Zone meeting, Zone Delegates resolved to provide suggested presentation topics to the Executive Officer. Based on suggested topics received, and further discussion by the Executive Committee, a draft Zone Forum program has been compiled and was attached to the Agenda.

The final draft program is included on the following page:

# WALGA State Council Regional Meeting

## Zone Forum

### Central Country Zone

### Pingelly Recreation and Cultural Centre (PRACC)

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Wednesday, 6 May 2026

The Zone Forum is an initiative of State Council that aims to foster meaningful discussion and exchange of information between Zone members and State Council.

Central Country Zone Chair, Cr Des Hickey, will MC the Forum.

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>11:00am</b>          | Lunch on arrival   |
| <b>12:00pm - 3:00pm</b> | <b>Zone Forum</b>  |
| <i>5 minutes</i>        | <b>Welcome</b><br>Central Country Zone Chair, Cr Des Hickey                                  |
| <i>10 minutes</i>       | <b>Overview of Zone priorities</b><br>Central Country Zone Chair, Cr Des Hickey              |
| <i>30 minutes</i>       | <b>Host presentation</b><br>President Cr Jackie McBurney, Shire of Pingelly                  |
| <i>30 minutes</i>       | <b>4WDL (ROC) Key Worker Housing Project</b><br>President Cr Amy Knight, Shire of Dumbleyung |
| <i>30 minutes</i>       | <b>Renewable Energy Projects</b><br>President Cr Karen Harrington, Shire of West Arthur      |
| <b>1:45pm – 2:15pm</b>  | Afternoon tea  |
| <i>30 minutes</i>       | <b>50 Year Road Strategy</b><br>CEO Mr Gavin Treasure, Shire of Dumbleyung                   |
| <i>10 minutes</i>       | <b>Closure</b><br>WALGA President, Mayor Mark Irwin  |

#### **8.4.4. BUDGET 2026-27**

The Central Country Zone is required to review and adopt an annual budget for each financial year.

At its meeting held on 7 April 2026, the Executive Committee considered the draft 2026–27 budget and resolved as follows:

*That an item be prepared for the April Zone meeting seeking endorsement of the 2026–27 budget, with the following changes:*

- 1. Halve the annual subscription amount to \$500 per Local Government; and*
- 2. Provision be made for consultant fees to engage a facilitator for the Strategic Priorities Workshop scheduled for August.*

A draft budget for the 2026–27 financial year has subsequently been prepared and is included on the following page. The draft budget has been developed taking into account:

- Prior year actual and forecast expenditure, providing a year-to-date forecast based on known and anticipated costs; and
- The estimated opening cash balance as of 1 July 2026.

In accordance with the direction of the Executive Committee, the draft budget also incorporates:

- A reduction in the annual subscription fee to \$500 per Local Government; and
- The inclusion of consultant fees for facilitation of the proposed Strategic Priorities Workshop in August (based on an estimate).

#### **RESOLUTION**

**Moved: President Cr Jackie McBurney**

**Seconded: President Leigh Ballard**

**That the Central Country Zone endorse the 2026-27 budget.**

**CARRIED**

|   | Budget<br>2025-26 | Forecast<br>YTD 30/6/2026 | Budget<br>2026-27 | Comments   |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--|
| <b>Income</b>                             |                   |                           |                   |  |
| 501 General Subscriptions                 | \$15,000          | \$15,000                  | \$7,500           | <i>Halve the annual subscription amount to \$500 per Local Government</i>    |
| 575 Interest Earned                       | \$400             | \$112                     | \$250             |  |
| <b>Total Income</b>                       | <b>\$15,400</b>   | <b>\$15,112</b>           | <b>\$7,750</b>    |  |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                        |                   |                           |                   |  |
| 1535 Zone Expenses - Audit Costs          | \$1,285           | \$2,150                   | \$1,129           | <i>5% increase applied to fee of 1075</i>                                    |
| 1546 Zone Expenses - In-Person Meetings   | \$7,000           | \$4,770                   | \$7,000           | <i>Same as last year</i>   |
| 1558 Zone Expenses - Financial Management | \$3,008           | \$3,540                   | \$3,646           | <i>Use of external accountants and Xero monthly charge - increased by 3%</i> |
| 1580 Zone Representative - Honoraria      | \$2,785           | \$2,785                   | \$2,869           | <i>3% increase applied</i>   |
| New<br>account Consulting / Projects      | \$20,000          | \$605                     | \$2,500           | <i>Consultant 150 Square for a few hours of project work</i>                 |
| 1610 Zone Representative - Travel Costs   | \$1,000           | \$0                       | \$600             | <i>To allow travel to Perth for zone delegation</i>                          |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>                  | <b>\$35,078</b>   | <b>\$13,850</b>           | <b>\$17,743</b>   |  |
| <b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>                  | <b>(\$19,678)</b> | <b>\$1,262</b>            | <b>(\$9,993)</b>  |  |
| Estimated brought forward Balance 1 July  | \$73,509          | \$73,509                  | \$74,771          |  |
| Surplus/(Deficit)                         | (\$19,678)        | \$1,262                   | (\$9,993)         |  |
| Estimated Balance 30 June                 | \$53,831          | <b>\$74,771</b>           | <b>\$64,778</b>   |  |

## 9. ZONE BUSINESS

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### 9.1. URGENT ADVOCACY: FOREST PRODUCTS COMMISSION (FPC) "RATES-EQUIVALENT" PAYMENTS DIVERTED TO STATE TREASURY – IMMEDIATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET IMPACTS (2025/26)

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*By Vin Fordham Lamont, Shire of West Arthur*

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Forest Products Commission (FPC) has historically paid council rates directly to local governments on relevant freehold landholdings.

In September 2025, the FPC advised impacted local governments that it would immediately cease paying rates directly to Shires and, instead, make rates-equivalent payments to the State Treasurer.

The Warren Blackwood Alliance of Councils (WBAC), together with the Shires of Cranbrook and West Arthur, has outlined that the FPC's position relies on Section 43 of the *Forest Products Act 2000*, including that the State Government considers the FPC exempt from paying rates on certain unleased land and must pay an equivalent amount to the Treasurer under Section 43(4), with the amount and timing determined by the Treasurer under Section 43(6).

A key concern raised by impacted local governments is that the sudden implementation in 2025/26 did not provide budget transition time, notwithstanding the principle described in Section 43(7) that points to commencement applying from the next full financial year (and, more broadly, the expectation that public finance changes of this nature should not be applied in an unplanned way mid-budget cycle).

As a result, multiple local governments that had budgeted for the FPC rates revenue in their adopted 2025/26 annual budgets are now facing significant immediate shortfalls because FPC has not paid the 2025/26 rates (and the rates-equivalent is being directed to Treasury rather than the local governments).

WBAC has advised that, for 2025/26, the collective shortfall across the seven affected Shires is approximately \$325,000\*\*, representing a material impact for small regional councils.

In January 2026 indicative 2025/26 impacts by individual Shires were estimated to be:

|                         |           |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| Boyup Brook:            | \$135,000 |
| Bridgetown-Greenbushes: | \$21,540  |
| Donnybrook Balingup:    | \$9,383   |
| Manjimup:               | \$55,000  |
| Nannup:                 | \$40,000  |
| Cranbrook:              | \$28,000  |
| West Arthur:            | \$35,000  |

Impacted Councils have identified that these funds support core services such as road maintenance, parks and gardens, community facilities, emergency services support, medical services, recreation programs and local events, and the shortfall is forcing consideration of reductions across these service areas.

Councils are also concerned about the forward financial trajectory, noting the FPC's ongoing land acquisition and plantation expansion program and the compounding effect of additional properties transitioning out of local rating bases unless a sustainable mechanism is established.

Affected local governments have characterised the situation as creating inequity, because private plantation operators continue to pay rates directly to local governments, while the FPC does not under the current arrangement.

### **COMMENT**

This issue requires urgent WALGA advocacy because it is producing an immediate and unplanned financial shock in the current 2025/26 financial year for affected councils. Impacted Shires are already preparing agenda items for service reductions and cost saving measures to address the budget holes created by the cessation of FPC rate payments.

From a Local Government sustainability perspective, the matter has both:

- an immediate cashflow/budget stability dimension (2025/26 revenue shortfall now impacting adopted budgets), and
- a structural funding dimension (future years will be further affected as more land transfers out of the local rates base without a mechanism to return rates-equivalent payments to affected local governments).

WBAC and the Shires of Cranbrook and West Arthur have also explicitly requested Minister Jackie Jarvis MLC, Minister for Forestry, for the:

1. redirection of 2025/26 rates-equivalent payments from Treasury to the impacted Shires, and
2. establishment of a cross-portfolio process (Local Government / Forestry / Treasury) to determine a fair and sustainable mechanism for 2026/27 and future years, including clarity regarding forward acquisition modelling.

Given that Local Governments are responsible for infrastructure and services relied upon by plantation operations (including local roads and emergency management), removal of this revenue without offset threatens service levels and increases pressure on remaining ratepayers.

### **SECRETARIAT COMMENT**

WALGA recognises the impact that the Forest Products Commission's (FPC) change to the payment of rates-equivalent amounts has on Local Governments within the Central Country Zone (CCZ), particularly given the timing of the application of the change prior to the 2025/26 financial year.

WALGA understands that the CCZ and affected Local Governments, have already engaged directly with the Minister for Forestry on this matter and supports the CCZ in seeking timely resolution of the immediate 2025/26 impacts and longer-term certainty for future financial years.

WALGA acknowledges the significant impact that rating exemptions have on Local Government Revenue, and their ability to provide essential community services.

This matter aligns with longstanding [WALGA Advocacy Positions](#) regarding rating, including the following:

#### **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*.

#### **2.1.4 Rating Exemptions – Rate Equivalency Payment**

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.

Additionally, [WALGA's 2026-27 State Budget Submission](#) calls for an independent organisation to undertake a broad review of rating exemptions.

A number of concerns regarding rating and rating exemptions have emerged across the sector, particularly over the past 6–12 months. WALGA is undertaking scoping work to consider the most effective way to address these matters through a coordinated, overarching and sector-wide advocacy approach.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to advocate as a matter of urgency to the State Government (including the Treasurer, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Forestry) to:

1. Establish a formal cross-portfolio arrangement (Treasury/Local Government/Forestry, with WALGA and affected Local Governments) to:
  - a. confirm a transparent method for calculating and timing the rates-equivalent amounts under the current legislative settings; and
  - b. implement an agreed mechanism to allocate and remit the rates-equivalent payments to the impacted Local Governments from 2026/27 onward.
2. Provide impacted Local Governments with certainty and forward estimates regarding:
  - a. the FPC's land acquisition / plantation expansion trajectory; and
  - b. modelling of the projected financial impact on affected rating bases, so Councils can undertake responsible long-term financial planning.
3. (If required) Progress options for policy and/or legislative amendment to ensure ongoing equity and financial sustainability for communities hosting FPC freehold landholdings, including ensuring outcomes that do not unfairly transfer costs to remaining ratepayers.

## ALTERNATE MOTION

Moved: President Cr Karen Harrington

Seconded: President Leigh Ballard

**That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to advocate matter of urgency, prior to the Local Government Budget cycle, to the State Government (including the Treasurer, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Forestry) to:**

- 1. Establish a formal cross-portfolio arrangement (Treasury/Local Government/Forestry, with WALGA and affected Local Governments) to:
  - a. confirm a transparent method for calculating and timing the rates-equivalent amounts under the current legislative settings; and**
  - b. implement an agreed mechanism to allocate and remit the rates-equivalent payments to the impacted Local Governments from 2026/27 onward.****
- 2. Provide impacted Local Governments with certainty and forward estimates regarding:
  - a. the FPC's land acquisition / plantation expansion trajectory; and**
  - b. modelling of the projected financial impact on affected rating bases, so Councils can undertake responsible long-term financial planning.****
- 3. (If required) Progress options for policy and/or legislative amendment to ensure ongoing equity and financial sustainability for communities hosting FPC freehold landholdings, including ensuring outcomes that do not unfairly transfer costs to remaining ratepayers.**

**CARRIED**

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## 9.2. BUSH FIRE RISK MITIGATION ALONG THE RAIL CORRIDORS

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*By Shire of Wickepin*

### BACKGROUND

At the recent Annual Electors Meeting for the Shire of Wickepin, concern was raised by several members of the public about long grass and the lack of any Bush Fire Risk Mitigation along the rail corridors in our Shire.

The lack of control has allowed long grass and vegetation to accumulate over several years and now forms a significant risk to the local towns and the agricultural region. The long grass and vegetation provide an area where any fire would quickly spread into the surrounding bushland and townsite. It also increases the damage caused by fire and reduces the ability of the Local Fire Brigade to effectively control fires, requiring additional resources from other areas and DFES as the fireground is increased.

The uncontrolled growth of grasses and bushland is clearly evident in the areas of the unused Tier 3 rail corridors and is widespread across the wheatbelt region.

It has been noted that the Central Country Zone has previously sent correspondence to the Federal Minister for Communications raising the matter of bush fire mitigation in communications facilities in regional Australia. The rail corridor concern would be a similar issue, but more of a state government issue.

At the March Meeting of the Shire of Wickepin, it was resolved that an item be presented to Central Country Zone, requesting action to be taken with a letter written to the Minister for Transport raising the concern and the dangers it creates for the regional areas of Western Australia.

### **SECRETARIAT COMMENT**

This issue has been raised at the Bushfire Operations Committee and the State Bushfire Advisory Committee and WALGA is a member of both. Update from the State Bushfire Advisory Committee, in its September 2025 Communique was as follows:

*“Originally raised through the Bushfire Operations Committee (BOC), this issue has now been included in the Ministerial Statement of Expectations priorities for SBAC. Members acknowledged BOC’s advice regarding ongoing challenges with fuel accumulation and the maintenance of strategic firebreaks along unused Tier 3 and Tier 4 rail corridors—particularly those near townsites and grain rail sidings. While some mitigation activities have been undertaken, significant work remains to reduce bushfire risk. Initial discussions at the meeting helped define the focus and next steps. Further advice from Government will be sought to inform SBAC’s approach to this issue.”*

WALGA will seek an update and report back to the Central Country Zone.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Central Country Zone write to the Minister for Transport raising the matter of bushfire mitigation along the rail corridors in regional Western Australia.

### **ALTERNATE MOTION**

**Moved:** President Cr Julie Russell

**Seconded:** President Cr Phil Blight

**That the Central Country Zone write to the Minister for Transport, the Public Transport Authority and ARC Infrastructure requesting them to urgently address the matter of bushfire mitigation along the rail corridors, both used and unused, in regional Western Australia.**

**CARRIED**

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## **9.3. REPLACEMENT DELEGATES – WALGA CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE AND DISTRICT LEADERSHIP GROUP**

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*By Shire of Narrogin*

### **BACKGROUND**

The WALGA Central Country Zone currently appoints a delegate to represent the Zone on the Wheatbelt District Leadership Group (DLG) (Northam), which is a key regional forum facilitating coordination across State agencies, local government, and community organisations.

The DLG continues to play a critical role in progressing regional priorities, including delivery of the *Living Well in the Wheatbelt Strategy*, alignment of agency activities, and advocacy on key human services and community development issues.

The Shire of Narrogin CEO, Dale Stewart, is currently the Zone's representative on the DLG. However, Mr Stewart will be relocating to the Pilbara in early May 2026 and will cease employment with the Shire on 1 May 2026.

Mr Stewart confirms that the upcoming meeting scheduled for 21 April 2026 will be his final meeting.

Given this change, there is a need for the Zone to:

- Nominate a replacement delegate to represent the WALGA Central Country Zone on the Wheatbelt District Leadership Group; and
- Ensure ongoing representation and continuity of local government input into this important regional forum.

The DLG minutes also highlight the importance of local government engagement, including potential future discussions regarding funding contributions, advocacy, and alignment of regional priorities. **(Attachment 15)**

Accordingly, it is timely for the Zone to appoint a new elected member or officer delegate.

## **RESOLUTION**

**Moved: President Leigh Ballard**

**Seconded: Cr Clive Barton**

**That the Central Country Zone:**

- 1. Notes that Dale Stewart, CEO of the Shire of Narrogin, will cease as the Zone's representative on the Wheatbelt District Leadership Group at the end of April 2026 due to relocation.**
- 2. Requests nominations from member Local Governments for a replacement Elected Member or officer delegate to represent the Zone on the Wheatbelt District Leadership Group.**
- 3. Appoints a new delegate (and, if considered appropriate, an alternate delegate) to ensure continued representation of the Zone on the District Leadership Group.**

**CARRIED**

*During discussion Mr Nic Warren, Chief Executive Officer of the Shire of Quairading nominated to fill the vacancy. His nomination was accepted by the meeting.*

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## **9.4. REGIONAL STATE COUNCIL MEETING – HOSTED BY THE SHIRE OF PINGELLY**

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WALGA provided a verbal update to the Zone on arrangements for the Regional State Council meeting being hosted by the Shire of Pingelly on Wednesday-Thursday, 6-7 May 2026.

**Noted**

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## 9.5. WHEATBELT ZONE FORUM

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The Avon-Midland Country Zone are hosting a one-day Wheatbelt Zone Forum on Friday, 21 August 2026 in Bindoon. The Avon-Midland Country Zone has extended an invitation to Delegates from the Central and Great Eastern Country Zones to attend the Forum. We are awaiting further details and will provide any updates as they are received.

**Noted**

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## 9.6. CONSULTATION ON DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ADVOCACY POSITION

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*By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA is undertaking sector consultation on a revised draft Climate Change Advocacy Position.
- This draft position was developed following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team of State Council.
- WALGA is seeking Council endorsed feedback by 1 May 2026.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's 2018 Climate Change [Policy Statement](#) and Advocacy Position state:

*Local Government acknowledges:*

1. *The science is clear: Climate change is occurring and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the dominant cause.*
2. *Climate change threatens human societies and the Earth's ecosystems.*
3. *Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, and to adapt to the impacts from climate change that are now unavoidable.*
4. *A failure to adequately address this climate change emergency places an unacceptable burden on future generations.*

*Local Government is committed to addressing climate change.*

*Local Government is calling for:*

1. *Strong climate change action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government.*
2. *Effective and adequately funded Commonwealth and State Government climate change policies and programs.*

The draft Advocacy Position in the Consultation Paper is:

1. *Local Government acknowledges the risks associated with, and is committed to, addressing climate change.*
2. *WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to provide:*
  - a. *the necessary climate leadership, coordination and action to ensure an orderly transition to achieve emission reduction targets and address the impacts of climate change*
  - b. *dedicated funding, guidance and practical support to assist Local Governments to undertake emissions reduction and adaptation actions.*

## ATTACHMENT

The WALGA Climate Change Advocacy Position Consultation Paper is available [online](#).

## BACKGROUND

Climate change, and related legislation, policy and action, have implications for many aspects of Local Governments' operations and services. More frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves, bushfires, extreme rainfall events and warming, rising sea levels are increasing the costs and complexity of delivering critical services, infrastructure and ensuring community wellbeing.

In 2018, State Council endorsed a [Climate Change Policy Statement](#) and advocacy position, following extensive sector consultation. Since this Advocacy Position was adopted there have been significant legislative, policy, technological and scientific changes, including:

- The national *Climate Change Act 2022* and the Western Australian Climate Change Bill 2023.
- The *Local Government Amendment Act 2023*, which expanded Western Australian Local Governments' general function under Part 3 s3.1(1A) of the *Local Government Act 1995* to:
  - a. to promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the district; and
  - b. **to plan for, and to plan for mitigating, risks associated with climate change;** and
  - c. in making decisions, to consider potential long-term consequences and impacts on future generations.
- The release of the Australian Government's [National Climate Risk Assessment](#) and [National Adaptation Plan](#) in 2025.
- Escalation of the transition to renewable energy, uptake of electric vehicles and energy efficiency standards under the National Construction Code.
- Climate science and projections ([international](#), [national](#) and [WA specific](#)) have also become clearer regarding the risks posed by climate change and the need for action to address the consequential impacts.

## COMMENT

Following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team, WALGA has developed a revised, draft Climate Change Advocacy Position for Local Government feedback which is currently out for consultation with feedback due by 1 May 2026. WALGA has received feedback from some Councils and understands a number of Councils will be considering this matter in April. Zone delegates are encouraged to take this item to their Councils.

The Central Country Zone passed a motion at its February 2026 meeting which included writing to all other zones highlighting its alternative Advocacy Position (proposed in March 2025). WALGA worked to incorporate the Central Country Zone feedback prior to the release of the Consultation Paper.

WALGA is seeking **Council endorsed feedback** on the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position by **COB Friday, 1 May 2026** to [environment@walga.asn.au](mailto:environment@walga.asn.au).

Following consideration of this feedback a final draft Advocacy Position will be developed and provided to zones and State Council for consideration.

## Noted

## 10. ZONE REPORTS

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### 10.1. CHAIR REPORT

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*Cr Des Hickey, Zone Chair*

The Chair provided a verbal report to the Zone.

**Noted**

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### 10.2. WALGA ROADWISE

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*Rodney Thornton, Regional Road Safety Advisor.*

Mr Thornton was an apology for the meeting.

**Noted**

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## 11. WALGA STATE COUNCIL EXECUTIVE REPORTS

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### 11.1. WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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The WALGA Presidents report was attached to the Agenda.

**Noted**

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### 11.2. STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

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*President Cr Phil Blight, State Councillor*

9.1 AVIATION ADVOCACY POSITIONS – was the only issue requiring a decision.

This meeting saw the end of the Karen Chappel presidency and after a long lead up and much lobbying by the prospective candidates, Mark Irwin was elected President for the next two years. Similarly, Chris Antonio was elected as Deputy President. Much of the meeting was then focused on management issues and reports.

**Noted**

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### 11.3. STATUS REPORT

| Agenda Item  | Zone Resolution   | WALGA Response  | Update Last Provided | WALGA Contact   |
|--|---|---|----------------------|---|
| <p>13 February 2026 Zone<br/>Agenda Item <b>9.3 Main Roads WA Speed Zoning Policy</b></p>                  | <p>That the Central Country Zone supports the Shire of Kulin and resolves to request WALGA to formally approach Main Roads Western Australia seeking a review of the policy-based removal of speed transition buffers across rural and regional Western Australia.</p>  | <p>Main Roads Western Australia (MRWA) is gradually removing intermediate "Speed Buffer Zones" (e.g., 80 km/h) on the approach to towns, replacing them with "Speed Limit AHEAD" signs to warn drivers of a sudden transition to lower speeds such as 60 km/h or 50 km/h through townsites.</p> <p>This policy shift, which began in mid-2020, aims to align with the latest Australian Standards and enhance consistency in speed zoning across WA and Australia.</p> <p>Previously, a 300-400 metre intermediate speed zone was used when dropping speeds by more than 30 km/h. This intermediate speed zone is being progressively replaced by two sets of "Speed Limit AHEAD" signs to warn drivers, allowing a direct reduction from high-speed zones to lower town speeds.</p> <p>This is a gradual, state-wide process. The changes harmonize WA speed zones with other Australian states.</p> | <p>April 2026</p>    | <p>Ian Duncan<br/>Executive Manager<br/>Infrastructure<br/><a href="mailto:iduncan@walga.asn.au">iduncan@walga.asn.au</a><br/>9213 2031</p> |
| <p>13 February 2026 Zone<br/>Agenda Item <b>9.10 Western Power Pole Top Fires and Network Response</b></p> | <p>That the Central Country Zone:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognises the recent spate of pole top fires during the ex-Tropical Cyclone Mitchell weather event as a serious regional and State-wide rural safety concern.</li> <li>2. Notes that while this matter has been raised by the Central Country Zone, the issues identified are not confined to Zone Local Governments and are likely to affect rural and regional communities across Western Australia.</li> <li>3. Requests WALGA to assume a State-wide advocacy role on behalf of rural and regional local governments in relation to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Pole top mitigation effectiveness in high-risk agricultural environments;</li> <li>b. Network performance;</li> </ol> </li> </ol> | <p>The frequency and impacts of pole top fires is noted.</p> <p>Safe and reliable power supply, particularly in regional WA is a key theme in WALGA's submission to the Economic Regulation Authority in context of the next regulated Access Agreement covering Western Power.</p> <p>Further operational engagement with Western Power is required and an update will be provided at the next Zone meeting.</p>   | <p>April 2026</p>    | <p>Ian Duncan<br/>Executive Manager<br/>Infrastructure<br/><a href="mailto:iduncan@walga.asn.au">iduncan@walga.asn.au</a><br/>9213 2031</p> |

|   |   |   |                    |   |
|---|---|---|--------------------|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Timely isolation of downed or compromised power lines during emergency incidents;</li> <li>d. Protection of volunteer bush fire brigade members operating near live electrical infrastructure; and</li> <li>e. Improved transparency, reporting and communication protocols between Western Power and local governments.</li> </ul> <p>4. Requests WALGA to formally engage with Western Power and the Minister for Energy seeking systemic review, strengthened operational response protocols and enhanced safety protections for volunteer emergency responders across rural and regional Western Australia.</p> <p>5. Requests that WALGA report back to Member Local Governments on advocacy actions undertaken and outcomes achieved.</p> |   |                    |   |
| 14 February 2025 Zone Agenda Item <b>9.1.3 Support for Public Ownership of WA Freight Rail Network</b>  | <p>That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supports State Government efforts to ensure the on-going sustainability and growth of freight rail in Western Australia;</li> <li>2. Seeks a commitment from the in-coming State Government to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. focus on ensuring a competitive freight rail network and services reduce freight on roads; providing road safety, environmental benefits; and</li> <li>b. work with Local Governments and other stakeholders to maximise the local economic growth opportunities provided through effective management of the rail network and corridors.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>   | The Infrastructure Policy Team supported including the proposed advocacy position in a new or consolidated policy statement in relation to freight rail following consultation with Local Governments and other stakeholders to better define the social, economic and environmental benefits sought from a publicly controlled freight rail network. | <b>August 2025</b> | <b>Ian Duncan</b><br>Executive Manager<br>Infrastructure<br><a href="mailto:iduncan@walga.asn.au">iduncan@walga.asn.au</a><br>9213 2031 |
| 22 August 2025 Zone Agenda Item <b>9.3 To Rationalise the Audit Function for Local Government in WA</b> | That the Zone request WALGA to advocate for the choice of an auditor of Local Governments in Western Australia be opened to individuals who are Registered Company Auditors with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) as well as the Office of Auditor General OAG).   | <p>This item has been referred to the Governance Policy Team for consideration.</p> <p>For the last 3 years WALGA has partnered with Local Government Professionals (LG Pro) to survey the Local Government sector on experiences during the annual financial audit process.</p>  | <b>April 2026</b>  | <b>Kirsty Martin, Executive Manager, Member Services</b><br>9213 2051<br><a href="mailto:kmartin@walga.asn.au">kmartin@walga.asn.au</a> |

|  |   |  |                   |   |
|--|---|--|-------------------|---|
|  |   | LG Pro has advised it will not be coordinating the survey this year and WALGA is considering whether to continue with the survey in the same format.   |                   |   |
| 22 August 2025 Zone Agenda Item <b>9.2 To Address Anomalies Arising from Changes to the Audit Function of Local Government in WA</b>           | That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to support a representation to the State Government to remove the Office of Auditor General (OAG) as the sole auditor of Local Government in Western Australia.   | <p>This item has been referred to the Governance Policy Team for consideration.</p> <p>For the last 3 years WALGA has partnered with Local Government Professionals (LG Pro) to survey the Local Government sector on experiences during the annual financial audit process.</p> <p>LG Pro has advised it will not be coordinating the survey this year and WALGA is considering whether to continue with the survey in the same format.</p>   | <b>April 2026</b> | <b>Kirsty Martin, Executive Manager, Member Services</b><br><a href="mailto:kmartin@walga.asn.au">kmartin@walga.asn.au</a><br>9213 2051 |
| 21 November 2025 Zone Agenda Item <b>9.6.1 Cost Shift Compliance Project Update</b>  | That the Central Country Zone refer Position 1 in the Zone's Cost Shifting and Compliance Report to State Council for consideration as a WALGA Advocacy Position. That is, to "reinstate the requirement for a Regulatory Impact Assessment for all amendments to legislation and regulation".  | This item will be referred to the Governance Policy Team for consideration.  | <b>April 2026</b> | <b>Kirsty Martin, Executive Manager, Member Services</b><br><a href="mailto:kmartin@walga.asn.au">kmartin@walga.asn.au</a><br>9213 2051 |
| 11 April 2025 Zone Agenda Item <b>9.3 Advocacy for Statewide Community Enhancements Fund (CEF) Framework &amp; Renewable Energy Guidelines</b> | <p>That the Central Country Zone of WALGA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supports the Shire of Narrogin's Community Enhancements Fund (CEF) Policy as a best-practice model for equitable benefit-sharing from large-scale renewable energy projects;</li> <li>2. Requests WALGA State Council to advocate to the State Government for the development of a Statewide Community Enhancements Fund Framework, consistent with the key principles of the Shire of Narrogin's CEF Policy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A minimum indexed contribution from renewable energy proponents based on installed capacity;</li> <li>○ Local Government management of restricted cash reserves for community benefit;</li> <li>○ A dedicated component for Indigenous Nations Funds (recommended 10%);</li> </ul> </li> </ol> | <p>The State Government published the Community Benefits Guideline for Large-Scale Renewable Energy Projects in the SW Interconnected System (SWIS) on 4 March. The release of the Guideline is an acknowledgement of the importance of sharing benefits created by the energy transition with host communities.</p> <p>PoweringWA will conduct a pilot of the Guideline focusing on two areas of investigation on the SWIS: the Central Coast area including the Shires of Dandaragan and Victoria Plains, and the Southern Wheatbelt area including the Shires of Narrogin and West Arthur. The Guideline reflects many of the sector's key asks, including placing Local Government at the centre of these conversations, a set contribution rate per megawatt of generation, indexation and the inclusion of battery storage projects.</p> | <b>April 2026</b> | <b>Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy</b><br><a href="mailto:nmatthews@walga.asn.au">nmatthews@walga.asn.au</a><br>9213 2039      |

|  |   |   |                          |   |
|--|---|---|--------------------------|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Alignment with Local Government strategic planning;</li> <li>○ Transparent governance, community engagement, and annual reporting.</li> </ul> <p>3. Further requests WALGA to advocate for the adoption of a broader Renewable Industry Framework for WA as outlined in the Shire of Narrogin's Advocacy Position, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consistent planning standards for renewable energy development (e.g., setbacks, zoning);</li> <li>○ A State-mandated community engagement framework;</li> <li>○ Legacy workforce housing solutions in lieu of short-term TWAs;</li> <li>○ A uniform Payment in Lieu of Rates (PILoR) model for wind, solar and BESS facilities;</li> <li>○ Empowerment of Local Governments to manage benefit-sharing and rating mechanisms.</li> </ul> | <p>WALGA will continue to advocate for community benefits to be mandatory and for the Government to provide advice on rating of renewable energy facilities as a priority.</p> <p>WALGA has also provided a submission on the draft Renewable Energy Planning Code (the Code) and associated Guideline for public consultation. The submission generally supports the intent of the draft Code but recommends changes to ensure comprehensiveness and avoid additional risk and cost to Local Governments. The submission does not support mandating these projects under Part 11B and reiterates that community benefits should be mandatory for large-scale projects.</p> |                          |   |
| <p>26 August 2023 Zone Agenda<br/>Item 9.2 Water Corporation –<br/>Non-Standard Water<br/>Services</p> | <p>That the Central Country Zone:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rejects Water Corporation attempts to classify regional sites as a 'Non-Standard Water Service' (unless specific agreement is reached with a Local Government Authority);</li> <li>2. Formally writes to Water Corporation and the Minister for Water confirming this position;</li> <li>3. Requests that WALGA supports the position of the Central Country Zone and rejects the Water Corporation's attempts to classify regional sites as a 'Non-Standard Water Service'; and</li> <li>4. Requests WALGA to engage with the Minister for Water to retain the current services, unless specific agreement is reached with a Local Government Authority.</li> </ol>  | <p>These matters have been incorporated into WALGA's Advocacy Position regarding Water Management, which is included as part of the May State Council Agenda for decision.</p> <p>Once the Advocacy Position has been endorsed by State Council, WALGA will provide a copy to the Minister for Water, highlighting the priorities of Local Government.</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>  | <p><b>April 2026</b></p> | <p><b>Nicole Matthews</b><br/><b>Executive Manager Policy</b><br/><a href="mailto:nmatthews@walga.asn.au">nmatthews@walga.asn.au</a><br/><b>9213 2039</b></p> |

**Noted**

## 12. WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA

Zone Delegates are invited to read and consider the WALGA State Council Agenda, which has been provided as an attachment (Attachment 10) with this Agenda and can be found via the link [here](#).

The Zone can provide comment or submit an alternative recommendation on any of the items, including the items for noting. The Zone comment will then be presented to the State Council for consideration at their meeting.

The State Council Agenda items requiring a decision of State Council are extracted for Zone consideration below.

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### 12.1. MATTERS FOR DECISION

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#### 12.1.1. PROTECTING COUNCIL MEMBER AND EMPLOYEE PRIVACY ADVOCACY POSITION

*By Meghan Dwyer, Governance Specialist*

##### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The South East Metropolitan Zone resolved to request WALGA advocate to amend s.5.95(1) of the *Local Government Act 1995* to specify that the right to inspect Primary and Annual Returns (Returns) contained in the Register of Financial Interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the residential address of the relevant person.
- Returns may include residential addresses, which are then made publicly accessible, creating privacy and safety risks.
- Council Members and employees are increasingly reluctant to disclose residential addresses due to safety and security risks, demonstrating that current legislation no longer aligns with contemporary expectations of privacy.
- Recent parliamentary scrutiny of similar requirements for Members of Parliament led to recommendations to remove full residential address disclosures, which the Government supported.
- In addition to Returns, Council Members must also provide a residential address when making their declaration of office.
- It would be appropriate for a review of all public disclosure requirements under the *Local Government Act 1995* to occur to ensure that they remain contemporary, effective, and aligned with modern standards of accountability and personal security.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the proposed advocacy position at its meeting on 23 March 2026.

##### ATTACHMENT

- Jurisdictional Comparison – Address Information in Council Member Returns and Declarations of Office (included below).

##### STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The proposed advocacy position aligns to the WALGA 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, in particular:

- Influence – Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
- Support – Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The recommendation is for State Council to endorse a new [Advocacy Position](#).

### ***Protecting Council Member and Employee Privacy***

*That WALGA advocates to the State Government to:*

- 1. Undertake a review of disclosure requirements for Local Government Council Members and employees under the Local Government Act 1995.*
- 2. Undertake the necessary legislative amendments to strike an appropriate balance between transparency, personal safety, and contemporary community expectations of privacy, including:*
  - a. Amend section 5.95(1) to prescribe that the right to inspect primary and annual returns contained in the register of financial interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the full residential address of the relevant person, and is instead limited to the suburb or locality.*
  - b. Amend Form 7 of the Local Government (Constitutional) Regulations 1998 to remove the requirement to disclose a full residential address when making the declaration of office.*

## **BACKGROUND**

At the 3 December 2025 meeting, State Council adopted new Advocacy Position 2.5.20 Electoral Material - Authorisation Statement Address Requirements in response to significant privacy and safety concerns arising from the obligation to publish a candidate's physical address on electoral materials.

When considering this item at the preceding round of Zone meetings, the South East Metropolitan Zone (SEMZ) resolved to request WALGA advocate to amend s.5.95(1) of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) to specify that the right to inspect Primary and Annual Returns (Returns) contained in the Register of Financial Interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the residential address of the relevant person.

State Council resolved to refer the SEMZ comments to the Governance Policy Team.

The Governance Policy Team endorsed the proposed advocacy position at its meeting on 23 March 2026.

## **COMMENT**

Public disclosure regimes must strike an appropriate balance between public transparency and personal safety. The inclusion of personal identifying information in publicly accessible documents has become increasingly problematic. As digital publication and internet search capabilities have expanded, material that once had limited circulation can be copied and distributed with ease. This environment has reinforced the need to carefully consider how much personal information is necessary to make publicly available, and the risks that may arise when doing so.

### **Local Government Act**

The Act establishes a range of public disclosure obligations designed to promote transparency and accountability. However, digital publication, increased data availability, and heightened personal safety concerns have created new risks that were not contemplated when these provisions were first drafted.

Returns require relevant persons to disclose personal financial information. Information disclosed includes the address of each parcel of real property, located in the district or in an adjoining district, in which the person had an interest and the nature of the interest in each parcel of real property (s.5.79). In practice, this often results in the disclosure of a Council Member or employee's residential address.

Returns are required to be included in the register of financial interests. Section 5.94(b) of the Act requires any register of financial interest to be made available to the public, and s.5.96 requires the Local Government to provide copies upon request.

Although s.5.93 of the Act establishes penalties for the improper use of information, information can now be copied and distributed almost instantly. In many cases, the harm may occur well before any investigation or action can be commenced.

In addition to the requirement for Council Members to disclose interests in real property as part of their returns, s.2.29 of the Act, together with Form 7 of the *Local Government (Constitution) Regulations 1998*, requires each Council Member to provide their full residential address when making their statutory declaration of office. Although this declaration is not required to be made publicly available under s. 5.94(b) of the Act, some Local Governments livestream or publish recordings of the proceedings. As a result, full residential address details become publicly accessible.

### **Emerging risks and issues**

Local Governments have observed increasing reluctance from Council Members and employees to provide their residential address. Reasons include:

- being registered as a silent elector under the *Electoral Act 1907*,
- experiences or risks of family or domestic violence,
- concerns that leave of absence approvals may signal when a residence may be unoccupied,
- role-related risks, such as potential targeted harassment by dissatisfied community members.

Disclosure of personal residential addresses can also expose individuals to cybersecurity and identity-theft risks, as this information can be combined with other data to build detailed personal profiles. Publicly accessible addresses may make individuals more vulnerable to targeted scams, social engineering, and unwanted contact, increasing both digital and physical security risks.

### **Parliamentary disclosure obligations**

The disclosure of the residential addresses of Members of Parliament in their Primary and Annual Returns has recently been considered by the [Legislative Assembly Procedures and Privileges Committee in Report No.1: Protecting privacy and other reasons to update the Members of Parliament \(Financial Interests\) Act 1992](#).

The Committee recommended that the Government review the relevant legislation, "with a view to addressing the requirement for the disclosure of full residential addresses and to consider broader legislative updates necessary to ensure the Act remains contemporary, effective, and aligned with modern standards of accountability and personal security."

The [Government response](#) supported this recommendation.

## **Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing**

The objectives of the new *Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024* (PRIS Act) include promoting responsible and transparent practices in the handling of personal information and balancing the public interests of protecting the privacy of personal information with the free flow of information by agencies.

Most privacy provisions in the PRIS Act come into effect on 1 July 2026.

The following sections of the PRIS Act intersect with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*:

- The information privacy principles do not apply to information that is already publicly accessible. This includes information in documents that are either generally available to the public or made available for public inspection under another written law (s.22).
- An individual may request a public entity to remove their personal information from a public register if making the information publicly available would substantially affect any individual's safety or wellbeing. If the public entity is satisfied that the grounds exist, the public entity must comply with the request unless the public entity is satisfied that the public interest in maintaining public access to the information outweighs any individual interest in the information not being made publicly available (s.77).

While this appears to provide a mechanism for individuals to address specific safety and privacy concerns, it would be preferable to ensure that the legislative requirements avoid unnecessary risks to all Council Members and employees.

WALGA will seek to engage with the Information Commissioner and Deputy Privacy Commissioner to clarify the way in which these and other PRIS Act provisions will apply to Council Members.

## **Review and amendments to the Local Government Act**

As Local Government Council Members and employees share the same safety concerns as Members of Parliament it would be appropriate to echo the Procedures and Privilege Committee and advocate for a broad review of all public disclosure requirements under the *Local Government Act 1995* to ensure that they remain contemporary, effective, and aligned with modern standards of accountability and personal security. A review would allow a clearer, risk-aware framework to be established that protects individuals while preserving appropriate transparency.

Within this broader reform, several targeted amendments are necessary. It is proposed that s. 5.95(1) be amended so that the right to inspect information in the register of financial interests under s. 5.94(b) is limited to the suburb or locality of each property, rather than the full residential address of the relevant person. Additionally, the requirement for Council Members to provide their full residential address in the statutory declaration of office should be removed. These amendments are consistent with practices adopted in other Australian jurisdictions and reflect the approach now being reconsidered for Members of Parliament.

Importantly, these changes would not weaken transparency or accountability. Council Members and employees would still be required to disclose their full residential address in Returns, and would continue to declare direct financial, indirect financial, proximity, and impartiality interests when they arise in decision-making processes. This ensures that relevant interests remain publicly recorded when they matter, without unnecessarily

exposing personal residential details. By limiting public access to only what is necessary, the legislative framework can better protect individual safety while preserving the integrity of the disclosure regime.

**ATTACHMENT: JURISDICTIONAL COMPARISON – ADDRESS INFORMATION IN COUNCIL MEMBER RETURNS AND DECLARATIONS OF OFFICE**

| <b>DISCLOSURES IN RETURNS</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Victoria</b><br/> <a href="#"><u>Local Government Act 2020</u></a><br/> <a href="#"><u>Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020</u></a></p> | <p>CEO must prepare <b>summary</b> of personal interests information disclosed in the last personal interest return.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes the town or suburb, <b>but not the street address or number</b> of the land that is the place of residence</li> </ul> <p>Other matters to be included or excluded are prescribed.</p> <p>Includes that a specified person may request in writing information not be included if the CEO consider including the information would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be reasonably likely to place the personal safety of any person at risk, or</li> <li>unreasonably expose a business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage</li> </ul> <p>Summary of personal interest returns available to members of the public.</p> <p>Detailed personal interests returns are only available to certain persons.</p>  |
| <p><b>New South Wales</b><br/> <a href="#"><u>Governance Information (Public Access) Act 2009</u></a></p>   | <p>From the <i>Information Access Guideline 1 - For Local Councils on the disclosure of information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Returns should be made <b>publicly available</b> on the council's website <b>unless there is an overriding public interest against release</b> or to do so would impose unreasonable additional costs on council.</li> <li>A consideration against disclosure is where release of the information may expose a person to a risk of harm or of serious harassment or serious intimidation.</li> <li>In the circumstances where council decides that there is an overriding public interest against disclosure, consideration should then be given to whether it is practicable to release an <b>edited copy of the record</b> (for example redacting the individual's signature or residential address)</li> <li>If it is practicable to do so, then the information should be deleted from a copy of the record and the remainder of the return made available on the council's website.</li> <li>Where information is deleted from a return, council should keep a record indicating, in general terms, the nature of the information redacted.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Queensland</b><br/> <a href="#"><u>Local Government Regulation 2021</u></a></p>   | <p><b>Suburb or locality</b> of the land is required (<b>not full address</b>).</p>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>South Australia</b><br><a href="#">Local Government Act 1999</a> | <b>Personal addresses are not to be published</b> nor are any addresses where the CEO is satisfied that the inclusion in the Register of the address of a person would place <b>at risk the personal safety of that person, a member of that person's family or any other person.</b> |
| <b>Tasmania</b>   | Currently does not require councillors to lodge a personal interests return. The Tasmanian government is implementing a new framework to strengthen the management of local government councillor conflicts of interest, with reforms expected before the 2026 elections.             |

| <b>INFORMATION IN COUNCIL MEMBER DECLARATIONS OF OFFICE</b>  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Victoria</b><br><a href="#">Local Government Act 2020</a><br><a href="#">Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020</a> | Address not required. |
| <b>New South Wales</b><br><a href="#">Local Government Act 1993</a>  | Address not required. |
| <b>Queensland</b><br><a href="#">Local Government Regulation 2021</a>  | Address not required. |
| <b>South Australia</b><br><a href="#">Local Government (General) Regulations 2013</a>  | Address not required. |
| <b>Tasmania</b><br><a href="#">Local Government (General) Regulations 2025</a>   | Address not required. |

#### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the following new Advocacy Position:

*Protecting Council Member and Employee Privacy*

*That WALGA advocates to the State Government to:*

1. *Undertake a review of disclosure requirements for Local Government Council Members and employees under the Local Government Act 1995,*
2. *Undertake the necessary legislative amendments to strike an appropriate balance between transparency, personal safety, and contemporary community expectations of privacy, including:*
  - a. *Amend section 5.95(1) to prescribe that the right to inspect primary and annual returns contained in the register of financial interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the full residential address of the relevant person, and is instead limited to the suburb or locality.*
  - b. *Amend Form 7 of the Local Government (Constitutional) Regulations 1998 to remove the requirement to disclose a full residential address when making the declaration of office.*

## RESOLUTION

**Moved:** President Cr Karen Harrington

**Seconded:** Cr Clive Barton

**That the Central Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.1 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.**

**CARRIED**

### **12.1.2. WATER MANAGEMENT ADVOCACY POSITION**

*By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste*

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- A new Water Management Advocacy Position and the retirement of position 6.14 Planning for Water is proposed.
- The new Position has been developed following consultation and feedback on WALGA's *Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper*.
- 28 Local Governments provided more than 200 comments on the paper, with the main issues being:
  - equitable access to consistent and reliable water;
  - water licensing and allocation;
  - integrated regional and catchment-scale water planning;
  - water for Public Open Space (POS);
  - funding
    - for critical infrastructure - drainage and irrigation, alternative water sources and sewerage inflow and headworks.
    - for water efficiency and water sensitive urban design initiatives.
  - expanding and improving the Waterwise Council Program;
  - access to data and information to inform decision making; and
  - addressing the impacts of stormwater runoff.
- The outcomes sought in 6.14 Planning for Water have been realised in the recently released State Planning Policy 2.9.
- The Environment Policy Team endorsed retiring the position and the new position at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

#### **ATTACHMENT**

- [Water Management Discussion Paper](#)
- [Water Management Consultation Summary Report](#)

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

This item relates to the following WALGA Strategic Pillars:

- Influence
  - Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
  - Empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support - Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed that the following new [Advocacy Position](#) be **endorsed**:

### Water Management

1. *Access to consistent, reliable and adequate water supplies is critical for Local Government operations, community health, amenity, environmental sustainability and economic activity.*
2. *WALGA is calling on the State Government to:*
  - a. *Modernise water management legislation and regulation, including:*
    - i. *Undertaking a review of the water licensing and allocation system to ensure equitable access and prioritise high value community use including for public open space.*
    - ii. *Developing a State-wide framework for integrated regional and catchment-scale water planning.*
  - b. *Adequately, sustainably and equitably fund critical water infrastructure programs for Local Government, including:*
    - i. *Drainage and irrigation upgrades.*
    - ii. *Alternative water sources (recycled water, stormwater harvesting, desalination and groundwater replenishment) and disused water asset transfer.*
    - iii. *Small-scale sewerage infrastructure headworks and infill sewerage.*
  - c. *Expand the Waterwise Council Program statewide and provide:*
    - i. *Increased support and resources to assist Local Government in delivering water efficiency measures.*
    - ii. *Incentives for Local Governments to undertake water efficiency initiatives.*
  - d. *Improve water data access and capability for Local Governments to ensure evidence-based decision making.*
  - e. *Provide effective leadership, guidance, education and enforcement to address the impacts of stormwater runoff.*

It is proposed that the following Advocacy Position be **retired**:

### 6.14 Planning for Water

*As part of the Water Management Report endorsement process, formal support from the relevant Local Government should be required where:*

1. *It is intended that the Local Government will become the infrastructure asset manager; or*
2. *The proposed location of water infrastructure assets will impact Local Government assets or facilities.*

The outcomes sought in Position 6.14 have been realised in the recently released [State Planning Policy 2.9](#).

## BACKGROUND

WALGA identified the need to consolidate and expand on current Water related [Advocacy Positions](#) and has undertaken initial consultation, through targeted engagement and consideration of issues raised by the sector previously. To inform the development of a new Advocacy Position, WALGA developed a Discussion Paper to gain feedback from the sector on their current challenges and needs in relation to water management across the state.

WALGA released the Discussion Paper for comment in late November 2025, with an initial deadline of 15 January 2026 for comment, however based on feedback from the sector this deadline was extended to Thursday, 12 March.

28 Local Governments have provided feedback, 14 of those Council/CEO level feedback. The feedback provided by Local Governments was comprehensive, with over 200 individual comments received across the submissions. WALGA acknowledges the significant time and consideration given by Members in providing that level of feedback.

The main themes of the feedback reflect those explored in the Discussion Paper and are consistent across Local Government:

- Legislation which is inequitable and outdated, particularly for licensing and allocation.
- State legislation should align with the National Water Agreement, particularly strategic, long term integrated planning and equitable access to drinking water.
- Aging and insufficient water infrastructure.
- Support and resourcing needed to explore and mainstream alternative water sources.
- Reactive approaches to headworks and sewerage servicing constraining development, particularly in regional and high-growth areas.
- Public Open Space (POS) in relation to planning decisions not accounting for the water needed to sustain these areas.
- Statewide expansion of the Waterwise Council program and improvement in program support and design.
- High interest in improving and supporting water efficiency and water sensitive urban design outcomes.
- Water data gaps and poor data sharing limits sound decision making.
- Water quality as an emerging and under-recognised issue.

WALGA has consolidated the feedback into a Consultation Report which summarises the main themes and issues raised by the sector and how it has been addressed in the draft Advocacy Position.

## COMMENT

The new Position has been informed by the information, issues and priorities identified in feedback received from Local Governments on the WALGA Discussion Paper.

A new Advocacy Position is timely given the release of [Made Possible by Water](#) by the State Government on 21 March 2026, a document outlining WA's water future. A comprehensive Advocacy Position on this issue will be essential to assist WALGA's advocacy and influence how the Government delivers the priorities identified. Some of the matters identified in the draft Advocacy Position are reflected in Made Possible by Water, including expansion of the WaterWise Program and delivery of new water sources.

The Environment Policy Team endorsed the new Advocacy Position and the retirement of Position 6.14 at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council:

1. Endorse the following new Advocacy Position:

### *Water Management*

1. *Access to consistent, reliable and adequate water supplies is critical for Local Government operations, community health, amenity, environmental sustainability and economic activity.*
2. *WALGA is calling on the State Government to:*
  - a. *Modernise water management legislation and regulation, including:*
    - i. *undertaking a review of the water licensing and allocation system to ensure equitable access and prioritise high value community use including for public open space*
    - ii. *developing a state-wide framework for integrated regional and catchment-scale water planning.*
  - b. *Adequately, sustainably and equitably fund critical water infrastructure programs for Local Government, including:*
    - i. *drainage and irrigation upgrades*
    - ii. *alternative water sources (recycled water, stormwater harvesting, desalination and groundwater replenishment) and disused water asset transfer*
    - iii. *small-scale sewerage infrastructure headworks and infill sewerage.*
  - c. *Expand the Waterwise Council Program statewide and provide:*
    - i. *increased support and resources to assist Local Government in delivering water efficiency measures*
    - ii. *incentives for Local Governments to undertake water efficiency initiatives.*
  - d. *Improve water data access and capability for Local Governments to ensure evidence-based decision making.*
  - e. *Provide effective leadership, guidance, education and enforcement to address the impacts of stormwater runoff.*
2. Retires Advocacy Position 6.14 Planning for Water.

### **RESOLUTION**

**Moved: President Cr Jackie McBurney**

**Seconded: President Cr Adrian Kowald**

**That the Central Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.2 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.**

**CARRIED**

### 12.1.3. OFF ROADS VEHICLES ADVOCACY POSITION

By Rebecca Hicks, Policy Advisor Community

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that Advocacy Position 3.12 Off Road Vehicles (ORV) be retired.
- The *Control of Vehicles (Off-road Vehicles) Act 1978* (the ORV Act) provides the legislative framework for the use of off-road vehicles within permitted areas in WA.
- Nine Local Governments own and maintain Off Road Vehicle (ORV) areas.
- Advocacy Position 3.12 Off Road Vehicles was adopted by State Council in 2018 in response to concerns from Members about the use of permitted ORV areas.
- Amendments to the ORV Act in 2025 address the core objectives of the ORV Advocacy Position, particularly as it relates to registration and enforcement.
- The retirement of the ORV Advocacy Position was endorsed by the People and Place Policy Team at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

#### ATTACHMENT

- [Control of Vehicles \(Off-road Areas\) Amendment Act 2025](#)

#### STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Retiring this Advocacy Position aligns with the following WALGA Strategic Pillars:

- Influence
  - Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
  - Empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support
  - Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

#### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed that Advocacy Position [3.12 Off Road Vehicles](#) be **retired**.

*Legislation relating to off road vehicles should be reviewed to align registration and licensing of off-road vehicles with other vehicle types are users. In addition, educational resources should be developed in consultation with users, regulators, and vendors relating to safety, regulatory compliance and other associated matters.*

#### BACKGROUND

The *Control of Vehicles (Off-road Vehicles) Act 1978* (the ORV Act) prohibits the use of Off Road Vehicles (ORVs) in areas outside of permitted areas and makes provisions for the use of ORVs in permitted areas. The Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) is responsible for administering the legislation and providing [information and support](#) to users and Local Governments. The legislation defines ORVs as including, but not limited to, trail bikes, quad bikes, beach buggies and road licensed vehicles such as four-wheel drives when used in off-road locations.

The use of ORVs outside of permitted areas can have impacts on Local Governments and communities including community safety in public spaces, road safety and environmental impacts. These issues fall under the scope of other legislation.

Nine Local Governments currently maintain and operate permitted areas: the Cities of Greater Geraldton, Karratha, Kwinana and Swan and the Shires of Carnarvon, Dandaragan, Gingin, Port Hedland and York.

WALGA's Advocacy Position was adopted by State Council in 2018, in response to Member concerns regarding the use of permitted ORV areas.

The ORV Act was amended in 2025 to align penalties and enforcement expectations with other WA transport legislation. The *Amendment Act* includes provisions to introduce online and label registrations and increase penalties for existing offences. The majority of the ORV Amendment Act commenced with immediate effect in August 2025. Sections of the legislation relating to registration labels are dependent on system design changes to the online registration platform. The legislation regulations and commencement date are expected by the end of 2026.

In 2024, the [State Government announced \\$4.8 million](#) in grant funding for Local Governments to develop new and upgrade existing ORV areas. This funding recognises the key role Local Government plays in the upkeep and management of ORV areas.

### COMMENT

The ORV Amendment Act addresses the core objectives of the WALGA ORV advocacy position, particularly as it relates to registration and enforcement. As the intended outcomes of the advocacy position have been achieved, it is proposed that Advocacy Position 3.12 Off Road Vehicles be retired. WALGA will work with LGIRS to provide advice and support on the commencement of the Act regulations for Members managing permitted areas.

WALGA has engaged with Members that currently manage ORV permitted areas. Six Local Governments have responded and provided their support for the retirement of the advocacy position.

WALGA will continue to monitor emerging issues associated with ORVs, with a particular focus on usage outside of permitted areas.

The proposed retirement of the ORV advocacy position was endorsed by the People and Place Policy Team at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council retire Advocacy Position 3.12 *Off Road Vehicles*.

### RESOLUTION

**Moved:** President Cr Phil Blight

**Seconded:** President Cr Julie Russell

**That the Central Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.3 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.**

**CARRIED**

## 12.1.4. HOMELESSNESS ADVOCACY POSITION

By Hannah Godsave, Manager Community Policy

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that the 2019 Advocacy Position 3.11 Homelessness be updated.
- While responding to homelessness is a State and Australian Government responsibility, the impacts of homelessness intersect with multiple areas of Local Government service delivery and requires them to manage community expectations.
- Western Australian Local Governments are reporting increased numbers of people experiencing homelessness, including Local Governments that have historically experienced minimal impact.
- WALGA undertook a survey of Members in early 2026 to better understand the impact on the sector and inform a review of the current Advocacy Position.
- The updated Position reflects the sector's view that the Australian and Western Australian Government should provide leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular specialist services, social and affordable housing and wraparound services.
- The People and Place Policy Team endorsed the revised position at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

### STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

This item relates to the following WALGA Strategic Pillars:

- Influence
  - Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
  - Empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support
  - Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed that the **existing** Advocacy Position [3.11 Homelessness](#):

*WALGA recognises that Local Government through its planning, health, community development and regulatory powers can facilitate positive local and regional responses to end homelessness, however does not see that it has a lead role. Rather, Local Government's role is one of a stakeholder that requires early engagement in the understanding of collaborative approaches that improve the quality of life for people experiencing homelessness in all of its manifestations.*

be **replaced** with a new Advocacy Position as follows:

*WALGA calls on the Western Australian and Australian Governments to provide leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular:*

1. *Ensuring specialist homelessness services are responsive to need, place-based and people-centred.*
2. *Investing in social and affordable housing and wraparound services.*

## BACKGROUND

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness as when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

The ABS Census of Population and Housing provides the authoritative data source on people experiencing homelessness. The 2021 Census reported 9,729 people experiencing homelessness in WA. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare provides more contemporary data based on interactions with specialist homelessness services. In 2024-25, almost 289,000 (1 in 115) people engaged with specialist homelessness services in WA, of which 47% were accessing homelessness support for the first time.

While responding to homelessness is a State and Australian Government responsibility, the impacts of homelessness intersect with multiple areas of Local Government service delivery, including the maintenance of public spaces, planning and zoning for appropriate services and revenue-related functions such as rates and grants administration. Local Governments must also manage community expectations about how they will respond to homelessness.

WALGA's current advocacy position was adopted by State Council in 2019 in the lead up to the release of [\*All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030\*](#) (the Strategy) released by the State Government. The Strategy sets out a vision for a whole of community response, led by the Department of Communities, working towards ending homelessness in Western Australia. The Strategy identifies a predominantly supportive role for the Local Government sector in addressing homelessness, while also acknowledging that some Local Governments directly provide homelessness and accommodation services. Suggested sector contributions in the Strategy include facilitating local partnerships, identifying rough sleepers, sharing local area knowledge to inform State Government resourcing decisions, and connecting people to specialist services. This supportive role for the Local Government sector is reflected in the current Advocacy Position.

At the National level, the [National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness](#) provides a five-year funding and accountability framework between the Australian and State/Territory Governments to support social housing and homelessness services until June 2029. The bilateral schedule for Western Australia sets out a \$165.9 million homelessness funding contribution from both parties.

## COMMENT

Local Governments have been reporting increased numbers of people experiencing homelessness, including Local Governments that have historically experienced minimal impact. Local Governments have shared that they are facing growing pressure to meet both their defined obligations and community expectations for comprehensive responses, including specialist homelessness services triage, investment in housing and support service provision.

To better understand the issues being raised by Members, WALGA conducted a sector survey on homelessness in early 2026. 68 responses (49%) were received, 26 metropolitan and 42 regional, with representation from all WALGA Zones. Key findings from the survey include:

- 74% of respondents report an increase in the significance of homelessness in their Local Government area in the last two years.
- 60% of respondents report an increase in enquires from community members regarding homelessness in the last two years.
  - Key issues raised in community enquiries are rough sleeping and persons living in vehicles.
- 23% of respondents consider there is no role beyond defined responsibilities for Local Government in response to homelessness.
- 61% of respondents consider preventative measures to reduce homelessness and facilitating connections to specialist service providers as an appropriate role for Local Government in response to homelessness.
- 83% of respondents rank State and Federal Government funding as the highest or second highest priority enabler to respond to homelessness.
- 51% of respondents report that current specialist homelessness services are not adequate within their Local Government area.
- Respondents rank affordable housing as the top priority for support/services to address homelessness, followed by wraparound services and specialist support services.

Informed by survey responses and acknowledging the support role of Local Government identified in the State Strategy, the updated position calls on the Australian and Western Australian Government to provide the necessary leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular specialist services, social and affordable housing and wraparound services.

The People and Place Policy Team endorsed the revised position at its meeting on 19 March 2026 meeting.

#### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council replace Advocacy Position 3.11 Homelessness with the following:

*WALGA calls on the Western Australian and Australian Governments to provide leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular:*

1. *Ensuring specialist homelessness services are responsive to need, place-based and people-centred.*
2. *Investing in social and affordable housing and wraparound services.*

#### RESOLUTION

**Moved: President Cr Leigh Ballard**

**Seconded: President Cr Jackie McBurney**

**That the Central Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.4 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.**

**CARRIED**

*Item 7.2 was discussed prior to item 12.2. Ms Manning was not in the meeting when this item was raised earlier in the Agenda due to a prior commitment.*

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## **7.2 WHEATBELT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

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*Ms Renee Manning, Acting Chief Executive Officer*

Ms Manning provided an update to the Zone.

**Noted**

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## **12.2. OTHER STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS**

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Zone Delegates are invited to raise for discussion, questions or decision any of the items in the State Council Agenda, including the items for noting, Policy Team and Committee Reports or the Key Activity Reports.

### **13. EMERGING ISSUES**

*A late item was received from the Shire of Corrigin and the Shire of Kulin. This item was circulated to Delegates prior to the meeting.*

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## **13.1. MINISTERIAL DECISION TO ALLOW HEAVIER LOADS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROADS**

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*By Shire of Corrigin and Shire of Kulin*

### **BACKGROUND**

In March 2026, the Minister for Transport announced a temporary upgrade of Restricted Access Vehicle (RAV) networks to Accredited Mass Management Scheme (AMMS) Level 3, enabling heavier vehicle loads for fuel, fertiliser and lime on selected State and local roads in regional Western Australia. Details are outlined in the [Media Release](#) and [6-2026 v3 | Main Roads Western Australia](#).

Local governments support the government initiatives to maintain a reliable fuel and fertiliser supply to the region as part of a range of measures in response to concerns raised about fuel security amid conflict in the Middle East.

Local governments and WALGA were not consulted prior to the announcement, despite local governments being the responsible road managers for affected local roads.

Any change to heavy vehicle access conditions on local roads has direct implications for road safety, pavement, culvert and bridge capacity, asset condition, maintenance and renewal costs and local government liability. Existing access arrangements are based on assessed road condition and safety considerations.

The upgrade coincides with the wetter part of the year and is expected to accelerate pavement deterioration, particularly on rural roads, increasing maintenance costs and reducing asset life. There is already a significant gap between amount of funding required for road maintenance, renewal and upgrade and funding availability.

Local governments across the wheatbelt have experienced frustration with the limited compliance with the Main Roads Heavy Vehicle access permits and operating conditions despite the recent increase in heavy vehicle compliance activities.

The tables below show the RAV and AMMS categories and weight limits for the heaviest category across many shires in the Central Country Zone.

Table 1 Tandem Drive Prime Mover, Trailer Combinations Restricted Access Vehicle (RAV) Categories



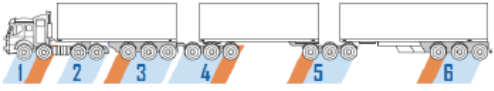

| Category 7 RAVs |   |                    |           |                  |
|-----------------|---|--------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Category        | Vehicle Description   | Length             | Max. Mass | Approved Network |
| 7A              | AB-Triple (Prime Mover, Semi Trailer & B-Double)<br> | >27.5 m<br>≤36.5 m | 108.5 t   | RAV Network 7    |
| 7B              | BA-Triple (B-Double & Dog Trailer)<br>               | >27.5 m<br>≤36.5 m | 108.5 t   | RAV Network 7    |

Table 2 Prime Mover, Trailer Combinations AMMS Categories

| Category 7 RAVs |   |                    |            |                 |                    |                  |
|-----------------|---|--------------------|------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Cat.            | Vehicle Description   | Length             | AMMS Level | Max. Gross Mass | Max. Modified Mass | Approved Network |
| 7A              | AB-Triple (Prime Mover, Semi Trailer & B-double)<br> | >27.5 m<br>≤36.5 m | Level 1    | 115 t           | 7 t                | N7.1             |
|                 |   |                    | Level 2    | 119 t           | 11 t               | N7.2             |
|                 |   |                    | Level 3    | 123.5 t         | 15 t               | N7.3             |
| 7B              | BA-Triple (B-double & Dog Trailer)<br>               | >27.5 m<br>≤36.5 m | Level 1    | 115 t           | 7 t                | N7.1             |
|                 |   |                    | Level 2    | 119 t           | 11 t               | N7.2             |
|                 |   |                    | Level 3    | 123.5 t         | 15 t               | N7.3             |

More information on the specific combinations is available on the Main Roads WA website below.

[prime-mover-trailer-combinations-operating-conditions](#)

[Orders/tandem-drive-prime-mover-trailer-combinations-restricted-access-vehicle-categories.pdf](#)

[AMMS accredited-mass-management-scheme-amms-tandem-drive-prime-mover-trailer-combinations-restricted-access-vehicle-categories.pdf](#)

[AMMS accredited-mass-management-scheme-amms-prime-mover-trailer-combinations-operating-conditions.pdf](#)

## RECOMMENDATION

That the Central Country Zone:

1. Notes the Ministerial decision to temporarily upgrade RAV networks to AMMS Level 3 on local government roads.
2. Expresses concern that the decision was made without consultation with local governments or WALGA.
3. Requests WALGA advocate to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads Western Australia seeking clarification on:
  - a. risk assessments without route-specific road safety or asset capacity assessment for local government roads,
  - b. compliance and enforcement arrangements,
  - c. duration and process for revocation of the upgrade,
  - d. opt-out options for local government roads, and
  - e. additional funding support for impacted local government road assets.

## ALTERNATE MOTION

**Moved: President Cr Sharon Jacobs**

**Seconded: Cr Robbie Bowey**

That the Central Country Zone:

1. **Writes to the Minister for Transport to express concern about this decision.**
2. **Notes the Ministerial decision to temporarily upgrade RAV networks to AMMS permit on local government roads.**
3. **Expresses concern that the decision was made without consultation with local governments or WALGA.**
4. **Requests WALGA advocate to the Minister for Transport and Main Roads Western Australia seeking clarification on:**
  - a. **risk assessments without route-specific road safety or asset capacity assessment for local government roads,**
  - b. **compliance and enforcement arrangements,**
  - c. **duration and process for revocation of the upgrade,**
  - d. **opt-out options for local government roads, and**
  - e. **additional funding support for impacted local government road assets.**

**CARRIED**

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## 13.2. PRIORITISATION OF FUEL SUPPLIES

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President Cr Jackie McBurney raised for discussion the topic of fuel shortages and potential prioritisation of fuel supplies.

President Cr Phil Blight provided a verbal update to the Zone about the weekly meetings he and other State Councillors have been attending with the Fuel Security State Controller, Mr Rob Cossart. Cr Blight noted that the meetings have been of value and urged Zone members with any fuel security issues or questions to let him know and he will pass this through the meeting.

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### **13.3. RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING CEO**

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President Leigh Ballard thanked Mr Dale Stewart, Chief Executive Officer of the Shire of Narrogin for his eight years of contribution to the Zone and the Shire of Narrogin. The Zone extended a warm thank you to Dale and wished him well in his future endeavours.

### **14. NEXT MEETING**

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, 2 June 2026 commencing at 7:30am, via MSTeams.

The next Central Country Zone meeting will be held on Friday, 12 June 2026 commencing at 9:30am. This meeting will be hosted by the Shire of Dumbleyung.

### **15. CLOSURE**

The Chair thanked the Shire of Cuballing for hosting the meeting and providing the wonderful catering.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 12:22pm.