

# President's Report

## May 2026

### Introduction

As the newly elected WALGA President, I am proud to represent our 139 Member Local Governments and advance the sector's priorities at both the State and National level.

I would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of outgoing President Karen Chappel AM JP and Deputy President Paul Kelly. As a sector, we have benefited from the selfless and determined leadership demonstrated by Karen and Paul across the last four years.

As your President, I am committed to maintaining strong, collaborative relationships across all levels of Government, ensuring the perspectives of Western Australia's Local Governments are reflected in policy development, and engagement occurs at the times it matters most.

I also acknowledge the election of WALGA Deputy President Chris Antonio from the Shire of Northam, and I look forward to working closely with him to progress WALGA's strategic objectives and reinforce the strong voice of Local Government in Western Australia.

### Political Engagement

Since commencing in the role, I have been humbled by the messages of support I have received from all levels of Government. I have made it a priority to engage with key State Government Ministers, Members of the Opposition and Federal Members of Parliament to seek early meetings and explore opportunities for constructive collaboration.

Strengthening these relationships is a priority, and I am focused on ensuring WALGA is well positioned to engage proactively on matters of importance to the Local Government sector.

### Media Engagement

In my first weeks as President, I have actively engaged with media on relevant matters. I have spoken to a range of outlets on topics including Renewable Energy, Local Government reform, State Government priorities and the long-term challenges facing the sector, as well as attending pertinent events.

Media has included interviews with the ABC Radio and TV, 6PR, and The West Australian, emphasising the importance of community benefit, protecting local voice, and ensuring Local Governments are not required to absorb costs arising from major policy and infrastructure decisions.

I have also had the opportunity to share my vision for WALGA and how I plan to build on the success to-date, working with the State Government to ensure the best outcomes for WA Local Governments and their communities.

On Tuesday, 10 March, I attended the Energy Exchange Australia event with Minister for Energy and Decarbonisation Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA where Premier Hon Roger Cook MLA announced the State of Energy initiative.

On Thursday, 12 March, I attended UDIA WA's first industry breakfast for 2026 where Deputy Premier and Treasurer the Hon Rita Saffioti MLA delivered a keynote address emphasising housing supply without increasing demand and the importance of community engagement. This provided an opportunity for me to discuss with her the critical role Local Governments play in supporting new housing developments across WA.

It was also great to see Minister for Local Government the Hon Hannah Beazley MLA acknowledge WALGA's new leadership and the work of the Association in Parliament.

### **Fuel Security**

Fuel supply constraints continue to impact Local Governments across Western Australia, particularly in regional areas, and WALGA has remained actively engaged in the State's coordinated response. WALGA has been meeting regularly with Mr Rob Cossart, the State Fuel Security State Controller, which has provided the opportunity for information sharing, and the provision of on-the-ground feedback regarding fuel availability and impacts.

Feedback from the sector highlights ongoing supply disruptions, particularly from independent suppliers, affecting Local Governments' ability to maintain adequate reserves and plan operations with certainty. Emerging delays to waste collection and landfill services have prompted contingency planning across several communities. Members have also reported supplier-driven cost increases and workforce challenges, including staff unable to travel or undertake fuel-dependent duties.

WALGA will continue to meet weekly with the State Controller and provide timely updates to the sector as the situation evolves.

### **Electoral Reforms**

Following the electoral reform announcement made by the Hon Hannah Beazley MLA, Minister for Local Government at 2025 WALGA Convention, WALGA distributed a Discussion Paper to ensure the current Advocacy Position still reflects the sectors views.

WALGA received over 100 submissions from Members and the results will be utilised to update existing advocacy positions.

### **Sector wide engagement with Aboriginal Elected Members and communities**

In my first week as President, I participated in WALGA's second Aboriginal Elected Member Roundtable, followed the next day by the annual Aboriginal Engagement Forum. Established and newly elected Aboriginal Elected Members from twelve Local Governments joined myself, WALGA's Senior Executive Team and the Director General of the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) to share their experience of leading and representing their communities on Council. It was a great opportunity to listen to Aboriginal Councillors from vastly diverse communities across WA and gain a stronger understanding of their experience as Elected Members and community and cultural leaders.

Representatives from LGIRS also joined the Roundtable to hear directly what support is required to enable Aboriginal Elected Members to thrive in their Council roles. These insights will enable WALGA to work collaboratively with LGIRS to fulfil the Department's

commitment to support Aboriginal Elected Members made at the 2025 Aboriginal Engagement Forum.

### **2026 Aboriginal Engagement Forum**

The 2026 Aboriginal Engagement Forum was held at the State Reception Centre, Kaarta Gar-up | Kings Park, on 18 March 2026. The program theme was Empowerment in Action | Kaarditjin kwop Koorliny and focused on opportunities for Local Government to build pathways to employment, business and leadership. The event sold out with approximately 250 attendees, and a record number of Aboriginal Elected Members, Aboriginal Local and State Government officers and community partners. I would like to thank my fellow State Councillors who attended the Forum and helped to promote the event.

### **Large Scale Renewable Energy Projects - Community Benefit Framework**

The State Government's release of the Community Benefits Guideline for Large-scale Renewable Energy Projects in the South West Interconnected System marks a key step in ensuring regional communities share in opportunities created by the energy transition.

The Guideline follows strong advocacy from WALGA for meaningful local benefits and builds on the release of WALGA's Renewable Energy Community Benefits and Engagement Guide in July 2025.

These community benefits arrangements have the potential to deliver and accelerate priorities of local communities. The Guideline will establish the development of Community Benefits Plans and the formation of Community Benefits Advisory Groups.

Local Governments will have a central role in developing Community Benefits Plans and as part of the Community Benefits Advisory Groups to be established to ensure that the plans align with community priorities.

This is a significant advocacy outcome, however the focus on ensuring these benefits remain distinct from the way Local Governments apply rates to land that has undergone a change of use, which is essential for cost recovery, will continue.

Finally, I'd like to extend my best wishes on behalf of WALGA to the communities impacted by Tropical Cyclone Narelle. This event is a sobering reminder of the destructive power of these natural events across the State. I am in awe of the strength and resilience of our sector during these events, and I'd like to acknowledge State Councillors Matt Nikkula, the Shire of Exmouth President and Audra Smith the President from the Shire of Ashburton. Audra and Matt, along with every other Elected Member and officer in communities impacted by TC Narelle make us all proud and we will continue to do everything in our power to support them during the long recovery ahead.

**Mark Irwin**  
**WALGA President**

# President's Contacts

The President's contacts since 4 March 2026 and scheduled before 8 May 2026 are as follows:

## State and Commonwealth Government Relations

- Hon Hannah Beazley MLA, Minister for Local Government; Disability Services; Volunteering; Youth; Gascoyne
- Hon John Carey MLA, Minister for Planning and Lands; Housing and Works; Health Infrastructure
- Housing Industry Roundtable with Deputy Premier, Hon Rita Saffioti MLA and Hon John Carey MLA
- Ride Safe Inquiry Briefing with Hon Hannah Beazley MLA and Hon Jessica Stojkovski MLA
- Ms Kirrilee Warr MLA, Shadow Minister for Local Government
- Labor Leaders Forum lunch with Premier, Hon Roger Cook MLA
- Labor Leaders Forum lunch with Hon Paul Papalia MLA
- 500 Club Event – Basil Zempilas – A Vision for 2026 Luncheon and Q&A
- Leader of the Opposition, Vasil Zempilas MLA and Shadow Minister for Housing, Sandra Brewer MLA
- Department of Energy and Economic Diversification & Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety
  - Director General, Rebecca Brown (DEED)
  - Coordinator of Energy, Jai Thomas
  - Director General, Lanie Chopping (DLGIRS)
- Ms Lanie Chopping, Director General, Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety
- Mr Leon Mclvor, Director General, Department of Housing and Works

## Zone Meetings

- Murchison Country Zone
- Northern Country Zone
- South East Metropolitan Zone
- Pilbara Country Zone
- Peel Country Zone
- East Metropolitan Zone
- Kimberley Country Zone
- Great Southern Country Zone

## Local Government Relations

- **State Council Meetings**
  - State Council Meeting, 4 March
  - State Council Information Forum, 1 April
  - Finance & Services Committee
- **ALGA**
  - Board Meeting, 19 March

## Conferences, Workshops, Public Relations

- Energy Exchange Australia 2026

- Regional Capital Alliance WA meeting (RCAWA)
- Safe Systems for Local Government Workshop
- WALGA Aboriginal Elected Member Roundtable
- 2026 WALGA Aboriginal Engagement Forum
- WALGA 2026 Mayors and Presidents Forum
- Property Council of Australia – Lunch with the Treasurer