

President's Report

September 2025

Introduction

It has been a busy few months for the Local Government sector, with several issues getting substantial public attention.

Across these past few months, we've responded to more than 40 media queries and in some instances, I have been disappointed with the representation of the sector and have responded accordingly – noting the clear policy positions of WALGA.

Please be assured, WALGA will continue to take every opportunity to champion the incredible efforts of WA Local Governments.

The WALGA Local Government Awards, held at the WA Museum on 19 July celebrated the outstanding achievements and contributions of individuals and Councils across the State. Feedback continues to support the decision to host the Awards as a stand-alone event, allowing adequate time to appropriately acknowledge award recipients.

Rating of Miscellaneous Licences

WALGA strongly supports the Supreme Court's interpretation on the ability for local Governments to rate miscellaneous licences and opposes the State Government's proposed amendments to provide an exemption for these licences.

The Association maintains that:

- Legislative changes should not override judicial decisions that promote equity and sustainability.
- Occupied land under miscellaneous licences should be rateable.
- The resource sector should contribute to local communities through rates, just as other property owners do.

WALGA has advocated strongly on this issue following the State Governments announcement to legislate for a rating exemption for miscellaneous licences as follows:

Thursday, 10 July 2025

- WALGA media statement – [Supreme Court decision supports critical role of Local Government](#)
- ABC Drive, [interview with Geraldine Mellet](#)

Saturday, 2 August 2025

- WALGA media statement - [WALGA condemns State Government move to legislate against Supreme Court decision](#)
- The West Australian, Rebecca Le May - [WA Local Government Association hits back as State Government shields miners from land rates](#)

Sunday, 3 August 2025

- The Sunday Times (pg. 5), Rebecca Le May – "Councils' fury over mining land rates"

Monday, 4 August

- ABC News online, Chloe Henville - [“Move to exempt miners from paying rates on miscellaneous licenses 'concerning’”](#)
- ABC Mornings with Nadia Mitsopoulos – [“WALGA president Karen Chappel and AMEC CEO Warren Pearce discuss the State Government plan to prevent councils levying rates on miscellaneous licences”](#)
- 7 Regional News, Brandon Demura - [“State Government accused of re-writing rulebook for WA Councils”](#)
- ABC News Perth, Blake Kagi - [“Local Governments condemn State Government move”](#)

Local Government Elections

Work has commenced on preparing for the October 2025 Local Government Elections. In addition to the New Councillor Webinar hosted by WALGA and joined by the Minister, LGIRS and WAEC, a statewide media campaign has been developed to launch in August to both encourage diversity of candidate nominations and voter participation.

Further details on Statewide Candidate Information Webinar

Upcoming Election Candidate Information webinar ahead of the opening of nominations for the 2025 Local Government Elections.

Monday, 18 August

6:00pm to 7:30pm

Online via Zoom

This session is designed to support individuals considering nomination and will provide a clear overview of:

- the election process
- the responsibilities of Council Members and Local Governments
- the regulatory role of LGIRS in Western Australia

The Webinar will include presentations from Hon. Hannah Beazley MLA - Minister for Local Government; Disability Services; Volunteering; Youth; Gascoyne, Dennis O'Reilly - Acting WA Electoral Commissioner, Erin Gauntlett - LGIRS Deputy Director General.

Local Governments are encouraged to share details of the webinar through their networks and host a group viewing for community members who may be interested in nominating for the upcoming elections.

The webinar will be recorded and will be available online after the event.

Local Candidate Information Forums

If your Local Government is interested in inviting WALGA to provide a presentation at your local candidate briefing, please register your interest as soon as possible, by providing your requested date and time to governance@walga.asn.au.

WALGA will prioritise local candidate briefings jointly hosted by several Local Governments, and depending upon our capacity, will then consider individual briefings for a single Local Government.

In addition, WALGA is also developing training for Independent Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee members, particularly around chairing meetings.

WALGA's Members Hub

The Member Hub is now open on level 3 at WALGA's office, 170 Railway Parade, West Leederville. Our Member Hub is a new service offering, providing bookable meeting rooms and shared and private working spaces, available to all Member Local Governments. I encourage all Members to contact [WALGA's reception](#) for bookings.

Political Engagement

WALGA's political engagement has continued, with a range of meetings held with State Ministers, Shadow Ministers and other Members of Parliament following the Election. This engagement has been critical in re-establishing the sector's priorities with our State policy makers.

Importantly, I met with Premier Roger Cook on 9 July. This was a positive engagement that reaffirmed the Government's commitment to working with the sector through WALGA on important issues for Western Australia.

Emergency Management

I strongly urge all Local Governments to complete the WALGA 2025 Local Government Emergency Management Survey that will be sent to all Members in September. The Survey is an important tool that enables WALGA to understand and quantify the sector's concerns and needs in meeting its emergency management responsibilities. Focus areas for the 2025 Survey include: Bushfire Brigade management, Aboriginal cultural heritage considerations, and reform of the Local Government Grants Scheme. The 2025 survey findings will be presented to Zones and State Council – an important opportunity to share your views and perspectives. The Survey will be open for 4 weeks.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the 2025 Local Government Emergency Management Forum hosted by WALGA on 17 June 2025 at the City of Stirling. The Forum, themed *Local Government Future Proof: Preparing today for tomorrow's challenges*, provided a fantastic opportunity for 150 attendees from over 41 Local Governments to enhance their capabilities, build insights, and share strategies in undertaking their critical emergency management responsibilities.

Polyphagous shot-hole borer

The Government announced on 19 June that it had been decided it was longer feasible to eradicate PSHB and that a National Transition to Management Plan will be developed. This decision is deeply disappointing and will have significant implications for Local Government. As I indicated in [WALGA's statement](#), the decision to move from eradication to a management phase for PSHB is a result of the inadequacy of the State Government's early response to PSHB.

On 29 July 2025 I met with the Hon Jackie Jarvis, Minister for Agriculture and Food; Fisheries; Forestry; Small Business to express WALGA's concerns. I have sought assurance

that Local Government, and other key stakeholders will be meaningfully engaged in the development of the management arrangements. WALGA is also advocating for long-term funding support for the sector.

Tree Protection on Private Land

The recent State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) decision *Zorzi and Town of Cambridge [2025] WASAT 77*, held that the removal of a single existing tree can constitute development and therefore requires development approval. This marks the first instance where SAT has classified the removal of a single tree in an urban context as development.

This decision vindicates the work WALGA has undertaken to support Local Governments in their endeavours to protect large canopy trees on private land and highlights the importance of having a clear local planning framework, such as WALGA's Tree Retention Model LPP, in outlining when approval is necessary for tree removal.

Attacks on Local Government Planning Functions

You will be aware of recent media coverage of comments made by the Minister for Planning, John Carey MLA in relation to the performance of Local Government planning and building regulatory functions and claims that our sector is purposely holding up and delaying housing approvals.

WALGA strongly refutes the Minister's claims and I have made several media appearances to defend the sector's planning performance. These claims are baseless and are not representative of the critical role and that Local Government planning plays in delivering sustainable and liveable communities and places.

In fact, WALGA's Local Government Performance Monitoring Project shows that 99% of all development applications across Western Australia were approved by Local Governments in 2023-24, a level of performance consistent over the past eight years.

Local Government is and has always been the backbone of the planning system, determining more than 20,000 proposals each year. WALGA will continue to stand up to these unjustified attacks.

President Cr Karen Chappel AM JP
WALGA President

President's Contacts

The President's contacts since 2 July and scheduled before 5 September are as follows:

State and Commonwealth Government Relations

- Hon Roger Cook BA GradDipBus (PR) MBA MLA, Premier; Minister for State Development; Trade and Investment; Economic Diversification
- National Emergency Management Ministers Meeting Dinner with Hon Kristy McBain MP
- National Emergency Management Minister Meeting
- WA Police
- Office of the Auditor General
 - Nayna Raniga
 - Jason Beeley
- Hon Matthew Swinbourn BA LLB MLC, Minister for the Environment; Community Services; Homelessness
- Hon Don Punch BPsych BSocwk MBA MLA, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Water; Climate Resilience; South West
- Hon Dr Tony Buti BPE DipEd MIR LLB DPhil MLA, Attorney General; Minister for Commerce; Tertiary and International Education; Multicultural Interests
- Hon Jackie Jarvis MLC. Minister for Agriculture and Food; Fisheries; Forestry; Small Business; Mid West
- Hon Hannah Beazley BA MLA, Minister for Local Government; Disability Services; Volunteering; Youth; Gascoyne
- Ms Kirrilee Warr MLA, Shadow Minister for Local Government; Fisheries
- Hon Sabine Winton BA BPS MLA, Minister for Education; Early Childhood; Preventative Health; Wheatbelt

Zone Meetings

- Northern Country Zone
- North Metropolitan Zone
- Kimberley Zone Meeting

Local Government Relations

- **State Council Meetings**
 - Strategic Forum, 2 July
 - State Council Meeting, 2 July
 - Information Forum, 6 August
 - Finance & Services Committee
 - Local Government House Trust
- **ALGA**
 - Executive Meeting x3
 - Board Meeting (Post NGA Conference)
- **LGIS**
 - Board Meeting
 - 11 July
 - 22 August
 - Risk and Compliance Committee Meeting

- Town Team Movement
- 2025 WALGA Local Government Awards
- Shire of Morawa Midwest NAIDOC Ceremony
- Lord Mayors Distress Relief Fund Board Meeting
- WALGA Certificate III Virtual Graduation
- Shire of Jerramungup, Deputy President Cr Julie Leenhouders & CEO, Martin Cuthbert
- Shire of Ravensthorpe, President Cr Tom Major & CEO, Matthew Bird
- State Council Agenda Briefing for Zone Chairs
- WALGA Transport and Roads Forum
- Regional Capital Alliances WA Meeting
- State Road Funds to Local Government Advisory Committee Meeting

Conferences, Workshops, Public Relations

- Kimberley Regional Group and Regional Capital Alliances WA Government Forum
- Bringing Dowerin Downtown Lunch
- NGAA 2025 Congress Sunset Dinner & Drinks
- Shire of Perenjori Official Supermarket Opening
- Regional Road Group Chairs Workshop
- Statewide Candidate Briefing Webinar
- Pathways to Politics for Women