



WALGA

# 2026-27 State Budget Submission



The West **at its Best.**



# ABOUT WALGA

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) is an independent, member-based, not-for-profit organisation representing and supporting the WA Local Government sector.

Our membership includes all 139 Local Governments in the State. WALGA uses its influence, support and expertise to deliver better outcomes for WA Local Governments and their communities.

### Our Purpose

To leverage the collective strength and influence of the Local Government sector for the benefit of WA Local Governments and their communities.

We achieve this through a team of subject matter experts who are professional, agile and committed to driving outcomes for the sector.

### Our Vision

To be the authoritative voice and trusted partner for Western Australian Local Government.

## CONTENTS

State Government and WALGA priorities	4	Enhance pedestrian crossings	37
WALGA's 2026-27 State Budget Submission	8	Fill gaps in the Long-Term Cycle Network	39
<b>Climate Resilient</b>	<b>10</b>	Safer regional roads	41
Grow our tree canopy	11	<b>Connected &amp; Inclusive</b>	<b>42</b>
Strengthen disaster recovery	13	Access to primary healthcare in rural and remote areas	43
Protect our coast	17	Modern libraries for the future	44
Collaborate to adapt to climate change	19	Expand community sport and recreation infrastructure	47
<b>Disaster Ready</b>	<b>20</b>	Create a Community Arts and Culture Facilities Fund	49
Boost funding for emergency services volunteers	21	<b>Local Government Reform</b>	<b>50</b>
Invest in Local Government bushfire mitigation	23	Pilot Artificial Intelligence for Government in WA	51
More Community Emergency Service Managers	25	Review Rating Exemptions	52
Reduce disaster risk	27	Create a Local Government leadership capability program	55
Equitable access to the Underground Power Program	29	<b>Efficient Regulation</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Strategic Waste Management</b>	<b>30</b>	Strengthen our biosecurity response	57
Invest in waste avoidance and resource recovery	31	Stop the spread of the Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer	59
<b>Enabling Safer And More Active Transport</b>	<b>32</b>	Fund a biodiversity survey program	61
Convert children's crossings to signalised pedestrian crossings	33	<b>A Strong And Diverse Economy</b>	<b>62</b>
Increase active transport around schools	35	Accelerate regional economic development	63



# The State Government's priorities align strongly with WALGA's vision to see the West **at its Best.**

## STATE GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

### ▼ Protecting and restoring our environment

## WALGA'S SOLUTIONS

- ▼ \$16 million per annum for four years from 2026-27, to extend and expand CoastWA
- ▼ Long-term funding commitment to promote a strategic approach to coastal erosion management and adaptation across WA
- ▼ \$7.2 million over four years from 2026-27, for regional alliances to deliver climate adaptation actions at a regional scale
- ▼ \$45 million over four years from 2026-27, for Quarantine Area (QA) Local Governments to help stop the spread of the Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer (PSHB)
- ▼ \$7 million over three years from 2026-27, for QA residents

- ▼ \$15 million over four years from 2026-27, to fund and coordinate a statewide biodiversity survey program to standardise habitat and vegetation mapping.
- ▼ Reform of the Local Government Grant Scheme (LGGS) to ensure a sustainable and equitable funding model that meets the future needs of bushfire response  
  
In the interim, additional funding is required to keep the community safe:
  - ▼ \$42.3 million in 2026-27, to clear the backlog of unfunded capital grant requests for Volunteer Bushfire Brigades (VBFs) and State Emergency Service (SES) units
  - ▼ A minimum allocation of \$10 million per annum within the LGGS for new Local Government capital grant funding requests
  - ▼ Additional \$2.8 million per annum from 2026-27 to the current allocation for LGGS operating grants, to meet rising costs and safety requirements of VBFs
- ▼ Increase Mitigation Activity Fund Grant Program (MAFGP) to \$15 million per annum from 2026-27, to enable Local Governments to strategically mitigate bushfire risk
- ▼ \$40 million over 10 years from 2026-27, to expand the Urban Canopy Grant Program and deliver an additional 200,000 new trees and 4 million<sup>1</sup> understorey plants
- ▼ Additional \$9 million per annum from 2027-28, to fully fund 63 Community Emergency Services Managers to work with all 111 Local Governments that manage bushfire brigades
- ▼ \$20 million per annum from 2026-27, for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) to ensure WA is prepared and can respond to increasing biosecurity threats

## STATE GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

▼ **Western Australia to remain the strongest economy in the nation**

▼ **Diversifying our economy for the future**

▼ **The best place in the world to get a quality job**

▼ **To be able to access the healthcare we need, when we need it**

▼ **Building safe and inclusive communities**

## WALGA'S SOLUTIONS

▼ Double Regional Economic Development (RED) Grants to \$11 million per annum for ten years from 2026-27

▼ \$200,000 in 2026-27, for an independent organisation to undertake a broad review of rating exemptions

▼ \$6.9 million over 2026-27 and 2027-28, to trial AI projects in Local Government

▼ \$360,000 over four years from 2026-27, to provide a 50% funding subsidy for 15 students per year to undertake the Diploma of Local Government

▼ \$9.5 million per annum from 2026-27, to help rural and remote Local Governments cover the costs of providing essential primary healthcare services, until long-term funding and workforce solutions are in place

▼ Increase the Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund to \$60 million per annum from 2026-27

▼ \$60 million per annum from 2026-27, to create a Community Arts and Cultural Facilities Fund to support the development of arts and cultural infrastructure

▼ \$4.4 million per annum from 2026-27, for public library materials

## STATE GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES

▼ **Delivering quality infrastructure and services across our State**

## WALGA'S SOLUTIONS

▼ \$10 million reserve fund for disaster-resilient reconstruction of essential public assets following a natural disaster

▼ \$600,000 per annum for three years from 2026-27, to trial Regional Liaison Officers, boost recovery support for WA's most disaster-affected communities, and improve DRFA outcomes

▼ A State Recovery Funding Framework to ensure timely and flexible recovery support is available to WA communities

▼ \$9 million per annum for four years from 2026-27, to establish a Local Government Disaster Risk Reduction Fund to support infrastructure and community resilience initiatives

▼ \$10 million over 10 years, to support residents in lower socioeconomic areas in managing the costs associated with the transition to underground power

▼ Allocate all Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Levy revenue (\$70 million per annum) to strategic waste management initiatives

▼ \$20 million per annum for four years from 2026-27, to address the gaps in the Long-Term Cycle Network

▼ \$5 million per annum for four years from 2026-27, to implement active transport infrastructure, interventions, and supporting initiatives around schools

▼ \$12 million over four years from 2026-27, to fund the conversion of five priority crossings per year to signalised crossings

▼ \$4 million per annum for four years from 2026-27, for Local Governments to support the implementation of pedestrian crossings and associated infrastructure improvements

▼ Long-term commitment to fully fund the Regional Road Safety Program



## WALGA'S 2026-27 STATE BUDGET SUBMISSION

In the lead up to the 2025 State Election, the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) launched *The West at its Best* – a comprehensive policy agenda for the incoming Government during its next term.

*The West at its Best* sets out priority areas for investment and reform to deliver a positive and future-focussed vision for WA: a State where neighbourhoods are green, vibrant and inclusive; roads are safe to drive on; public amenities are modern and accessible; and communities thrive in a low-carbon, climate-resilient environment.

Many of the priorities in WALGA's policy platform align with the State Government's *Priorities for Government 2025-2029*, emphasising cross-government collaboration, economic diversification, equitable healthcare access, affordable housing,

community safety and inclusion, environmental protection, and the delivery of high-quality infrastructure and services.

WALGA acknowledges the State Government's encouraging commitments to many of these priorities during the 2025 State Election campaign.

As the 2026-27 State Budget approaches, WALGA urges the Government to build on this momentum through further targeted investment in priority initiatives.

With a renewed mandate and a strong financial position, now is the time to embrace reform and invest strategically – to address immediate challenges and create lasting change through new technologies, accelerating the clean energy transition and decarbonising our economy.

WALGA's *2026-27 State Budget Submission* outlines the funding required in the short term to realise this vision, and ensure:

- ▼ Our **communities can adapt to the impacts of climate change**, including hotter days, extreme weather events and rising sea levels.
- ▼ We are **prepared and resilient in the face of the growing number of natural disasters** and extreme weather events, with comprehensive plans and resources in place to protect lives and property.
- ▼ Communities thrive within a **low-carbon environment**, powered by clean energy sources that drive sustainable living and economic prosperity. We embrace innovative technologies and energy-efficient infrastructure, while committing to reducing carbon emissions.
- ▼ Our **infrastructure** supports people to safely access jobs, education, healthcare, recreation and other services, as well as enabling a vibrant, internationally competitive business sector to thrive.

- ▼ **Diversity, equity, and accessibility** are embedded in all aspects of community life, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, circumstance or location, feels valued and has equal opportunities to fully participate and thrive in the community. Essential services and infrastructure are accessible to all residents, regardless of where they live.
- ▼ **Local Governments have the resources and flexibility** needed to fulfil their community responsibilities without unnecessary regulatory barriers. The important role of Local Government in the planning system is enhanced.

WALGA and its Member Local Governments welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with the State Government to progress these critical initiatives and ensure the West is **at its Best.**







# Climate Resilient

2026-27 State Budget Submission

## GROW OUR TREE CANOPY

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$40 million over 10 years from 2026-27, to expand the Urban Canopy Grant Program and deliver an additional 200,000 new trees and 4 million<sup>1</sup> understorey plants

### Benefits

- ▼ Cooler urban areas and more green spaces
- ▼ Improved health and wellbeing
- ▼ Increased biodiversity

Trees and vegetation in urban environments are essential for protecting communities from the impacts of climate change. The canopy they provide reduces urban heat, supports public health and wellbeing, cleans the air and enhances biodiversity.

Building and maintaining a healthy, resilient and diverse urban forest requires coordinated action by State and Local Governments, landowners, industry and the community.

Local Governments are implementing extensive tree planting programs to increase canopy. The State Government has also made a welcome investment through the Urban Canopy Grant Program and 'Treebates' to support tree planting across Local Government, schools and households. It has also committed to develop an Urban Greening Strategy for Perth and Peel and has adopted a target to increase canopy cover to 30% by 2040.

Despite these efforts, little progress has been made. Data released by the Western Australian Planning Commission in May 2025, using a revised methodology to include the Perth Hills and State forests, shows that canopy cover across the Perth

and Peel regions was just 22% in 2024. Between 2020 and 2024, canopy cover only increased by 1%.

This lack of progress is overwhelmingly a result of the ongoing loss of trees on private land due to inadequate tree protections for both infill and greenfield development. This has been compounded by biosecurity threats such as the Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer and the effects of climate change, which are making conditions hotter and drier.

Achieving the State Government's 30% canopy target will require a comprehensive, strategic, and long-term Urban Greening Strategy – one that combines effective policy and regulatory measures to reduce the loss of significant trees on private land with a sustained and accelerated tree planting program.

The development of the Urban Greening Strategy for Perth and Peel was announced in February 2024 but is yet to be delivered. Finalising and implementing this Strategy must be treated as a priority, with its scope expanded to include key urban centres across WA.

Local Governments are leading the way in protecting trees on private land, with eight Local Governments adopting WALGA's Model Local Planning Policy that provides regulatory protection for trees of significant size. WALGA collected data for the 2024-25 financial year from Local Governments with the policy in place, which showed that the policy is being implemented in a pragmatic and constructive way – resulting in the retention of 50% of existing trees on sites following the assessment process.

The success of this policy, alongside growing community awareness and support, presents a compelling case for the State Government to step up and provide leadership in this critical area.

A \$40 million investment in Local Governments' urban greening programs over the next 10 years will deliver an additional 200,000 new trees and 4 million<sup>2</sup> understorey plants across streetscapes and parks in areas with the lowest canopy cover, increasing access to green spaces and creating cooler, more liveable neighbourhoods. The delivery of this planting program would provide 3,400 ha of tree and understorey cover, equivalent to eight times the area of Kings Park.

<sup>1&2</sup> Based on the cost of delivering the existing Urban Greening Grant program



## STRENGTHEN DISASTER RECOVERY

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$10 million reserve fund for disaster-resilient reconstruction of essential public assets following a natural disaster
- ▼ \$600,000 per annum for three years from 2026-27, to trial Regional Liaison Officers, boost recovery support for WA's most disaster-affected communities, and improve DRFA outcomes
- ▼ A State Recovery Funding Framework to ensure timely and flexible recovery support is available to WA communities

### Benefits

- ▼ Essential public assets able to withstand the impact of disaster
- ▼ Faster recovery from disasters, and reduced impact on affected communities
- ▼ Reduced infrastructure recovery costs, and increased reimbursement from the Australian Government

The frequency, severity and cost of natural disasters due to climate change is growing at an alarming rate. In 2020, natural disasters cost the Australian economy \$38 billion annually – a figure projected to reach \$73 billion by 2060<sup>3</sup>.

WA has experienced 45 declared disasters since 2020, impacting 81 of 139 Local Government areas. In 2024-25 alone, more than \$99 million was spent on essential public asset reconstruction through Category B of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) in WA.

While State Governments are primarily responsible for emergency management, recovery funding in WA is heavily dependent on the Australian Government's Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). The absence of a dedicated State Recovery Funding Framework limits WA's ability to respond equitably to the diverse recovery needs of affected communities.

The DRFA in WA only supports Local Governments to rebuild damaged assets to their pre-disaster function, on a like-for-like basis, with no provision for betterment or resilient reconstruction. This leaves infrastructure vulnerable to repeated damage, prolongs community disruption, and results in inefficient use of resources to repair frequently damaged roads.

High upfront costs and delays in approval and reimbursement from the DRFA-WA further limit Local Government capacity to support timely, community-focussed recovery. Recent disasters – including Cyclone Seroja, the Kimberley Floods, and Cyclone Zelia – have impacted regional Local Governments that lack the financial capacity to fund upfront costs of recovery. This places strain on their long-term financial position. Other disasters – such as the Mariginiup Bushfire and Bunbury Storms – have required recovery programs that were not eligible for DRFA in WA without the declaration of an exceptional event by the Prime Minister of Australia.

Although the State Government has ultimately stepped in, the absence of a dedicated recovery policy framework has impeded and complicated the delivery of timely assistance.

<sup>3</sup> Deloitte Access Economics. (2021). *Update to the economic costs of natural disasters in Australia. Australian Business Roundtable for Disaster Resilience & Safer Communities*



# THE ABSENCE OF A DEDICATED STATE RECOVERY FUNDING FRAMEWORK LIMITS WA'S ABILITY TO RESPOND

To strengthen disaster recovery efforts, a \$10 million Reserve Fund for Disaster Resilient Reconstruction and a State Recovery Funding Framework should be established.

This must be accompanied by urgent streamlining of the DRFA-WA process and improved support for Local Governments and communities to access available funding efficiently and equitably.

A dedicated \$10 million fund for resilient reconstruction would enable Local Governments to incorporate betterment measures into their recovery programs.

WA's \$99 million Category B spend in essential public assets reconstruction in 2024-25 highlights the potential for significant cost savings through betterment. Upgrading infrastructure during recovery can reduce the frequency and cost of future repairs, enhance community connectivity, improve emergency response efficiency, and minimise the likelihood of disruptions to essential services and supply.

The value of the betterment approach is well established. The *Colvin Review (2024)* and *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (2020)* both recommended incorporating 'build back better' principles into DRFA. In Queensland, where the State's betterment

program has funded more than 920 projects across 76 Local Government Areas since 2013, a \$244 million investment has resulted in an estimated saving of \$988 million in avoided future costs.

A State Recovery Funding Framework would enable the State Government to respond promptly and equitably to all community recovery needs. It would provide additional upfront financial support to assist Local Governments facing compounding disasters or high infrastructure recovery costs. This Framework would support the existing DRFA-WA arrangements, while governing access to the State's pre-approved disaster recovery allocation when investment is needed outside or ahead of the DRFA-WA.

To further strengthen disaster recovery, the DRFA-WA should be streamlined as an urgent priority, with enhanced assistance to ensure access for Local Governments and communities. This approach could be modelled on the Queensland Reconstruction Authority's Regional Liaison Officers, who work closely with disaster-impacted Local Governments. A pilot program involving three Regional Liaison Officers in WA's most disaster-prone regions could be trialled initially.

This initiative has the potential to significantly reduce recovery costs for both State and Local Governments, by improving administrative processes and increasing WA's DRFA reimbursement rate from the Australian Government – which has historically been very low, at around 30%. In contrast, Queensland's streamlined DRFA administration, dedicated support for Local Governments and stronger audit preparedness result in a much higher reimbursement rate.

The State Government has already taken important steps to strengthen disaster recovery capabilities, including a \$24.4 million investment to establish a permanent disaster recovery team, and a contemporary revision of the State Recovery Framework.

Funding reform is now crucial to support the design and implementation of this Framework, bolster WA's preparedness for increased disasters due to climate change and ensure that the State's investment in recovery will deliver for our communities.







City of Greater Geraldton

City of Greater Geraldton



## WE NEED TO ACT NOW TO MANAGE THE ONGOING RISKS AND MITIGATE THE SUBSTANTIAL COST OF ADAPTING TO COASTAL INUNDATION

### PROTECT OUR COAST

#### Funding Request

- ▼ \$16 million per annum for four years from 2026-27, to extend and expand CoastWA
- ▼ Long-term funding commitment to promote a strategic approach to coastal erosion management and adaptation across WA

#### Benefits

- ▼ Protection and management of valuable coastal infrastructure enabling recreation, tourism and other economic activity
- ▼ Alignment with the WA Coastal Zone Strategy and State Planning Policy

According to the *National Climate Risk Assessment* (2025), sea levels in Australia are expected to rise approximately 0.14 metres by 2050 under a 1.5°C warming scenario, and up to 0.54 metres by 2090 if global warming reaches 3°C.

This rise in sea levels will significantly increase the frequency of coastal flooding and intensify the risk to critical coastal infrastructure – including ports and roads, public assets, private properties and coastal ecosystems – due to more severe storms, erosion and inundation. Industries dependent on coastal access and stability will also face mounting challenges.

With an extensive coastline, WA is at significant risk. The State Government has identified 55 coastal erosion 'hotspots' (15 metropolitan, 40 regional) and flagged an additional 31 locations (8 metropolitan and 23 regional) for future consideration. Twenty-three Local Government areas have been recognised as requiring active management over the next 25 years.

We need to act now to manage the ongoing risks and mitigate the substantial cost of adapting to coastal inundation.

Under State Planning Policy 2.6, Local Government is responsible for planning and addressing predicted erosion and inundation hazards, through the preparation of Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plans (CHRMAP). Through the CoastWA Program, the State Government has delivered funding and support to Local Governments to manage current impacts of coastal erosion and inundation and to plan and prepare for increased impacts in the future.

However, the level of funding provided for the CoastWA Program is inadequate and is due to expire in 2025-26. Only \$33.5 million was allocated to the Program over five years to 2025-26, despite the State Government estimating in 2019 that the cost to manage the 55 hotspots was \$110 million over the same period – with more funding required over the medium to long-term. The cost of managing these sites is expected to rise even higher, given that initial estimates did not take into consideration the non-hotspot locations that are also experiencing erosion, nor the revised sea level estimates.

In the short term, continuing the CoastWA Program with increased funding will deliver significant public benefits, by reducing future costs and strengthening community resilience to coastal hazards. A long-term funding commitment is also needed to ensure Local Governments have the resources to plan, respond and adapt to coastal risks into the future.



COLLABORATE TO ADAPT  
TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Funding Request

- ▼ \$7.2 million over four years from 2026-27, for regional alliances to deliver climate adaptation actions at a regional scale

Benefits

- ▼ Increased resilience to the impacts of climate change
- ▼ Increased collaboration and delivery of on-ground services and programs
- ▼ Leverage shared resources to deliver regional solutions

Effective collaboration between government, industry, and communities is vital to help regional areas prepare for and respond to the growing challenges of climate change, economic transition, service delivery gaps, and infrastructure needs.

Regional alliances offer a framework to drive this collaboration. They enable Councils and communities to pool resources, attract investment, and deliver locally tailored solutions that reflect regional priorities.

This model has been tested and proved to be successful through the Regional Climate Alliance Pilot, delivered by the State Government and WALGA in 2022-23, with two Pilot Alliances each awarded \$200,000 to deliver on-ground projects and provide a coordinator position to drive outcomes.

Through the Pilot, the Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils has attracted more than \$1 million of funding to support adaptation and resilience projects focussed on drought, water, urban canopy, and disaster-ready outcomes.

Many Local Governments in regional areas face constraints – such as small populations, geographic isolation, and limited resources – that hinder their ability to respond effectively to climate risks. By forming alliances, these communities can achieve outcomes that no single Local Government could deliver alone, while also engaging with broader partners including the State Government, and not-for-profit and community organisations.

The regional climate alliance initiative is a key commitment within the *Western Australian Climate Policy* (2020), supporting Local Government collaboration on climate change. It is also further acknowledged in the *Climate Resilient WA: Directions for the State's Climate Adaptation Strategy* (2022) and the *WA Climate Adaptation Strategy* (2023).

The program will provide \$1.4 million annually to support on-ground adaptation projects that raise community awareness and improve climate resilience. According to the Australian Local Government Association's *Adapting Together* report, resilience projects conservatively yield benefits of at least \$0.80 to \$3.10 for every dollar invested.

A central coordinator position will also be funded to support alliances in building capacity and strengthening networks across the sector. This has proven to be a key success factor in the State pilot and across other jurisdictions.

The benefits of this model could also extend beyond climate adaptation. For example, this model is well suited to collaboration in other important areas, such as the renewable energy transition, and regional waste management.



# Disaster Ready

2026-27 State Budget Submission

## BOOST FUNDING FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES VOLUNTEERS

### Funding Request

- ▼ Reform of the Local Government Grant Scheme (LGGS) to ensure a sustainable and equitable funding model that meets the future needs of bushfire response

In the interim, additional funding is required to keep the community safe:

- ▼ \$42.3 million in 2026-27, to clear the backlog of unfunded capital grant requests for Volunteer Bushfire Brigades (VBFs) and State Emergency Service (SES) units
- ▼ A minimum allocation of \$10 million per annum within the LGGS for new Local Government capital grant funding requests
- ▼ Additional \$2.8 million per annum from 2026-27 to the current allocation for LGGS operating grants, to meet rising costs and safety requirements of VBFs

### Benefits

- ▼ VBFs and SES equipped with the necessary tools to safely and effectively protect WA communities

Local Government Volunteer Bushfire Brigades and State Emergency Services play a critical role in protecting communities across WA during emergencies, and are the backbone of WA's emergency and fire response capability.

Across the State, 111 Local Governments manage 563 VBFs, with 17,559 LGIS-registered volunteers. Local Governments are responsible for the initial fire response across 91.8% of WA's landmass.

VBFs and SES are funded through the Local Government Grants Scheme and by Local Governments. The LGGS is funded from the Emergency Services Levy (ESL).

Despite the critical role of these volunteers, funding through the LGGS has not kept pace with rising costs and increased disasters. The LGGS now falls dangerously short of what is required to sustainably fund bushfire response. Rising costs for infrastructure, equipment and labour – along with stricter Work Health and Safety standards, higher insurance premiums, and the need for inclusive facilities to support a changing volunteer workforce – have all created additional financial pressure.

The funding gap for capital grants is widening rapidly. In 2017-18, Local Governments requested \$3.4 million more than was available. By 2022-23, the shortfall had surged to \$23.3 million, and in the latest grant round, it exceeded \$40 million.

Although the total allocation for 2025-26 was \$36 million, most of it was already committed to new or replacement emergency response vehicles and the ongoing operating costs of VBFs and the SES. Local Governments submitted \$44 million in new capital grant applications for construction and upgrades to volunteer facilities, new response vehicles, and other essential emergency response items. Only \$1.7 million was available, leaving \$42.3 million unmet.

This is not a new issue. The scheme no longer meets the needs of VBFs and must be reviewed and reformed.





Despite the ESL's intent to fund emergency services equitably, in 2020-21, VBFs managed by Local Government received only half the average funding of DFES-managed brigades, groups and units, highlighting a significant disparity in resource allocation.

The absence of a clear capability baseline and asset visibility means funding decisions are often reactive and inconsistent. This increases the risk of under-resourced brigades and SES units – particularly in high-risk areas.

To ensure our emergency volunteers have the facilities and equipment they need, the State Government must prioritise LGGS reform to design a modern, sustainable, and equitable grants program to support VBFs and SES.

In the interim, urgent investment is needed to ensure VBFs and SES units are adequately resourced to ensure the safety of our communities. This includes:

- \$42.31 million in 2026-27 to clear the backlog of unsuccessful 2025-26 capital grant requests.
- A minimum allocation of \$10 million per annum within the LGGS for new Local Government capital grant funding requests.
- \$2.8 million in additional annual funding from 2026-27 to meet rising operational needs.

Without a comprehensive asset audit and capability framework, funding decisions will remain reactive and fragmented, and VBFs will increasingly struggle to keep their communities safe.

## INVEST IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUSHFIRE MITIGATION

### Funding Request

- ▼ Increase the Mitigation Activity Fund Grant Program (MAFGP) to \$15 million per annum from 2026-27, to enable Local Governments to strategically mitigate bushfire risk

### Benefits

- ▼ Reduced bushfire risk and safer WA communities
- ▼ Reduced cost in responding to bushfires

WA's increasingly severe fire seasons demand a shift from reactive suppression to proactive, locally-driven mitigation. Local Governments are best placed to identify and address bushfire risks in their communities, but they require greater support to plan and deliver effective mitigation works.

The MAFGP provides grants to Local Governments with an endorsed Bushfire Risk Management Plan (BRMP) to carry out physical mitigation treatments on Crown land. Since 2017, the Program has supported almost 9,500 treatments. However, its limited scope restricts Local Governments from fully implementing strategic mitigation plans.

Supporting Local Governments to plan and invest strategically ensures mitigation funding is directed where it delivers the greatest impact on risk reduction.

Expanded funding for the MAFGP will strengthen Local Government capability to plan and undertake mitigation works through:

- BRMP development and implementation to maintain Local Government capacity for bushfire risk mitigation.
- Community education and engagement to reduce risk on private land, recognising that in some parts of the State working with private landowners is the most effective way to reduce bushfire risk.
- Acquisition of assets and equipment for mitigation operations to build in-house capacity and reduce expenditure and reliance on contractors.
- Workforce and operational support to deliver treatments.

This expanded scope ensures funding is targeted to strategically identified local risks, enabling Local Governments to take coordinated, on-the-ground action that reduces bushfire risk and builds long-term resilience.

## SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO PLAN AND INVEST STRATEGICALLY ENSURES MITIGATION FUNDING IS DIRECTED WHERE IT DELIVERS THE GREATEST IMPACT





**MORE COMMUNITY EMERGENCY SERVICES MANAGERS**

**Funding Request**

- ▼ Additional \$9 million per annum from 2027-28, to fully fund 63 Community Emergency Services Managers (CESMs) to work with all 111 Local Governments that manage bushfire brigades

**Benefits**

- ▼ Strengthened Local Government bushfire and emergency capability
- ▼ Improved operational readiness, volunteer coordination and more effective bushfire response

Community Emergency Services Managers (CESMs) are essential to building the capacity of Local Governments to deliver all-hazard prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (PPRR) initiatives within their communities.

Their leadership is especially important in Local Governments that manage Volunteer Bushfire Brigades (VBFs), where CESMs help ensure readiness, coordinate volunteers' efforts, and implement effective bushfire mitigation strategies. CESMs also facilitate collaborative relationships with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) and key State agencies. Their presence directly contributes to safer, more resilient communities – particularly in smaller regional Local Governments where financial constraints often preclude the hiring of dedicated emergency management Officers.

WALGA welcomes the State Government's 2025-26 Budget commitment of \$3.5 million over

four years to fund six additional CESMs, but further investment is needed.

Once all six new CESMs are appointed, there will be 41 CESMs supporting an estimated 66 Local Governments. However, 45 Local Governments that manage VBFs will still lack access to a CESM, despite strong interest in joining the program. To close this gap, funding is required for 22 additional CESM positions – bringing the total to 63 CESMs – which would enable support for all 111 Local Governments that manage bushfire brigades.

CESMs are also paid at different rates, depending on the capacity of the employing Local Government. In the metropolitan area, there are seven DFES-employed CESMs, paid at higher pay rates. Achieving pay parity across all CESMs is essential for equity and to ensure workforce stability, particularly in regions that struggle to retain skilled personnel.

The total estimated cost to fully fund 63 CESMs with pay parity is \$12.6 million. With the six new CESMs in place, the 2027-28 CESM Program budget will be \$3.65 million – leaving a shortfall of \$9 million annually that requires funding.

The CESM Program is jointly funded by the Emergency Services Levy (ESL) and Local Governments. Given that CESMs play a frontline role in emergency management and community resilience, the program should be fully funded through the ESL.

Twenty-six Local Governments without responsibilities for bushfire brigades also require a CESM to support all-hazard prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Fully funding 13 CESMs for these remaining Local Governments without bushfire brigades would cost an additional \$2.6 million per annum.

Expanding the CESM Program would substantially improve bushfire preparedness and response capabilities in underserved regions. With the State Government reviewing key emergency services laws (*Fire Brigades Act 1942*, *Bush Fires Act 1954*, and *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1998*) to create one modern, streamlined Act, now is the ideal time to strengthen the CESM Program. This would help Local Governments manage bushfire risks, meet their responsibilities, and remain prepared for future legislative changes.





Damage after Cyclone Seroja



Kimberley Floods

REDUCE DISASTER RISK

Funding Request

- ▼ \$9 million per annum for four years from 2026-27, to establish a Local Government Disaster Risk Reduction Fund to support infrastructure and community resilience initiatives

Benefits

- ▼ Increased protection of community assets and infrastructure
- ▼ Safer communities
- ▼ Reduced recovery costs

Local Governments in WA play a critical role in reducing disaster risk for their communities by managing essential public assets and fulfilling responsibilities under the *Emergency Management Act 2005*. These responsibilities include developing Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) and establishing Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMCs) to drive planning and collaboration, reduce risk, and build community resilience.

Despite being on the frontline, Local Governments are facing increasing challenges in fulfilling their emergency management responsibilities. Climate change is driving more frequent and complex disasters, placing immense pressure on Local Governments, communities, and the broader emergency management system. The 2024 *Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster*

*Funding* acknowledged this pressure and called for a strategic shift toward proactive investment in risk reduction and resilience, along with a major boost in the delivery capability of Local Government.

WALGA's 2023 Emergency Management Survey identified inadequate emergency management capacity and capability, low levels of community preparedness, and inadequate recovery support as key Local Government challenges.

To meet these challenges, a dedicated and long-term funding mechanism is essential in supporting Local Governments to lead disaster risk reduction, build community resilience, and protect lives and property.

Currently, the All Western Australians Reducing Emergencies (AWARE) program is the only dedicated State funding source for Local Government emergency management, with just \$238,000 annually shared across 137 councils – equating to roughly \$1,700 each. This level of funding is far too low given the scale and complexity of responsibilities, and the increased disaster risk due to climate change.

To close this gap, the AWARE program should be replaced with a dedicated State Disaster Risk Reduction Fund. This Fund would support Local Government-led initiatives, attract additional Australian Government investment, and align WA with national efforts to build disaster resilience. Eligible disaster risk reduction initiatives could include:

- Improving the resilience of essential public assets.
- Risk-based local emergency management planning.
- Community-based risk reduction, resilience and preparedness programs.

The increased funding would support the implementation of key strategic frameworks, including the *WA Community Disaster Resilience Strategy* (2023), the *Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework* (2018), and the *National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy* (2019).





Underground Power Program,  
City of Canning

Targeted investment and sustained support in prevention and preparedness is especially important to reduce the financial impact of the growing number of disasters. Evidence shows that every dollar spent on prevention and preparedness delivers \$9.60 in savings – yet only 3% of national disaster funding is currently allocated to these critical activities.

Modelling by the Insurance Council of Australia shows that a \$2 billion investment in resilience measures could save Governments and households more than \$19 billion by 2050 – a return of 10 to 1.

Other States have already recognised the importance of investing in Local Government-led disaster risk reduction:

- Queensland's Resilience and Risk Reduction Fund (QRRRF), jointly funded by State and Australian Governments, invested \$14.7 million in 2023-24. The Get Ready Queensland program provides an additional \$2 million annually for local resilience initiatives.

- Tasmania's Emergency Management Grants Program allocates \$1.1 million annually to support local preparedness and risk reduction.
- South Australia's State Emergency Management Fund provides \$1.1 million annually for capability building and community engagement, administered by the State Emergency Management Committee.
- Victoria's Municipal Emergency Resourcing Program delivers \$5.9 million annually to support rural, regional, and outer-metropolitan councils in fulfilling emergency management responsibilities.

WA should follow suit. A dedicated State Disaster Risk Reduction Fund will ensure Local Governments have the resources they need to safeguard communities and build a more resilient future.

## EQUITABLE ACCESS TO THE UNDERGROUND POWER PROGRAM

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$10 million over 10 years, to support residents in lower socioeconomic areas in managing the costs associated with the transition to underground power

### Benefits

- ▼ Continued roll out of the Underground Power Program to priority areas
- ▼ Financial relief for low-income households and seniors at risk of payment default

Western Power is partnering with local communities to strengthen the urban power network through the Targeted Underground Power Program (TUPP). This initiative delivers significant benefits, including improved reliability, safety, and security; enhanced streetscapes; reduced tree maintenance; and increased property values.

Undergrounding powerlines is most cost-effective when ageing infrastructure is due for replacement. The State Government has committed \$3.4 million to help Western Power bring underground power to lower socio-economic areas. However, this funding doesn't cover the cost of connecting individual properties to the new underground network, which is often the most significant component for households without an existing underground connection.

With construction costs rising across WA, many communities are finding these projects increasingly unaffordable. If the opportunity is lost, Western

## IF THE OPPORTUNITY IS LOST, WESTERN POWER WILL BE FORCED TO REPLACE OLD POLES AND WIRES ABOVE GROUND

Power will be forced to replace old poles and wires above ground, locking in less reliable and outdated technology for the life of the new assets – more than 50 years.

Many households are already under financial strain, including those in areas with above-average property values. While some support exists for concession card holders, many residents – particularly seniors and households in low-income areas – still face barriers to participation.

To ensure these projects proceed, targeted financial support is needed for seniors and low-income households to help manage the cost of connecting individual properties to the new underground power network.

It is recommended that funding be provided to Local Governments to offer hardship discounts once a project is scheduled. Once a Local Government enrolls in the program and the project is scheduled, the costs for Consumer Mains Connections will be assessed for all properties within the area. The program will ease costs for households that face a significant cost burden and are more likely to default on payment.

This will enable equitable access to modern infrastructure and support WA's transition to a future-ready energy network – including household electrification and the integration of distributed energy resources.



# Strategic Waste Management

2026-27 State Budget Submission

## INVEST IN WASTE AVOIDANCE AND RESOURCE RECOVERY

### Funding Request

- ▼ Allocate all Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Levy revenue (\$70 million per annum) to strategic waste management initiatives

### Benefits

- ▼ Increased recycling and reduced landfill
- ▼ Achievement of the State Waste Strategy targets
- ▼ Reduced carbon emissions

The Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Levy (WARR Levy) applies to putrescible and inert waste generated, or disposed of, in the Perth metropolitan area.

The WARR Levy was originally established to fund strategic waste management initiatives; however, it is not currently being used as intended. Only 25% of the revenue collected through the Levy is directed to the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery (WARR) Account, with the remaining 75% absorbed into consolidated State Government revenue. This has resulted in a consistent annual allocation of just \$20 million for waste-related programs. Of that \$20 million, approximately 40% is used to support the operations of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, leaving just \$12 million for grants, programs, and strategic initiatives.

The recent review of the State Waste Strategy acknowledged that progress is being made towards key targets. This progress could be accelerated

by greater investment in priority areas, including the Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) transition, expanding support for regional and remote communities, addressing illegal dumping, and assisting the commercial and industrial sector. Targeted funding in these areas – alongside the expansion of successful programs, such as Household Hazardous Waste and Bin Tagging – would help to achieve these key waste targets by boosting material recovery rates, improving community amenity, and fostering long-term behavioural change.

However, forecasts show that the WARR Levy revenue is expected to decline due to reduced landfill volumes, driven by the adoption of FOGO systems and waste-to-energy contracts. While the total allocation remains at \$20 million, the hypothecation rate is expected to increase from 2025-26, reaching 30% by 2026-27.

To deliver on the WARR Levy's intent and make further progress towards State Waste Strategy targets, the full \$70 million collected through the WARR Levy in 2026-27 should be reinvested into strategic waste management initiatives. These include:

- \$20 million for FOGO implementation and support.
- \$10 million for Regional waste and infrastructure planning and capacity building.
- \$10 million for Commercial and Industrial (C&I) waste sector audit and interventions.
- \$8 million for illegal dumping prevention and management through inter-agency collaboration.
- \$5 million for food waste avoidance campaign.
- \$4 million for expansion of the Household Hazardous Waste program.
- \$1 million for expansion of the Waste Sorted Bin Tagging program.
- \$12 million already budgeted for existing programs.

It is recognised that the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will also require ongoing operational funding. This should be provided separately through consolidated revenue, ensuring that the full WARR Levy is used to advance WA's strategic waste goals.



# Enabling Safer And More Active Transport

**2026-27 State Budget Submission**

## CONVERT CHILDREN'S CROSSINGS TO SIGNALISED PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$12 million over four years from 2026-27, to fund the conversion of five priority crossings per year to signalised crossings

### Benefits

- ▼ Improved safety for school children and Traffic Wardens at crossing locations
- ▼ Alleviation of the chronic shortage of Traffic Wardens
- ▼ Promotion of active and healthy lifestyles

Enabling children to safely walk and ride to local schools has significant positive effects, including reducing car trips, congestion and parking pressure, as well as improving health outcomes through increased physical activity.

Manned children's crossings are designed to provide a safe point for children to cross roads on their way to school. However, high traffic speed and traffic volumes pose serious risks – not only to children, but also to the Traffic Wardens who manage these crossings.

These risks are exacerbated by a chronic shortage of Traffic Wardens statewide. According to WA Police, approximately 50 warden positions remain vacant, resulting in a prioritisation of the busiest crossings while others remain unmanned. The WA Police Children's Crossings Unit also reports that the average age of a Traffic Warden is 76, and that occupational safety incidents – including falls and assaults – are reported approximately twice per week.

WALGA acknowledges the State Government's recent commitment of \$10 million to extend 40km/h speed limits to all Warden-controlled crossings outside of designated school zones. This is a positive step towards improving safety during peak school hours. In the lead up to the 2025 State Election, the Government also committed that 19 children's crossings (of which 10 are on the list of high-risk crossings) would be converted to pedestrian signalised crossings.

While these commitments are welcomed, further action is required to address the remaining top 20 multi-lane, high-speed, high-volume children's crossings that continue to pose serious safety risks.

Investing in signalised pedestrian infrastructure at these locations would significantly enhance safety and accessibility for children using active transport. It will also alleviate pressure on the limited Traffic Warden workforce, enabling wardens to be reallocated to other crossings currently lacking coverage.

**HIGH TRAFFIC  
SPEED AND  
TRAFFIC VOLUMES  
POSE SERIOUS  
RISKS – NOT ONLY  
TO CHILDREN,  
BUT ALSO TO THE  
TRAFFIC WARDENS  
WHO MANAGE  
THESE CROSSINGS**





**MANY SCHOOL PRECINCTS LACK THE BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT SAFE AND INDEPENDENT TRAVEL. WITHOUT THIS INFRASTRUCTURE, CHILDREN ARE DISCOURAGED FROM WALKING OR CYCLING.**

## INCREASE ACTIVE TRANSPORT AROUND SCHOOLS

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$5 million per annum for four years from 2026-27 for Local Governments to implement active transport infrastructure, interventions, and supporting initiatives around schools

### Benefits

- ▼ Safer school precincts that support and encourage children to walk and cycle
- ▼ Promotion of active and healthy lifestyles
- ▼ Enhanced neighbourhood liveability

Over the past 40 years, Australia has experienced a decline in the rate of children walking or cycling to school. Nationally, active transport rates have dropped from 75% to 25%. In Perth, only about 20% of children actively commute, with half driven to school despite living less than 1km away.

Low active travel contributes to childhood inactivity, congestion, unsafe school precincts, and poorer community liveability. Combined with population growth and urban development, these challenges are expected to worsen without coordinated action.

Many school precincts lack the basic infrastructure to support safe and independent travel, such as pedestrian crossings, cycle paths, footpaths, traffic calming measures and end-of-trip facilities. Without this infrastructure, children are discouraged from walking or cycling.

Local Governments are eager to provide supporting infrastructure and initiatives; however, they are limited by funding constraints and fragmented programs. Some small-scale initiatives have been implemented, such as walking school buses or minor footpath upgrades, but these are not enough to reverse declining trends in active travel around schools.

A dedicated State funding pool – separate from broader road infrastructure budgets, and focussed exclusively on active transport around schools – would enable Local Governments to deliver scalable, consistent, and impactful infrastructure and programs. This funding pool could provide grants to Local Governments and schools to undertake local planning, conduct school access audits, and deliver co-designed, community-driven solutions.

Funding is needed to support all key aspects of active transport to school, including:

- Building and maintaining active transport networks (e.g. footpaths, cycleways, shared paths).
- Supporting facilities along active travel routes (e.g. signage, path markings, shade structures, drinking water fountains).
- Safety improvements in school catchments (e.g. crossings, speed reduction measures, lighting, traffic calming).
- End-of-trip facilities (e.g. bike and scooter parking, lockers).
- Education and engagement initiatives on safe and respectful use of active transport.
- Inclusive and accessible infrastructure, addressing the needs of children with disabilities and those in diverse socio-economic and geographic contexts.





## ENHANCE PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$4 million per annum over four years from 2026-27, to support the implementation of pedestrian crossings and associated infrastructure improvements

### Benefits

- ▼ Help Local Governments deliver pedestrian plans and promote active transport
- ▼ More accessible and inclusive paths and crossings, and improved access to public transport
- ▼ Reduced vehicle emissions, traffic congestion and road maintenance costs
- ▼ Promote active and healthy lifestyles

As the State Government seeks to promote active transport and reduce reliance on private vehicles, investment in pedestrian infrastructure is essential – particularly at mid-block locations where safe crossing opportunities are limited.

While not everyone drives, nearly everyone can use the pedestrian network. Investing in infrastructure that serves the entire community is critical to ensuring equitable access to key destinations and public transport.

Over recent decades, the number of safe and accessible pedestrian crossings has declined markedly, contributing to unsafe environments for

pedestrians and undermining efforts to promote active transport. This issue is particularly evident around schools, where walking and cycling rates have dropped from 75% forty years ago to just 25% today. Safety concerns are a major factor influencing this decline.

Pedestrians, as Vulnerable Road Users, must be safely accommodated. A targeted program to implement pedestrian-priority crossings, designed for people of all ages and abilities – including those using wheelchairs or mobility devices – is critical to reversing current trends.

Local Governments maintain the majority of WA's pedestrian network and have a thorough understanding of pedestrian needs within their communities. With the recent update to Main Roads policy on pedestrian priority crossings, Local Governments are well-positioned to implement infrastructure that aligns with local pedestrian plans and encourage walking and cycling. However, the cost of installing safe crossings – especially those requiring lighting upgrades – is prohibitive.

To address this issue, a dedicated funding pool should be made available to enable Local Governments to accelerate the delivery of pedestrian priority crossings and associated infrastructure at key mid-block locations.

While Main Roads and other agencies may also contribute to implementation, Local Governments are best placed to lead this work, given their jurisdictional knowledge and existing investment in active transport networks.

## INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE THAT SERVES THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY IS CRITICAL



## FILL GAPS IN THE LONG-TERM CYCLE NETWORK

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$20 million per annum for four years from 2026-27, to address the gaps in the Long-Term Cycle Network

### Benefits

- ▼ Safe, dedicated active transport infrastructure
- ▼ Connected active transport routes
- ▼ Increased walking, cycling and use of other active transport options within the community
- ▼ Remove barriers to active transport modes
- ▼ Promote active and healthy lifestyles

A well-connected active transport network is essential to building a healthier, more sustainable, and more liveable WA. It delivers long-term benefits by easing traffic congestion, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving public health outcomes through increased physical activity.

The Long-Term Cycle Network (LTCN), developed in partnership with Local Governments under the *Perth and Peel @ 3.5 million* framework, provides a strategic blueprint for delivering continuous, safe, and accessible cycling and walking routes across the region. However, critical gaps remain. Many users are unable to safely reach key destinations such as train stations, community centres, and primary paths due to missing links in the network. These persistent gaps in WA's LTCN are hindering the development of a safe, continuous, and appealing active transport system for the broader community.

The State Government's Stage 1 submission to Infrastructure Australia highlights the scale of the challenge: only 41% of the 1,297km of identified primary network and 34% of the 1,564km of the secondary network are currently complete. The remainder either does not exist or requires substantial upgrades. Feedback from WA Local Governments also highlights a fragmented network, safety concerns and limited resources as persistent barriers. While Local Governments have delivered and maintained paths, progress remains inconsistent and underfunded.

Accelerating the delivery of the LTCN through increased State Government funding will support Local Governments to complete missing links and deliver safe, convenient and equitable active transport options. This investment will support the construction and upgrade of cycling paths, pedestrian walkways and related infrastructure, creating a safer, more convenient and more comfortable experience for users. By addressing missing links, Local Governments can integrate upgraded sections into the broader LTCN, creating a cohesive, statewide network.

**MANY USERS ARE UNABLE TO SAFELY REACH KEY DESTINATIONS DUE TO MISSING LINKS IN THE NETWORK**





## SAFER REGIONAL ROADS

### Funding Request

- ▼ Long-term commitment to fully fund the Regional Road Safety Program

### Benefits

- ▼ Reduced fatalities and serious injuries on regional Local Government roads

**WITH SERIOUS  
CRASHES  
OCCURRING  
ACROSS THE  
REGIONAL ROAD  
NETWORK,  
THERE IS A NEED  
TO SUSTAIN  
INVESTMENT IN THE  
MEDIUM TERM**

Between 2019 and 2023, regional roads in WA saw 19,465 reported crashes, resulting in 523 deaths and 2,754 serious injuries. Of those killed or seriously injured, 44% were on local roads.

Proven, low-cost safety treatments – such as sealing road shoulders and installing audible edge and centre lines – can dramatically reduce run-off-road and head-on crashes. Initial evaluation of treatments on the State highway network have shown an encouraging 50% reduction in fatalities and 35% reduction in serious injuries on treated sections.

To extend these life-saving benefits across the broader network, the State Government has committed to expand the Regional Road Safety Program to include regional Local Government roads, ensuring safety benefits are spread more evenly across the network.

The 2024-25 State Budget committed \$250 million over four years to apply these low-cost road safety treatments across regional roads managed by Local Government, which will help address the most common crash types that result in death and serious injury (run-off-road and head-on crashes).

With serious crashes occurring across the regional road network, there is a need to sustain investment in the medium term. A program of work is underway, and maintaining momentum is critical to achieving the goals of the State Road Safety Strategy and preventing the devastating loss felt by too many families and communities.



# Connected & Inclusive

2026-27 State Budget Submission

## ACCESS TO PRIMARY HEALTHCARE IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$9.5 million per annum from 2026-27, to help rural and remote Local Governments cover the costs of providing essential primary healthcare services, until long-term funding and workforce solutions are in place

### Benefits

- ▼ Reduced hospital pressures and costs
- ▼ Sustainable and equitable access to primary healthcare services for local communities
- ▼ Funds are not diverted away from the provision of essential community services and infrastructure

Every Australian deserves access to quality primary healthcare – no matter where they live. Yet for more than 500,000 Western Australians in regional, rural, and remote communities, this basic right is not being met. The Australian and State Governments are failing in their responsibility to ensure adequate healthcare provision across the regions.

GP availability is lower in rural and remote areas across the country. In outer regional, remote, and very remote areas, WA has the lowest GP-to-population ratio with just 75.9 GPs (FTE) per 100,000 people – well below the national average of 87.3 (FTE) for equivalent remoteness. This shortage has real consequences for people in regional and rural areas, as they face higher healthcare costs,

reduced access to timely care, and poorer health outcomes compared to those in metropolitan centres.

People living in the regions are more likely to die from disease at a younger age than people living elsewhere in Australia. Limited access to primary care contributes to higher rates of hospitalisations, injuries, and deaths.<sup>4</sup> Chronic illness is also more prevalent in these communities, with regional areas recording the highest rates of people living with multiple long-term health conditions.

Inadequate access to primary care is also straining the broader health system. According to the WA Country Health Service, more than half of emergency department visits are for non-urgent issues – many of which could have been managed by a local GP if one were available.

Recognising the importance of being able to see a doctor, Local Governments are reluctantly stepping in to try and secure healthcare services for their communities. They are funding accommodation, vehicles, and medical centre operations to ensure their communities can access essential support.

In 2024-25, over half of non-metropolitan Councils were actively supporting primary healthcare services – an investment totalling over \$9.5 million, according to WALGA's 2025 Local Government GP Support Survey. This is not sustainable. Funding medical care is placing enormous pressure on already stretched Local Government budgets – diverting resources from other essential services and infrastructure. Local Governments should not, and cannot, continue to bear this cost.

The Australian and State Government must act now to address the systemic failures in rural and remote healthcare, and develop and fund innovative solutions.

Until sustainable funding and workforce models are in place, regional Local Governments must be reimbursed for the support they are providing. A dedicated primary healthcare funding program would help offset these costs and ensure communities across WA have access to this essential care.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (n.d.), *Rural and remote health*. Available from: [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)



MODERN LIBRARIES FOR THE FUTURE

Funding Request

- \$4.4 million per annum from 2026-27, for public library materials

Benefits

- Modern public library services that meet community needs
- Support for learning, education, social cohesion and economic participation through digital inclusion
- Provision of free services to help communities manage the high costs of living

Public libraries are no longer just places to borrow books – they are vibrant community hubs where people of all ages and backgrounds gather to learn, feel safe and be connected. Libraries play a vital role in promoting literacy, bridging the digital divide, and offering essential services to those who need them most.

Demand for library services is rising, with visitor numbers increasing by 13.4% between 2021-22 and 2023-24. Despite this growing demand, State Government funding for WA's 233 public libraries has remained stagnant at just over \$8 million over the past eight years from 2016-17 to 2024-25. During this same period, State Government funding for public library materials has fallen by 10%, while WA's population has grown by 18% and inflation by 30%.

To restore funding to appropriate levels, an estimated \$4.4 million per annum is needed in 2026-27 and across the forward estimates, with future allocations indexed to reflect population growth and inflation.

As technology evolves and community needs shift, libraries are expanding their collections to include eBooks and audiobooks. However, unlike physical books, most digital licenses expire after one year and must be repurchased – often at increased cost.

Additional funding for library materials would ensure libraries can meet growing demand, keep pace with rising costs, and allow Local Governments to focus on their core role of delivering modern, inclusive, and well-resourced public library services.

DEMAND FOR  
LIBRARIES IS  
RISING,  
BUT FUNDING  
HAS REMAINED  
STAGNANT



Fremantle Library,  
City of Fremantle



Piara Waters Library,  
City of Armadale



## EXPAND COMMUNITY SPORT AND RECREATION INFRASTRUCTURE

### Funding Request

- ▼ Increase the Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund to \$60 million per annum from 2026-27

### Benefits

- ▼ Meet growing community demand through the provision of quality sporting facilities
- ▼ Promotion of active and healthy lifestyles and social inclusion
- ▼ Increased youth engagement
- ▼ Protection of open space and natural areas

Sport and recreation facilities are vital to Western Australia's active lifestyle and community wellbeing. They provide inclusive spaces where people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds can engage in physical activity, build social connections, and contribute to broader public benefits – such as improved health outcomes, reduced crime rates, new job creation, and economic growth.

With WA's population surpassing 3 million (and projected to reach 3.3 million by 2032), demand for high-quality, accessible sport and recreation infrastructure has continued to grow. Participation in sport is diversifying, and communities require facilities that reflect their evolving needs.

The State Government has committed substantial investment in sporting and community facilities through the *Play On WA* initiative, with a goal to deliver 2,030 community sport and recreation infrastructure items across WA by 2030.

Local Governments also play a leading role in the provision of recreation facilities – such as parking, sports fields and stadiums, golf courses, swimming pools, and sport centres. Adequate funding for the maintenance and upgrade of these facilities will also be needed to support the achievement of this goal.

The Community Sport and Recreation Facilities Fund (CSRFF) plays a critical part in supporting Local Governments and community sporting organisations to invest in infrastructure. Additional funding is needed for the CSRFF to ensure that it can meet the community's needs.

The fund is consistently oversubscribed, leaving many valuable projects unfunded. Despite a temporary uplift of \$3.8 million in the 2024-25 State Budget, current funding levels are insufficient to meet rising demand. In addition to increased demand placed on the CSRFF, funding levels have also not kept pace with escalating construction costs, which have increased by an average of 34% over the past five years. This is affecting project outcomes.

Along with more funding for sport and recreation facilities, we also need to improve planning for regional-level sporting facilities – an issue that was identified by the State Infrastructure Strategy. The State Infrastructure Strategy has recommended developing a 10+ year regional-level sporting facilities plan, to identify gaps in current provision and explore opportunities for shared spaces. The implementation of this strategy is a priority and should be supported by dedicated funding.

## CURRENT FUNDING LEVELS ARE INSUFFICIENT TO MEET RISING DEMAND





Regional Arts Workshop Series,  
Shire of East Pilbara

## CREATE A COMMUNITY ARTS AND CULTURAL FACILITIES FUND

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$60 million per annum from 2026-27, to create a Community Arts and Cultural Facilities Fund to support the development of arts and cultural infrastructure

### Benefits

- ▼ Meet growing community demand through enhanced arts and cultural infrastructure
- ▼ Ensure cultural infrastructure is fit-for-purpose
- ▼ More vibrant and liveable regional areas

Arts and culture make our communities vibrant places to live, offering a range of benefits that contribute to overall wellbeing. Access to arts and culture fosters social cohesion, mental wellbeing and education, while also generating economic outcomes by driving tourism and stimulating local activity.

Cultural infrastructure – such as theatres, community centres and galleries – provides the physical spaces where these benefits are realised. However, despite their importance and visible impact, investment in cultural infrastructure is being held back by a lack of dedicated funding. The 2022 State Infrastructure Strategy highlighted this issue, noting that arts and culture receive only a small portion of the State's infrastructure budget – with little attention given to regional needs.

Local Governments are the primary providers and operators of cultural facilities, including nearly all of WA's Regional Arts and Entertainment Centres.

However, they face significant challenges in maintaining and upgrading these assets to meet growing community demand. In 2021-22, WA Local Governments spent an average of \$72.54 per person on cultural services – the third highest rate nationally. Sustaining this level of investment is becoming increasingly difficult.

Currently, there are no dedicated funding programs to support Local Governments in operating and maintaining community cultural infrastructure. Local Governments, particularly in regional areas, must rely on fragmented funding from the Australian Government, State, and philanthropic sources, which is often oversubscribed. These grants also tend to support one-off events and performances, rather than long-term infrastructure needs.

As a result, many cultural facilities are deteriorating. Research by the Australian Local Government Association has revealed widespread issues with the condition, functionality, and capacity of Local Government buildings – including those dedicated to arts and culture.

Creative WA, the Government's 10-year vision for arts and culture, has identified the need for investment in arts and cultural infrastructure. The State Government has provided \$30 million over three years to support the refurbishment and equipment needs of community arts and cultural facilities. While this funding is critical, the program is only established for three years and will not address the long-term need.

The creation of an ongoing Community Cultural and Arts Facility Fund, similar to the CSRFF, would provide the necessary capital funding to support the ambition of the State Government's Cultural Infrastructure Framework 2030+ and strengthen the creative, cultural and arts sector.

## INVESTMENT IN CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE IS BEING HELD BACK BY A LACK OF DEDICATED FUNDING



Local

Government

Reform



2026-27 State Budget Submission

PILOT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR GOVERNMENT IN WA

Funding Request

- ▼ \$6.9 million over 2026-27 and 2027-28, to trial AI projects in Local Government

Benefits

- ▼ Enable State and Local Governments to effectively pilot AI use cases, considering safety and effectiveness
- ▼ Potential to deliver more efficient services across Local and State Governments

Priority areas that could be addressed through the development of 'use cases' include:

- Accelerating housing supply by streamlining planning and building approvals.
- Addressing regional workforce shortages by automating routine tasks and freeing up staff for frontline services.
- Strengthening cybersecurity through improved data management and system readiness.
- Enhancing safety and risk management for bushfire volunteers.
- Supporting emergency management and disaster management, and building climate resilience.
- Improving coordination of front-line services, including through initiatives such as multi-lingual chatbots.

By taking a structured and informed approach to piloting AI, both State and Local Governments can reduce delivery risks, avoid duplication, and ensure responsible deployment. This program would not only build capability across Government but also position WA as a national leader in using AI to deliver smarter, more responsive public services.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents a transformative opportunity for WA to strengthen its economy and enhance public service delivery. With the Productivity Commission forecasting national benefits of up to \$116 billion over the next decade, WA is well-positioned to lead the way in deploying AI strategically across State and Local Government.

To progress this opportunity, funding for a coordinated and competitive pilot program is needed. Dedicated funding would provide the opportunity to explore high-impact applications of AI across State and Local Government – especially in areas where State and Local Government responsibilities intersect. This initiative would enable Local Governments to test innovative solutions to pressing policy challenges, with successful pilots scalable across WA and adaptable for broader use in State Government.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PRESENTS A TRANSFORMATIVE OPPORTUNITY FOR WA TO STRENGTHEN ITS ECONOMY AND ENHANCE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY



REVIEW RATING EXEMPTIONS

Funding Request

- ▼ \$200,000 in 2026-27, for an independent organisation to undertake a broad review of rating exemptions

Benefits

- ▼ Improved efficiency of Local Government rates
- ▼ Ensure exemptions are appropriately targeted

Rating exemptions have a significant impact on the revenue of Local Government and their ability to provide essential community services. When properties are exempt from paying rates, the resulting revenue shortfall must either be absorbed by other ratepayers, or lead to reductions in essential community services. This challenge spans both Australian Government and State-level exemptions and has implications for local infrastructure, service delivery, and community wellbeing.

Local Governments rely on a fair and sustainable rating framework to fund the essential services and infrastructure that underpin community wellbeing and economic development. A broader review of rating exemptions should be undertaken, with dedicated funding allocated in the 2026-27 State Budget to support this process. This review must engage all stakeholders and assess the long-term impacts of exemptions on community services and fiscal sustainability.

One of the most pressing concerns is the exemption granted for charitable purposes. Originally intended to support genuine charitable organisations, this provision has been interpreted to include commercial activities conducted by not-for-profit entities. This broad interpretation dilutes the intended purpose of the exemption. For instance,

RATING EXEMPTIONS HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE

Independent Living Units, which can be more expensive than average homes, often qualify for rate exemptions. This results in substantial revenue losses for Local Governments, shifting the financial burden onto other ratepayers – many of whom cannot afford such properties themselves.

Other exemptions that pose challenges and warrant review include:

- Properties leased by the Department of Housing to Charitable Organisations.
- Government Trading Entities.
- Projects under the State Agreement Act.
- State-owned unallocated Crown land.

Local Governments are also particularly concerned about the State Government's recent decision to amend the *Local Government Act 1995* to exempt land held under a miscellaneous licence from Local Government rates. This decision was made without consultation with the Local Government sector, and directly contradicts a prior ruling by the Supreme Court of Western Australia.

While a robust and competitive resources sector is vital to the State's economic prosperity, it must not come at the expense of regional communities. The proposed amendments to the *Local Government Act 1995* to exempt land held under a miscellaneous licence from Local Government rates should be paused and considered as part of a broader review of rating exemptions.

Addressing these exemptions is crucial to ensuring fair and equitable distribution of rates among all property owners, while still supporting legitimate charitable activities.







## CREATE A LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY PROGRAM

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$360,000 over four years from 2026-27, to provide a 50% funding subsidy for 15 students per year to undertake the Diploma of Local Government (LGA 50120)

### Benefits

- ▼ Well-trained Local Government leadership equipped to drive innovation and navigate complex challenges
- ▼ Future-proofed sector with emerging pipeline of highly skilled leaders

Local Governments across WA are experiencing a critical shortage of skilled and qualified executive leaders, particularly in regional and remote areas. This shortage is affecting Councils' ability to deliver essential services, uphold governance standards, and respond to increasingly complex community needs.

Findings from the 2023 Local Government Workforce Shortage Survey show that over 70% of WA Councils are having difficulty recruiting for senior leadership roles. These delays are having a direct impact on service delivery. Councils also highlighted the need for leadership development to support strategic planning and effective community engagement.

The shortage is being driven by several factors, including:

- Ageing workforce: 43% of the sector is aged 50 and over, with limited succession planning in place.

- Skills gaps: Many CEOs and senior managers lack formal qualifications in Local Government leadership.
- Recruitment barriers: Regional councils face added barriers such as housing shortages, lower remuneration, and geographic isolation.

Without targeted support, the leadership gap may widen further, increasing the risk of service disruption and governance challenges.

The creation of a Local Government Scholarship Program for senior Local Government officers would help build leadership capacity across the sector. The program would support CEOs, senior managers, and emerging leaders to complete the nationally recognised Diploma of Local Government, a qualification aligned with WA's Skills and Workforce Development Action Plan.

The program would represent a practical investment in building leadership capability across the sector. By equipping leaders with the skills and knowledge to manage change, engage communities, and plan strategically, the program would contribute to:

- More efficient and responsive service delivery.
- Stronger governance and accountability.
- Improved community engagement and planning.
- A sustainable leadership pipeline.
- Enhanced economic and social resilience.

**WITHOUT TARGETED SUPPORT, THE LEADERSHIP GAP MAY WIDEN FURTHER, INCREASING THE RISK OF SERVICE DISRUPTION**





# Efficient Regulation

2026-27 State Budget Submission

## STRENGTHEN OUR BIOSECURITY RESPONSE

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$20 million per annum from 2026-27, for the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) to ensure WA is prepared and can respond to increasing biosecurity threats

### Benefits

- ▼ Faster and more agile response to emerging biosecurity issues
- ▼ Reduces WA's reliance on national biosecurity funding arrangements
- ▼ Minimised risk of long-term damage from biosecurity incursions

## WA IS FACING INCREASINGLY COMPLEX AND CONCURRENT BIOSECURITY THREATS

WA is facing increasingly complex and concurrent biosecurity threats. These emerging threats are no longer confined to traditional agricultural sectors – they now pose serious risks to urban environments, natural ecosystems, and community infrastructure. Responding to these challenges requires rapid, coordinated action; however, the current system is not equipped to deliver this.

The review of the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*, completed in 2023, identified a need for widespread change to how the biosecurity system functions in WA – highlighting that legislation is outdated, responsibilities are fragmented, and enforcement mechanisms are insufficient.

The review also identified a range of challenges with biosecurity funding. Specifically, it noted that DPIRD is under-resourced to respond to increasing biosecurity threats, which limits its capacity to effectively plan, prepare and respond to the multiplicity of biosecurity threats facing WA's environment and agricultural sectors. The review highlighted the need for sustained investment and better support for regional and local biosecurity efforts.

Urgent interventions – such as early detection, containment, and eradication – can be compromised by delays and funding uncertainty, undermining response effectiveness and increasing potential environmental and economic costs.

The recent Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer (PSHB) incursion exposed the serious gaps in WA's biosecurity response. Despite significant efforts, eradication was unsuccessful – in part due to delays in securing adequate funding and resources. During the PSHB outbreak, the absence of a coordinated funding mechanism delayed action and increased the risk of long-term environmental and economic damage. Local Governments were expected to contribute without access to dedicated funding, placing significant strain on already limited budgets and undermining their ability to respond effectively.

WA cannot afford to repeat this experience. There is a critical need for sustained and increased investment to build workforce capacity, improve surveillance, and strengthen rapid response capabilities within DPIRD, to ensure that we are prepared and able to respond to increasing threats.





Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer trap



Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer damage

## STOP THE SPREAD OF THE POLYPHAGOUS SHOT-HOLE BORER

### Funding Request

- ▼ \$45 million over four years from 2026-27, for Quarantine Area (QA) Local Governments to help stop the spread of the Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer (PSHB)
- ▼ \$7 million over three years from 2026-27, for QA residents

### Benefits

- ▼ PSHB appropriately managed and the spread is limited
- ▼ Households are incentivised to identify and remove impacted trees
- ▼ Protection of mature, high-value trees and environmental assets

The PSHB biosecurity incursion is causing significant and widespread damage to the urban tree canopy across the Perth metropolitan region.

As WA moves into the Transition to Management (T2M) phase, the resources available to Local Governments and communities to respond are falling short. Local Governments currently manage a public green infrastructure asset of between 10,000 to 600,000 street trees, with further trees in parks and public open spaces. With 20-30% of these trees now at risk due to PSHB infestation, the scale of the threat is significant and growing.

A lack of action also places our native forests, plantations, and horticulture industries at risk. Global evidence shows that early detection and rapid response are essential to suppressing PSHB populations and preventing long-term damage.

However, as DPIRD reduces its role within the Quarantine Area, the burden of response is shifting to Local Governments and private landholders – without the funding to match.

Local Governments' tree maintenance budgets are already stretched to capacity. They cannot absorb the surge in workload required to manage PSHB without State Government investment. Without support, more trees will be lost, and natural environments will suffer irreversible decline.

Effective control must also extend beyond public land. Funding mechanisms that support private residents to treat infected trees are essential to ensure a comprehensive and equitable biosecurity response. If infestations on private property are left unchecked, progress made on public lands will be undone – and the borer will continue to spread.

**WITHOUT SUPPORT,  
MORE TREES  
WILL BE LOST,  
AND NATURAL  
ENVIRONMENTS  
WILL SUFFER  
IRREVERSIBLE  
DECLINE**





FUND A BIODIVERSITY SURVEY PROGRAM

Funding Request

- ▼ \$15 million over four years from 2026-27, to fund and coordinate a statewide biodiversity survey program to standardise habitat and vegetation mapping

Benefits

- ▼ Provision of contemporary and consistent data on biodiversity across the State
- ▼ Support for the implementation of the Native Vegetation Policy
- ▼ Streamlined regulatory processes
- ▼ Reduced cost to the community for essential infrastructure projects

WA's ability to plan, protect, and enhance its biodiversity is being limited by the absence of comprehensive, up-to-date vegetation data. This limitation undermines landscape scale planning and impedes efforts to enhance and protect biodiversity.

Currently, biodiversity surveys are conducted on a project-by-project basis, with little coordination or data sharing between agencies. These surveys are costly and can only be undertaken during spring (August to November) when species are most visible, making them difficult to schedule and resource.

As a result, Local Governments face significant delays and financial pressures when seeking environmental approvals for essential public works, such as road safety upgrades and infrastructure development on land under their management.

The WALGA *Issues Paper on Native Vegetation Clearing* highlights how these challenges are undermining the ability of Local Governments to meet community needs. Without reliable vegetation data, Councils cannot plan for clearing offsets, which are required to progress many projects. This leads to stalled projects, increased costs and greater regulatory complexity.

To address this, targeted funding is needed to implement a State Government coordinated and funded biodiversity survey program.

The 10-year Aboriginal Heritage Survey Program, led by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, provides a strong model for coordinated, long-term data collection. Local Governments suggest a similar State-funded biodiversity survey program could be established to consistently map key bioregions. This would reduce costs for Local Governments, improve data accuracy, and ensure information is centrally managed and accessible.

Improved vegetation data would help avoid delays to critical infrastructure projects, including those vital to WA's clean energy transition – such as road widening for renewable energy transport corridors. It also presents an opportunity to leverage funding and engagement from Local Governments and communities, ensuring shared ownership and long-term value.

A coordinated survey program would also ensure consistent data coverage across regions, support the implementation of the Native Vegetation Policy, and streamline regulatory processes in line with the Vogel-McFerran Review. Investing in this initiative is essential to unlocking more efficient project delivery, protecting biodiversity, and supporting WA's broader sustainability and infrastructure goals.

WITHOUT RELIABLE VEGETATION DATA, COUNCILS CANNOT PLAN FOR CLEARING OFFSETS





# A Strong & Diverse Economy

2026-27 State Budget Submission

## ACCELERATE REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Funding Request

- ▼ Double Regional Economic Development (RED) Grants to \$11 million per annum for ten years from 2026-27

### Benefits

- ▼ Creation of jobs, long-term economic growth and diversification in the regions
- ▼ Facilitation of additional private investment through matched funding

WA's regions are the engine room of the State's economy, driven by key industries such as agriculture, construction, tourism, and resources. They are also central to achieving WA's goals for economic diversification and the energy transition.

Strong regional economies are vital for building liveable, resilient, and vibrant communities. However, many regional areas still face barriers to accessing the same level of services and infrastructure as the Perth metropolitan area. Expanding local career and training opportunities is essential to support families, retain young people, and create sustainable livelihoods in regional areas.

The Regional Economic Development (RED) Grants Program is a key initiative supporting these goals. Its core objectives are to:

- Create and sustain local jobs.
- Diversify and grow regional industries.
- Build skills and capabilities.
- Boost business productivity.
- Attract new investment.

Since 2018, the WA Government has committed more than \$60 million over 11 years to the RED Grants Program. To date, more than \$40 million has supported 415 projects across all nine regions, spanning sectors such as manufacturing, health, and tourism. Local Governments have secured \$3.9 million to deliver economic development initiatives in their communities.

The WA Government has made job creation, economic diversification and the energy transition central to their vision for a strong economy. Expanding the RED Grants Program will accelerate growth, attract private investment, and enable regional communities to thrive in a strong, inclusive, and sustainable economy.

## MANY REGIONAL AREAS STILL FACE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING THE SAME LEVEL OF SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE AS THE PERTH METROPOLITAN AREA



# 2026-27 State Budget Submission



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