

Western Councillor



WALGA

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Issue 129 June 2024

Kellerberrin heals

As the anniversary of the Kellerberrin tragedy approaches, we look at how a tight-knit country community is recovering.

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"We just wanted to make sure we stood up when needed."

*Raymond Griffiths
CEO, Shire of Kellerberrin*

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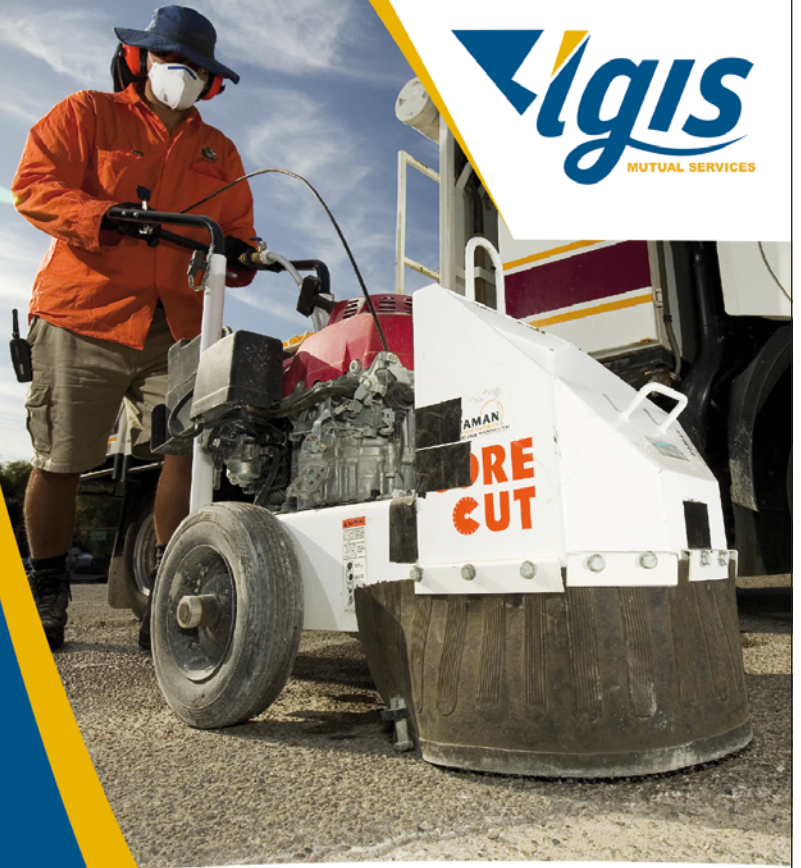
Local governments working together.

At LGIS, protecting our local government members is what we do.

We make sure our members have the right cover to suit their needs. If disaster strikes, our local government specialists help get them, and their community, back on their feet as soon as possible.

It's our members who make Western Australia such a great place to live – their roads get us around, we meet in their libraries and recreation centres, they manage our waste, and provide connection for the elderly. Every day they provide the countless services and support which makes us a community.

We believe that's worth protecting.



To find out how you can get the most out of your LGIS membership, visit lgiswa.com.au or call 9483 8888.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Peer Support Team

A practical way to provide mediation and conciliation support to Local Governments in Western Australia.

The Peer Support Team is an initiative between the WA Local Government Association (WALGA) and Local Government Professionals WA.

The team was formed to provide conciliation, negotiation and mediation support to Local Governments that identified issues of relationship conflict between Councillors, or between Councillors and senior staff.

The key objective is to assist Local Governments to resolve these issues

of conflict and reduce the need for formal investigations or enquiries.

The team will meet with the affected Councillors and staff individually, as well as in a group setting, allowing all parties to freely express their views in a neutral environment. The team will then assist the Local Government to develop outcomes and a path forward that is suitable for all involved.

So, to head off possible conflict or for the best resolution in situations where it already exists, call Nick Sloan or Candy Choo on the numbers below.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PEER SUPPORT TEAM HOTLINE NUMBERS

Nick Sloan
CEO
WALGA
Tel 9213 2025

Candy Choo
CEO
LG Professionals WA
Tel 9271 1136



WALGA

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Western Councillor

Issue 129 June 2024

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COVER: Shire of Kellerberrin CEO Raymond Griffiths in front of a community mural

Welcome to Issue 129 of *Western Councillor*

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Editors

Simon Beaumont and Taysha Sullivan, WALGA Media and Communications

Contributors

WALGA Staff and WA Local Governments

Cover photo & image editor

Jeff Henderson, Content Producer, WALGA Media and Communications

Design Creative.adm

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Canning



Karratha



Northam



From the Minister

It has been a very busy few months, as I have continued to meet with Local Governments on my ongoing informal listening tour across the sector.

It has been great to meet with more councils, individually and through zones, and hear about current issues and opportunities.

From Albany to the Kimberley, I have heard a lot about key issues for Local Governments and the importance of continuing to deliver positive reforms.

For instance, I have heard loud and clear about the importance of ensuring audit processes are clear, streamlined, and don't detract from front-line services or impose unreasonable costs on Local Governments.

I also completely understand the audit process can impose a burden on staff and the administration.

I fully appreciate the sector's feedback – my door is open and I'm happy to listen.

As the Minister, it is my job to see whether there are other things the State Government can do to support you.

In this term of government, we have streamlined and simplified the audit process.

In the last financial year, we published model financial statements and associated guidelines.



Minister Beazley and WALGA President Karen Chappel AM JP at the opening of the Canberra Hub

We have reduced the number of items that need to be in the audited financial statements, based on advice from the Office of the Auditor General.

We have reduced the frequency that assets need to be revalued to only every five years, starting this reporting year.

This will remain an area of focus for me in the months ahead.

Along with measures to cut red tape for Local Government, work to deliver our landmark reforms remains ongoing.

I'd like to sincerely thank those who have engaged positively with the changes and contributed to their implementation and success.

Tranche two legislation, which includes new laws to establish the Office of the Local Government Inspector, is expected to be introduced in the second half of 2024.

The 2024-25 State Budget also allocated \$702,000 to get the ball rolling, with detailed planning for the establishment of the Inspector.

The tranche two reforms also include changes to audit committees and enabling the payment of superannuation for council members.

As you may know, we are looking to deliver reforms to specifically support smaller Local Governments manage resourcing pressures.

For instance, we are working to support shared CEO and shared staff arrangements.

We have been working to streamline and standardise things such as council meeting procedures, which will make it easier for Local Government staff to work between councils.

We are looking to reduce the frequency that Local Governments have to review local laws from eight to 15 years.

We have also recently strengthened the Local Government Long Service Leave portability scheme, with a view towards incentivising Local Government employees to stay in the sector.

In our democratic system, everyone who is elected to serve in office holds the privilege for a finite time.

It's important to continue to work on long-term, challenging issues, and to celebrate every achievement you are able to deliver for your community.

I thank you for all your hard work.

Hon. Hannah Beazley MLA

Minister for Local Government; Youth;
Minister Assisting the Minister for Training
and Workforce Development



From the WALGA President

WALGA continues to work with Government and support our Members through advocacy, expertise, and opportunities for connection.

The start of May saw the hand down of the State and Federal Budget. Ahead of the 2024-25 State Budget, WALGA advocated on behalf of our 139 Member Local Governments through the development of our State Budget submission. The submission contained initiatives that Local Governments and the communities they represent, considered to be priority areas for investment.

After compiling such a strong State Budget Submission, many of the issues we advocated for were not acknowledged in the State Budget including greater Local Government Emergency Management funding, more Community Emergency Services Managers (CESMs), the renewal of aging libraries, the upgrade of arts and cultural facilities, addressing coastal erosion and the improvement of child safeguarding measures.

On behalf of our Member Councils, WALGA will continue to work with the State Government to invest in areas we had previously identified, especially in the lead-up to the 2025 State Election. To support this pursuit, we have also commenced the development of our 2024-25 State Election Campaign.

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is a time for all Australians to learn about our shared histories, cultures, and achievements and explore how each of us can contribute to reconciliation in Australia. WALGA was proud to partner with Reconciliation WA to assist in delivering a full program



WALGA welcomed Hon Alannah MacTiernan to our May State Council Meeting

of events across the State. Highlights included the high-profile NRW breakfast attended by Premier Hon Roger Cook MLA and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA, Aboriginal Reconciliation Memoirs with Carol Innes AM and WALGA Staff attending the Walk for Reconciliation at Langley Park. Thank you to all Member Councils and Elected Members who supported this important cause. Reconciliation is important, now more than ever.

I know that as Local Governments, our core focus is to serve our communities in the issues and areas that matter to them. This passion for serving our communities and delivering outcomes has been highlighted to me through the level of interest and registrations for the 2024 National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA). The theme of the 2024 NGA is 'Building Community Trust' which acknowledges the critical importance of trust in our democracy's different levels of Government, its institutions, and amongst citizens. I value the opportunity to showcase the incredible work of our Members and work alongside you to advocate on a National scale.

At WALGA, our people are proactive, passionate, and committed to providing the support Local Governments need to best serve their local communities. This is reflected in the calibre of resources, events, and networking opportunities we provide. Recently we hosted our sixth Waste and Environment Summit in the Shire of Northam. The Summit brought together Local Government, State Government, businesses, and the community to build relationships, share knowledge, improve service delivery, and highlight both social opportunities and environmental outcomes. Thank you to all who attended, our supporters and the WALGA staff who made the event a success.

This continual effort and momentum will culminate in the largest event on the Local Government calendar, WALGA's annual Local Government Convention (LGC24). LGC24 is a landmark event where we bring together Elected Members, Council Officers, Suppliers and key stakeholders as part of a unique program of professional development, networking and business opportunities.

This year, WALGA is proud to deliver an elevated program at a fresh new venue, the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. This year's theme is "Innovation Ecosystem". It speaks to the ability of WALGA and the sector to foster dynamic change within the fabric of WA through collaboration, promotion and daring to think big. Registrations are now open, and I encourage you all to join us on Tuesday 8 – Thursday 10 October 2024 as we aim to evoke new ideas, heighten passion for communities, and facilitate connections for ongoing skills and ideas sharing within the Local Government sector.

As always, I am inspired by the collective dedication of our staff, Members, and sector as we work towards WALGA's vision for agile and inclusive Local Governments that enhance community wellbeing and enable economic prosperity.

Cr Karen Chappel AM JP
WALGA President

LGIS membership in 2024/25, what's on the horizon?

by James Sheridan CEO, LGIS



The end of a financial year provides an opportunity to reflect and look toward to the future.

Recently the LGIS team have been on the road talking to members about what's happening in their Local Government and how

we can support them in 2024/25. Members have asked about the Scheme's performance, claims trends, preparing for natural disasters, and implications of the new *Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act WA (2023)*.

We've also been invited to speak to councils. Of particular interest has been Scheme protections; council decisions and liability implications; and Scheme performance. We've customised each of our presentations to address the specific concerns of individual councils.

Scheme performance for 2023/24

The Scheme's performance is a critical factor in setting membership contributions. Pleasingly, 2023/24 is predicted to finish slightly ahead of budget, a good result given last year's surplus of \$0.9 million, and the previous year's deficit of \$7.26 million. This year's result ensures the ongoing delivery of sustainable long-term protection to the Western Australian Local Government sector.

There have been challenges in 2023/24, but the Scheme's prudent fiscal management has ensured a good position for the sector. Our mutual ethos has shone through – collaborating with members to develop resources and provide guidance to navigate changing legislation and obligations.

Analysis by the Scheme's actuaries, Scyne, recommended that we increase our retained capital, and as such the Board has decided that any small surplus for 2023/24 will be held in reserve. LGIS must maintain capital to make sure we're in a sound position to respond to changes in the legislative and claims landscape.

Investments are a large part of our income and they have performed well this year, making up a large component of this year's surplus. The sector's claims performance remained on the same trajectory as 2022/23 experiencing pressure across several lines, particularly workers' compensation and to some extent property.

1 July welcomes new Workers Compensation Act

Over 250 Local Government representatives have attended LGIS information sessions on the new *Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 2023 (WA)*, commencing 1 July 2024. It's a complete rewrite of the current act and changes are numerous. There are significant implications for Local Governments as both employers and members of a mutual indemnity scheme, LGIS.

We partnered with WorkCover WA and legal firms Mills Oakley and Moray & Agnew to deliver a six-month information programme across the metropolitan area, in select regions and via online webinar.

The WorkCare portfolio is in the spotlight and under pressure with rising claims costs despite steady claim numbers. A significant consideration in our decision to increase capital retention is the new Act which substantially increases potential costs for each claim; these include increased claimant entitlements and tougher settlement conditions.

It is vital that in 2024/25 the sector works with LGIS to reduce the number and cost of claims. Those with poor claims performance will see this reflected in their 2024/25 WorkCare contributions.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your Local Government's issues, please contact me on 9483 8886 or talk to your LGIS account manager.



Our mutual ethos has shone through – collaborating with members to develop resources and provide guidance to navigate changing legislation and obligations.





Above: the scrap metal pile at the Shire of Toodyay Waste Transfer Station; **Top right:** Deputy Director General of DWER, Emily Briggs, addressing the opportunities and challenges for Local Government; **Bottom right:** Dr Mia Carbon, Deputy Director General Sustainability and Biosecurity, representing DBCA, addresses the summit

66 months until 2030

by the **WALGA Waste and Environment Team**

With just 66 months until the 2030 key date for net-zero targets, WALGA tackled the big issues head on at our sixth annual Waste and Environment summit.

“The world needs to decarbonise, and it needs to decarbonise at pace,” reflected Emily Briggs, Deputy Director General, Climate and Sustainability, with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER).

Briggs was speaking at the 2024 WALGA Waste & Environment Summit. Briggs went on to say that it is just “66 months until 2030”, a key date for net-zero targets. The WA Government has committed to reducing government emissions by 80 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030.

The Summit took place over two days in Northam in late May 2024. The event program was divided into three streams: waste management, biosecurity and biodiversity. On the first day experts from the waste and environment sector presented to a packed Northam Town Hall, and on the second day Local Government Councillors and officers toured local waste facilities and environment features.

Some of the highlights include:

Deborah Moody from Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation gave a Welcome to Country. The Hon Darren West MLC, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Action, delivered an opening address.

Jacky Jurmann, Manager of Planning and Environment with the Shire of Northam, spoke about some of the wins the summit hosts have had lately, including obtaining a Gold Waterwise status, carbon footprint monitoring, transitioning to EV, and giving away 10,000 native trees to residents.

Kelly Howlett, from Waste Authority WA, spoke of the Waste Authority’s vision for ‘a sustainable, low-waste future powered by a circular economy’ and outlined their strategic priorities, including better outcomes for regional and remote

communities waste infrastructure. Ms Howlett encouraged everyone to comment on the recently released Draft State Waste Strategy.

The Hon Sheila McHale and Tim Cusack, Chair and CEO of Containers for Change, spoke about the massive success of the project, with over 3.2 billion containers recycled through the scheme since its inception in 2020. McHale explained, “We’re doing really well in glass and aluminium. We need to focus attention on PET.” PET is a type of plastic. Glass recovery rates are high because most glass products are consumed at home whereas 60% of PET is water bottles which are consumed on-the-go.

Dr Mia Carbon, Deputy Director General Sustainability and Biosecurity, from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), delivered the sobering news that in 2023, WA faced 10 biosecurity incursions.

Belinda Walker, Director Native Vegetation, DWER, spoke of the challenges the Wheatbelt region faces when it comes to the clearing of native vegetation, “It’s a complex balance between road safety and maintenance and the important values of unique biodiversity within the Wheatbelt region.”

Kylie Tame from Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation raised an interesting problem that many of us hadn’t considered, that of feral pigs destroying artefact scatters, the material remains of past Aboriginal people’s activities, in Wandoo National Park. Ms Tame was in luck because her fellow presenter Hugo de Vos, Executive Manager Development and Regulation with the Shire of Toodyay, presented on the Shire’s feral pig intervention.

An expert First Nations person talking to a Local Government Officer to find a solution to a feral pig threatening a National Park captures the point of the Summit perfectly – to build networks for best practice across the waste and environment sectors of Local Government. Given that it is only 66 months until 2030, the importance of knowledge exchange and relationship building cannot be understated.



John Murray has been working with the City of South Perth for over 40 years, managing plant production at the City's nursery

The Rock Stars of Tree Stock

by **Melanie Davies**, Urban Forest Program Facilitator, WALGA

The quality of tree stock has a significant impact on Local Government efforts to increase canopy cover across our suburbs. Two Local Government nurseries are leading improvements in the field, courtesy of some rock star staff.

John Murray's love of drumming is equalled only by his lifelong dedication to growing quality trees. Horticulture is in John's veins. He is a descendent of the Wilson family who immigrated to Australia in 1887 and went on to establish the largest nursery of its day in the southern hemisphere.

John has been working with the City of South Perth for over 40 years and in his role as Streetscapes Supervisor manages plant production at the City's nursery. Growing from humble roots when it opened in 1977, the City's nursery produces an average of 120,000 plants per year, of which 6,000 are trees. John and his team of staff and volunteers are focused on implementing improvements to propagation to deliver exceptional quality.

Local Governments provide significant investment in tree planting programs, with an average base cost of \$600 per tree over its lifetime.

The quality of planted tree stock has a significant effect on tree establishment and survival in the months and years following planting. Local Governments allocate substantial investment in tree planting programs, with an average base cost of \$600 per tree over its lifetime, including purchase, planting, establishment and maintenance. The number of trees planted each year by a Local Government varies depending on their size and resources, but generally ranges between 300 to over 10,000 trees.

The City of South Perth's plant nursery is accredited by the *Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia* (NIASA), demonstrating the highest standard in management practices. Local provenance seed is collected and grown, allowing the city to grow and plant larger stock (35 – 45 L) of species that are not readily available, such as the WA Christmas tree (*Nuytsia floribunda*), Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), Coastal blackbutt (*E. todtiana*) and various banksia species. Propagation of local native species allows the City to establish a diverse and resilient urban forest that uses many of the plants that would have formed the area's original canopy.

For every three trees planted, two were pulled out within the first ten years due to poor growth or death.

John has also focused on increasing the beneficial soil microbe content in potting mixes, and tailoring irrigation programs, to support plant vigour and growth. The City now supplies plants to several Local Governments.

"In my four decades with the City of South Perth, I've witnessed the transformation of our nursery from a modest endeavour to a hub of green innovation," John said.

"When it comes to plant production, quality is our guiding principle. We're not just growing plants; we're nurturing the future of our urban landscape."

Most Local Governments don't own their own nurseries, they purchase plants from commercial suppliers. The City of Belmont commenced a new procurement process in 2022 to improve the quality and availability of tree stock used in annual planting programs.

City of Belmont Arborist Adam Barnett recalls the challenges faced with achieving the City's goal of increasing canopy cover through strategic planting. "In many cases, trees got off to a good start but then failed to grow, showing poor vigour and stunted growth. These trees didn't establish adequate root systems, and when removed showed girdling or 'pot bound' roots that were causing strangulation and preventing the tree from accessing water and nutrients in the surrounding soil. This essentially inflicts drought conditions on the plant, similar to a potted plant."

In partnership with WALGA's Local Government Urban Forest Working Group and Greenlife Australia, the peak industry body for production nurseries in Australia, the City of Belmont developed and piloted new contract specifications for tree purchasing. Nurseries are required to be accredited with NIASA and the *Landscape Tree Specification Sub-Program (LTSS)* to ensure best practice propagation standards are followed. Accredited nurseries audit tree stock at each hold point before seedlings are moved into bigger pots, to ensure correct root direction,



The City of Belmont is leading the way with new contracted specifications for tree purchasing

root ball occupancy, and formative pruning if required. These propagation standards ensure trees are healthy, better balanced, and able to anchor and establish a strong root system when planted.

Adam visits the nursery to undertake destructive testing of samples from batches at each holding point before they are transferred to larger pot sizes, to visually validate quality before accepting the final 35L container trees. Adam explains, "By specifying the need for accreditation and rejecting non-conforming stock, we are working in partnership with the nursery industry to improve the standard of plant production."

Improving tree stock quality is one of many initiatives that Local Governments are leading to increase urban canopy cover. WALGA will promote the contract specifications for tree purchasing on the Preferred Supplier Program to encourage adoption across the sector and provide training to Local Government officers on plant propagation standards, tree planting techniques and juvenile tree care.

John Murray on the drums in his band days



“

We're not just growing plants; we're nurturing the future of our urban landscape.

John Murray
City of South Perth

”



The Kellerberrin Recreation Centre provided a safe space for residents as the location of the Community Support Service in the aftermath of the event

Kellerberrin heals

It was some time before 9.00am on a Thursday morning, 7 September 2023 when Kellerberrin CEO Raymond Griffiths knew something was up in his town.

"Well, we were basically just in the administration office and we saw the police cars go past. From there, we started hearing about what had happened by word of mouth. It was pretty creepy. Then we spoke to the local police to see if they needed any assistance with road closures and the like. Our first thoughts were that we make sure that we can keep the community safe."

A terrible day had begun. Local man Lachlan Bowles had shot and killed Terry Czernowski at the workshops at the Moylan grain silos. Kellerberrin now had what WA Police describe as an "active shooter" somewhere in and around the town.

Ray and the Shire were clear on the role they wanted to play.

"We saw ourselves as a way of communicating to the community to make sure that we could actually get information out as quickly as possible through our social media and through the radio stations. We wanted to be the focal point, to keep the community out of the picture, because the last thing you want anyone to do in the community is to be challenged by media. There was just media all over the place, every street in town had media just walking up and down the street. So we tried to bear the brunt of that."

The CEO reflected on whether knowing the men involved impacted on his immediate actions.

"At the Shire we all knew them personally. I was only playing a social game of darts with one of those involved

the night before in one of our tournaments. Being a small community I knew both of them well."

The local police were soon joined by a large contingent of their metropolitan colleagues as the day wore on. A mobile phone black spot in town meant residents could hear irate voices and instructions as the siege continued.

"There couldn't be phone conversations, it had to be via voice and that was getting heard by more than just the people involved. This caused quite a bit of grief," says Ray.

"For a while we had no idea where the person was, he was at large. We just tried to make sure that the community were aware to stay indoors, remain in the house but be confident that they were safe. Just trying to get that message across in a positive manner was quite difficult. We just tried to keep the rumours and innuendo out of it and just keep to the facts."

The police siege ended in a paddock eight hours later. Kellerberrin, with a modest population of under 1,000 people, was now dealing with a murder-suicide of two well-known locals.

"You just went into a mode of 'right, we've just got to make sure we look after everybody' and the personal circumstance really didn't take effect until later that night.

"We caught up with some of the people that were actually involved in the incident themselves by catching up with them socially over the next few days," said Ray.



Being a small community, I knew both of them well.

Raymond Griffiths
Shire of Kellerberrin CEO



Ray was interviewed on the radio the next day, and it was clear the Shire had a massive role to play in the aftermath. As is often the case, the local police and the Shire remain in place, in their community, after a tragedy.

The Shire and the support services swung into action.

Raymond Griffiths is fulsome in his praise of what followed, particularly in the eight-week period after the incidents.

"I could not speak more highly of Jo Drayton and Holyoake (the Northam-based counselling outreach service). They were magnificent. The local police, Holyoake and the Local Government Insurance Scheme team all helped us through what was such a dark time."

Jo Drayton is the Suicide Prevention Coordinator in the Wheatbelt for Holyoake. She got a call from Ray Griffiths on the Thursday of the tragedy and got a communications and support services plan together. By the following Tuesday, Jo and Holyoake were in Kellerberrin, putting the recovery response on the ground.

"The District Superintendent of Police at the time suggested that Holyoake lead the development of a community drop-in support service that would be delivered within the Shire of Kellerberrin.



Shire of Kellerberrin CEO Raymond Griffiths reflects on the strength of his community

"When we looked at what was needed in response to what had been a homicide and then a suspected suicide, we also needed to take into account the traumatic experiences of individuals within Kellerberrin having to go into lockdown and that period of uncertainty as the critical incident played out.

"We decided that we wanted to create a holistic service that was open to everybody that had been impacted by the critical incident as part of the recovery process."

While Jo enlisted more counselling support from Amity Health and Rural Health WA, Ray and the Shire knew the Recreation Centre should be the venue for the drop-in service. It was out of the CBD, so people could attend in confidence. It had plenty of private meeting rooms and the locals see the Rec Centre as a safe place.

Jo says, "The Shire determined that we would run sessions weekly for a period of four hours on Thursday from 10.00am till 2.00pm, so people who were working could utilise the drop-in support service during their lunch break so that they weren't having to take time off work. We ran the sessions for six weeks, until the numbers reduced."

The collaboration between the Shire and the counselling agencies was crucial in "the postvention".

"The willingness of the Shire to collaborate and their generosity in providing the venue and helping us develop and disseminate promotional material at no cost was significant. I would meet with the Kellerberrin staff on Thursdays where we would have a pre-session meeting when I collected the keys, and then a post-session meeting when I dropped the keys back. We would have a debrief if there was anything that the Shire should promote from a community safety perspective."

Jo believes this approach was a first in Western Australia.

"I'm not sure if this has been done before, it was a significant piece of work, in response to a homicide suspected suicide. Historically, those initiatives have been led by metropolitan based organisations. So this was unique in that it was conceptualised, developed and then rolled out utilising place-based services, and attended by all agencies that were involved in the initial critical incident response and then recovery response. There has been interest in our learnings from other agencies and organisations, it's a bit of a blueprint."

As the recovery is ongoing, Ray Griffiths reflects on how the Kellerberrin community and the Shire is progressing.

"Well, we have some anniversaries coming up, we will know more then. You can't help but be so proud of the way the community has stuck together for both families, not just on one side, the whole community look after both, which, you know, you couldn't be more proud of than that."

"I think at the end of the day, though, when you're in a small community, the Shire is actually part of the community, we see ourselves invested. We've got the resources, we've got the capacity, we're here and we have got a good working relationship with the local police."

"It's not about us. What we do, we do for our community, it's not about me as CEO, it's not about our Works Manager who also did a lot. Basically we only did what we did to make sure that our community was safe. That's what we're here to do, to serve our community."

"We just wanted to make sure we stood up when needed."

Both Raymond Griffiths and Jo Drayton want Councils to be aware of just how much support is available in a crisis.

Says Ray, "I was somewhat aware but not of the extent of the support. I was amazed at the amount of contact that was made by agencies and organisations immediately and instantly. It's not just the police, I was astonished by the amount of information that was being provided to us for assistance and help and guidance and everything throughout the whole process."

Jo Drayton agrees.

"For Local Government authorities, when you are dealing with a critical incident, you don't have to do this alone. There are organisations and professionals within the region, that can support you and guide your responses."

"Developing those relationships prior I think is beneficial. So if there is a critical incident, a response around social and emotional wellbeing can be developed very quickly. There are services that have an area of expertise that you can tap into to develop that collaborative response."

"My key message is you don't have to do this alone."

"I think that's an absolute strength of our regional and remote communities, in times of crisis, or after a critical incident, people will go above and beyond to support individuals and families within their communities."

"It is such a strength and we know that people coming together to support one another is one of the greatest protective factors."

"When you overlay that with place-based services and organisations you can really create a robust safety net, which can then holistically help communities to heal and recover."



“

We decided that we wanted to create a holistic service that was open to everybody that had been impacted... as part of the recovery process.

”

Jo Drayton
Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Holyoake

HOLYOAKE
Whenever you're ready.

WALGA State Council resolutions, May 2024

On Wednesday, 1 May 2024 the City of Wanneroo hosted WALGA's second State Council Meeting for the year.

WALGA's State Council is the decision-making representative body of all 139 Member Local Governments and is responsible for sector-wide policy making and strategic planning.

The meeting welcomed Chair of the 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review, Hon Alannah MacTiernan to present how the Review Committee will examine the adequacy of Australia's regional telecommunications.

Chaired by WALGA President Karen Chappel AM JP, the Council consists of 24 State Councillors - 12 from Country constituencies and 12 from Metropolitan constituencies.

The day's Strategic Forum also provides an opportunity for State Council to discuss and share information between State Councillors and the WALGA Zones relating to regional, strategic Local Government issues.

State Council received presentations from the Mayors of the Cities of Stirling, Wanneroo and Joondalup. This was followed by a brief question and answer session.

The following Advocacy Positions and Submissions were endorsed by State Council:

- Waste Levy Advocacy Position
- Submission on the Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability (endorsed in principle, subject to amendments endorsed by Flying Minute)
- Submissions to Regional Telecommunications Reviews and Inquiries
- Submission on Draft Local Planning Scheme Regulations 2015 (Short-Term Rental Accommodation)

For full resolutions and further information, visit the WALGA website.

WALGA President Cr Karen Chappel AM JP, CEO Nick Sloan and Deputy President Cr Paul Kelly





An example of excellent erosion and sediment control at the Development WA Ocean Reef Marina construction. The hydromulch (green in the photo) greatly reduces sand drift. NB: Photograph was taken over a sediment fence. Damaged silt curtain possibly causing sediment pollution near the site has been repaired.

The Red Sea

by **Sarah Coles**, Environment Policy Officer, WALGA

Back in January, I went for my morning ocean swim and something was off; there was something weird in the water, a sort of a browny-red substance. I talked myself into thinking it was a new type of seaweed but cut my swim short because in the dark recesses of my mind I feared it might be sewage. Later that day I felt itchy.

It turns out that for several months this year, my local beach has been experiencing a bloom of the dreaded *Trichodesmium erythraeum*, or red algae. Last week WA Health advised visitors to Mullaloo Beach to avoid the discoloured water. The cause of the algae is suspected to be a faulty piece of erosion and sediment control equipment 3km north at the Ocean Reef Marina development.

In my role as Environmental Policy Officer at WALGA, I sit on the Sediment Task Force, which is funded by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) and supported by Perth NRM (Natural Resource Management). The Sediment Task Force takes a collaborative approach to the development of solutions to prevent sediment run-off, particularly from building sites.

The Sediment Task Force advocates for best practice erosion and sediment control, for example, a silt curtain surrounding a marina during construction to stop sediment from entering the water during the dredging and earthworks phase. Development WA did install a silt curtain at the Ocean Reef Marina development, but it is believed to have been damaged, allowing the release of sediment into the ocean.

When builders' sand goes down a drain it isn't magically teleported to the next new housing development, it ends up in streams, rivers, lakes and the once blue (now red) ocean. Once sediment enters a waterway it unleashes a terrible impact on the ecosystem, throwing the whole system out of balance. Sediment carries nutrients like phosphorus, which may cause algae blooms like the one I swam through in January.

Sediment is not just bad for the environment, it's bad for the Local Government purse. When developers let sediment leave the site it is the Local Governments that foot the bill. Local Governments pay to unblock drains, sweep streets, and repair Water Sensitive Urban Design elements that have been choked with sediment.

Bronwyn Scallan, coordinator of the Sediment Task Force, will tell you that Local Governments pay an eye-watering amount of money to deal with sediment pollution. In her 2021 report, "The economic cost of erosion and sediment loss from construction sites," Scallan writes, "dredging costs of up to \$5,000 per tonne of sediment have been reported."



Sediment in the suburbs: This site could be improved by a sediment fence to capture sediment and prevent it from leaving the house block and simple additions such as tarpaulins to cover the sand piles, and a sediment sock around the drain to prevent sand from entering. Behaviour changes such as builders sweeping sand from the road at the end of the day would help too.

Local Government plays a massive role in ensuring land development prevents sediment run-off. In late April, WALGA launched the Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines for Local Governments, a 30-page document that explains what sediment is, and how Local Governments can help foster best practice and compliance.

The guidelines were launched at the Local Government Sediment Forum, hosted by the Sediment Task Force, DBCA, New Waterways and Stormwater WA. Bronwyn Scallan gave a talk about the scope and scale of the problem, the City of Kwinana presented findings from their sediment snapshot (trials aimed at understanding and preventing sediment pollution), and Shelley Shepard, from New Waterways, spoke about the available tools to improve sediment management. A representative from Queensland group Water By Design spoke about the importance of compliance, and representatives from the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River and City of Wanneroo provided case studies of successful sediment control.



There was something weird in the water, a sort of a brown-red substance..."



Sarah Coles
Environment Policy Officer, WALGA

Matt Stovold, from ARUP, provided a developer's perspective and Leon Rowlands, from Switchback Consulting, explained the key elements of a successful erosion and sediment control program.

I left the Local Government Sediment Forum feeling optimistic. As I drove home along the coast road the City of Wanneroo's presentation played over in my mind. In 2023, the City of Wanneroo appointed a Sand Drift Compliance Officer (SDCO) to encourage best practice erosion and sediment control. The SDCO is paired with a Land Development Engineer to oversee development sites dust management plans at the outset of builds and conducts site visits throughout.

It's early days, but it's expected that the cost of employing the Sand Drift Compliance Officer will be far less than the cost of clearing up sediment pollution and could show a path forward for other Local Governments.

Time to dust off the swimming goggles...

Left: Sand from the Mitchell Freeway extension leaving the site and blowing across the bike path.



A Kimberley flood response dozer Credit: Main Roads

A frontline look at Emergency Management

The 2023 Emergency Management Survey results are out, but what does that mean for Councils on the frontline?

Unsurprisingly the response to the 2023 WALGA Emergency Management Survey (EM Survey) was very strong. As natural and man-made disasters have been sweeping the state over the past few years, 102 Councils (75%) aired their thoughts on critical Emergency Management issues and impacts like bushfires, flooding, cyclone, and coastal erosion.

While it was apparent almost all Local Governments strive to be compliant in having approved mechanisms in place like Local Emergency Management Agreements (85%) and Local Recovery Plans (79%) there were consistent significant concerns that many communities were not prepared for a major emergency (51%). Subsequently, the capacity of Local Governments to support their communities to recover after a significant emergency was seriously impacted.

Western Councillor spoke to three people involved at the frontline of Emergency Management at three different Councils and canvassed their thoughts on the findings of the WALGA EM Survey, in particular on community resilience and preparedness, State and Commonwealth funding and life after emergencies.

The President of the Shire of Capel, Doug Kitchen, acknowledged the survey results reflected a growing responsibility being placed onto Councils.

“Yeah, well, certainly we’ve seen some growing trends in major disasters around the nation recently, and certainly seen that there’s been an increased burden on Local Governments to continue that recovery effort long into the future, and in some cases into many years. That leads to a protracted resource drain on the Local Government.”

Cr Kitchen felt strongly that Local Governments are best placed to prepare for and manage emergencies locally,

“Local Government is at the grassroots level, everyone knows we just have that better connection to community and a better understanding of the natural environment in our area, which means that response and recovery can have more of a tailored and local approach.

“What we do see when there is a disaster in the community, most of those who help you through come from within a 500 metre radius of your home. That means that each affected community benefits through people having local knowledge and a pride of place. It also builds community spirit as we go through recovery efforts.”

97% of respondents with a Community Emergency Safety Manager (CESM) said their CESM was extremely or very valuable in addressing emergency management. The Shire of Capel doesn't have a CESM, Cr Kitchen would like one.

"Yeah, absolutely (we would like a CESM). What we have seen through this survey result and what we know through comments on the ground, is the impact that CESMs have on the ground in aiding capacity. It's not just fire brigade preparedness, response and then recovery efforts, a CESM will mean 95% Councils see better management of their Bush Fire Brigades. CESMs ensure that we can be prepared, respond and recover. It's making sure that our volunteers and those who are giving their time to defend their community are adequately trained, we need to see more CESMs in our region."

Mike Walmsley is a long-term resident of Waroona, a bushfire volunteer and the Shire President. His response to the EM Survey was personal and considered.

"While I wasn't overly surprised by the survey conducted into LG emergency management, I have some experience in this space as both being involved in recovery and being impacted by the 2016 Waroona Fires."

On community resilience, Cr Walmsley was in no doubt.

"Recovery is vitally important and needs to occur as soon as practically possible. It can be as simple as someone needing to have a chat, to enormous amounts of counselling and support for an amount of significant time. It is as individual as people are. For farming communities, resilience is part of our DNA because of what we do whereas a residential area may be completely different.

"I felt personally post our experience that I truly appreciated the support we had from all sorts of groups and wonderful individuals. I also got to a point I wanted to just to absorb what happened and rebuilding fences and cleaning up burnt trees can be quite cathartic.

“

When there is a disaster in the community, most of those who help you through come from within a 500 metre radius of your home.”

”

**Doug Kitchen
President, Shire of Capel**

"There is a plethora of feelings and emotions that surround an event like that. We were very fortunate that we didn't lose our house but we were always staying and defending and certainly felt a personal sense of resilience."

His community is also worried about disaster preparedness and recovery.

"Preparedness before an event can also be challenging, to educate property owners on what's expected and then also how to prepare for catastrophic conditions when not much can be done to protect a property. I have also taken part in community information sessions around disaster management that have been poorly attended.

"From a Local Government position, it is a daunting situation to be in when your community is under threat. It is an area that Local Government is increasingly confronted with but perhaps not resourced enough to cope with. Dealing with natural disasters and the aftermath is an area State Government is best placed

Shire of Capel President and volunteer Doug Kitchen acknowledged that the survey results reflected the growing responsibility placed on Local Governments





Flooding generated by Ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie in December 2022 and January 2023 caused significant damage to the Fitzroy River Bridge. *Credit: Main Roads*

to manage with the agencies at their disposal, such as the Department of Communities, which has over 6,000 employees. I have witnessed their engagement during the recent Nanga fires and felt they were offering tangible and solid support to both the impacted residents and our staff in strategies going forward after the event. Inevitably, many of the questions around recovery come back to the LG.

"With regard to funding and the LGGs, the past few years have proven challenging in supply and delivery of projects with cost escalations and contractor availability. It is hard to argue that extra funding in this area would not be helpful in clearing some of the demand for equipment and infrastructure and there was certainly a collective groan

of disappointment in this year's budget that failed to address this."

As the CEO of the Shire of Derby West Kimberley, Amanda Dexter has seen her fair share of flooding disasters in the last 20 years. The EM survey results ring true for her beleaguered communities.

"Most definitely, I think the issue of resilience and us being funded to be able to be resilient going forward is our main issue. Essentially, we are isolated, don't have resources, often have low socioeconomic conditions, and you know, none of that adds up to resilience in a community that can usually look after itself at a time of need.

"I think if you want to talk about the quality of life, the liveability, disasters and disaster management falls into that. We are losing a significant portion of our community that have the opportunity to leave or not even move here in the first place, and that's a massive issue for us at the moment."



Recovery is vitally important and needs to occur as soon as practically possible.



Mike Walmsley
President, Shire of Waroona

Ms Dexter echoes the survey findings from the 102 Councils that “betterment funding” for essential public assets is crucial, and that satisfaction with the DRFA-WA funding process is fairly low.

“In 2022 the Shire became the island of Derby, West Kimberley. We had failures on Highway One to the west of us, between Broome and Derby, and we had failures to the east of us with the bridge collapse. And unfortunately, this wonderful bridge has been rebuilt, and it’s now weight rated and can’t take more than 50 tons.

“So, we haven’t really progressed on any level. We’ve had some build back, but it hasn’t been necessarily build back better, and it hasn’t been about trying to future proof us going forward. The community is very concerned, and many people don’t want to be in those remote, isolated environments.

“At the minute, we are \$30 million deep into emergency funding, and we’ve had \$3 million from the State Government. We’ve had to take out loans to try and cover our costs. We’re absolutely grappling with cash flow, our claims are outstanding from September last year. We’ve been escalating that to ministers, but it is most definitely very complex. Whilst there’s some support out there, it is made so complicated and so hard. We’ve got four staff dedicated to it and it’s just constant lobby and slog.”

As CEO, Amanda Dexter and the Council have had some hard choices to make.

“During Cyclone Ellie (2022) we had to decide on either food, or power generators and diesel generators and fuel coming in. For weeks we couldn’t provide food to the supermarkets because we had to have power generation and fuel coming by barge.

“It’s an absolute nightmare of a game to be in. But at the end of the day, we definitely know that resilience and proactivity will provide a better outcome for the community.”

The 2023 WALGA Emergency Management Survey identified key issues raised by Local Governments including: community preparedness and resilience; capacity to respond to and manage recovery; the importance of infrastructure betterment funding, management of Bush Fire Brigades; inadequate Local Government Grants Scheme (LGGs) funding; and the need to reform and improve grant funding.



Scan the QR code to find out more about the results of the 2023 WALGA Emergency Management Survey



Right: Willare grader undertaking recovery efforts. Credit: Main Roads

Local Lens

The following pictures celebrate the achievements of Local Government in Western Australia. Local Governments are encouraged to submit notable events, initiatives and achievements to be featured in *Western Councillor* by contacting communications@walga.asn.au

City of Albany

Albany's Mounts precinct is now connected to the town centre via a shared path for active transport users. Funded by the Department of Transport's Western Australian Bicycle Network grants program, the Marine Drive Mounts Access Pathway enables walking, wheeling, and riding from Brunswick Street to Apex Drive through Marine Drive and Forts Road. This path will improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, connecting visitors from the Port or CBD to the National Anzac Centre. The project aligns with the City's vision for a more accessible and interconnected community and is already being used by locals and visitors to Albany.

Provided by Laura Condon, Communications Coordinator – City of Albany



Shire of Ashburton

From 27 May to 3 June, the Shire of Ashburton celebrated Reconciliation Week, a time for nationwide reflection and building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Shire's Communities teams were hard at work creating a jam-packed program to suit the theme "Now More Than Ever" across the four towns. From arts to cooking, exercise and short films, there was truly something for everyone to participate in and the week saw a record number in attendance.

Pictured: Ashburton Art Award recipient Brendon Cook and Councillor Linton Rumble JP

Provided by Amelia Johnston, Manager Media and Communications – Shire of Ashburton

Town of Bassendean

The Town of Bassendean has successfully secured \$570,000 of funding from the State Government's Club Night Lights Program for an extensive \$1.6m upgrade to sports lighting at the Jubilee Reserve playing fields. The much-anticipated upgrade will see the replacement of outdated halogen and metal halide globes with LED fittings. This transition will significantly reduce energy consumption and mitigate lighting spill into surrounding areas – minimising environmental impact, and enhancing the nighttime experience for nearby residents. The upgraded lighting infrastructure will maximise the utilisation of Jubilee Reserve, particularly by local sporting clubs, allowing for extended playing hours and enhanced training opportunities.

Pictured (L-R): Bassendean Caledonians Football Club committee member Diana James, Mayor Cr Kath Hamilton, President of Bassendean Junior Football Club Anthony Jerkovich, Hon Dave Kelly MLA, President of Bassendean Caledonians Football Club Rebecca Bellette
Provided by Elizabeth Martin, Communications Officer and Natasha Dowson, Executive Assistant to the CEO – Town of Bassendean



City of Bayswater

The City of Bayswater has launched its commercial mosquito control service to help neighbouring councils tackle mosquito breeding. The first of its kind in WA, the service uses industry-leading drone technology to target areas that are difficult to access and treat by foot or vehicle. The City of Perth has been using the service to apply mosquito larvicide treatments at Heirisson Island and Pelican Point, while the Town of Bassendean has used the service to limit mosquito breeding in the Ashfield Flats wetland.

Pictured: City of Bayswater Mayor Filomena Piffaretti, City of Perth Lord Mayor Basil Zempilas and Town of Bassendean Mayor Kath Hamilton

Provided by the City of Bayswater Communications and Marketing team



City of Belmont

The City of Belmont has unveiled a new mural at the Love Street shopping precinct, designed and painted by local artist Jinan Dodd and young people. The Project was delivered by the City of Belmont in partnership with Propel Youth Arts WA and the Y WA. Through a series of workshops Jinan introduced young people to various mural techniques and then mentored them onsite.

Pictured: City of Belmont Mayor Robert Rossi and local artist Jinan Dodd standing in front of the new Love Street Shopping Precinct mural
Provided by Laura Chaplyn, Coordinator Media and Communications – City of Belmont

City of Busselton

In May the City of Busselton, in partnership with local vets, launched a Yellow Dog campaign to help the community understand that some dogs need space. The Yellow Dog campaign started in Europe and aims to improve community safety and dog wellbeing by clearly and easily identifying dogs who prefer to be left alone. This may include dogs that are nervous, old and grumpy, in training, unwell or recovering from an injury. Members of the public are asked to not approach dogs wearing a yellow bandana, ribbon or vest themselves or with their dog. For more information visit the City's website.

Pictured: City of Busselton Rangers Sorcha Gillen and Marilyn Harrison

Provided by Tonia Kilian, Public Relations Officer – City of Busselton



Town of Cambridge

The Town of Cambridge partnered with Beam Mobility in April 2024 to provide up to 120 e-scooters along its stunning coastline, including key destinations such as City Beach, Floreat Beach, and Peasholm Dog Beach. With the 12-month trial commencement, users are also able to use a purple e-scooter to travel along the coast into the City of Stirling, providing accessibility between the areas and key local attractions.

Pictured: Residents and visitors are invited to embrace this new mode of transport and explore Cambridge's coast in a fun, efficient, and environmentally friendly way

Provided by Matt Lau, Senior Media & Communications Officer with photo by Rory Cherry, Marketing & Communications Officer – Town of Cambridge



City of Canning

Back for its second year, the City of Canning's cultural extravaganza, Global Streets, was held on Saturday 20 April. Celebrating Canning's rich cultural diversity, Queens Park Reserve was transformed into a vibrant cultural festival. Residents were invited to come along to try new food from cuisines around the world, experience new customs and activities from different cultures, and enjoy a diverse range of live stage performances. The City of Canning is one of the most diverse Local Government areas in WA, with 50.9% of the population born overseas, and Global Streets creates a safe and inclusive space to celebrate the City's diversity.

Pictured: Lisa Watson, Community Development - Programming (Hillview)
Provided by Bronwyn Keys, Marketing and Communications Advisor – City of Canning



Shire of Carnarvon

The Shire of Carnarvon is thrilled to announce the completion of the first stage of the Egan Street Revitalisation, part of the "The Future is Me" program funded by the Department of Justice. The Deadly Girls Group, the Shire's youth after-school program with Ngala Midwest & Gascoyne, collaborated with Meraki Boho to create this stunning mural. This masterpiece is just the beginning of an exciting transformation along Egan Street. This vibrant artwork is part of the "Beautiful Streets: 6701" initiative, a key element of the Shire's Strategic Community Plan, showcasing the collaboration of youth and community in transforming Egan Street.

Pictured: Tayla Beynon from Meraki Boho with Ngala and the Deadly Girls Group. Provided by Ashleigh Barr, Communications & Engagement Officer – Shire of Carnarvon



Shire of Derby/West Kimberley

Tourism is back and thriving in the Shire of Derby/West Kimberley with the recent launch of a new tourism website (australiasboabcountry.com.au) and reopening of the Derby Community Hub (previously Visitor Centre). The website serves as an essential informational tool for visitors in the West Kimberley area, featuring tips and tricks for the infamous Gibb River Road, local information and provides information about local tour operators and services. For those who prefer face-to-face interactions, the Community Hub offers a welcoming space where visitors can engage with the dedicated customer service team.

Provided by Maria O'Connell, Media Officer
– Shire of Derby / West Kimberley

Shire of Gingin

It is with immense pride that the Shire of Gingin congratulates staff member Bob Kelly, who received the Dr Richard Lugg Award for Sustained Excellence in the Advancement of Public Health at the 17th International Federation of Environmental Health World Congress held in Perth on 24 May. Mr Kelly was presented with the award in front of 650 delegates from over 22 countries at the congress, making him one of four recipients to have received the honour since its inception in 2009. "Getting this award is a very big deal and we are extremely proud of Bob," said Shire CEO, Aaron Cook.

Pictured: Nominating officer Mrs Tanya Anderson with worthy winner Mr Bob Kelly at the Gingin Shire Office
Provided by Meredith Taylor and Matilda Agnew, Communications and Marketing – Shire of Gingin



City of Gosnells

Work has begun on a Youth Entertainment Space at Sutherlands Park in Huntingdale. With funding of \$4.5 million from the City of Gosnells and \$2 million from the State Government, the project will include a split-level skating plaza and shallow skate bowl, sealed pump track, urban play area incorporating a social hangout zone with social swings and seating, a rebound wall and multi-purpose area for games. The entire YES plaza will be covered by a shelter and feature LED lighting and a projector screen. Construction is expected to be completed by mid-2025.

Pictured: Councillor Kylie Dalton, Cr Saiful Islam, Cr Aaron Adams, former Deputy Mayor Adam Hort, Cr David Goode, Cr Serena Williamson, Member for Southern River Terry Healy and Cr Diane Lloyd at the site of the future Youth Entertainment Space
Provided by Carmen Carter, Communications Officer – City of Gosnells



City of Joondalup

Craigie resident Katie Gordon (pictured here with Joondalup Mayor Albert Jacob) claimed the top prize of \$4,000 in the City of Joondalup's 2024 Community Art Exhibition for producing the Most Outstanding Artwork, Ghost(s) – an oil painting on incised plywood. The annual exhibition, held at Lakeside Joondalup Shopping City in May/June, featured 205 artworks – a record number of entries, which were all produced by City of Joondalup residents or members of local affiliated visual arts associations.

Pictured: Craigie resident Katie Gordon pictured with Joondalup Mayor Albert Jacob

Provided by Stuart McLea, Media and Communications Officer – City of Joondalup

City of Karratha

The Red Earth Arts Festival returned in May for its 14th year, presented by the City of Karratha with Principal Partner Rio Tinto, Event Partner Woodside Energy and its joint venture partners, and Program Partner Pilbara Ports, with additional funding by the DLGSC RACIP Arts Activities in Regional Communities Grant and the Fortescue Community Grant. REAF transforms ordinary spaces into captivating canvases, infusing them with the vibrancy of art in all its forms. More than 4,000 people attended over 70 free and ticketed performances, workshops, and activations across ten locations.

Provided by Samara Martin, Communications Support Officer – City of Karratha



City of Mandurah

In May, the City of Mandurah was recognised for the second time as a Platinum Waterwise Council for its leadership and efforts in efficient and sustainable water use throughout local places and spaces. The City was awarded 2024 Platinum Waterwise Council of the Year at the Water Corporation's Waterwise Recognition Event, also acknowledging the City's commitment to community education and changing behaviours. A series of programs and initiatives to protect the local environment are being delivered as part of the City's 10-year Environment Strategy. The City recently upgraded a local park to create more sustainable water use, plus hosted a series of Love Our Lakes workshops to educate the community to help improve water quality for the City's 20 urban lakes.

Pictured: Water Corporation Chair Andrea Sutton, City of Mandurah Senior Water Resources Officer Dale Robinson, Department of Water and Environmental Regulations Director General Alistair Jones and City of Mandurah CEO Casey Mihovilovich. Image courtesy of Water Corporation. Provided by Holly Sutton, Media and Public Relations Consultant, Strategic Communications – City of Mandurah



Shire of Murray

In light of Volunteer Week, the Shire of Murray hosted a VIP Volunteer Celebration event, recognising the contributions of longstanding volunteers within community organisations. The Shire of Murray awarded a Certificate of Appreciation to all volunteers who had reached 5, 10 or 20-year milestones or were nominated for their outstanding contributions. This was a beautiful night celebrating the community and some of the local legends for their truly outstanding volunteering efforts over the years.

Picture: The amazing smiling faces of Marie Paterson, Cheryl Brown, and Kay Milham, all of whom are volunteers from the Murray District Hospital
 Provided by Kaylin Heyns, Digital Communications and Marketing Officer – Shire of Murray



City of Perth

It was a tree-mendous May! During City of Perth's Tree Month, 1,600 plants and 280 trees were planted across multiple community planting days in every corner of the City.

Provided by the City of Perth Comms and Media Team

Shire of Northam

The WA Day long weekend in Northam was buzzing with excitement as the Round 9 WAFL game took place at Henry St Oval on Sunday 2 June. The local community turned out in droves to support the thrilling match where West Coast narrowly triumphed over Perth with a final score of 10.11 (71) to 10.9 (69). The event saw incredible backing from local businesses and the community, drawing a crowd of over 4,000 people. Dubbed the Northam Cup, there is a strong hope for this event to become an annual tradition.

Picture: West Coast Eagles and Perth Football Club competing in the Northam Cup

Provided by Candice Parkes, Acting Manager of Activations and Communications – Shire of Northam



City of Rockingham

The AFL has awarded its highest accolade for a community football facility to the City of Rockingham's Baldivis Sport Complex. The new \$20.1m Baldivis Sports Complex Main Pavilion has been awarded Western Australia's Project of the Year and is a joint winner of National Project of the Year as part of the AFL's Ken Gannon Community Football Facilities Awards 2023.

Picture (L-R): Steven Rose, Manager Facilities and Government Relations WA Football Commission, Deb Hamblin, City of Rockingham Mayor, Jenelle Williamson, AFL National Schools/Innovative Venue Growth Lead Michael Parker, City of Rockingham CEO, Brian Emery, Baldivis Brumbies Football Club President

Provided by Michael Callaghan, Media and Communications Coordinator – City of Rockingham



City of South Perth

In May the City of South Perth hosted a successful Charity Drop-Off Day. Residents and community members came together to donate a variety of household items, including furniture, clothing, and electronics to local charities. The drive-in-and-drop-off format allowed for a smooth and efficient donation process, with volunteers assisting in unloading items directly from vehicles. The event saw a tremendous turnout of around 500 cars throughout the day, with attendees eager to contribute to Starting Over Support (SOS), Good Sammys, Vinnies, and Paraquid Industries.

Pictured: Georgia Benson, Waste Supervisor – City of South Perth
Provided by Maria Noakes, Communications Officer – City of South Perth



City of Subiaco

Tens of thousands of people turned out for Subi Blooms this year to celebrate Mother's Day, with 100 per cent of audiences rating their blooms experience as a positive one. Western Australia's premier floral artists created 19 stunning installations this year, forming a captivating floral trail that weaved through Subi's bustling streets, laneways and shopfronts. After the festivities, the installations were packed into bouquets and gifted to King Edward Memorial Hospital.

Provided by Sarah Pope, Senior Communications Officer – City of Subiaco

City of Stirling

The City's Senior Community Citizen of the Year for 2024, Maureen Banham, was recognised for founding and coordinating the Karrinyup Mall Walkers – a walking group for seniors which provides exercise and social interaction in a safe environment regardless of the weather.

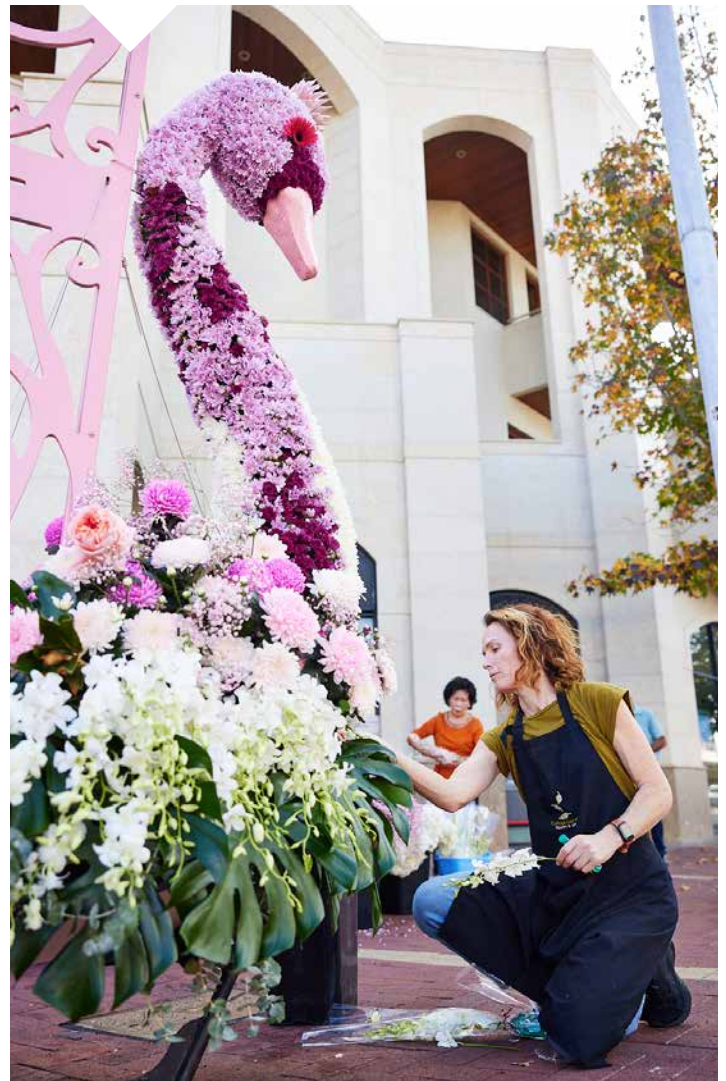
Pictured: Senior Community Citizen of the Year, Maureen Banham
Provided by Scott Stirling, Communications & Content Officer – City of Stirling



Shire of Victoria Plains

On Thursday 23 May the Shire of Victoria Plains held a combined morning tea for residents. The occasion recognised local volunteers for National Volunteer Week (over 200 volunteers) – without them and the amazing work they do, the Shire would not have clubs, committees and associations operating for emergency services, progress associations, sporting clubs and more. The Shire also held an Australia's Biggest Morning Tea which raised over \$1,200. A massive thank you to everyone who helped organise the event and to those who attended.

Provided by Katrina Humphries, Community Development Officer – Shire of Victoria Plains



City of Vincent

The City of Vincent successfully wrapped up its Shortcut Lane: Pop-Up Event Series in North Perth, which ran throughout May. Hundreds of people from across Perth came to community events held in a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly temporary space between the View Street and Rosemount Hotel carparks. There was something for everyone with Food Truck Fridays, outdoor cinema nights, community market and second-hand clothing market and clothes swap forming part of the program. The series was supported by RAC.

Picture: Stilt performers at a Food Truck Fridays event as part of the Shortcut Lane: Pop-Up Event Series
Provided by Kristie Lim, Media and Communications Officer – City of Vincent



City of Wanneroo

Wanneroo Aquamotion has been named Platinum Waterwise Aquatic Centre of the Year at the Water Corporation's 2024 Waterwise Recognition Awards. The Water Corporation's annual awards recognise Western Australian Local Governments and aquatic centres for embedding waterwise principles into their operations. Aquamotion was recognised for demonstrating innovation and achievements over and above best practise water management. These innovations include a new ultraviolet disinfection system that provides precise metering, proactive leak detection through a web-based dashboard, a new dry changing room for large groups and smart water fountains featuring sensors.

Picture: Mayor Linda Aitken with the Wanneroo Aquamotion team
Provided by Toyah Shakespeare, Acting Media and Digital Communications Advisor – City of Wanneroo

Shire of Woodanilling

Exciting times at the Shire of Woodanilling! The team gathered for a photo at CEO Paul Hanlon's first Council Meeting in May. Here's to a future of collaboration and progress for the local community.

Picture L-R: Phil Burgess (EMI), Cr Rod Marshall, Cr Ian Garstone, CEO Paul Hanlon, Cr Kahlia Stephens, Deputy Shire President Russel Thomson, Shire President Dale Douglas, and Cr Bev Smith
Provided by the Shire of Woodanilling

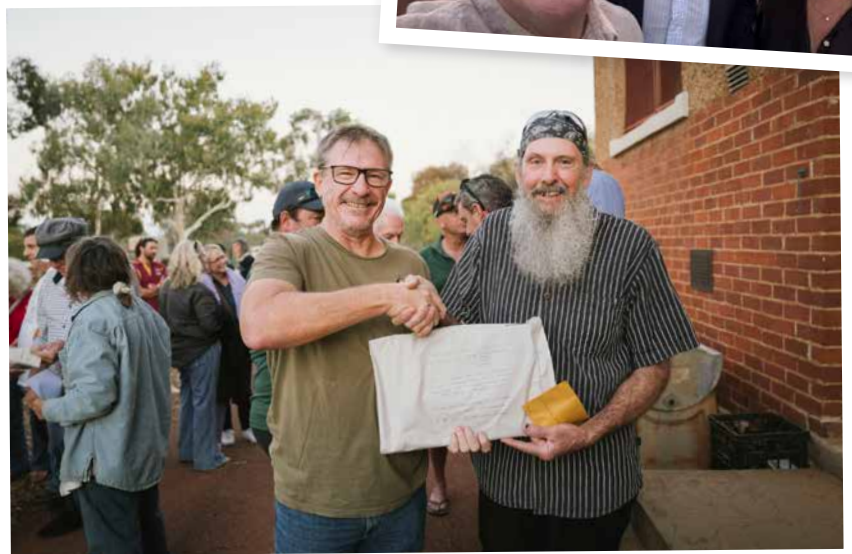




Above: The original time capsule being lowered by Grass Valley residents in 1979.

Above right (L-R): Northam Shire President Chris Antonio; candidate for the State seat of Central Wheatbelt, Lachlan Hunter; and Robyn Sermon, CEO Royal Agricultural Society and Chair of the Wheatbelt Development Commission and Regional Development Commission

Right: Shane Delaney with GVPA President Randle Beavis



Same place, different time

Community spirit shines as the town of Grass Valley unearths an emotional time capsule

The year is 1979. "Up There Cazaly" by the Two-Man Band was topping the Australian singles charts, Western Australia was celebrating 150 years as a State, and the town of Grass Valley was coming together to bury a time capsule that would capture this moment in time.

On Saturday 25 May, past and present residents of Grass Valley in the Shire of Northam gathered to celebrate the much-anticipated Back to Grass Valley Day and open a time capsule that had been buried by residents in 1979.

Organised by the Grass Valley Progress Association (GVPA), the highlight of the event was the uncovering of letters, remnants, and memories from the past preserved in the time capsule.

The event drew a large crowd of 150 eager spectators, all anxious to catch a glimpse of their community's history. The capsule, originally intended to be opened in 2029 to celebrate Western Australia's bicentennial, was opened early at the request of residents.

"The time capsule was buried in 1979, coinciding with WA's 150-year celebrations," said current GVPA President Randle Beavis.

"It was meant to be opened in 2029 to celebrate WA's 200th year as a state."

"A number of older and former residents asked the GVPA to bring it forward as many would not be alive by 2029. It was a tough decision however the right one to bring it forward five years."

The capsule, made of 10mm thick PVC, was carefully cut open using a thin blade angle grinder.

Inside, six moisture-absorbent stockings had ensured the preservation of heartfelt letters, photographs, and various mementoes, evoking powerful emotions among the 2024 attendees.

Two smaller capsules containing bottles of beer, scotch, and red wine were also unearthed. Unfortunately, the bottle of scotch was cracked during the excavation dig.

The day was filled with laughter and tears as the community reflected on their shared history, with many generational ties.

The sight of these relics, preserved for 45 years, brought back a flood of memories for many, including Shire of Northam President Chris Antonio, whose father had held the title of Shire President at the time.

"Rae Knight, a local, even had the foresight back in 1979 to bury an item for the Shire," said Antonio.

Right: The Shire President's report and information booklet from the time capsule was presented to Council in June

"This was emotional for me, as the Shire President in 1979 was my father, David Antonio, who had recently been elected Shire President, and provided a report in the booklet that was set aside by Rae."

The unearthed booklet was presented to the Shire of Northam at their June 2024 Ordinary Council Meeting.

Also in the capsule was an envelope from the GVPA President in 1979, Bill Delaney (dec.), addressed to current GVPA President Randle Beavis. This was ceremoniously handed over by Bill's eldest son Shane, marking a touching moment of continuity and connection across generations.

"It was a very touching moment," said Beavis.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime nostalgic day with much laughter and tears."

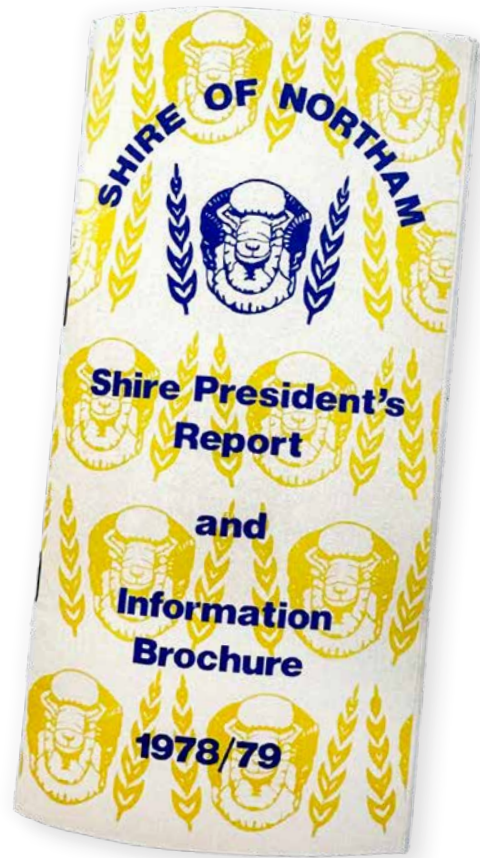
In addition to reminiscing, the community also looked towards the future. A new time capsule was created during the event, scheduled to be opened on the first Saturday of May in 2050.

Residents contributed letters and items that represented the present day, ensuring that future generations would have a tangible connection to their town's history and heritage, just as the 1979 capsule had provided for them.

"There were many poignant moments when families and residents opened the packages for them, as some of the prior residents have since passed away," said Antonio.

"There is nothing more heart-wrenching than reading a letter for the first time, from a family member who has left you.

"I look forward to the contents of any other time capsules that may be opened over the next few years."



It was a once-in-a-lifetime nostalgic day with much laughter and tears.



**Randle Beavis
GVPA President**

The time capsule was opened five years early at the request of residents



Community batteries key to the growth of renewable energy sources

As WA's energy landscape continues to evolve, community batteries could play an increasingly important role in maintaining a stable and reliable supply of energy across the South West Interconnected System (SWIS).

According to Synergy Account Manager Luke Randell, Synergy is exploring a range of renewable energy sources and solutions as the energy system transitions towards net zero in line with WA Government targets.

"WA's main electricity network – the SWIS – supplies electricity from a range of sources, including wind and solar energy, and it's vital to keep the system in balance," said Mr Randell. "Distributed energy resources, including community batteries, are a crucial part of our renewable energy future in WA."

Keeping WA's energy system in balance

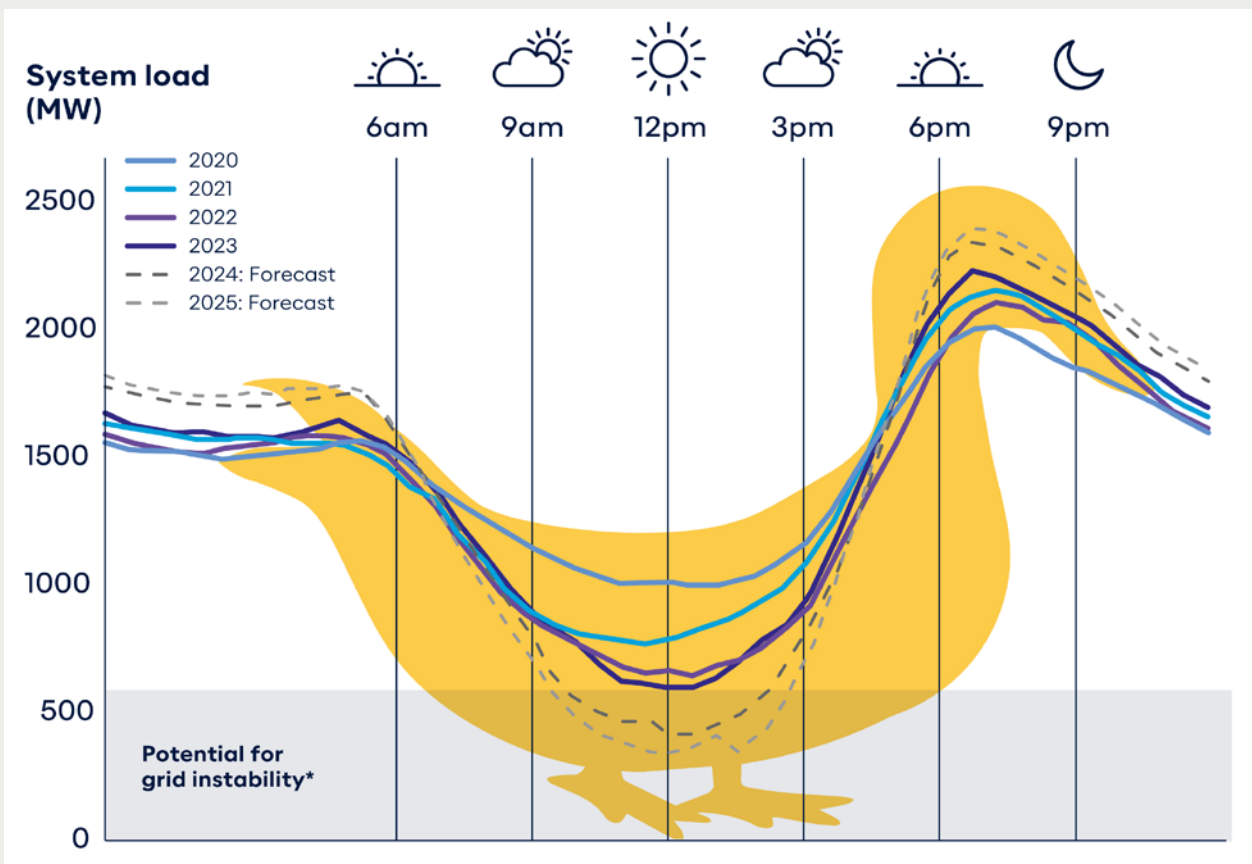
"Here in WA, we have a significant amount of solar generation from the high uptake of rooftop solar panels. During the day, the excess solar energy – that's anything not used by the homes and businesses with rooftop solar installations – feeds back into the grid. This solar generation stops when the sun goes

down – but our collective demand for electricity peaks around the same time, as people arrive home from work and school," said Mr Randell.

Mr Randell explained that the rise and fall in demand for electricity from the grid throughout the day creates a pattern known as "the Duck Curve". This term was coined around 2012 by the California Independent System Operator in the United States, noting the distinct duck-like shape of the graphical representation of demand for electricity in a system. "The Duck Curve" is now widely referenced in the energy industry.

"Across the SWIS, this Duck Curve represents the potential for power system instability. Our grid is adapting to meet extreme changes in demand across different parts of the day. These extreme changes in demand can result in the energy system becoming unstable."

A graphical representation of the "Duck Curve" for the SWIS, created with 2022-2023 data from AEMO



Supporting the SWIS with battery storage

Battery storage works by storing the excess solar energy generated during the day, to be used later at times of higher demand. According to Mr Randell, storing solar energy in a battery is not new, but Synergy has been working with government and energy partners to explore the application of battery power on a community scale.

“A community battery is a shared solution for a local neighbourhood that allows both that neighbourhood and the wider community to access the benefits. So far, feedback and results from our community battery pilots such as our three-part PowerBank trial have been positive from a customer perspective. Participants were generally happy with the impact on their electricity costs, and we received positive feedback around participants becoming more conscious of their electricity use.”

Mr Randell noted that community batteries offer a way to distribute renewable energy benefits across the entire community. They can help balance electricity

supply and smooth out the flow of power on the grid and, in some cases, can even be used as part of a back-up power supply.

“By reducing the high cost of upgrading existing power infrastructure in areas that have high energy demand during peak demand hours, community batteries can also support even more customers to install solar panels.”

“Batteries are key to supporting the growth of renewable energy sources. Our trials are exploring how we can reduce the impacts of the Duck Curve by soaking up that excess solar during the day and allowing that energy to be discharged from the batteries as the sun goes down and the demand for electricity increases.”

As WA's energy landscape evolves, Synergy is supporting customers, including Local Government authorities, to navigate the changes and understand any impacts. To learn more, please contact Luke Randell at luke.randell@synergy.net.au or call 0436 916 941.



Local council regulated electricity tariffs are changing.

The State Government has announced changes to the regulated electricity tariffs, effective from **1 July 2024**. These changes are part of an annual review that considers the cost of generating and transporting electricity, as well as the costs associated with maintaining the safety, security and sustainability of the electricity network.

At Synergy, we do our best to minimise the costs we can control, and we're always working on ways to supply cleaner and more sustainable energy for our customers.

We're here to help you manage these changes.

There are several ways Synergy can help you manage your electricity costs. From providing energy saving tips that could help you improve your energy efficiency to flexible payment options, we're here to support you.

To find out more about the 2024 price changes and the range of support services available to you, visit [synergy.net.au/pricechanges](https://www.synergy.net.au/pricechanges)

Across the State – showcasing Local Governments at their best

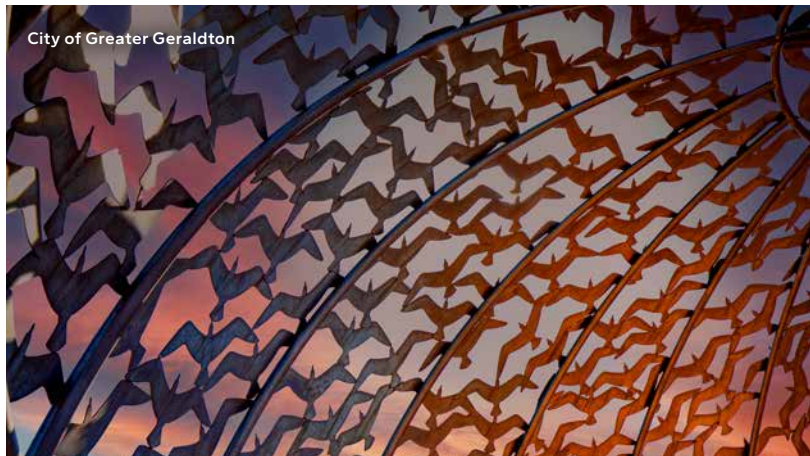
Images by Jeff Henderson, Content Producer, WALGA



City of Bunbury



Shire of Broome



City of Greater Geraldton



Shire of Leonora



Town of Port Hedland



Shire of Cue



City of Bunbury



Town of Port Hedland