

President's Report

March 2025

Introduction

It's been a busy start to 2025, and the pace looks set to continue throughout the year!

2025 is the Year of the Election – with State, Federal and Local Government elections all occurring this year.

For the State Government election, WALGA has focused on advocacy around our "The West at it Best" advocacy campaign. Responses to our campaign from the major parties are outlined further in this report.

I look forward to working with everyone across the sector, as we progress Local Government initiatives and positions.

State and Federal Elections

The 2025 State Election campaign is now well under way, with all parties announcing a range of commitments in recent months.

I am pleased that WALGA's State Election Campaign has been successful in securing commitments for a number of important initiatives aligned with the priorities outlined in WALGA's *The West at its Best* policy platform. To date, these include:

Labor

- Expansion of the regional road safety program to local roads (\$125 million)
- 23 new signalised crossing to replace warden-controlled children's crossings (\$17.7 million). 10 of these align with WALGA's list of priority crossings.
- Funding for six new Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) positions (\$3.5 million)
- Dedicated State Bushfire Mitigation Branch to undertake mitigation works on unallocated crown land, unmanaged reserves. Support LG to manage the risk on road verges and provide support during major incidents
- Commitment to double Perth's tree canopy cover to 30% by 2040, new urban canopy growth program (\$10 million) and 'treebates' to encourage Western Australians to plant native trees
- Regional housing package, including new and refurbished social housing, additional GROH homes and stamp duty relief for first homebuyers (\$145 million)
- Expansion of the PATS rebate by more than 50% and expansion to include dental services and allied health (\$34 million)
- Range of infrastructure projects to improve community sport and recreation facilities across the state (\$186 million), including \$30 million additional funding for infrastructure upgrades to support women's participation in sport

Nationals

- Emergency management initiatives including funding to clear the backlog of facility upgrades under the Local Government Grant Scheme and expansion of the CESM program with 27 additional positions (\$136 million)
- Regional headworks fund (\$1 billion)
- Safer local roads program, applying targeted treatments to 8,200km of local roads (\$276 million)
- Boost to PATS and expansion to allied health and dental services (\$100 million)
- Implement a comprehensive State Planning Policy for renewable energy, mandate community impact assessment and community benefit funds with a baseline contribution of 1.5%
- Increase the Community Sport and Recreation Facilities Fund to \$40 million per annum, and develop 10 year regional sporting plans.

Liberal

- Housing infrastructure investment fund to support enabling infrastructure such as sewerage, roads and water (\$500 million)
- Create a new Regional Housing Infrastructure Program, to support headworks in regional areas and unlock housing (\$100 million)
- Regional health initiatives including increasing PATS fuel and accommodation allowances, more career paramedics in regional WA, and patient transport in the Wheatbelt (\$87 million)

WALGA has also prepared a policy platform for the 2025 Federal Election, and has provided this to the Federal Government and WA Members of Parliament and candidates and is seeking opportunities for further discussions in coming weeks.

Polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB)

WALGA's advocacy on this issue has continued, most recently concerns were expressed by the sector regarding inadequate access to relevant information on the location of PSHB infestations and positive traps in their areas ([*WALGA boss Karen Chappel slams attempts to withhold vital biosecurity information on the invasive borer*](#)). WALGA is continuing to push for Local Governments to be included in, and funded through, the national Response Plan. While we have made some progress, as outlined in the Item for Noting in the State Council Agenda, there is still considerable work to be done to eradicate this pest.

Renewable Energy

Following the Forum hosted by WALGA at the end of last year, WALGA is progressing the development of a Community Benefits and Engagement Guide to assist Local Governments when working with proponents on large scale renewable energy projects. Interested Local Governments will have the chance to provide input into the Guide over the coming months.

WALGA is continuing its advocacy work with ongoing engagement with relevant State Government Ministers and discussions with key government agencies. In January The West Australian published my 'Op-ed' piece [*Locals must have input in renewable plans and the answer is blowing in the Wind*](#), which stressed the need for a framework to assist industry proponents and Local Governments entering renewables discussions.

The Minister for Energy; Environment; Climate Action has responded to my correspondence on this issue, acknowledging Local Governments' concerns and reinforcing the role of Powering WA to engage with the sector to better understand the opportunities and challenges faced by their communities.

Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) Round Three

Applications for Round Three of the [Disaster Ready Fund](#) (DRF) close on 2 April 2025. The DRF significant funding source for Local Government disaster resilience and risk reduction projects, with \$200 million of Commonwealth investment available across all jurisdictions in 2025-26. Round Two funded 17 Local Government projects WA valued at over \$23 million, including fire danger rating signage, community education, evacuation centre improvements and infrastructure projects. Round Three has a greater focus on infrastructure projects with up to \$138 million dedicated to infrastructure projects with a minimum value of \$500,000.

Local Government Legislative Reform

The Local Government Amendment Bill 2024 was Assented to on 6 December 2024.

Some of the items have come into effect immediately are:

- Clarified Roles and Responsibilities of Council, Council Members, Mayors and Presidents and CEOs
- Local Law Reforms
- Committees of Council – Councils to appoint Committee chairs
- Owner and Occupier roll changes

Regulations relating to Superannuation for Elected Members have recently been gazetted. It is worth noting that Superannuation came into effect on 1 February 2025 as discretionary for Local Governments. Local Governments will need to make a decision by Absolute Majority if they wish to pay superannuation to Elected Members.

The regulation to mandate Bands 1 and 2 to pay superannuation to Elected Members will take effect from 19 October 2025.

Therefore, those Band 1 and 2 that have not resolved to pay superannuation, will be required to pay Superannuation to Elected Members from 19 October 2025.

Other items will require regulations and further work, including:

- Development Assessment Panel (DAP) Functions
- Office of the Local Government Inspector
- Local Government Monitors
- Independent Member and Chair of Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee
- Clarified Regional Subsidiaries Provisions
- Unreasonable / Vexatious Complaints
- Changes to Local Government Borrowing Powers

In addition, regulations relating to Tranche 1 amendments are still required:

Amendments yet to commence include:

- Council Plans
- Standardised Meeting Procedures
- Communications Agreement
- Community Engagement Charter and Surveys
- Publication of CEO Performance Review (consultation has commenced)
- New Lease and Contract Registers (consultation has commenced)

In respect to CEO Matters and Online Registers, WALGA circulated an Info Page and Discussion paper, seeking feedback on draft regulations. Responses are requested by 19 March and will inform a State Council Agenda item to go through the April round of Zone meetings.

Reconciliation at WALGA

WALGA has embedded the development and implementation of an Innovate level Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) as a strategic initiative in the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan. This new RAP is intended to complement the broader work already undertaken by the organisation to support the efforts of Local Governments to progress reconciliation at the local level, including the Aboriginal Engagement Forum, training and education opportunities, Employee Relations support and facilitating links to reconciliation organisations.

President Cr Karen Chappel AM JP
WALGA President

President's Contacts

The President's contacts since 6 December 2024 and scheduled before 5 March 2025 are as follows:

State and Commonwealth Government Relations

- State Road Funds to Local Government Advisory Committee Meeting
- Hon John Carey MLA, Minister for Planning; Lands; Housing; Homelessness
- Hon Hannah Beazley MLA, Minister for Local Government; Youth

Zone Meetings

- Avon Midland Country Zone Meeting
- North Metro Zone Meeting
- Pilbara Country Zone Meeting
- Central Metropolitan Zone Meeting
- Kimberely Zone Meeting
- Northern Country Zone Meeting

Local Government Relations

- **State Council Meetings**
 - Information Forum
 - Local Government House Trust
 - Finance and Services Committee
- **ALGA**
 - Board Meeting & Strategic Planning Retreat
- **LGIS**
 - JLT Management Committee
 - Risk and Audit Committee

- City of Vincent - Mayor Alison Xamon & CEO David MacLennan
- Growth Areas Perth and Peel (GAPP) Meeting
- Lord Mayors Distress Relief Fund AGM & Board Meeting

Conferences, Workshops, Public Relations

- WALGA Wrap 2024
- WALGA Urban Forest Conference
- Certificate 3 in Local Government Virtual Graduation
- Seven West Media Leadership Matters Breakfast with Libby Mettam
- Seven West Media Leadership Matters Breakfast with Premier Hon Roger Cook
MLA