

President's Report

September 2026

Member Engagement

Over the past few months, I have prioritised getting out and meeting with Local Governments throughout the State, including through the Gascoyne, Murchison, Pilbara, Goldfields-Esperance, Wheatbelt and South West.

Having the opportunity to meet and discuss the issues and challenges with peers and colleagues across the State firsthand has assisted me with better understanding how the Association is positioned to provide support. When I reflect on the cascading issues we have collectively been responding to in recent months, including fuel security, H5 Bird Flu and proposed changes to the Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding arrangements, I am reminded that our Members are concurrently managing more fundamental challenges – workforce, financial capacity and housing to name a few.

It has also been important for WALGA to be visible as a peak body through attendance at key political presentations and events. I appreciate the support of State Councillors who have joined me at a number of events to hear directly from State and Federal policy makers.

Media Engagement

Since the last report, I have continued to highlight the important work that Local Governments deliver to their communities across media interviews with The West Australian, 6PR, ABC Radio, and TV.

I have made comments to the media, including an interview with ABC Radio, regarding how Local Governments set budgets and how rates are calculated.

I have been focussed on ensuring that my comments highlight the important work that Local Governments undertake to deliver outstanding and tailored services for their local communities, and the costs associated with this level of service.

As the authoritative voice for Western Australian Local Government, WALGA will continue to engage proactively with the media to advocate on behalf of our Members.

Political Engagement

Engagement with key decision makers has continued, with meetings held with a number of Ministers in recent months. Key amongst these include the Premier, Deputy Premier, Minister for Local Government and several Western Australian Members of Federal Parliament.

WALGA also hosted Minister Beazley's Labor Business Roundtable luncheon.

These have been productive conversations and provided an important opportunity to ensure that Local Government is front of mind for our political leaders.

Local Government Awards

WALGA's annual Local Government Awards in June saw more than 40 current and former Elected Members and Local Government Officers recognised with Honours Awards for their outstanding contributions across WA. A number of Local Governments were also acknowledged for their significant work in making WA roads safer through WALGA's RoadWise Recognised Awards and in making Local Governments more accessible through the Most Accessible Communities WA Awards (MACWA).

Behind every great community are Local Government Elected Members and Officers who put in extraordinary efforts to deliver better outcomes, and I extend my congratulations to everyone who was recognised for their efforts.

Disaster Recovery Funding Framework

WALGA is working with ALGA and the Western Australian Government, through its membership of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC), to advocate for the interests of Western Australian Local Governments in relation to the Australian Government's proposed Disaster Recovery Funding Framework reforms. WALGA is also consulting directly with Local Governments to inform a submission to the Australian Government, which will be provided to State Council via Flying Minute ahead of the September State Council meeting.

The proposed reforms have significant implications for Local Governments, particularly in relation to access to recovery funding, cost-sharing arrangements and administrative requirements, and WALGA is advocating to ensure Local Government interests are reflected in both the Commonwealth and State reform processes.

Planning Reform Announcements

In addition to recent proposed R-code changes and train station precinct announcements, on 28 July the Minister for Planning, Hon John Carey MLA, announced a further tranche of planning reforms focused on improving efficiency across the planning system through legislative, regulatory, procedural and guideline changes.

The reforms aim to progress remaining actions from the 2019 Action Plan for Planning Reform, reduce decision-making delays and support the release of serviced lots, including through streamlined regional and local scheme amendment processes and fewer approval steps.

Other changes include clarifying WAPC structure plan powers, introducing a 28-day timeframe for Local Government feedback on technical road drawings, expanding development approval exemptions and CEO delegations for small grouped and multiple dwellings, and reducing statutory determination timeframes.

WALGA was briefed on the changes ahead of the announcement and will be consulting with the sector to inform submissions on the changes.

I was speaking at the UDIA WA Red Tape Summit where the Minister made the announcement. My focus in that speech was to highlight that:

- Local Government is a strategic planning partner that helps create the conditions for housing delivery through local planning strategies, schemes and infrastructure planning.
- Unlocking development-ready land requires coordinated investment and genuine partnerships between State and Local Government.

- Addressing planner and building surveyor workforce shortages is essential to maintaining efficient planning and building systems.
- Long-term housing solutions will only be achieved through collaboration, alignment and shared responsibility across all levels of government and industry.

I hope to see many of you at the upcoming annual Local Government Convention on 16 - 18 September. The program and sessions are based around the theme 'Tomorrow's World' – reflecting the rapidly changing environment we find ourselves in, with sessions tailored to the diversity of challenges we face across the State and how we can prepare and build the capability to respond.

Mark Irwin
WALGA President

President's Contacts

The President's contacts since 1 July 2026 and scheduled before 2 September 2026 are as follows:

State and Commonwealth Government Relations

- Hon Roger Cook MLA; Premier; Minister for Defence Industries; Tourism; Trade and Investment
- Hon Tony Buti MLA, Attorney General, Minister for Commerce; Tertiary and International Education; Multicultural Interests
- Hon Jackie Jarvis MLC, Minister for Agriculture and Food; Fisheries; Forestry; Small Business; Mid West
- Hon John Carey MLA, Minister for Planning and Lands; Housing and Works; Health Infrastructure
- Hon Hannah Beazley MLA; Minister for Local Government; Disability Services; Volunteering; Youth; Gascoyne
- Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC, Minister for the Environment; Community Services; Homelessness
- Ms Kate Chaney MP
- Ms Samantha Rowe MLC, Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier; Treasurer; Minister for Transport; Sport and Recreation
- Ms Caitlin Collins MLA, Member for Hillarys
- Office of Hon Kristy McBain MP
- Mr Tom French MP, Member for Moore
- House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport Parliament of Australia Inquiry into Local Government Funding

Local Government Relations

- **State Council Meetings**
 - Strategic Forum and State Council Meeting, 1 July
 - Information Forum, 5 August
- **ALGA**
 - Board Meeting, 30 July
- **LGIS**
 - Board Meeting, 10 July
 - Risk and Compliance Committee
- City of Fremantle Mayor Ben Lawver & CEO Glen Dougall
- Shire of Esperance, CEO Shane Burge
- Shire of Ravensthorpe, President Rachel Gibson & CEO Nicole O'Neill
- Shire of Carnarvon, CEO Amanda Dexter
- Shire of Upper Gascoyne, President Jim Caunt and CEO John McCleary
- Town of Port Hedland Mayor, Jacinta Behrend & CEO, Dale Stewart
- Shire of Ashburton President Audra Smith & CEO Keith Woodward
- City of Bunbury Mayor, Jaysen de San Miguel
- Shire of Exmouth, President Matthew Nikkula & CEO, Ben Lewis

Conferences, Workshops, Public Relations

- Labor Leaders Forum Lunch with Hon Hannah Beazley MLA
- Planning Industry Association Planning Priorities Breakfast with Hon John Carey MLA
- Reconciliation WA
- WALGA Role of Mayors and Presidents Course
- Bringing Dowerin Downtown Perth Lunch
- UDIA WA Red Tape Summit
- REIWA Rural Conference
- Doing Co

Zone Meetings

- Great Eastern Country Zone
- South Metropolitan Zone