

Western Councillor



ISSUE 132 | JUNE 2025

Resilience and adaptation on our coast

Ensuring a safer and resilient
future for coastal communities

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Conference, Raising
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Lakes without Brakes
highlighting importance of
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Celebrating ten years of
CouncilConnect

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Western Councillor

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Welcome to Issue 132 of *Western Councillor*
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Key takeaways from the January – March Quarter

Expertise

Energy Transition

WALGA continues to support the sector to overcome challenges related to large scale renewable energy projects including how Local Governments can work with proponents regarding community engagement and benefits.

In February, WALGA held a workshop attended by 28 Local Governments focused on the development of a Community Benefits and Engagement Guide. In addition, WALGA has set up a virtual network via a Teams Group to bring together Economic Development practitioners from across the State, enabling the opportunity to ask questions, share challenges and provide feedback on WALGA's economic development work. To join the group please email lharwood@walga.asn.au

Federal Budget 2025-26 Analysis

The 2025-26 Federal Budget presented a clear focus on responsible fiscal management and investment in voter priorities such as addressing the cost of living, improving healthcare, boosting education and access to housing.

Importantly for Local Governments, the Budget retained its commitment to a number of key funding programs for the sector including Financial Assistance Grants, Roads to Recovery and the Black Spot Program. However, it missed the opportunity to invest in other key initiatives identified in WALGA's 2025 Federal Election Priorities, with no new spending provided for the sector. These priorities present a plan to build community resilience through strategic investments and policy reforms in critical areas such as community infrastructure, coastal management, emergency management, regional health, road safety and telecommunications.

WALGA's Quarterly Economic Briefing

Is now available for Members, providing Local Governments with a snapshot of the current economic climate and economic conditions impacting our sector. The March 2025 Economic Briefing, which incorporates WALGA's 2025-26 Federal Budget Analysis, contains unique data and insights tailored for Local Governments in WA. To read the Economic Briefing, visit www.walga.asn.au



From the Minister

It is an absolute honour to have been reappointed as the Minister for Local Government, and have the opportunity to continue to work collaboratively with WALGA and Local Governments right across our wonderful State.

Local Governments are fundamental to the overall quality of life of Western Australians, delivering critical services and significant infrastructure for our communities, as well as employing thousands of people.

Our Cook Labor Government has a bold vision for the future of our State, that will deliver a strong, diversified economy by training highly skilled workers to make more things here, build more homes and provide the services every Western Australian should have access to, no matter where they live.

This is also an historic period of change for the sector, as we continue to implement our landmark Local Government reforms – the biggest to the sector in more than 25 years.

These reforms are focused on delivering a more transparent, efficient, robust and accountable Local Government sector to better service councillors, staff, ratepayers and residents.

I was incredibly proud to reach a significant milestone of these reforms in November last year, with the passage of the Local Government Amendment Act 2024 through Parliament.

This delivered the second tranche of reforms that will modernise and strengthen Local Government operations, setting new benchmarks for transparency, integrity and strategic planning, including through the establishment of the new Local Government Inspector.

These reforms have been shaped by many years of extensive work and detailed consultation with WALGA and the wider sector.

Already some reforms have been introduced to help build a more resilient Local Government sector and address workforce challenges.

These include allowing payments to independent committee members, and a strengthened portability scheme to make it easier for employees to transfer long service leave accrual between Local Governments.



Our Cook Labor Government has a bold vision for the future of our State, that will deliver a strong, diversified economy.



New provisions to enable Local Governments to more easily pay superannuation to council members were also implemented in February this year following strong advocacy from WALGA, acknowledging the significant dedication and investment of time a council member commits to their role.

All Local Governments have the option to resolve by absolute majority to make superannuation contributions for council members. It will become mandatory for class 1 and 2 Local Governments to make superannuation contributions from 19 October.

Work is continuing to develop new regulations to implement our remaining Local Government reforms.

Feedback from the sector is an important part of this process, with consultation held recently on Local Government CEO performance criteria, and rules requiring Local Governments to maintain public registers of important information.

Establishing the new Office of the Local Government Inspector is also progressing and a key focus for 2025.

A request for information process was undertaken to gather input from experienced individuals and organisations to help inform the establishment of a new panel of Local Government monitors to support the Inspector and build capacity in the sector.

The Department continues to progress the development of PetsWA, a new online centralised registration system for dogs and cats. I recognise the importance of meaningful consultation with the sector on these reforms.

Work will also continue to support the development and improvement of off road vehicle areas across WA including their management by Local Governments.

Our Cook Labor Government will continue to work hard for every Western Australian, ensuring our economy remains the strongest in the nation and our communities continue to thrive. I look forward to supporting the sector during this exciting time.

Hon. Hannah Beazley MLA
Minister for Local Government; Youth;
Minister Assisting the Minister for Training
and Workforce Development



From the Shadow Minister

It is a great privilege to write my first column for Western Councillor as the newly appointed Shadow Minister for Local Government.

Having spent over a decade in Local Government, including the last four years as Shire President of Chapman Valley, and as a WALGA State Councillor since 2023, I feel well-equipped to continue advocating for local decision-making, practical policies, and putting communities first – values which are at the heart of Local Government.

However, I also recognise Local Governments are facing mounting challenges. Every year, councils are being asked to do more with less. In many regional communities, ratepayer bases are stagnant or even declining, while the cost of essential services – such as road maintenance, waste management, and the development of community infrastructure – continues to rise.

As Shadow Minister, I am committed to working closely with Local Government Councillors and staff. I will continue to advocate for the issues that matter most to your communities and ensure your voices are heard in State Parliament.

One issue which has become a significant concern for many Local Governments is the rapid rise of renewable energy projects. While I am supportive of the transition to more affordable, cleaner energy, it is crucial these projects do not come at the expense of people's lifestyles, livelihoods, or the industries which are vital to our communities. And we must ensure WA's unique natural environment is preserved and protected.

I have moved policy motions calling for a State Policy Framework for renewables and The Nationals WA have stood alongside WALGA in calling for a comprehensive, statewide strategy that includes a clear and consistent planning framework for large-scale renewable energy projects across WA. Local Governments are deeply involved in the approval, regulation, and development of these projects, and it's essential their strong local knowledge and voices are not sidelined.

In my own electorate, Kalbarri residents are growing increasingly anxious about the Murchison Green Hydrogen project, which proposes to place 520 wind turbines and a 7,000 hectare solar farm alongside the town's vital tourism, fisheries, and agricultural industries.



Local Governments are facing mounting challenges. Every year, Councils are being asked to do more with less.



Further south, I've heard concerns from Busselton and Dunsborough residents about the environmental and economic impact of a large-scale offshore wind farm. Families and farmers in Augusta are also worried about the potential impacts of a proposed wind farm on their land, livelihoods, and way of life.

This is a challenge the Cook Labor Government has had eight years to address. Yet WA still lacks a fit-for-purpose planning framework for renewable energy projects, leaving Local Governments with limited support and guidance when negotiating with multinational companies.

Beyond these challenges, there is always plenty going on in the Local Government portfolio, with State Parliament currently dealing with the *Control of Vehicles (Off-Road Areas) Amendment Bill 2025* which will streamline the registration process for off-road vehicles being used in these dedicated areas across the State, and increase penalties for those who do the wrong thing.

I was also delighted to read the recent Auditor General's audit results for Local Government finances, which showed significant progress, reflecting the hard work of Local Governments in improving financial practices.

This year's results saw the number of qualified audits decreasing from 12 last year to just six – a notable improvement – and more than 90 per cent of audits were completed on time. I particularly want to acknowledge the 20 Local Governments which were recognised as best practice entities by the Auditor-General, including 17 from regional areas.

It's fantastic to see regional Local Governments, often with fewer resources than their metropolitan counterparts, leading the way in financial management.

As the Shadow Minister for Local Government, my door is always open. I encourage you to reach out and share your views on what is working well in your community, or where improvements can be made.

Thank you for your ongoing work and dedication to local government.

Kirrilee Warr MLA

Member for Geraldton

Shadow Minister for Local Government; Fisheries

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The West at its Best.



From the WALGA President

As always, I am proud to highlight our continued efforts to use our influence, and support our Members through the advocacy, expertise and services provided by WALGA.

In February WALGA hosted another successful Urban Forest Conference. With the theme of 'Raising Resilience', the conference brought together a diverse line-up of expert speakers, informative sessions and collaborative panels, focused on the need to build resilience in these challenging times for urban forests.

WALGA is proud to deliver this landmark bi-annual event focused on the future of the State's urban canopy and look forward to reconvening in 2027.

The State Election in March saw the re-election of the Cook Government.

WALGA's 'The West at its Best' State Election Priorities Platform was highly successful with all parties committing to components of the priority requests. WALGA generated significant media interest and fostered public engagement through collaboration with our 139 Member Local Governments.

These extensive advocacy efforts were picked up by mainstream media outlets including The West Australian, showcasing WALGA's priorities to the general public, and amplifying our campaign efforts.

WALGA also undertook a comprehensive engagement strategy with meetings held with key Ministers, candidates, and the Opposition parties – ensuring WALGA was able to reach and discuss important policy matters with political parties, their members and candidates.

As the authoritative voice and trusted partner for Western Australian Local Government, we look forward to working with the new State Government, advocating to ensure issues impacting Local Government are addressed and that our Members are involved in decision making that affects their communities.



WALGA continues to leverage the collective strength and influence of our Members for the benefit of WA Local Governments and their communities.



I have written to the Premier, Deputy Premier, Leader of the Opposition and all Ministers to congratulate them on their appointment and seek the opportunity to discuss the sector's priorities for the next term.

Also in March, Treasurer Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP handed down the 2025-26 Federal Budget.

Importantly for Local Governments, the Budget retained its commitment to a number of key funding programs for the sector including Financial Assistance Grants, Roads to Recovery and the Black Spot Program.



However, it missed the opportunity to invest in other key initiatives identified in WALGA's 2025 Federal Election Priorities, with no new spending provided for the sector. The priorities present a plan to build community resilience through strategic investments and policy reforms in critical areas such as community infrastructure, coastal management, emergency management, regional health, road safety and telecommunications.

Looking forward, I am inspired by the collective dedication of our staff, Members, and sector as we continue to drive the best outcomes for our communities.

Cr Karen Chappel AM JP
WALGA President



LGIS

By James Sheridan
CEO, LGIS

Historic year marks 30 years of Local Governments working together

The first quarter of the year sees a significant number of our LGIS team out on the road visiting Members as we discuss your protection needs for 2025/26. Thank you to all our Members for your diligence in the renewal declaration process.

The information you provide is vital in allowing us to draw an accurate picture of changes across the sector compared to the previous period. We'll analyse the information you've provided, consider claims performance, and negotiate with our indemnity partners to secure terms for 2025/26. Check out LGIS Risk Matters, March 2025 for more information on the factors that affect your membership.

Elected Members scheme feedback

In February we asked Councillors to tell us what they know about the LGIS mutual and how we support the sector. Thank you to the 292 Elected Members who responded to the survey helping us identify the areas that we do well and where we can improve.

Key results included:

- 92%* – LGIS is an important WALGA service
- 83%* – LGIS is committed to Local Governments working together
- 74%* – our Council is proud to be a part of the LGIS scheme
- 76%* – LGIS is different to commercial insurance underwriters and brokers
- 72%* – the LGIS Scheme Risk Program assists in reducing claims and ensuring the sustainability of the LGIS Mutual.
- 80%* – LGIS provides a unique service which meets all Local Government requirements.

**Shows percentage of respondents that agreed with the statement.*

Renewed mutual commitment

This year when Local Governments renew their membership for 2025/26, they'll be a part of a three-decade commitment to the sector, maintaining a legacy that ensures the ongoing, sustainable protection for all Local Governments in Western Australia.

1 July 2025 marks a historic moment for the LGIS Mutual indemnity scheme. On the same day 30 years ago LGIS launched. A lot has changed over that time but the core purpose of the mutual remains – Local Governments working together through a mutual to protect their people, organisations and communities.

LGIS was born from necessity, when the commercial insurance market withdrew cover or were seeking exorbitant premiums. WA Local Governments banded together to protect themselves making sure that they would always have access to appropriate, affordable and sustainable protection. The reasons that LGIS was formed still exists today – confirming that the mutual indemnity scheme remains the best option to protect WA Local Governments.

Since inception our services have grown to provide members with a range of risk services which meet the needs of modern Local Governments. We work together to manage risks and drive down claims – protecting the Scheme, containing contribution costs, and ensuring the sustainable protection of the WA Local Government sector.

30 Years of mutual benefits

Our WA Local Government members have benefitted from a cooperative, mutual approach receiving far more than 'insurance' from their membership of the scheme. Benefits include:

- Covers specifically designed for WA Local Government that accurately and adequately reflect risk exposures, meet regulatory requirements, and aren't replicated in the commercial market.
- Expansive sector wide risk management services, focused on reducing member's exposures and creating safer organisations and communities.
- Balancing the cost of risk over time even in the face of adverse claims outcomes.
- Mitigating price volatility driven by cyclical insurance market conditions across the globe.
- Investment earnings retained in the member's fund.
- Group covers that individual Local Governments can't always afford or are not available.
- WA based Local Government experts provide members with a tailored, personalised service.
- Surplus funds stay with the Scheme and can be returned to members, and not into the 'pockets' of insurance company shareholders. Over \$60.19 million has been returned to members since 2007.

Connecting with Councils

Our recent survey showed that many Elected Members are keen to learn more about the LGIS Mutual and how we work with Local Government. We would welcome the opportunity to attend and present on topical issues to your council meetings.

You're also encouraged to check out the LGIS website, our news page and publications. These can be found at www.lgiswa.com.au and then navigating to Resources>'News and highlights' or 'Latest publications'. The Risk Matters microsite at www.riskmatterslgis.com.au has more detailed stories from our quarterly magazine.

For more information and queries on your LGIS membership and services talk to your LGIS Account Manager.



Guide to contract risks

June 2023



Tree risk mitigation guide

August 2023



Footpaths and shared paths

Risk mitigation guide

Celebrating 30 years of Local governments working together.

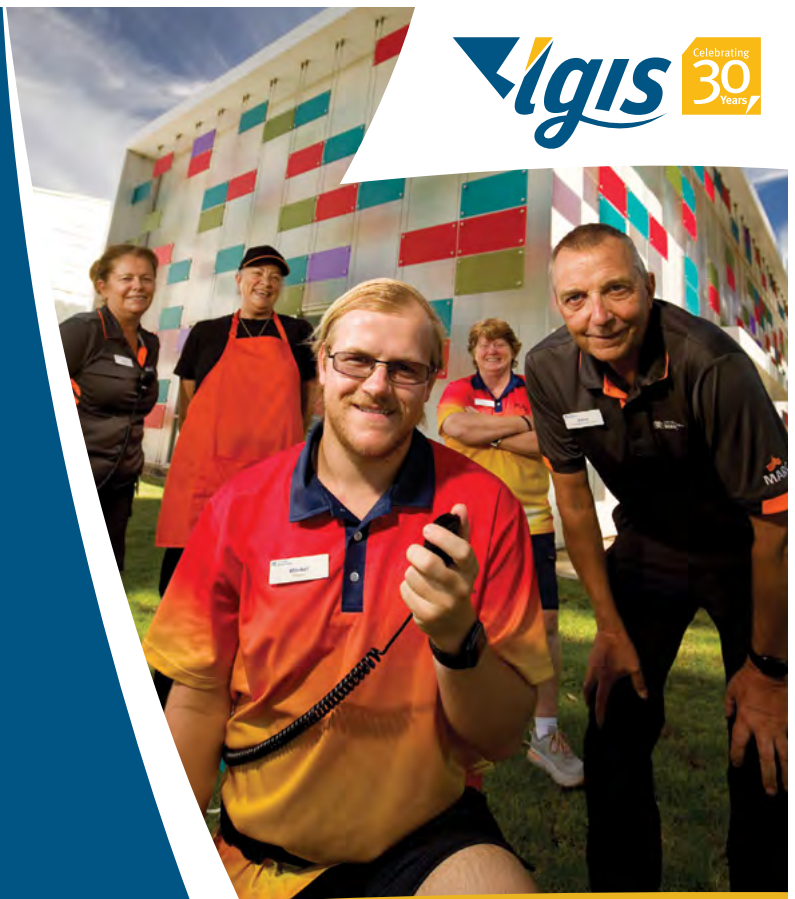
Three decades ago, WA local governments joined together to form LGIS.

We've stood shoulder to shoulder with our members in good times and bad. When disaster strikes our local government specialists are there to help.

We keep innovating providing new cover and risk management services to meet the evolving needs of modern local government.

Through LGIS, our members are backed by the entire local government sector, so they can focus on what they do best - providing the countless services and support which makes a community.

We believe that's worth protecting.



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



Advocating for future success – spotlight on the Shire of Mundaring

Bringing local communities' stories into the heart of decision making

Advocacy is a crucial tool for Local Governments to secure necessary support and funding for community projects. The Shire of Mundaring, led by President Paige McNeil, provides a compelling example of how focused advocacy efforts can lead to significant commitments at a State and Federal level.

In recent years, the Shire of Mundaring's Council recognised the need to prioritise advocacy when, unlike other Local Governments, they had not previously received the election commitments they required to get projects off the ground.

This realisation led them to seek professional advice from an advocacy consultancy and develop a comprehensive advocacy priorities document. This document outlined various projects, each with different financial commitments and sizes, but all aimed at the most critical improvements for the community.

One of the standout projects was the Mundaring Town Centre revitalisation project which was presented to Minister King in Canberra during the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) conference and subsequently received a \$15 million federal grant.

President McNeil explains, "The strength of the advocacy was the story about how the funding would create transformative impact in our town centre. It's not just a building; it's the catalyst of a new cultural town centre."

A key element of their advocacy strategy was the emphasis on co-funding. The Shire of Mundaring had already saved \$12 million and sought a co-contribution from the government, rather than asking for full funding.

"We were seeking a co-contribution, and that was the same for every project on our priorities list."

Another focus was on renewing community and sporting assets, particularly updating change rooms to accommodate increased female participation in sports.

"Our facilities are aged and lack accessibility and inclusivity. We invited the State Government to partner with us to provide inclusive and accessible change rooms at our sporting ovals," she said, highlighting the importance of storytelling in advocacy.

"Advocacy is more than just having a meeting. It's about introducing candidates to our community and telling our unique story about the challenges and opportunities, and then having the story echoed by our community leaders," she says.

In the lead up to the WA State Election, candidates were invited to the Mt Helena Oval to meet the sports teams and hear from parents about the challenges faced due to inadequate facilities. "We showed the candidates the current facilities, so they experienced it for themselves.

We require upgrades to these facilities to ensure that everyone in our community has the opportunity to participate in sport and to grow community connection."

Telecommunications resilience was another critical advocacy area, especially in the Perth Hills. A supercell storm in January 2024 highlighted the vulnerability of the telecommunications infrastructure, which failed during the emergency. Advocacy efforts focused on securing federal support to improve this



The West at its Best.

infrastructure and ensuring better preparedness for future emergencies.

"After the storm I took to ABC Radio and after the segment, I received two calls, one from the Labor Member and one from the Liberal Member. Two community forums were organised, and thanks to Nick Sloan and Karen Chappel we also secured Telstra and NBN in the room.

"Over the next 12 months our CEO Jason Whitaker worked hard in collaboration with Telstra to find a solution."

A practical cost effective solution was found to enhance the battery backup resilience to ensure telecommunications towers remain operational during emergencies.

This collaborative approach, which involved Local, Federal Governments, and Telstra, resulted in a \$1.2 million matched, funding commitment and will be delivered by the Albanese Government.

"This solution is not only cost-effective but also life-saving, demonstrating the power of practical, collaborative advocacy."

McNeil, a Diploma of Local Government (Elected Member) graduate and WALGA State Councillor, also highlights the importance of continuous education and understanding policy frameworks to assist advocacy efforts.

Acknowledging the partnership between a Local Government President and CEO, President McNeil says professional development helped her understand how to advocate effectively within policy guidelines. "Knowing your craft is vitally important. The Diploma helped me fully understand my role and how Local Government works," she says.

Additionally, McNeil underscores the value of leveraging existing advocacy documents. "I used WALGA's State Election advocacy document The West at its Best because it was so well written. I'd encourage Local Governments to use WALGA's advocacy documents to do the same.

When we're all on the same page, asking for the same thing, we strengthen our message."

By prioritising advocacy, sharing compelling community stories, and emphasising collaboration and co-funding, Local Governments can secure the support they need to create lasting, positive changes in their communities.



Advocacy is more than just having a meeting. It's about introducing candidates to our community and telling our unique story about the challenges and opportunities, and then having the story echoed by our community leaders.

President Paige McNeil,
Shire of Mundaring





A look back at WALGA's Urban Forest Conference

The 2025 WALGA Urban Forest Conference, themed 'Raising Resilience', marked its largest gathering yet, with a sold-out event attracting over 400 delegates. Held at Murdoch University's Boola Katitjin venue, the conference seamlessly integrated natural timber and leafy grounds, creating a stunning outdoor setting for discussions. A pop-up forest supplied by Ellenby Tree Farm and the Village Green hub showcased WALGA's Preferred Supplier Program members and greening organisations.

Environmental scientist and media presenter, Professor Josh Byrne AM, served as the MC, guiding delegates through a program that addressed key urban forest issues. Topics ranged from planning protections for trees to future-proofing species selection and building collective action.

The conference continued its tradition of successful political engagement, with Hon Reece Whitby MLA, Minister for Energy;

Environment; Climate Action, and Hon Neil Thompson MLC, Shadow Minister for Environment, outlining their parties' urban forest election commitments.

A highlight of the event was the keynote address by Dr Freya Thomas, Senior Urban Forester at The City of Melbourne. Dr Thomas emphasised the value of ambitious canopy cover targets to push boundaries, support innovation, and address urban forest equity. The City of Melbourne's urban forest precinct plans, underpinned by data on projected canopy growth and species distribution, served as an inspiring model.

Presentations from Local Governments, including Albany, Bassendean, Kalamunda, Mandurah, Port Hedland, and Wanneroo, showcased excellence in the sector. Mayor Xamon of the City of Vincent and Mayor Butterfield of the City of Armadale were strong advocates for WALGA's Urban Forest and PSHB Policy Positions during panel discussions.

The ABC attended the event and featured interviews with WALGA President Karen Chappel and various presenters. This generated significant exposure and community engagement.

For the first time, the conference kicked off a day earlier with five field tours and an Elected Member masterclass on Tree Retention Through the Planning System. This provided delegates with the opportunity to experience some of Perth's



incredible greening projects, delivered in partnership with the Perth Inner City Group.

The conference also elevated the inclusion of Aboriginal content and voices, highlighting the importance of caring for Country as a vital component of healthy urban forests. Students from the Murdoch University Environmental Science Association (MUEnSA) led a banksia walk at lunchtime, allowing delegates to enjoy a spectacular flowering display of banksia species under the original marri trees of the area.

The program showcased the leadership of Local Government and partner organisations in planning and delivering better urban forest outcomes. Attendees provided overwhelmingly positive feedback, expressing renewed optimism and commitment to continue the momentum for positive change.

A huge thank you to all attendees, speakers, and sponsors, including the Perth Inner City Group, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Murdoch University, the Harry Butler Institute, Nature Link Perth, Ellenby Tree Farms, and ABC Radio Perth, for their amazing support.

WALGA will continue to advocate for increased urban tree canopy and assist Local Governments. Keep an eye out for event information when the Urban Forest Conference returns in 2027!

For the first time, the conference kicked off a day earlier with five field tours and an Elected Member masterclass on Tree Retention Through the Planning System.



WA Tree Festival 2025: Celebrating the value of trees

The WA Tree Festival, which ran from 12 April to 10 May 2025, brings Local Governments and community groups together to highlight the importance of trees to residents and tree enthusiasts.

With Western Australia losing trees at an alarming rate, particularly due to private development, and recently exacerbated by the Polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB), the festival aims to raise awareness and encourage tree planting and preservation efforts.

Currently, Perth's tree canopy stands at just 16%, the lowest of any Australian city.

The festival features a variety of events across the State, offering something for everyone.

Local Governments came together to deliver events, activations and learning opportunities for their communities as WA Tree Festival serves as a reminder of the critical role trees play in our environment and the collective effort needed to preserve and expand our urban forests.

The WA Tree Festival is a fantastic opportunity for Local Governments and communities to come together, learn about the benefits of trees, and take action to improve their canopy.

For more information about the initiative, search 'WA Tree Festival' on Facebook.



“The City of Armadale is continuing efforts to green the suburbs by delivering a diverse range of trees and other plants to reduce urban heat and support our local fauna. Approximately 70% to 85% of land in our suburbs is privately owned, so it’s very important for residents to be supported as part of the solution. The mental health and wellbeing benefits of trees, gardens, and nature are well documented, and it’s not hard to bring these positive benefits to your home.

“Our Branch Out 2025 initiative encourages our residents to plant trees and shrubs on their property to increase the overall canopy cover. By working cooperatively with our residents, we can increase our tree canopy and actively make the City a better place for current and future generations.”

Mayor Ruth Butterfield, City of Armadale

“The City of Swan is proud to support the WA Tree Festival 2025, in partnership with other Local Governments, as we all work towards preserving and improving our urban canopy in the Perth metropolitan area.

“The month-long festival celebrates the importance of trees for wildlife, urban cooling, improving streetscapes, and physical and mental health.

“Swan is blessed with many natural assets, and initiatives like the WA Tree Festival further support our sustainability efforts so we can protect our natural environment for future generations.”

Mayor Tanya Richardson, City of Swan

“The WA Tree Festival is a fantastic opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate the beauty and benefits of trees.”

“Through engaging activities and thoughtful discussions, we hope to inspire greater appreciation for how trees support biodiversity and enhance our urban spaces.

“By participating in the festival, individuals and families can learn simple and practical ways to care for our natural environment now and for future generations.”

Climate and Sustainability Project Officer
Kylie Outhwait, City of Albany



City of Armadale

Mayor Ruth Butterfield and the Bedfordale Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade hosted Premier Roger Cook, as part of a tour of the volunteer bushfire brigades in the Darling Scarp in late 2024. Premier Cook was joined by Minister for Emergency Services Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, Department of Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm AFSM, and Member for Darling Range Hugh Jones MLA.

The visit included a tour of the station, and an opportunity to thank the volunteers for their ongoing work. The volunteer brigades provide a critical service to our community, for which we are all grateful.

Pictured: DFES Commissioner Darren Klemm, Hugh Jones MLA, Premier Roger Cook, Mayor Ruth Butterfield, Minister Stephen Dawson, CEO Joanne Abbiss, members of the Bedfordale Volunteer Bushfire Brigade
Background mural by Brigade member Second Lieutenant Bronwyn Brims
Provided by Nic Errol, Senior Media & Communications Advisor – City of Armadale



Shire of Ashburton

Shire President Audra Smith met with teams both local and far away to thank them for their efforts in the aftermath of the November 2024 storm event. With winds of up to 136km/h tearing through Tom Price, uprooting decades-old trees and structures, it was the incredible work of volunteers, organisations and businesses that helped restore the town to the sunny oasis we know it to be, and we extend our gratitude to those who assisted in ways both big and small.

Pictured: Shire of Ashburton President Audra Smith with the Tom Price SES unit
Provided by Gemma Taylor, Digital Communications Officer – Shire of Ashburton



City of Bayswater

In February, the City of Bayswater partnered with Perth Festival to bring two unmissable free experiences, Orchestra-oke and Karla Bidi, to the local community.

On Saturday 22 February, pop songs and orchestral music came together for Orchestra-oke at Pat O'Hara Reserve in Morley. Aspiring singers from across Perth took to the stage to perform beloved pop hits accompanied by Perth Symphony Orchestra.

Riverside Gardens in Bayswater shone after dark throughout the festival with Karla Bidi, an art installation blending light, sculpture and soundscape drawing upon the Noongar tradition of lighting a guiding trail of fire to welcome visitors.

Pictured: Bayswater resident Mila Campbell onstage with Perth Symphony Orchestra for Orchestra-oke
Provided by the City of Bayswater Communications and Marketing team



City of Belmont

The City of Belmont's transformation of Wilson Park is one step closer, with works on the Zone 2: Heart + Playground set to commencing in March. To mark this significant milestone, a ceremony was recently held on-site, bringing together key stakeholders and community members.

Included in the proceedings was a smoking ceremony, led by Noongar Elder Brett Collard and Rohan Collard, to prepare the space ahead of construction, reflecting the City's commitment to respecting First Nations culture within the precinct.

Wilson Park Zone 2: Heart + Playground was designed through extensive community consultation and will deliver an exciting and inclusive space for all ages and abilities. The project is jointly funded by the Australian Government, the Western Australian Government and the City of Belmont.

Pictured: Federal Member for Swan Ms Zaneta Mascarenhas and from the City of Belmont, Councillor Jenny Davis, Councillor Jarod Harris, Mayor Robert Rossi, Deputy Mayor Councillor Sessions, Councillor Christopher Kulczycki, and Councillor Bernie Ryan. Provided by Laura Chaplyn, Coordinator Media and Communications – City of Belmont



Shire of Brookton

On Saturday 2 November, the Shire of Brookton hosted a successful gym open day, allowing the community to explore our equipment. Guest speaker Louise O'Neill from Farm Life Fitness shared valuable insights on health and wellbeing. The event concluded with a relaxing post exercise stretching session that participants enjoyed.

A big thank you to our generous sponsors, Fleet Fitness and the Shire of Brookton, for supporting our raffle! Congratulations to our winners: Karen Trott (12-month gym membership) and Kylie Freeman (My-Zone MZ-3). Special thanks to everyone involved, especially Jessika, Skye, and Holly, for their hard work in planning the event!

Pictured: Karen Trott, Louise O'Neill Farm Life Fitness (Rural Counsellor and Wellbeing Advocate and the winner of the 2022 WA Women of the Year in the AgriFuture Rural Women's Award) and Kylie Freeman

Provided by Deanne Sweeney, Manager Corporate & Community – Shire of Brookton



Town of Cambridge

The 2025 Celebrate Summer Festival on 19 January at Bold Park Aquatic was a day of sunshine, fun, and community spirit. Families enjoyed water inflatables, bubble magic, face painting, and a live DJ. A BBQ fundraiser added to the festivities. Mayor Gary Mack said: "It's wonderful to see our aquatic centre hosting events that bring families together to connect and create lasting memories."

Pictured: Two boys leap into the pool, making a splash at Bold Park Aquatic during the Celebrate Summer Festival on 19 January – Cambridge's ultimate summer pool party!

Provided by Matt Lau, Senior Media & Communications Officer – Town of Cambridge Photo by Stephen Heath Photography



City of Busselton

City of Busselton and Workpower representatives were joined by community to officially open the City of Busselton Reuse Shop. Located at the Busselton Waste Transfer Station, the shop has been operational since January 2025.

The reuse shop is the fourth operated by Workpower, a community-focused not-for-profit, and the first located out of the metropolitan area. The re-use shop is all about giving pre-loved items a new home while diverting waste from landfill and offers genuine local employment opportunity for people with disability.

This project was supported by the Government of Western Australia and the Waste Authority of Western Australia.

Pictured: Ribbon cutting ceremony performed by City of Busselton Mayor, Phill Cronin and Workpower CEO, Lee Broomal; joined by Workpower and City of Busselton representatives and community

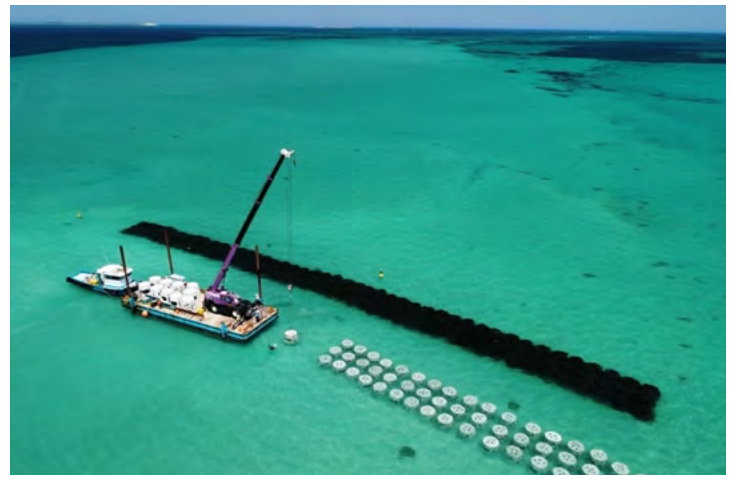
Provided by Deborah Holden, Communications and Marketing Officer – City of Busselton



City of Canning

Youth Week WA 2025 is celebrated from 10 to 17 April with the theme 'Our Threads, This Place, Your Moment'. The theme, selected by the Youth Week WA Planning Committee, reflects young people's connection to the community and each other. Youth Week is Western Australia's biggest annual celebration of young people, recognising their valuable contributions and providing opportunities to express ideas, raise important issues, and connect with peers in their local communities.

Provided by Mischa Tan, Marketing & Communications Advisor – City of Canning



Shire of Capel

Australia Day 2025 was a time to celebrate our diverse nation and welcome 25 new citizens. Following the Citizenship Ceremony, we honoured the volunteers who make the Shire of Capel a vibrant and close-knit community through the annual Community Awards. Outstanding individuals and groups were recognised for their selfless contributions, alongside those receiving the Volunteer Honorarium for their ongoing dedication to service. This day highlighted the importance of community spirit, and we extend our gratitude to all who help shape the Shire of Capel into the special place it is today.

Pictured: Shire President Doug Kitchen (left), with Senior Community Citizen of the Year nominees, also joined by Cr Christine Terranroy, Cr Rosina Mogg, and Cr John Fergusson.

Provided by Michelle McCully, Community Development Officer - Shire of Capel

City of Cockburn

An artificial reef installed off North Coogee in March 2022 for coastal erosion research has blossomed into a snorkellers' paradise.

The City of Cockburn doubled the reef's 135 concrete bomboora modules to 270 in November 2024 at C.Y. O'Connor Beach.

Macroalgae, seaweed and mussels cover the reef, with underwater surveys recording twice the species of visiting fish observed before its installation.

Preliminary research findings from The University of Western Australia (UWA) Oceans Institute indicate the reef have contributed to a 10% cut in wave height, and reduced wave energy reaching the shoreline by 20%.

Pictured: The engineered fringing reef was installed by the City of Cockburn in partnership with global marine and subsea services company MMA Offshore. Provided by Michele Nugent, Media & Communications Officer - City of Cockburn



Town of Claremont

The Town of Claremont's Adopt a Tree program is flourishing.

Now in its second year, the program was created to help restore the Town's tree canopy as a result of the Polyphagous shot-hole borer causing havoc on Perth's trees.

Adopters can choose from a variety of species which are more resilient to the borer, plus the option of a customised plaque has proven a popular in paying tribute to a family member, pet or friend.

Trees planted last season are thriving and applications for 2025 are now open.

Pictured: Local residents Hannah and Anthony Cammack with their adopted tree, in honour of the late Sarah Cammack
Provided by Ashley Rush, Manager Communications and Customer Relations - Town of Claremont



Shire of Coolgardie

Our Leisure and Recreation Officer kicked off Australia Day in style, capturing the energy and enthusiasm of our Aqua Aerobics attendees with this fun selfie frame! The Shire of Coolgardie's aquatic programs bring people together, promoting health, connection, and plenty of laughs. Whether it's celebrating national events or enjoying everyday fitness, our community is always ready to make a splash.

Pictured: Carly Agot - Leisure and Recreation Officer with Aqua Aerobics attendees on Australia Day. Provided by Joy Charlton, Communication and Media Officer - Shire of Coolgardie



Town of Cottesloe

The Town of Cottesloe was successful in securing funding from the Australian Government's Active Transport Fund (ATF) to upgrade the footpath along Marine Parade - Curtin Avenue to North Street.

\$4.175 million has been secured from the ATF for design and construction works, which will involve widening and upgrading the path to improve safety, accessibility and connectivity. The Marine Parade dual use path has been consistently identified by our community and Council as high priority in our cycle network. This significant external funding – covering over 95% of the estimated project cost – will enable us to get to work on this project!

Pictured: Deputy Mayor Melissa Harkins met Cycling Without Age volunteers Chook and Lori, and two of their regulars, John and Nada, who love going for a ride along the foreshore. They were very pleased to hear about the path upgrade! Provided by Lisa Mattiske, Senior Communications and Marketing Coordinator – Town of Cottesloe



Shire of Dandaragan

The Shire of Dandaragan recently hosted the official opening of its Agaton Road Upgrade Project funded in partnership with the Australian Government through its Remote Roads Upgrade Pilot Program (RRUPP).

The Shire was one of four WA Local Governments to share in \$150 million funding under this program to improve roads in regional and rural communities across the nation. The construction of 20 kilometres of sealed road addresses significant deficiencies along this key route that in the past has posed considerable safety risks, limited community access in inclement weather, and impacted economic development within the surrounding area.

Councillors and staff were joined by WA Senator, Mr Glenn Sterle, representing the Australian Government, and Hon. Melissa Price MP, Member for Durack, at an official opening morning tea at the site.

Pictured: Shire Operations team and community members, Hon. Melissa Price, MP, Senator Glenn Sterle, Shire President, Cr Tony O'Gorman
 Provided by Julie Rouse, Coordinator Infrastructure Services – Shire of Dandaragan

Shire of Derby/West Kimberley

The Shire of Derby/West Kimberley is pleased to announce the appointment of Tamara Clarkson as its new Chief Executive Officer. Having served as Acting CEO for several months, Tamara brings 18 years of experience in Local Government across regional and metropolitan Western Australia. Tamara is thrilled to take on the role and to continue working with the community to ensure the Shire remains a vibrant and resilient place to live and work. Shire President Peter McCumstie welcomed the appointment, highlighting Tamara's commitment to the region and leadership abilities and looks forward to working alongside Tamara in her new role.

Pictured: CEO Tamara Clarkson (right) with Shire staff
 Provided by Maria O'Connell, Media and Communications Officer – Shire of Derby/West Kimberley



Shire of Dowerin

The Shire of Dowerin and Dowerin Community Resource Centre have had the pleasure of collaborating with the Dowerin District High School and Waugh Miller Macqueen Accountants to provide students with valuable insights into everyday financial management.

This initiative has been made possible through the support of the Department of Communities' Youth Engagement funding, helping us equip young people with essential life skills for the future.

Provided by the Shire of Dowerin



Shire of Exmouth

Exmouth celebrated Australia Day with a splash at the Paltridge Memorial Swimming Pool in January. The community gathered for a special celebration, acknowledging history, welcoming four new Australian citizens and awarding the annual AUSPIRE Australian Citizen Awards.

The coveted AUSPIRE Awards reflect on inspiring groups and individuals who illustrate community spirit and showcase dedication to collective good. The nominees' outstanding contributions and lasting impacts to Exmouth's local community were acknowledged with heartfelt thanks. In true Australian style, the event was wrapped-up with Lamington cake and a jump in the pool.

Pictured: AUSPIRE Australian Citizen Award nominees pictured with local members. Kevin Michel MLA, Hugo Langele, Kylie Showman, Peter Foster MLC and Violeta Brosig on behalf of Exmouth Community Gardens.

Provided by Rosa Harper, Communications and Marketing Officer – Shire of Exmouth



City of Greater Geraldton

Almost a year ago, the City of Greater Geraldton welcomed the crew and star-studded cast filming for Stan's production of Invisible Boys.

Adapted from the book of the same name by renowned Geraldton author Holden Sheppard the 10-episode LGBTQIA+ drama series is set in 2017 during the same-sex marriage plebiscite, and centres around a group of gay teens living in Geraldton. In alignment with the City's Film Friendly initiative City teams from across the organisation worked together to help the production come together as smoothly as possible.

Provided by Aidan Salmon, Acting Coordinator Communications & Tourism



Shire of Gnowangerup

The inaugural Wild Gravel event in October 2024 saw an incredible turnout, with 350 registered runners and riders tackling the stunning Stirling Ranges. Participants, aged 5 to 84, took on gravel rides from 21km to 125km and gravel runs from 5km to 21km - some even doing both! Three hand cyclists also joined the adventure.

While not a race, times were logged, with the fastest 125km ride completed in 4 hours 9 minutes and the 21km run in 1 hour 21 minutes. The event wrapped up with a community celebration at Mt Trio Bush Camp.

With overwhelming support, Wild Gravel returns on 11 October 2025, introducing a 160km ride and a full marathon.

Provided by Neah Stewart, Community Development Manager and Penny Wells, Communications and Events Coordinator – Shire of Gnowangerup.



Shire of Harvey

It's been raining tennis balls in Brunswick Junction after a highly anticipated infrastructure project was given the greenlight.

The project involves redeveloping four courts at the Brunswick Tennis Club, a beloved institution in the Shire's south.

Largely driven by local community members, the court redevelopment will deliver a safe, durable, and landscaped space for tennis enthusiasts to practice their swing.

Shire of Harvey CEO Annie Riordan said the Shire recently met with the Tennis Club to celebrate.

"The community is very excited to see these upgrades come to life," she said.

"Once finished, we will have a great facility to play tennis for many years to come."

Provided by Tamra Carr, Coordinator Marketing and Communications – Shire of Harvey



City of Joondalup

A sold-out audience of 7,000 were on hand as Kav Temperley, Fanny Lumsden, Charlie Collins, and Karen Lee Andrews delivered Fleetwood Mac's incredible catalogue of songs in *Yesterday's Gone: The Fleetwood Mac Legacy*.

This memorable night only enhanced the event's reputation as the best outdoor concert experience in Perth.

Pictured: Joondalup Mayor Albert Jacob and wife Cecylia take a selfie ahead of the City's 2025 Valentine's Concert at Joondalup Resort.

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



City of Melville

The award winning LeisureFit Booragoon reopened its swimming pools in January after a \$11.5 million major redevelopment. The centre, which won People's Choice - Large Business Award at the 2024 AUSactive Awards, saw its leisure pool and 50 metre pool upgraded to be more inclusive with accessible ramps and a host of other improvements.

Pictured: Melville Mayor Katy Mair and CEO Gail Bowman cutting the ribbon at the official reopening of LeisureFit Booragoon

Provided by Kerry Faulkner, Communications Officer (Media) – City of Melville



City of Kwinana

The City of Kwinana provided six tablets to two bush fire brigades to better equip frontline firefighting appliances.

The tablets are designed to operate in extreme conditions and allow for faster fire mapping ahead of air intel, leading to improved safety on the fire ground for brigade members and enhances their responsiveness to fires.

They were installed in the Urban Tankers and Light Tankers at the Mandogalup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and the Kwinana South Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, with training provided to brigade members.

Pictured: Mandogalup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade Third Lieutenant Grant Howatson and City of Kwinana Bush Fire Mitigation Officer Jarrad Fowler.

Provided by Jaime Shurmer, Communications Officer – City of Kwinana



Shire of Murray

The Shire of Murray are excited to announce the following three major projects have been completed in Pinjarra with funding from Alcoa to support the lifestyle, wellbeing and safety of the community.

The new Murray River Foreshore lighting, upgraded CCTV network, and the new lighting at Sir Ross McLarty Oval support the Shire's focus area 'People' which ensures our community enjoy excellent health, wellbeing and quality of life. We are proud to be delivering projects that support our community and continue to support our plan for the future. These projects have helped to showcase and activate important spaces in Pinjarra.

This project was funded by the Shire of Murray with \$150,000 allocated from the 2024-2025 capital works program, with an additional \$150,000 funded by Lotterywest.

Pictured: Councillor Douglas McClarty and Stephanie Gardner from Alcoa posing on the Pinjarra Suspension Bridge.

Provided by Kaylin Heyns, Digital Communications and Marketing Officer – Shire of Murray



Shire of Narembeen

The Shire of Narembeen is proud to partner with Hurt to Help in hosting the Bin 2 Bin Marathon, a unique 42.2km run between the Mt Walker and Narembeen grain receival bins. The 2025 event saw an incredible turnout, with 114 runners, 100 volunteers, and a lively festival atmosphere featuring children's entertainment and live music. The event was live streamed to the town oval for supporters to enjoy the action. This exciting community event raises funds for the Hurt to Help charity, while promoting fitness and well-being and strengthening local connections, making it a highlight on the Shire's event calendar.

Provided by Rebecca McCall, Chief Executive Officer – Shire of Narembeen

City of Rockingham

Former City of Rockingham Mayor Barry Sammels has been made a Freeman of the City for his sustained contribution to the community over many years as Mayor, and through his voluntary involvement in a range of organisations and activities.

Mr Sammels served as Mayor for 18 years from 2003 to 2021. He was a local businessman for over 30 years, a life Member of the Rockingham Kwinana Chamber of Commerce, past president of the Rockingham Trade Centre Association, and a recipient of Rotary International's Paul Harris Fellow award and WALGA's Long and Loyal Service award.

Pictured: Former City of Rockingham Mayor Barry Sammels and current Mayor Deb Hamblin

Provided by the City of Rockingham Media Team



City of Perth

Partnering with GO2CUP, the City of Perth introduced reusables and waste-sorting initiatives for food vendors at the Sunset Sounds and West Perth Movie Night events to enhance sustainability efforts.

The initiative aligned seamlessly with the City's ongoing commitment to reducing waste and promoting environmentally responsible practices.

Provided by the City of Perth



Shire of Plantagenet

Over 120 volunteers representing 36 community volunteer organisations gathered at Karribank in Porongurup on Saturday 15 February for the Shire of Plantagenet's annual Thank a Volunteer Sundowner. Shire President Len Handasyde thanked all the dedicated 'vollies' who contribute to their local community.

Provided by Lisa Newbury, Communications Coordinator – Shire of Plantagenet. Photo by Kelly Logan

Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale

SJ celebrating our advocacy wins!

The Shire of SJ has been working hard over the past few months leading up to the State election, to secure commitments from all parties to fund priority projects.

So we're pleased to celebrate some wins from all major parties for our key projects, including roads and the redevelopment of our recreation centre. The commitments are important, not just for funding purposes but to draw attention to our advocacy asks as we head into a Federal election.

Pictured: Liberal Leader Libby Mettam and Paul Mansfield candidate for Darling Range (Lib) with Byford Fire Brigade volunteers
 Provided by Issy Rule, Strategic Communications & Advocacy Advisor – Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale



City of Stirling

Community spirit shines at the City of Stirling's Bowlo Banter. Hundreds of residents took part in a night of community spirit, held simultaneously at all 10 bowling clubs across the City of Stirling. Locals and members shared ideas with the Mayor, Councillors and City staff on bowling over barriers to attending and enjoying their local club.

The event was part of the Everyone Belongs community engagement initiative which will also inform the City's new Access and Inclusion Plan and Public Health Plan.

Pictured: Mayor Mark Irwin playing a game of lawn bowls
 Provided by Mikaela Henschel, Communications Officer – City of Stirling

City of South Perth

Thousands flocked to Sir James Mitchell Park on Saturday 22 February as two of WA's biggest bands took the stage at South Perth Sounds.

San Cisco and End of Fashion delivered epic performances, marking the long-awaited return of this free community event to our picturesque foreshore after five years.

Concertgoers grooved to their favourite hits, soaking up the balmy summer evening with food trucks, family-friendly activities, and roving entertainment.

South Perth Sounds' return was a resounding success, thanks to the support of Lotterywest.

Pictured: San Cisco take the South Perth Sounds stage. Provided by the City of South Perth Communications Team



City of Swan

There is a new address for fun and adventure now the \$6.5 million Ballajura Intergenerational Playspace – Weitj Park on Oxleigh Drive is officially open.

The all-ages, all-abilities playspace features three distinct zones:

- an outdoor gym, a flying fox and a multi-swing set,
- an industrial play area for juniors, featuring a ninja assault course, basket swings, slides and trampolines,
- and a nature play area with a dry creek, rope net and more.

Tanya Richardson, City of Swan Mayor, said spaces like this one were an important place of connection for our community.

“We are thrilled to achieve this for residents and the wider community,” she said.

Pictured: Bryce Parry, former City of Swan Council Member (left), Mel Congerton, former City of Swan Deputy Mayor; Tanya Richardson, City of Swan Mayor; Rita Saffioti, Deputy Premier and Member for West Swan; Stephen Cain, City of Swan CEO; Lorna Harper MLC, Member for the East Metropolitan Region and Haeden Miles, City of Swan Council Member (right)

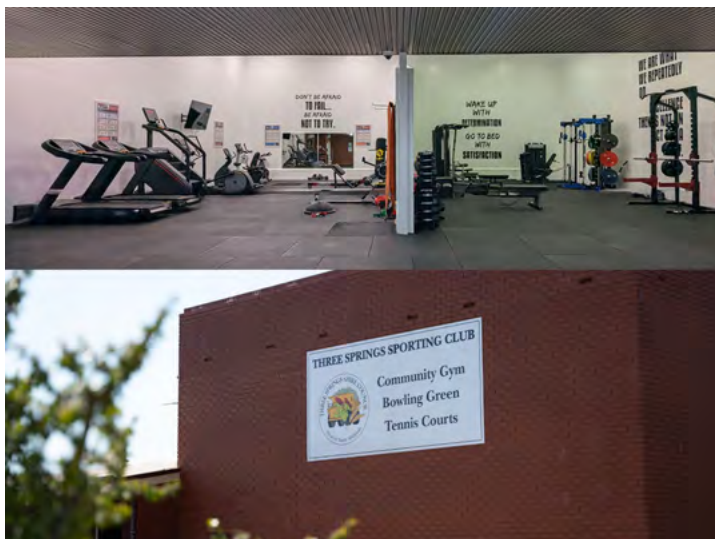
Provided by Julian Wright, Communications Officer. Photo by Andrea Dimacali, Social Media Officer – City of Swan

Shire of Victoria Plains

Shire of Vic Plains had the pleasure of organising another annual Australia Day event which was held on the 26th of January. Massive thanks to the Calingiri Sports Club committee for hosting this year making this event possible. Thank you to Yued representative Brett Collard for coming up to do Welcome To Country and provide us with great stories and history on when his family lived and grew up in the area. A big thank you to the National Australia Day Council for this grant funding opportunity, enabling the Shire to provide this annual event for our residents to celebrate Australia Day. Job well done Calingiri Sports Club committee.

Pictured: Brett Collard, Deputy CEO Colin Ashe and Community Development Officer Katrina Humphries

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



Shire of Three Springs

The Shire of Three Springs recently completed the expansion of the Community Gym at the Three Springs Sporting Club, a vibrant facility that also features lawn bowls and tennis courts. The project included expanding the gym area and adding a stair climber, recumbent bike, smith machine, and additional free weights, offering diverse equipment for a variety of workout options. With its spacious layout, modern equipment, and welcoming environment, the gym has become a space for the community to stay active, connect, and pursue their health and fitness goals.

Provided by Raman S Viridi, Community Development Officer and Seeko Johnson, Manager of Infrastructure – Shire of Three Springs

City of Vincent

The City of Vincent's GreenTrack priority assessment service has been expanded to provide a new tree incentive.

The service offers faster approvals and reduced fees for sustainable home builds and renovations.

Vincent recently expanded the eligibility for the \$200 rebate, so that applicants who retain significant trees can now also claim the discount.

The goal is to protect urban canopy across the City.

Pictured: a sustainable home in Mt Hawthorn. Provided by Kristie Lim, Media and Communications Officer – City of Vincent



City of Wanneroo

Construction has officially begun on the highly anticipated Alkimos Aquatic and Recreation Centre with the City of Wanneroo marking the occasion at a recent groundbreaking ceremony.

The City is grateful to have received funding commitments of \$30 million from the Australian Government (\$25 million under the Priority Community Infrastructure Program and \$5 million under the Female Facilities and Water Safety Stream), \$12.6 million from the State Government (\$10 million under the WA Recovery Program, \$2.5 million from the Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund and \$147,592 through the Changing Places program) and \$14.2 million through the Alkimos-Eglinton Developer Contribution Plan.

Pictured: Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Wanneroo Mayor Linda Aitken with (left to right) Deputy Mayor James Rowe and Councillors Bronwyn Smith, Helen Berry, Jordan Wright, Sonet Coetzee, Phil Bedworth, Paul Miles, Alex Figg and Natalie Herridge

Provided by the City of Wanneroo Communications and Brand Team



Shire of West Arthur

On a glorious balmy evening in March, the Darkan branch of CWA hosted its annual International Women's Day. The event was attended by local women who enjoyed canapes provided by Robyn Quill, and a dessert bar provided by CWA members. Brandy Newton from Boyup Brook provided the musical entertainment. Share the Dignity volunteer Catherine Maughan spoke about ending period poverty. \$5 from each ticket purchased for the event was donated to Share the Dignity.

Photographer: Caro Telfer

Provided by Sharon Bell, Community Development Officer – Shire of West Arthur



Shire of Wongan-Ballidu

This year's Australia Day Community Fun Day at the Wongan Hills Swimming Pool was an event to remember, with record-breaking attendance that truly showcased the vibrant spirit of the community. The day was packed with activities and contributions that made it extra special including CEO Sam Dolzadelli and Cr Mandy Stephenson joining the festivities. Sam even braved the water slide, much to the delight of the crowd. Exceptional feedback poured in from the community, with many describing the event as one of the best Australia Day celebrations yet. It was heartwarming to see so many smiling faces, hear the laughter, and witness the incredible turnout.

Pictured: CEO Sam Dolzadelli hitting the water slide

Provided by Kim Walsh, Manager Community and Customer Services – Shire of Wongan-Ballidu



Community spirit a driving force

'Lakes without Brakes' highlighting importance of community collaboration

The inaugural 'Lakes without Brakes' event in the Shire of Lake Grace is a great example of how collaboration between the community and their Local Government can assist in creating a vibrant and engaging atmosphere for residents and visitors alike.

The idea for 'Lakes without Brakes' began with a casual conversation about the numerous rare and interesting cars in Lake Grace. Joseph Goy, a resident who moved to town the year prior, was discussing these hidden gems with a local couple when a member of the Lake Grace Development Association overheard and saw potential. They encouraged Joseph to spearhead the event, providing him with the support and resources needed to bring the idea to life.

Initially envisioned as a modest gathering with around 20 cars and a coffee van, the event quickly grew beyond expectations. With the help of the Development Association and the Shire, 'Lakes without Brakes' attracted 90 cars and approximately 350 attendees, far surpassing initial projections.

Joseph took on the role of marketing and sponsorship, leveraging his work connections to secure funding and designing promotional materials.

The Shire's Community Development staff played a crucial role in ensuring the event could proceed logistically, handling paperwork, and ensuring everything was in place for a smooth execution.

"The Shire basically made it happen. They filled out the paperwork, handled everything I had no idea about, and then they volunteered on the day. It wouldn't have happened without them," Joseph remarked.

The event also saw significant volunteer support from local organisations, including staff from the local hospital who offered their time and assistance. Local businesses contributed by sponsoring the event and providing prizes, which helped increase participation and engagement.

The response from the community was overwhelmingly positive. The event not only brought together residents of Lake Grace but also attracted visitors from neighbouring towns, Perth, and Geraldton – with some traveling as far as 600 kilometres. This influx of visitors created a buzz in the town, benefiting local businesses and fostering a sense of pride among residents.

"The atmosphere was amazing," said Shire of Lake Grace Community Economic Development Officer Aimee Turnbull. "We were expecting it to be popular, but not to the extent it was. The community came out and supported it, which was absolutely amazing."

The Shire of Lake Grace has played a pivotal role in supporting and facilitating 'Lakes without Brakes' and Aimee highlighted the importance of the Shire's open-door policy, which encourages residents to bring forward ideas and initiatives. This approach has led to the successful implementation of various other projects, such as a youth mentoring program, a re-imagined Harvest Festival, and the community garden.

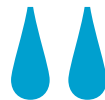
By fostering strong relationships with community members and organisations, the Shire has been able to create a supportive environment where ideas can flourish. This collaborative approach not only enhances the liveability of the Shire's towns but also ensures that the community's needs and aspirations are met.

"Having the door open for the community to approach the Shire with ideas for events and initiatives has been key," Aimee explained.



We've found that a more informal approach, even if it's just a conversation down the road or a quick cup of coffee, has had the best results.

Aimee Turnbull, Community Economic Development Officer – Shire of Lake Grace



"One of the things that came out of the Shire's review of the Strategic Community Plan was that the community really wanted to see improvements in festivals and events and community consultation and engagement.

"We've been working really hard since then to get out amongst the community, meeting with groups and community members. We've found that a more informal approach, even if it's just a conversation down the road or a quick cup of coffee, has had the best results."

The success of 'Lakes without Brakes' is a testament to the power of community collaboration and the importance of Local Government support. As the Shire of Lake Grace continues to grow, the Shire's commitment to fostering community spirit and engagement is crucial in maintaining the Shire's vibrant and welcoming atmosphere.

In addition to events like 'Lake without Brakes', the Shire has been instrumental in other community initiatives such as the all-abilities playground and the community garden. These projects not only enhance the liveability of the Shire but also foster a sense of community and belonging among residents.

"The all-abilities playground and the community garden are perfect examples of how we can create inclusive and engaging spaces for everyone," Aimee said. "These initiatives bring people together and make our Shire towns more vibrant and welcoming places to live."

With plans for future events already in motion, residents can look forward to more opportunities to come together.

As for the legacy of 'Lakes without Brakes' in town? "The town is buzzing at the moment," says Joseph.

"I've been jokingly told off by all the mechanics in town for all the extra work they're getting. Everyone is speaking so highly of the event and really looking forward to next year."





Celebrating ten years of CouncilConnect

Acknowledging ten years of WALGA and Market Creations Agency

A highly successful ten-year partnership between the public and private sector will soon transition to a new chapter. The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) and WA-based private business, Market Creations Agency, will enter a new agreement in the delivery of the website design, development, and hosting platform, CouncilConnect, at the end of this financial year.

Launching in Western Australia in 2013, Market Creations Agency and WALGA partnered to provide a consistent solution to website design, development, and hosting for Local Governments. This specialised and user-friendly website platform is now available to Local Governments nationwide.

Over 180 CouncilConnect websites have been delivered to date, including corporate websites, intranets, Elected Member portals and tourism websites, as well as sites that promote core Local Government facilities such as recreation centres, libraries, museums, and art galleries.

The impact of the CouncilConnect program is significant, with over 110 million page views and 28 million unique users visiting the sites since 2017. This reach, paired with an uptime of 99.9%, demonstrates the robustness of the solution that Local Governments have come to rely on.

Rosslind Ellis, Stakeholder Relations Manager at the Town of Victoria Park shared her experience of being part of the first metropolitan CouncilConnect site during her time at the City of Vincent.

"When I started at the City of Vincent, we needed to unify all these disparate websites into a single, affordable solution. The CouncilConnect is a solution that could be used by multiple Local Governments. This partnership allowed us to create websites for the City that was not only cost-effective but also scalable, benefiting many councils across WA."

Rosslind continued, "At Vincent, we were able to quickly create a base website using the pre made plugins and applications that CouncilConnect provided. We then used these features to create the Corporate Website, Beatty Park Website, Library Website, Corporate Intranet and Councillor Portal. From this, we started working with the CouncilConnect team to build plugins and applications that we needed, and that other Local Governments could use."

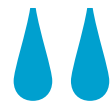
With the CouncilConnect service now expanding interstate with clients in the Northern Territory, South Australia, and New South Wales, Managing Director and Founder of Market Creations Agency Darren Lee is proud of his team.

"We couldn't be prouder of our business journey, starting as a home-based business in Geraldton in 1997, expanding to Perth in 2015 and scaling since to continue to support the needs of Local Government. The opportunities this has created for our talented team of graphic designers, web developers and marketing professionals is something we collectively hold very dear to our hearts."



Whether you're an absolute novice with no prior knowledge or have a comprehensive understanding of the process, they adapt their approach to suit the needs of the organisation.

Rebecca McCall,
Chief Executive Officer, Shire of Narembeen



We believe you get back what you put in as an effort-based business that truly cares and seeks to understand our client's needs and pain points, and act as an extension to their team. Our Director of Client Services Alice Jeffcott and I have visited more than 50 Local Government clients throughout WA in the month of February alone, from the northern reaches of the Pilbara to as far south as Albany and Denmark."

Shire of Narembeen Chief Executive Officer Rebecca McCall highlighted Market Creations Agency's commitment to community and growth. "Market Creations has grown and flourished while maintaining a commitment to excellence. It's been wonderful to see a regional business grow without losing its identity. It's the personal touch from Darren and his team, with annual face-to-face meetings that enables his team to gain an insight into an individual organisation's dynamics, team, and challenges."

Rebecca also shared a recent initiative where Market Creations extended support to a young team member studying graphic design.

"Darren offered to host Georgia, our team member, for training and mentoring within his team. This gesture goes beyond standard service delivery and shows their commitment to community and growth. We plan to take up this offer before starting our website refresh."

Rebecca added, "The team have always been exceptionally generous in providing support, guiding us step by step. Whether you're an absolute novice with no prior knowledge or have a comprehensive understanding of the process, they adapt their approach to suit the needs of the organisation."

All Local Governments that are Members of WALGA can purchase goods and services through the WALGA Preferred Supplier Program (PSP).

Through the PSP, Members can access over 1,100 Preferred Suppliers across 12 Panels which include over 150 categories of different goods and services. Market Creations Agency will continue to be a member of the Preferred Supplier Program.

The Local Government Regulations provide a tender exemption for purchases through the PSP, meaning Members can save time and money by engaging prequalified Preferred Suppliers directly from the Panels rather than undertaking a full tender process.

Darren continued, "Whilst the partnership with WALGA transitions to the Preferred Supplier Program environment, of which both Market Creations Agency and sister company Integrated ICT already reside on across multiple service categories, we will continue in our efforts to 'Make a Difference' wherever our services are needed, a founding philosophy the company was originally created on 28 years ago."

There will be no changes to the delivery of CouncilConnect in FY2025/26 and Market Creations Agency looks forward to continuing to deliver best practice digital solutions for Western Australian Local Governments for many years to come.

For more information about WALGA's Preferred Supplier Program, visit the WALGA website.



Resilience and adaptation on our coast

By Dr Lucy Sheehy, CoastWA Local Government Facilitator, WALGA

Ensuring a safer and resilient future for coastal communities

Local Governments are building coastal resilience and adapting to coastal hazards to achieve a safe and resilient future for coastal communities.

The Western Australian coastline is iconic and an essential part of our identity – it is where we live, holiday, and come together – providing environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits.

Fifty-three Local Governments have management responsibility for the majority of Western Australia's 20,000kms of diverse coastal and estuarine foreshores. A changing climate means many of these Local Governments are already having to adapt and respond to coastal erosion and inundation.

Increased storm intensity and rising sea levels will see the coast, and how we access, use and enjoy the coast, change

significantly in the future as roads, infrastructure, public assets, homes and ecosystems become at risk.

CoastWA is the State Government strategic response to coastal hazards with CoastWA grants the leading source of funding for Local Government coastal adaptation projects.

Over the past 3 years WALGA's CoastWA Local Government Facilitator (funded by the State Government through CoastWA) has been engaging with and supporting coastal and estuarine Local Governments.

CoastWA Local Government Facilitator, Dr Lucy Sheehy says there are several ways she supports coastal and estuarine Local Governments but one of the most valuable is visiting Local Governments and talking to officers about their challenges, offering advice and undertaking site visits. Recently she visited the Shires of Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe and Esperance.



Noel Myers, Manager of Development at the Shire of Jerramungup, said that having Lucy visit the Shire in-person was a valuable experience.

“It is a great opportunity to ensure that there is a good understanding of our local coastline and local challenges. Developing those relationships and connections is important so that Lucy and WALGA can continue to advocate for and represent our Shire and other coastal Local Governments through CoastWA.”

Lucy believes it is important to recognise that Local Governments have a really challenging task to manage and adapt their coastlines and they cannot do it alone.

“Understanding coastal hazard risk, engaging with communities and identifying short and long-term adaptation pathways is critical for the effective adaptation of our coast.”

Thirty-eight Local Governments have developed or are developing Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plans (CHRMAs) to identify and plan for future coastal hazard risk. However, implementation of these plans and the actions within them will have significant financial and social implications for Local Governments often involving either the construction of coastal protection infrastructure and/or long-term retreat of communities.

“An important part of my role is promoting CoastWA grants and assisting Local Governments to access CoastWA funding. We hold an annual CoastWA grant information session, facilitate meetings between individual Local Governments and State Government to discuss potential projects, offer review and advice of draft applications and can assist in writing grant applications if needed.”



Understanding coastal hazard risk, engaging with communities and identifying short and long-term adaptation pathways is critical for the effective adaptation of our

coast. Dr Lucy Sheehy,
CoastWA Local Government
Facilitator, WALGA





Kirsten Wood, A/Director Developments Services, Shire of Broome, spoke about the assistance provided to the Shire in preparing a successful CoastWA grant application.

“Coastal planning is a complex and changing space. Having Lucy’s role available to share knowledge of other Local Government approaches and help us connect to those people we need to talk to, has been invaluable to the Shire. Lucy spent a couple of days working in our office assisting us to prepare a grant application, the successful outcome of which means that the Shire is now in a position to review its CHRMAP.”

CoastWA has worked collaboratively with WALGA, facilitating increased engagement between State and Local Government and leading to improved outcomes. A key outcome has been the development and delivery of a CoastWA Local Government Training Program which has had 445 attendees across six modules. Modules covered topics such as coastal processes, coastal protection infrastructure and coastal hazard assessments.

WALGA also supports the Local Government CHRMAP Forum which meets three times a year for information sharing, expert presentations, State Government updates and project collaboration.

Responding and adapting to coastal hazards requires all levels of Government to work together to achieve a safe and resilient future for our coastal communities, and the collaboration between WALGA, Local Government and State Government through CoastWA is an important step forward.

As part of its 2025 Federal Election Priorities campaign, WALGA advocated for the development of a National Coastal Hazards Adaptation Strategy and funding towards a dedicated Coastal Hazard Adaptation program.

State Council Resolutions

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.

December 2024

The South West Country Zone hosted State Council in the City of Busselton over Thursday, 5 and Friday, 6 December for the final meeting of the year.

Each year, State Council has two regional meetings - one hosted by a Metropolitan Zone and another hosted by a Country Zone. Regional meetings give State Council the opportunity to meet with Elected Members and senior officers from Member Local Governments and allow State Councillors to gain a first-hand appreciation of the various issues confronting Local Governments in each Zone.

Zone Forum

The Zone Forum is the main feature of the Regional State Council meeting as it provides Members with an opportunity to present directly to State Councillors on regional, strategic Local Government issues.

At the Forum, State Councillors were joined by Elected Members and CEOs from the 12 Local Governments within the South West Country Zone.

State Council received presentations from:

- Warren Blackwood Alliance of Councils
- Bunbury Geographe Group of Councils
- Shire of Augusta Margaret River
- City of Busselton.

After the Zone Forum, interested State Councillors were taken on a walking tour through the Busselton CBD and foreshore area.

State Council

Key items on the Agenda were:

- The endorsement of WALGA's Strategic Plan 2025-2029
- The consideration of 2024 Annual General Meeting Resolutions
- Reviews of Advocacy Positions including Local Government Elections, Aboriginal Communities, Family and Domestic Violence, and Container Deposit Schemes
- Endorsement of submissions on the State Hazard Plan – Fire, 2025 Salaries and Allowances Tribunal Remuneration Inquiry for Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Members, and the Final Report of the Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (Colvin Review).

March 2025

WALGA hosted its first State Council Meeting for 2025 on Wednesday, 6 March where State Council considered several items, including:

- WALGA's Climate Change Advocacy Position
- WALGA's Waste Management Legislation Advocacy Position
- Changes to Road Safety Advocacy Positions.

For full resolutions from both meetings, visit the WALGA website.



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If your council is focusing on sustainability, one of the simplest things you can do is choose renewable energy. Join other councils by choosing one of our sustainable energy options – and together we'll all power a brighter future for WA.

See how your council can help. Contact **Luke Randell** via luke.randell@synergy.net.au or **0436 916 941**.

Albany Grasmere Wind Farm is a Bright Energy Investment (BEI) asset.



Synergy advertorial

Synergy's NaturalPower: Simple sustainability option for LGAs

As Local Governments and businesses consider the measures needed to achieve their emissions reduction and renewable energy targets, Synergy is highlighting a simple but effective option available in the renewable energy sector. Synergy NaturalPower is a renewable energy product accredited under Australia's GreenPower Program, available to commercial and residential customers. According to Luke Randell, Account Manager at Synergy, by choosing NaturalPower, Synergy customers can offset all, or a percentage in increments of 25%, of carbon emissions from their electricity consumption.

"Any Local Government authority exploring new ways to make their operations even more sustainable could find NaturalPower is a simple but effective way to do just that," he said.

Mr Randell explained that customers who choose NaturalPower through their Synergy account pay an additional charge on top of their usual tariff, but Synergy uses that amount to buy Large-scale Generation Certificates (LGCs) on their behalf. "These LGCs are from nationally-accredited GreenPower renewable energy sources which meet strict environmental criteria."

"Purchasing renewable energy products such as NaturalPower is an effective measure to offset the impact a home, business or Local Government authority has on the environment and support the growth of the renewable energy sector at the same time. Across Australia, renewable energy projects can help to create jobs and support regional businesses."

Mr Randell noted that it's important for customers to understand that opting for NaturalPower is an offset of emissions through renewable energy. "When a customer chooses NaturalPower, the electricity supplied to their premises is not supplied directly from renewable sources in the same way rooftop solar works. For a Local Government authority, for example, your energy will still be generated from a mix of sources, but your contribution supports Australia's renewable energy industry and contributes to increased amounts of renewable energy in the network."

"NaturalPower offers a simple way to support Australia's renewable energy sector. Increasing the demand for renewable energy across the energy system helps to drive further investment into these renewable energy sources. Other potential benefits of NaturalPower can include improving your building's Green Star Performance Ratings and NABERS rating, and a GreenPower logo is available to share through your communications and marketing materials."

"Choosing NaturalPower for your Local Government authority is generally a seamless process. The only change you'll see from choosing NaturalPower is a difference on your bill, which differs depending on the percentage of NaturalPower you choose. The amount of renewable energy matching the percentage you select is bought by Synergy on your behalf and then fed into the grid, rather than directly into your facilities, so there is no interruption to your power service through choosing NaturalPower."

Learn more about NaturalPower

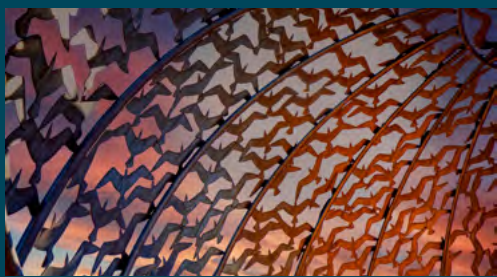
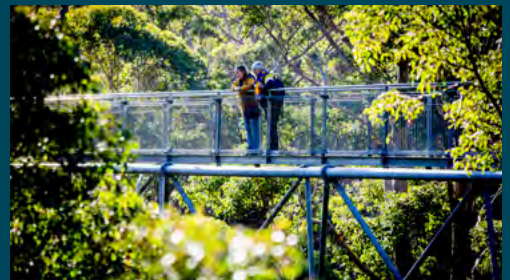
For more information about NaturalPower, and how Synergy could help your Local Government authority achieve its renewable energy goals, please visit [synergy.net.au/CommercialGreen](https://www.synergy.net.au/CommercialGreen) or contact Luke Randell at luke.randell@synergy.net.au or call **0436 916 941**.

Use the offset calculator

Try the Synergy calculator at [synergy.net.au/CommercialGreen](https://www.synergy.net.au/CommercialGreen) for an estimate of the amount of carbon emissions your Local Government authority may be able to offset with NaturalPower.

Across the State

showcasing Local Governments at their best.



Images by Jeff Henderson, Content Producer, WALGA