WALGA

Northern Country Zone Minutes

23 February 2026

Hosted via MS Teams
Commencing at 1:00pm

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES 4
1.1 Opening 4
1.2 Attendance 4
1.3 Apologies 5
2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY 6
3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST 6
4 DEPUTATIONS 6
4.1 Mr Boyd Brown, Telstra Regional General Manager WA 6
5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES 6
5.1 Business Arising From Previous Minutes 7
6 WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA 7
6.1 Aviation Advocacy Positions (State Council Agenda item 9.1) 7
7 EXECUTIVE REPORTS 11
7.1 Zone President's Report 11
7.2 WALGA State Councillor Report 11
7.3 WALGA President's Report 11
7.4 Status Report 12
7.5 Regional Development Australia – MID West 12
7.6 Department of Local Government Industry Regulation and Safety 12
8 ZONE BUSINESS FOR DECISION 12
8.1 Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement For the Period 1 July 2025 to 31 December 2025 12
8.2 Request to Present – Australian Bureau Of Statistics (ABS) 13
8.3 Water Corporation Representation to Zone Meeting 14
9 ZONE BUSINESS FOR NOTING/DISCUSSION 14
9.1 CORRESPONDENCE 15
9.1.1 Correspondence Out 15
9.1.2 Correspondence In 15
9.2 Water Management Discussion Paper update 15
9.3 Consultation on Draft Climte Change Advocacy Position 17
9.4 Disaster Ready Fund: Round 4 Anticipated to Open in March 2026 18
9.5 2026 Local Government Honours Awards 18
9.6 Draft Renewable Energy Planning code 19
10 GENERAL BUSINESS 21
10.1 Call to Guests to Address the Meeting 22
10.2 Regional issues 22
10.3 Other General Business 22
11 NEXT MEETING 22
12 CLOSURE 22

PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

How to use the Framework:

- If the majority of the factors are towards the left column, the issue is a high priority.
- If the majority of the factors are towards the middle, the issue requires action, but is not a high priority.
- If the majority of the factors are towards the right column, the issue is a low priority.

Impact on Local Government Sector Impact on Local Government sector without intervention	High	Medium	Low
Reach Number of member Local Governments affected	Sector-wide	Significant (multiple regions, Zones, or bands)	Few
Influence Capacity to influence decision makers	High	Medium	Low
Principles Alignment to core principles such as autonomy, funding, general competence	Strong	Partial	Peripheral
Clarity Policy change needed is clear and well-defined	Clear	Partial	Unclear
Decision-maker support Level of support among decision-makers (political and administrative)	High	Medium	Low
Public support Level of support among the public or other stakeholders	High	Medium	Low
Positive consequences for WALGA Prospect of positive consequences for WALGA. E.g. enhanced standing among members or leverage for other issues.	High	Medium	Low
Negative consequences for WALGA Prospect of negative consequences for WALGA for not undertaking the advocacy effort. E.g. diminished standing among members or other stakeholders.	High	Medium	Low
Partnerships Potential for partnerships with other stakeholders	Yes (3+)	Possibly (1-2)	No (0)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Zone Delegates are requested to provide sufficient written notice, wherever possible, on amendments to recommendations within the State Council or Zone agenda to the Zone Chair and Secretariat prior to the Zone meeting.

Agenda Papers are emailed 7 days prior to the meeting date.

Confirmation of Attendance An attendance sheet will be circulated prior to the commencement of the meeting, please register your attendance by printing your name against your Council on the attendance sheet.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Minutes of the previous meeting
2. President's Report
3. RDA Mid West-Gascoyne Report 2026
4. February 2026 Update – Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety
5. Invitation to Minister Dawson to attend 23 February 2026 NCZ Meeting
6. Invitation to CBH CEO, Ben MacNamara to attend 23 February 2026 NCZ Meeting

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

Chair, President Cr Karen Chappel opened the meeting at 1:00pm and welcomed members and guests.

1.2 ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS	**1 Voting Delegates from each Member Council**
Shire of Carnamah	President Cr Merle Isbister (voting delegate) Mr Stuart Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Chapman Valley	President Cr Nicole Batten (voting delegate) Mr Jamie Criddle, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Coorow	President Cr Guy Sims (voting delegate) Mr Peter Bentley, Acting Chief Executive Officer
City of Greater Geraldton	Mayor Jerry Clune (voting delegate) Mr Ross McKim, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Irwin	Cr Isabelle Scott (voting delegate) Mr Shane Ivers, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Mingenew	President Cr Hellene McTaggart (voting delegate) Cr Naomi Obst (voting delegate)

	Mr Matt Fanning, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Morawa	President Cr Karen Chappel **(Chair)** Mr Marty Symmons, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Northampton	President Cr Elizabeth (Liz) Sudlow (voting delegate) Mr Andrew Campbell, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Perenjori	President Cr Jude Sutherland (voting delegate) Mr Clinton Strugnell, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate)
Shire of Three Springs	President Cr Nadine Eva (voting delegate) Ms Krys East, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
WA Local Government Association Secretariat	Cr Paul Kelly, WALGA Deputy President Ms Kirsty Martin, Executive Manager Member Services Ms Kelsey Nicholson, Executive Assistant
Invited Guests	
Mid West Development Commission	Mr Nils Hay - Chief Executive Officer
Main Roads	Ms Janet Hartley-West - Regional Director Mid West-Gascoyne
Department of Fire and Emergency Services	Mr Mark Bowen, Superintendent Midwest Gascoyne Region
Regional Development Mid West Gascoyne	Mark Holdsworth, Executive Officer
Guest Speakers	
Telstra WA	Boyd Brown, Regional General Manager WA

1.3 APOLOGIES

Federal Member for Durack	Melissa Price MP
Member for Mid-West	Shane Love MLA

Minister for Agriculture and Food; Fisheries; Forestry; Small Business; Mid West	Hon Jackie Jarvis MLC
CBH	Kellie Todman, Manager Govt & Industry Relations
Member for Geraldton	Ms Kirrilee Warr MLA, Shadow Minister for Local Government, Fisheries
Shire of Carnamah	Cr Dwayne Wooltorton, deputy delegate
Shire of Chapman Valley	Cr Trevor Royce, deputy delegate
Shire of Coorow	Cr Giulia Censi, deputy delegate Ms Mia Maxfield, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
City of Greater Geraldton	Cr Jenna Denton, deputy delegate
Shire of Irwin	Cr Andrew Gillam, deputy delegate
Shire of Mingenew	Cr Jonathan Holmes, deputy delegate
Shire of Morawa	Cr Ken Stokes, deputy delegate
Shire of Northampton	Cr Tim Hay, deputy delegate
Shire of Perenjori	Cr Daniel Bradford, deputy delegate

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We, the Northern Country Zone of WALGA, acknowledge the Yamatji people, the Traditional Custodians of this land that meet on today, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Elected Members must declare to the Chairman any potential conflict of interest they have in a matter before the Zone as soon as they become aware of it. Councillors and deputies may be directly or indirectly associated with some recommendations of the Zone and State Council. If you are affected by these recommendations, please excuse yourself from the meeting and do not participate in deliberations.

4 DEPUTATIONS

All Deputations have a time limit of 20 minutes, which includes questions time.

4.1 MR BOYD BROWN, TELSTRA REGIONAL GENERAL MANAGER WA

Mr Boyd Brown, Telstra Regional General Manager WA attended online and provided a presentation.

5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Minutes of the Northern Country Zone meeting held on **24 November 2025** have previously been circulated to Member Councils and are provided as an attachment to the Agenda. **(Attachment 1)**

RESOLUTION

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Northern Country Zone held on 24 November 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Moved: **President Cr Liz Sudlow**
Seconded: **President Cr Nicole Batten**

CARRIED

5.1 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

6 WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA

Zone Delegates are invited to read and consider the WALGA State Council Agenda, which can be found via the link here.

The Zone can provide comment or submit an alternative recommendation on any of the items, including the items for noting. The Zone comment will then be presented to the State Council for consideration at their meeting.

The State Council Agenda items requiring a decision of State Council are extracted for Zone consideration below.

6.1 AVIATION ADVOCACY POSITIONS (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 9.1)

By Negar Nili, Policy Officer Transport and Roads

RESOLUTION

That the Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 9.1 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided below.

Moved: **President Cr Liz Sudlow**
Seconded: **President Cr Guy Sims**

CARRIED

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse two new Advocacy Positions on Aviation as follows:

1. Regional Airports
   WALGA supports the sustainable operation of Local Government owned regional airports and advocates for proportionate regulatory frameworks, targeted funding, and operational guidance to ensure safe, efficient, and resilient airport infrastructure and services.

2.	Regional and Remote Air Services *WALGA advocates for reliable, affordable, and equitable regional air services, calling for greater oversight of airline pricing practices, including transparent fare structures and equitable access to discounted and lower-cost fares, to mitigate the impacts of limited competition and dynamic pricing on regional residents, businesses, and essential travel. WALGA also promotes the continued viability of essential routes and recognises regional aviation as an essential service supporting community access, workforce mobility, and regional economic development.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Two new Advocacy Positions are proposed to strengthen WALGA's aviation advocacy framework and to inform WALGA's response to future inquiries and/or consultation relating to aviation.
- The aim of the new positions is to provide clearer and more contemporary guidance on:
  - the sustainability and ongoing viability of Local Government-owned regional airports; and
  - the affordability, reliability and accessibility of regional and remote air services for Western Australian communities.
- The proposed positions will assist WALGA to advocate more effectively on behalf of its Members by:
  - clearly articulating the essential service role of aviation in regional, rural and remote Western Australia;
  - strengthening WALGA's capacity to engage with State and Commonwealth governments on aviation policy and funding; and
  - supporting Local Governments facing regulatory, financial and service-delivery challenges associated with regional aviation.
- The development of the proposed Advocacy Positions has been informed by engagement with a sample of Local Governments, which highlighted shared concerns regarding high regional airfares, service reliability, capacity constraints and the role of aviation in supporting health access, emergency response and regional economic development.
- WALGA currently has two existing aviation Advocacy Positions; however, feedback from Local Governments clarified that the inclusion of additional, targeted policy positions is essential to better reflect contemporary challenges and to strengthen support for Councils.
- The proposed positions build on existing WALGA policy and provide a stronger basis for:
  - sector advocacy;
  - engagement with State Council and Zones to seek feedback; and
  - informing WALGA's potential submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Regional Airfares.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The current WALGA Advocacy Positions relating to Aviation are positions 5.9 Aviation and 5.9.1 Airfare Pricing in Regional Western Australia. The proposed new positions would be in addition to these existing positions.

5.9 Aviation

Position Statement	*The Local Government sector supports the Department of Transport's State Aviation Strategy 2020, with more focus required on non-RPT airports to ensure it is representative of all of WA, more focus on general aviation development across WA and*

noting that the preferred ownership and governance of Local Governments is Council Controlled Organisations. The Local Government sector advocates for a clear position on the economic benefit of airports in regional areas to be included in the future state wide Airports State Planning Policy.

5.9.1. Airfare Pricing in Regional Western Australia

Position Statement *The Local Government sector supports:*

1. *An evidence-based assessment commissioned by the State Government to determine the degree to which market structure and other factors influence the cost of providing air services on each route, the pricing structure offered and the actual prices paid.*
2. *The State Government providing oversight of airfares ensuring transparency, encouraging partnerships between Local Governments and airline carriers to grow the market and the provision of subsidies in some situations.*

BACKGROUND

Aviation plays a critical role in Western Australia, particularly for regional, rural, and remote communities, by providing essential connectivity for access to healthcare, education, employment, and social engagement. Reliable and affordable air services are also vital to regional economic development, workforce mobility, and community resilience, especially where alternative transport options are limited.

WALGA's advocacy on aviation is underpinned by its existing policy framework, which emphasises the need for safe, reliable, and cost-effective air services across regional and remote Western Australia. These policies highlight the critical role of aviation in enabling regional connectivity, supporting service delivery, and contributing to economic development, while recognising the operational and regulatory responsibilities faced by Local Government–managed airports.

WALGA has also contributed to State-level policy development including the State Aviation Strategy 2020. This strategy supports key initiatives including regulating certain routes to support a sustainable service, the Regional Airfare Zone Cap, Regional Airports Development Scheme and regulation of closed charters in some situations. It is anticipated that the Department of Transport and Major Infrastructure will review and refresh the State Aviation Strategy in 2026-27.

At the national level, WALGA engaged in consultation processes leading to the Green and White Papers on Regional Transport and Aviation, representing Local Government perspectives and regional needs.

Two recently initiated inquiries — the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the determinants of regional airfares and the Senate (Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee) Inquiry into the State of Australia's Aviation Sector and its ability to deliver reliable and affordable services to rural, regional and remote communities — provide important opportunities to review and improve policies supporting regional aviation. Both inquiries have overlapping focus areas, including affordability, government intervention, and impacts on regional communities.

To inform its responses to both inquiries, WALGA has engaged with a sample of Local Governments to understand their experiences, challenges, and priorities for regional air services. This engagement has clarified the needs of Local Governments and communities, forming the basis for developing two proposed new Advocacy Positions to support

Members and advocate for improved connectivity, affordability, and service sustainability across regional Western Australia.

NEW ADVOCACY POSITIONS

Regional Airports

Position Statement	*WALGA supports the sustainable operation of Local Government owned regional airports and advocates for proportionate regulatory frameworks, targeted funding, and operational guidance to ensure safe, efficient, and resilient airport infrastructure and services.*
Background	Regional airports are vital for connectivity, economic development, tourism, health access, and emergency response in Western Australia. Local Governments operating regional airports face increasing regulatory and operational pressures, including aviation security requirements, compliance obligations, ageing infrastructure, and limited staffing capacity. Many Council-owned airports cover day-to-day operating costs but lack sufficient capital to fund major infrastructure renewal or security upgrades. Airports that support both community access and FIFO activity can face additional funding constraints despite their ongoing role in servicing regional communities. These challenges highlight the need for regulatory settings and funding arrangements that reflect airport scale, risk profile, and regional operating conditions.

Regional and Remote Air Services

Position Statement	*WALGA advocates for reliable, affordable, and equitable regional air services, calling for greater oversight of airline pricing practices, including transparent fare structures and equitable access to discounted and lower-cost fares, to mitigate the impacts of limited competition and dynamic pricing on regional residents, businesses, and essential travel. WALGA also promotes the continued viability of essential routes and recognises regional aviation as an essential service supporting community access, workforce mobility, and regional economic development.*
Background	Regional communities rely on air services for essential travel, including access to health care, employment, education, and family connections, particularly where alternative transport options are limited. High airfares, limited availability of lower-cost seats, and opaque pricing structures reduce affordability for residents and businesses, even in markets with more than one airline. Regional air services are also vulnerable to sudden service reductions or route withdrawals, which can isolate communities and disrupt economic and social activity. These challenges underscore the importance of policy settings that support affordability, service continuity, and equitable access.

COMMENT

Engagement with a sample of Local Governments operating airports with Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) services highlighted operational, financial, and service delivery issues affecting both Council-owned airports and regional air services.

Key matters raised by Councils include:

- Airline pricing and equitable access: Complex, opaque, and highly variable fare structures; limited availability of lower-cost seats; competition does not always deliver affordable or equitable outcomes.
- Aviation security requirements: Standards designed for larger airports impose significant operational and financial burdens, with outdated equipment, regulatory ambiguities, and high upgrade costs creating compliance challenges.
- Funding and resource constraints: Many Councils operate airports with limited staff and capital; while day-to-day operating costs may be covered, major infrastructure renewal or expansion and security upgrades are often unfunded.
- Service continuity and reliability: Regional air services are fragile, with sudden route reductions or withdrawals impacting essential travel, community connectivity, and local economies.
- Coordination across governments and industry: Fragmented policy, regulatory, and funding arrangements limit Local Governments' ability to respond quickly to changes, highlighting the need for improved collaboration.
- Regional aviation as an essential service: Airports and air services underpin health access, emergency response, tourism, economic development, and social cohesion, demonstrating their broader value beyond transport alone.

Based on these issues and priorities identified through Local Government engagement, WALGA has developed the two proposed Advocacy Positions above on aviation – one focusing on regional airports and the other on regional and remote air services – to address the challenges of affordability, accessibility, operational sustainability, and service continuity for regional communities.

7 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

7.1 ZONE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Refer to WALGA President's report

7.2 WALGA STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

For noting

WALGA State Councillor, President Cr Liz Sudlow provided an update on State Council activities since the November 2025 zone meeting.

7.3 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

For noting

President Cr Karen Chappel will spoke to the WALGA President report. The report is provided as an attachment to the Agenda. **(Attachment 2).**

7.4 STATUS REPORT

By Chantelle O'Brien, Zone Governance Officer

For noting

The Northern Country Zone currently has no outstanding items.

7.5 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA – MID WEST

For noting

Mark Holdsworth, Director, Regional Development provided the Regional Development Australia – Mid West & Gascoyne report. The report is provided as an attachment to the Agenda. **(Attachment 3).**

7.6 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INDUSTRY REGULATION AND SAFETY

For noting

The February 2026 DLGIRS update is attached to the Agenda **(Attachment 4).**

8 ZONE BUSINESS FOR DECISION

8.1 DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2025 TO 31 DECEMBER 2025

RESOLUTION

That the Northern Country Zone financial report for December 2025 be received.

Moved: **President Cr Isabelle Scott**
Seconded: **President Cr Liz Sudlow**

CARRIED

Summary
The following is based on the transactions that occurred between 01 July 2025 and 31 December 2025.

NORTHERN COUNTRY ZONE OF WALGA INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT For the period 1 July 2025 to 31 December 2025			
	Date	**Amount**	**Description**
Statement Balance B/F	1/07/2025	**$9,980.95**	
	09/12/25	$2,000.00	Shire of Three Springs Annual Subscription 2025/26
	09/12/25	$2,000.00	Shire of Perenjori Annual Subscription 2025/26
	09/12/25	$2,000.00	Shire of Northampton Annual Subscription 2025/26
	09/12/25	$2,000.00	Shire of Mingenew Annual Subscription 2025/26

	09/12/25	$2,000.00	Shire of Morawa Annual Subscription 2025/26
	09/12/25	$2,000.00	City of Greater Geraldton Annual Subscription 2025/26
	09/12/25	$2,000.00	Shire of Irwin Annual Subscription 2025/26
	09/12/25	$2,000.00	Shire of Coorow Annual Subscription 2025/26
	09/12/25	$2,000.00	Shire of Chapman Valley Annual Subscription 2025/26
	09/12/25	$2,000.00	Shire of Carnamah Annual Subscription 2025/26
Total Receipts		**$20,000.00**	
Payments Made	02/10/25	-$72.00	Microsoft Exchange online subscription annual 010825-310726
	02/10/25	-$75.00	Northern Country Zone EO Mailbox Fees
	03/10/25	-$31.55	Officeworks -Zone meeting Snacks
	03/10/25	-$78.07	Officeworks- Name Plates for Zone Meeting
	27/10/25	-$818.18	Timeless Zone Meeting morning tea
	16/12/25	-$545.45	November NCZ Meeting - Morning Tea & Lunch catering
Total Payments Made		**-$1,620.25**	
Closing Cash Balance	31/12/25	**$28,360.70**	
Amount held in trust by WALGA		**$28,360.70**	

Annual subscriptions totalling $20,000 were invoiced in accordance with the November Zone Meeting Minutes. Payments have been received from 9 of the 10 Local Governments. Expenditure incurred between 1 July 2025 and 31 December 2025 amounted to $1,620.25, resulting in a closing account balance of $28,360.70.

8.2 REQUEST TO PRESENT – AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS (ABS)

RESOLUTION

That the Northern Country Zone supports the deputation of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to be provided at zone meetings.

Moved: **President Cr Nicole Batten**
Seconded: **President Cr Liz Sudlow**

CARRIED

BACKGROUND
WALGA has been approached by a representative from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) requesting support for a deputation to be provided at Zones meetings to facilitate a targeted, Elected Member/CEO-focused discussion on the Australian Census.

The ABS is seeking insight on local community considerations, participation challenges, and how Census engagement can be strengthened across Western Australia.

This proposal recognises that councillors have distinct responsibilities, insights, and perspectives that extend beyond operational Census delivery.

CEOs and Elected members will also have the opportunity to explore how Census data supports council planning, advocacy, and service delivery, while helping shape future engagement approaches.

The session is designed to be practical, collaborative, and responsive to the priorities and experiences of local governments.

The session would be framed as: "We are here to listen — what would you like to ask, know, or see changed?"
Focus points:

- Elected-member perspectives
- Local challenges and insights
- Improvement and change
- Value for Local Governments
- Strengthened collaboration

8.3 WATER CORPORATION REPRESENTATION TO ZONE MEETING

By Shire of Perenjori

RESOLUTION

That the Northern Country Zone invite representation from the Water Corporation to the next Zone meeting requesting a briefing on;

- **an overview of the current condition of Water Corporation infrastructure in the Midwest**
- **an overview of any capital investment / upgrades scheduled in the Midwest**

Moved: **President Cr Jude Sutherland**
Seconded: **President Cr Nicole Batten**

CARRIED

BACKGROUND

A number of significant Water Corporation infrastructure failings have occurred within the Shire of Perenjori over the past 12 – 18 months. These failings have not been resolved by the replacement or upgrade of infrastructure but rather by temporary solutions such as the carting of potable water over an extended period. Feedback from other Local Governments in the Zone is that similar temporary solutions are being preferred to the capital upgrade of Water Corporation infrastructure.

The Shire of Perenjori considers it would be beneficial to Zone members to have a clear understanding of the condition of Water Corporation infrastructure in the Midwest and what capital investment is proposed in the future.

9 ZONE BUSINESS FOR NOTING/DISCUSSION

9.1 CORRESPONDENCE

9.1.1 Correspondence Out

For noting

Attachment – Invitation to Minister Dawson to attend the 23 February 2026 Northern Country Zone Meeting. **(Attachment 5)**

Attachment – Invitation to CBH CEO, Ben MacNamara to attend the 23 February 2026 Northern Country Zone Meeting **(Attachment 6)**

9.1.2 Correspondence In

For noting

Email received 27/01/2025 – Declined invitation from Minister Dawson to attend all Northern Country Zones in 2026

Emailed received 29/01/2025 – Declined invitation from CBH, CEO Ben MacNamara to attend the 23 February & 20 April Northern Country Zone Meetings

9.2 WATER MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION PAPER UPDATE

By Rebecca Brown, WALGA Policy Manager Environment and Waste

For discussion

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA has developed a Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper exploring issues for Local Governments in managing water resources.
- To inform the Discussion Paper, WALGA undertook research and direct engagement with the sector and reviewed existing Water Advocacy Positions and feedback from WALGA Zones.
- Based on this consultation, the Discussion Paper identifies water security and water efficiency as as key themes.
- Feedback on the Discussion Paper will inform the development of a new water management advocacy position.
- Zones and Local Governments are encouraged to provide comments to WALGA by 12 March 2026.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This item relates to WALGA Advocacy Positions 3.1.1 Service Delivery to Aboriginal Communities, 4.3 Clearing Permits and Water Licenses and Permits, 6.10 Public Open Space (POS) and 6.14 Planning for Water.

ATTACHMENT

- Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper

BACKGROUND

Local Governments contribute to the management of water through strategic planning, land management, development approvals, community behaviour change and, in some cases, direct water service provision. Local Governments' role in water service provision

includes drainage, water use and re-use and aspects of wastewater and sewerage services. The challenges for future water management are escalating across Western Australia due to population growth, climate change and increased competition for limited water resources.

To inform the Discussion Paper WALGA reviewed its existing Water Advocacy Positions and motions, feedback from WALGA Zones and undertook research and direct consultation with the sector. Consultation included workshops with both metropolitan and non-metropolitan Local Governments, an online session with 40 officers focused on water security and efficiency and a regionally focused session with 30 Local Government representatives exploring the barriers to being waterwise in a regional setting. In addition, WALGA conducted 14 one-on-one interviews with officers from 22 metropolitan, regional and remote Local Governments to better understand key issues. Further insights were gained through meetings with officers from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Water Corporation, as well as internal discussions with WALGA.

COMMENT

From consultation and research WALGA has undertaken with Local Government, two key themes consistently emerged - water security and water efficiency.

Water security relates to the reliable availability, adequate quantity and acceptable quality of water needed to support human health, economic development and environmental amenity. Issues identified include:

- Infrastructure: Funding to repair and upgrade aging Local Government water infrastructure including irrigation, drainage and stormwater systems and to improve reliability of State-managed assets.
- Alternative Sources: Diversifying water supply through non-traditional sources such as recycled water, stormwater harvesting, or desalination to support community assets.
- Licensing: Reforming the current water licensing system, including equity, access and regulatory enforcement.
- Access: Addressing barriers to equitable water access, particularly for regional and remote communities.
- Use: Planning for water allocation and consumption across sectors.

Water efficiency is focused on reducing unnecessary water loss through better practices, technologies and infrastructure. Issues identified include:

- Technology: Adopting waterwise technologies to enhance water efficiency.
- Water Literacy and behaviour change: Increasing water literacy within Local Government and the community to support change management and adaptation within communities.
- Water Sensitive Urban Design: Improving understanding to encourage the adoption of efficient technologies and design standards to reduce water consumption across public and private infrastructure.

Local Governments across Western Australia are addressing water security and efficiency through various actions across strategic infrastructure planning, innovative water management practices and community awareness. A new Water Management Advocacy Position will ensure WALGA can effectively advocate on behalf of the sector in relation to this issue. The Discussion Paper includes options to address these issues and questions for the sector relating to each of the key areas.

Feedback on the Discussion Paper will inform the development of a new water management advocacy position. All Zones and Local Governments are encouraged to provide comments to WALGA by 12 March 2026.

9.3 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT CLIMTE CHANGE ADVOCACY POSITION

By Rebecca Brown, WALGA Policy Manager Environment and Waste

For noting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA is undertaking consultation on a revised Climate Change Advocacy Position.
- This Draft was developed following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team of State Council.
- Since WALGA's current Advocacy Position and Policy Statement were endorsed in 2018, there have been significant legislative, policy, technological and scientific changes.
- An updated climate change advocacy position, which complements other WALGA advocacy positions, will provide a sound basis for WALGA's advocacy.
- WALGA is seeking Council endorsed feedback by 1 May 2026.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This item is intended to replace WALGA's 2018 Climate Change Advocacy Position and Policy Statement.

ATTACHMENT

The Consultation Paper is available online.

BACKGROUND

Climate change, and related legislation, policy and action, have implications for many aspects of Local Governments' operations and services. More frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves, bushfires, extreme rainfall events and warming, rising sea levels are increasing the costs and complexity of delivering critical services, infrastructure and ensuring community wellbeing.

In 2018, State Council endorsed a Climate Change Policy Statement and advocacy position, following extensive sector consultation. Since this Advocacy Position was adopted there have been significant legislative, policy, technological and scientific changes, including:

- The national *Climate Change Act 2022* and the Western Australian Climate Change Bill 2023.
- The *Local Government Amendment Act 2023,* which expanded Western Australian Local Governments' general function to include planning for, and mitigating, the risks associated with climate change.
- The release of the Australian Government's National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan in 2025.
- Escalation of the transition to renewable energy, uptake of electric vehicles and energy efficiency standards under the National Construction Code.
- Climate science and projections (international, national and WA specific) have also become clearer regarding the risks posed by climate change and the need for action to address the consequential impacts.

COMMENT

It is important that the WALGA climate change advocacy position is updated to reflect these changes and the consequent needs and priorities of Local Governments. An updated climate change advocacy position, which complements other WALGA advocacy positions, will provide a sound basis for WALGA's advocacy.

Following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team, WALGA has developed a revised, draft Climate Change Advocacy Position for Local Government feedback.

WALGA Environment and Waste Team members will be attending Zone meetings in April 2026 to support zone discussions on the draft Advocacy Position.

WALGA is seeking Council endorsed feedback on the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position by **COB Friday, 1 May 2026.** Feedback can be provided to environment@walga.asn.au.

Following consideration of this feedback a final draft advocacy position will be developed and provided to Zones and State Council for consideration, expected to be in July 2026.

9.4 DISASTER READY FUND: ROUND 4 ANTICIPATED TO OPEN IN MARCH 2026

By Rachel Armstrong, Policy Manager Emergency Management

For noting

The Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) is the Australian Government's key funding program to support projects that reduce disaster risk and strengthen community resilience.

Round Four of the DRF is expected to open in March 2026 with approximately $200 million available nationally. A strong focus on *construction-ready*, infrastructure-based mitigation projects with clear risk reduction benefits is expected. This is similar to Round 3 which prioritised infrastructure-based projects such as flood levees, cyclone shelters, warning systems. A list of Round 3 projects funded is available at Disaster Ready Fund | NEMA).

WALGA is providing early notice to Zones and member Local Governments to consideration of both individual and collaborative project opportunities, and pre-planning ahead of the formal announcement.

The DRF is administered by DFES, in Western Australia. Further information is available at Disaster Resilience Grants - Department of Fire and Emergency Services and by emailing DisasterResilienceGrants@dfes.wa.gov.au.

DRF Round 4 is likely to be released in March 2026, and encourage Local Governments to consider shared or individual disaster risk reduction projects

WALGA will advise the Sector when the DRF is formally announced.

9.5 2026 LOCAL GOVERNMENT HONOURS AWARDS

By Kathy Robertson, Manager Association Governance

For noting

The Honours Program recognises and celebrates the outstanding achievements and lasting contributions made by Elected Members and officers to their respective Local Government, the Local Government sector, WALGA and the wider community.

There are five awards in the 2026 Program:

1. Local Government Medal
2. Life Membership

3. Eminent Service Award
4. Merit Award
5. Young Achievers Award

All Local Government Elected Members and officers are eligible for nomination for each award.

Nominations are open now and will close at **5:00pm on Thursday, 2 April 2026.**

Further information about the 2026 Honours Program, including the nomination form and guidelines for preparing nominations, are available on the WALGA website.

All awards will be presented later this year at the WALGA Local Government Awards event. More details about the event will be announced shortly.

For more information contact Habiba Farrag, State Council Governance Officer, on 9213 2050 or via email honours@walga.asn.au.

9.6 DRAFT RENEWABLE ENERGY PLANNING CODE

By Kieran McGovern, Senior Policy Advisor, Planning

For noting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA Advocacy Position 6.17 Renewable Energy Facilities calls for changes to the renewable energy State planning framework to ensure it is fit for purpose to guide the ongoing development of the sector.
- The State Government has released a draft Renewable Energy Planning Code and Guidelines with the aim of establishing a consistent assessment framework, clear development standards, and improved certainty around impacts such as noise, landscape, environmental considerations, and safety.
- The Code initially focuses on wind farms but is designed to expand to other renewable technologies, requiring detailed technical reporting and encouraging (but not regulating) community benefit-sharing agreements.
- Proposed regulatory amendments would align local planning schemes with the Code and classify renewable energy projects valued at $20 million or more as mandatory significant development, shifting decision-making authority to the WAPC.
- WALGA strongly encourages consideration of the draft Code by Zones. Local Governments should make their own submissions on the draft Code by 10 April 2026 and provide feedback to WALGA to inform our submission on behalf of the sector by 27 February 2026. Council endorsed submissions are preferred.

ATTACHMENT

- Draft Renewable Energy Planning Code and Guidelines
- Information Sheet - Proposed Amendments to Local Planning Scheme Regulations
- Information Sheet - Proposed Amendments to Significant Development Regulations
- WALGA summary of the draft Renewable Energy Planning Code

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's proposed advocacy approach is consistent with WALGA Advocacy Positions:

- 6.1 Planning Principles and Reform
- 6.4 State Development Applications and Decision Making
- 6.16 Energy Transition Engagement and Community Benefit Framework

- 6.17 Renewable Energy Facilities
- 6.18 Priority Agriculture.

BACKGROUND

The growth in the number, size, and complexity of renewable energy facilities across Western Australia is expected to continue as energy generation and other traditional industries de-carbonise their facilities and operations. As a result, the placement and management of renewable energy facilities have become contentious issues in local communities across Western Australia.

In September 2024, WALGA's State Council endorsed three advocacy positions to address concerns related to renewable energy. Advocacy Position 6.17 Renewable Energy Facilites noted that the existing Western Australian Planning Commission's (WAPC) Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities was inadequate to address these concerns, leading to inconsistent application and approvals of renewable energy facilities across the State.

The advocacy position calls for the existing Position Statement: Renewable Energy Facilites to be elevated to a State planning policy, to provide the highest level of planning policy control and ensure the state planning framework is fit for purpose to guide the ongoing development of the sector.

On 12 December 2025, the State Government released a draft Renewable Energy Planning Code (the Code) and associated Guidelines for public consultation. The Code has been prepared to provide guidance to industry, Local Government and communities by:

- introducing a consistent development assessment framework for renewable energy infrastructure across Western Australia.
- establishing clear development standards and application requirements.
- addresses potential land use and environmental impacts, such as noise and landscape considerations.

The initial focus of the Code is on wind farms, with flexibility to expand to other renewable energy developments, including solar farms and battery energy storage systems.

The draft Code covers key planning issues such as safety, noise, shadow flicker, landscape and visual impact, natural environment, natural hazards, aviation safety, electromagnetic interference, transport, construction, and decommissioning.

Under the proposed Code, development applications must include detailed technical reports, whilst community benefit-sharing agreements are encouraged, these agreements sit outside of the planning system.

To enable implementation of the Code, regulatory amendments are proposed to the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015* to support incorporation of the Code into local planning schemes through Model Provisions, introduce standard land-use definitions that will apply to all local planning schemes and guide assessment of new noise-sensitive development near existing or approved wind farms.

There are also proposed reforms to the *Planning and Development (Significant Development) Regulations 2024*, which will classify renewable energy development applications valued at $20 million or more as mandatory significant development. These projects will be assessed and determined by the WAPC under the State Significant Development Pathway (under Part 11B of the *Planning and Development Act 2005*), and Local Governments role will be to provide commentary to the development application, but final decision-making authority will rest with the WAPC.

Consultation on the draft Code and Guidelines closes 10 April 2026.

COMMENT

WALGA's has advocated for changes to the renewable energy State planning framework to ensure orderly and proper planning of renewable energy facilities and therefore welcomes the release of the draft Renewable Energy Planning Code and Guidelines by the State Government for public comment. This draft Code represents a significant step toward establishing a consistent planning framework to guide the ongoing development of renewable energy facilities across WA - providing important clarity and guidance to WA Local Governments.

The proposed amendments to classify renewable energy projects over $20 million as 'mandatory significant development' that must be determined by WAPC does not align with WALGA's Advocacy Position 6.4 State Development Applications and Decision Making, as it has the potential to erode Local Government decision making powers and community input. WALGA's position is that Part 11B should be abolished, or, if it is retained, the cost threshold should be raised to $50 million.

WALGA considers it is essential that the requirement for community benefits be mandated. There are several options that should be examined as potential mechanisms to mandate community benefit-sharing agreements, including (but not limited to) amendments to existing planning or energy legislation or new, standalone legislation.

There is also a lack of guidance regarding appropriate land uses in particular zones, specifically protecting rural land for agricultural purposes, instead stating that wind farms are generally compatible with agricultural land uses. WALGA's position is that regulatory amendments are required to create a model zone through the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015* for land identified as high quality agricultural land (noting most of this land is located in the South West region) known as the 'Priority Agriculture'.

WALGA held two online information sessions on the Code alongside the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage on 5 and 9 February 2026 for Local Government officers and Elected Members respectively.

WALGA will prepare a submission to the State on behalf of the sector to ensure the draft Code delivers positive outcomes for Member Local Governments, communities and industry.

WALGA strongly encourages consideration of the draft Code by Zones. Local Governments should make their own submissions on the draft Code by 10 April 2026 and provide feedback to WALGA to inform our submission on behalf of the sector by 27 February 2026. Council endorsed submissions are preferred.

WALGA's submission will be provided to State Council by flying agenda to meet the submission deadline.

10 GENERAL BUSINESS

As per Item 35 of the Zone Standing Orders, a Delegate may under General Business introduce a motion relating to any item of interest to Local Government, but not otherwise.

10.1 CALL TO GUESTS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

Main Roads WA
MRWA provided updates on recently completed projects, ongoing recruitment for in-house maintenance roles, and noted recent cyclone impacts affecting operations.

Mid West Development Commission

Mr Nils Hay noted progress by the Productivity Commission's inquiry into regional airfares , provided an update on the Regional Housing Support Fund, and noted outcomes from a recent forum with Keystart.

10.2 REGIONAL ISSUES

As per the resolution at Item 9.1 of the February 2018 meeting, Regional Issues are open for discussion.

10.3 OTHER GENERAL BUSINESS

Midwest Secondary Grain Freight Route – Tranche 2 Infrastructure Australia Business Case
The Shire of Mingenew provided an update on the development of the above.

The President calls for Other General Business

11 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Northern Country Zone will be held Monday, 20 April 2026 at the City of Geraldton Multipurpose Centre, commencing at 1pm.

12 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 2:33pm.