

KIMBERLEY ZONE

Meeting Minutes

10 April 2025

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1. Kimberley Country Zone Meeting Open: 9:29AM

Chair acknowledged the Traditional Custodians of the different lands on which people met today, and paid respect to all the Elders past, present and emerging.

2. Attendance and Apologies

Name	Shire / Council / Organisation	Method
Members		
Cr Malcolm Edwards	President, Shire of Halls Creek	In Person
Cr Chris Mitchell	President, Shire of Broome – Chair	In Person
Cr Peter McCumstie	President, Shire of Derby West Kimberley	Zoom
Observers		
Jeremy Hall	A/CEO, Shire of Broome	In Person
Tamara Clarkson	CEO, Shire of Derby West Kimberley	In Person
Susan Leonard	CEO, Shire of Halls Creek	In Person
Vernon Lawrence	CEO, Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley	In Person
Executive Support Team		
Paul Rosair	Principal NAJA Business Consulting	In Person
Michelle Mackenzie	Principal Mira Consulting	In Person
Jane Lewis	Principal Redit Research	Zoom
Rebecca Billing	Administrative Assistant, NAJA Business Consulting	Zoom
Apologies		
Gordon Thomson	President, Shire of Christmas Island	
David Price	CEO, Shire of Christmas Island	
Aindil Minkom	President, Cocos (Keeling) Islands	
Frank Mills	CEO, Cocos (Keeling) Islands	
Tony Lacy	Cocos (Keeling) Islands	
Cr Azah Badlu	Cocos (Keeling) Islands	
Sam Mastrolembo	CEO, Shire of Broome	

Name	Shire / Council / Organisation	Method
Cr David Menzel	Zone Chair, and President, Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley	
Cr Tony Chafer	Deputy Shire President, Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley	
Guests		
Nick Sloan	CEO, WALGA	Zoom
Cr Karen Chappel	President, WALGA	Zoom

3. Disclosures, Conflicts and Declarations of Interest:

	Fina	ancial Interest	/ Impartiality
Member	Item Number	Item	Nature of Interest
Nil			

4. Ki	mberley Country Zone State Council Agenda:
	Attachments:
	1 President's Report
	2 WALGA State Council Agenda and Report on State Council Actions
	(Separately Attached)

1.1 Presidents Report – Attachment 1





President's Report May 2025

Introduction

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

One election finished, two more to go in 2025.

In this report, I outline the State election result and touch on the outcomes of WALGA's advocacy, the Federal election strategy, the Aboriginal Engagement Forum, Local Government legislative reform and work in the Renewable Energy area.

State Election

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

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.

I have invited Ministers with a Regional Portfolio to attend Zone meetings where possible.

WALGA's "The West at its Best" State Election Priorities was highly successful with all parties committing to components of the priority requests. The Labor Government's commitments were significant, and a report will be provided in the State Council agenda for this round of meetings.

Federal Election Strategy

WALGA's 2025 Federal Election policy platform is now complete and was provided to the Federal Government and WA Members of Parliament and candidates in February 2025. The Australian Local Government Association will also be running a public campaign to seek additional funding for priority areas for Local Governments.

WALGA's key areas of focus are Community Infrastructure, Coastal Management, Emergency Management, Regional Health, Safer Roads and Telecommunications.

WALGA is seeking meetings with relevant Members of Parliament in coming months to discuss these important priorities.

Aboriginal Engagement Forum

I want to thank those Elected Member and State Councillors who have registered to join us at the Aboriginal Engagement Forum on 9 April and especially mention Cr Barry Winmar and Cr Helen Sadler for their membership of the event Reference Group. I'm delighted to report that we've had a record number of State Councillors, Elected Members, and CEO delegates register this year, which speaks to the importance of this issue and high calibre program.



The afternoon before the Forum, WALGA will hold its first Aboriginal Elected Members Roundtable with 15 Aboriginal Elected Members from across the State. This event will provide an opportunity for attendees to share their experiences, achievements, challenges and aspirations as a Councillor and to explore how WALGA can assist and support them. I look forward to building on this important work.

Renewable Energy

Work has commenced on the development of a best practice Community Benefits and Engagement Guide to assist Local Governments working with proponents on large scale renewable energy projects. Two workshops have been held with Local Governments, providing them the opportunity to speak about the challenges and opportunities they are facing.

WALGA is also conducting research relating to Local Government rating and payment in lieu of rates in respect to renewable energy projects.

Through this project, consultants have bene engaged to provide advice on current rating provisions available to Local Governments. This includes differential rating and reviewing rating methods from other jurisdictions including Victoria's Payment in Lieu of Rates (PILOR) Scheme.

Letters have also been sent to the Premier and the new Minister for Energy and Decarbonisation; Manufacturing; Skills and TAFE; Pilbara, seeking a meeting to discuss the key issues being faced by Local Governments.

Local Government Legislative Reform

WALGA continues to support members in implementing and preparing for reforms included in the Local Government Amendment Acts of 2023 and 2024.

The requirement to appoint all Committee Members by absolute majority Council decision by 1 July 2025 is now in effect. Preparation is also being made for the anticipated reforms to Audit Risk and Improvement Committee, including the requirement to appoint an independent person as Presiding Member. In addition, Local Governments are required to consider the application of newly introduced caretaker restrictions in their forward planning.

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries consultation regarding the publication of CEO KPIs and online registers is open until 8 May. WALGA circulated an Info Page and Discussion paper, seeking feedback on the draft regulations. The results of this consultation, and proposed WALGA submission will be in the State Council agenda to be considered at the April/May round of Zone and State Council meetings.

President Cr Karen Chappel AM JP WALGA President



President's Contacts

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

State and Commonwealth Government Relations

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

Zone Meetings

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

Local Government Relations

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

1.

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

Conferences, Workshops, Public Relations

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



1.2 Reports from Representatives

WALGA -

- Cr Karen Chappel, President
- Nick Sloan, CEO

5.2.1 Reports from Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries Report

Report will be provided once available.



5.3 Reports from Kimberley Country Zone

Zone Delegates are invited to read and consider the WALGA State Council Agenda, which has been provided as an attachment with this Agenda and can be found via the link <u>here</u>.

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 the meeting on 7 May 2025. The State Council Agenda items requiring a decision of State Council are extracted for Zone consideration below.

5.3.1 Item/Matters for Decision

Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations
Council Agenda 8.1 Regulations for CEO KPIs and online registers – WALGA Submission	 RECOMMENDATION That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.1 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided below. WALGA RECOMMENDATION That WALGA endorse the recommendations contained in the attached 'Regulations for CEO KPIs and public registers submission'. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Consultation is open on the draft Local Government Regulations Amendment Regulations 2024 (the Draft Regulations), which give effect to reforms relating to the publication of online registers, publication of CEO performance criteria and performance reviews, and other CEO matters. The Local Government legislation reform platform from the State Government indicated that one of the reform outcomes was "Reducing red tape, increasing consistency and simplicity". The overwhelming sector feedback is that these reforms will not achieve this aim and will instead increase red tape without any clear public benefit. Sector feedback has been collated and identifies overarching concerns listed in this report. The attached submission, informed by this feedback, is recommended
	for endorsement.



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations
	 ATTACHMENT Regulations for CEO KPIs and public registers Draft WALGA submission
	POLICY IMPLICATIONS WALGA's existing advocacy positions are based on the high-level reform proposals provided for public consultation in 2022.
	The current Advocacy Positions are:
	2.2.4 CEO Recruitment Panel The Local Government sector supports the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries establishing a panel of approved panel members to perform the role of the independent person on CEO recruitment panels.
	2.5.27 Online Registers The Local Government sector supports requiring Local Governments to report specific information in online registers on the Local Government's website, including registers for leases, community grants, interests disclosures, applicant contributions and contracts (excluding contracts of employment).
	2.5.28 Publishing CEO Key Performance Indicators
	 The Local Government sector conditionally supports the reporting of CEO Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are consistent with the strategic direction and operational function of the Local Government, subject to exemptions for publishing KPIs of a confidential nature. The Local Government sector does not support results of CEO performance reviews being published.
8.2 Dog and Cat Management	RECOMMENDATION
Advocacy Position	That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.2 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided below.
	WALGA RECOMMENDATION That WALGA replace Advocacy Position 2.12 <i>Puppy Farming</i> with a revised <i>Dog and Cat Management</i> advocacy position, as follows:



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations
	 In regard to the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the PetsWA Centralised Database, the WA Local Government sector advocates: a) that fees reflect completed cost modelling to ensure that Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011. b) that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index. c) that the PetsWA centralised registration database is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government registration fee revenue. d) that the function of PetsWA be restricted to the registration of dogs and cats, exclude ancillary functions such as animal related complaints and infringement notices, and integrate with existing Local Government corporate systems. e) for the continued legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements. f) for a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from approved breeders. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Motions from Zones regarding the PetsWA Centralised Registration Database provide an opportunity to review the existing Puppy Farming advocacy position. The purpose of the new position is to reflect the progression of the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the emerging concerns of the Local Government sector regarding the PetsWA centralised registration Stop Puppy Farming advocacy position. The Government sector regarding the PetsWA centralised registration system. The Government sector regarding the PetsWA centralised registration system. The Governance Policy Team endorsed the new advocacy position at its m



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations
	The current Advocacy Position is as follows:
	 2.12 Puppy Farming The WA Local Government sector: Welcomes a cost modelling review of the financial impact on Local Governments to ensure that Local Government is able to fully recover costs and not be disadvantaged in ensuring compliance of any new legislation to Stop Puppy Farming. Acknowledges the benefit of de-sexing of dogs not used for approved breeding purposes, and request further information on the complexities associated with de-sexing of dogs prior to considering supporting the proposal. Supports a centralised dog registration system that is developed, operated and maintained by State Government. Supports appropriate legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements. Does not support the transition of pet shops to adoption centres. Requests there be a Local Government-specific consultation process in relation to the proposed amendments to the Animal Welfare Act to introduce Standards and Guidelines for the Health and Welfare of Animals including dogs. Supports a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from professional registered breeders. Requests the State Government discontinue the use of the term 'Farming' due to the negative connotation that may be associated with other regulated industries, and consider renaming the initiative 'Stop Puppy Mills'. The Local Government sector advocates that: any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act be paid by the State Government; and b) the Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-
	annually and at minimum, be adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.
	The recommended new Advocacy Position is as follows:
	Dog and Cat Management In regard to the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the PetsWA Centralised Database, the WA Local Government sector advocates:



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations	
	 a) that fees reflect completed cost modelling to ensure that Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011. b) that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index. c) that the PetsWA centralised registration database is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government registration fee revenue. d) that the function of PetsWA be restricted to the registration of dogs and cats, exclude ancillary functions such as animal related complaints and infringement notices, and integrate with existing Local Government corporate systems. e) for the continued legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements. f) for a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from approved breeders. A table comparing the current and proposed advocacy position can be seen in Attachment A. 	
8.3 Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Advocacy Position	Attachment A. RECOMMENDATION That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.3 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided below. WALGA RECOMMENDATION That WALGA replace the following Advocacy Positions: 5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act 5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves with an updated Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Advocacy Position as follows: WALGA calls on the Western Australian Government, in consultation with Local Government, to undertake legislative and policy reform to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the regulatory system for clearing native vegetation in Western Australia, including: 1. Amending the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and associated	



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations
	a. introducing statutory timeframes for the determination of referrals, permit applications and appeals
	b. increasing the default duration of Area and Purpose Permits to 10 years
	c. provide a permanent exemption for clearing of previously legally cleared transport corridors
	d. strengthening environmental data sharing requirements to ensure proponents cannot opt-out of sharing data collected for environmental assessment and monitoring purposes.
	 Ensuring the regulatory system is adequately resourced to: a. implement an expedited process for clearing permits for projects that prevent death and serious injury (road safety), and state and federally funded or co-funded projects b. establish a dedicated Local Government unit within the
	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to: i. case manage Local Government referrals and clearing permit applications
	ii. provide guidance and training for Local Governments, particularly in relation to roadside vegetation management iii. support partnerships with Local Governments in
	strategic environmental offsets
	c. enable timely investigation and enforcement action for illegal clearing
	d. increase investment in the collection and provision of statewide biodiversity data, including:
	i. funding and coordinating a state-wide biodiversity survey program to standardise habitat and vegetation mapping
	<i>ii. making biodiversity data more discoverable, accessible and useable.</i>
	 Undertaking bioregional planning for native vegetation management, with a focus on highly cleared areas and implementing strategic solutions for environmental offsets that can be utilised by Local Government.
	4. Working with the Australian Government to reduce duplication between the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
	• The effectiveness, cost and complexity of the regulatory system for native vegetation clearing has been a longstanding concern for Local Governments, particularly in relation to its impacts on the delivery of road and other infrastructure projects.



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations
	 WALGA has made numerous representations and submissions to the State Government on this issue. WALGA's current <u>advocacy positions</u> relating to the regulation of clearing of native vegetation were endorsed by State Council in 2004 (5.2.1) and 2006 (5.2.2). Numerous reviews and significant legislative and policy changes aimed at streamlining regulatory requirements have occurred since that time which has resulted in some improvement, however, problems persist. The updated Advocacy Position, seeks to respond to feedback and issues raised by the sector, calls the State Government to:
	 implement legislative, policy and process changes, including the imposition of statutory timeframes for assessments and appeals; increasing the duration of clearing permits; providing a permanent exemption to enable clearing in previously legally cleared transport corridors; and strengthening environmental data sharing requirements. allocate adequate resources to implement an expedited process for road safety and state and federally funded or co-funded projects; a dedicated Local Government unit to process applications and support the sector; timely compliance and enforcement action; and implement a state-funded collection and provision of data. undertake bioregional planning and implement strategic solutions for environmental offsets for Local Government. reduce duplication between the State and Australian government regulatory systems.
	• At their joint meeting on 24 March, the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Teams recommended that State Council endorse the Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations advocacy position.
	 ATTACHMENT WALGA Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Issues Paper Road Safety Briefing Note
	POLICY IMPLICATIONS This item is to replace existing Advocacy Positions 5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act and 5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves with a new <i>Native</i> <i>Vegetation Clearing Regulations</i> position.
	The current Advocacy Positions are as follows:
	5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	e Recommendations				
	Impact on Road Reserves Position Statement. The Local Government sector supports continued advocacy to minimise the impact on road reserves and in regards to Regulations, processing times, access to vegetation data and a Code of Practice on maintenance activities.				
	5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves The Local Government sector supports Schedule 2 of the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 as a permanent exemption for the maintenance of existing transport corridors and supports the continued advocacy for improvements to processing and timelines of the current clearing legislation.				
	ne proposed Advocacy Position is as follows:				
	 Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations WALGA calls on the Western Australian Government, in consultation with Local Government, to undertake legislative and policy reform to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the regulatory system for clearing native vegetation in Western Australia, including: Amending the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and associated regulations to remove unnecessary process, complexity and improve 				
	 timeframes, including: a. introducing statutory timeframes for the determination of referrals, permit applications and appeals b. increasing the default duration of Area and Purpose Permits to 10 years c. provide a permanent exemption for clearing of previously legally cleared transport corridors d. strengthening environmental data sharing requirements to ensure proponents cannot opt-out of sharing data collected for 				
	 environmental assessment and monitoring purposes. 2. Ensuring the regulatory system is adequately resourced to: a. implement an expedited process for clearing permits for projects that prevent death and serious injury (road safety), and state and federally funded or co-funded projects b. establish a dedicated Local Government unit within the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to: i. case manage Local Government referrals and clearing permit applications ii. provide guidance and training for Local Governments, 				
	particularly in relation to roadside vegetation management iii. support partnerships with Local Governments in strategic environmental offsets				



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations
	 c. enable timely investigation and enforcement action for illegal clearing d. increase investment in the collection and provision of statewide biodiversity data, including: i. funding and coordinating a state-wide biodiversity survey program to standardise habitat and vegetation mapping ii. making biodiversity data more discoverable, accessible and useable. 3. Undertaking bioregional planning for native vegetation management, with a focus on highly cleared areas and implementing strategic solutions for environmental offsets that can be utilised by Local Government. 4. Working with the Australian Government to reduce duplication between the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
8.4 Submission on the State Recovery Arrangements	That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.4 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided below. WALGA RECOMMENDATION That State Council endorse the submission to the Department of Fire and
	 Emergency Services on proposed revisions to the State Recovery Arrangements. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) is consulting on revised State Recovery Arrangements via Engage WA Emergency Management. Formal consultation closes Friday, 2 May. WALGA was granted an extension to enable the draft submission to be included as an Item for Decision in the 7 May State Council Agenda. The revised arrangements integrate lessons from past recoveries, current best practices, and clarify roles and responsibilities. There are no significant changes to Local Government roles and responsibilities under the <i>Emergency Management Act 2005</i> and State Emergency Management Framework. The Commonwealth - State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements - Western Australia (DRFA-WA) are not part of the State Emergency Management Framework and are outside the scope of the review.



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations					
	 WALGA's draft submission was shared with Local Governments and the draft final version incorporates feedback. WALGA's submission is generally supportive of the revised State Recovery Arrangements, which provide improved clarity on roles and responsibilities in recovery, particularly for State Government, and clearer arrangements for transitioning from response to recovery and from recovery to business as usual. WALGA's submission highlights the need for State Government investment in streamlined, appropriate and effective funding mechanisms for recovery and resilience building, and the need to ensure adequate support to Local Governments. The People and Place Policy Team noted the draft submission at its 18 March meeting. 					
	 ATTACHMENT Draft State Recovery Arrangements – WALGA submission 					
	POLICY IMPLICATIONS WALGA's submission on the State Recovery Arrangements is aligned to the following <u>Advocacy Positions</u> :					
	8.1 Emergency Management Principles					
	 The State Government bears fundamental responsibility for emergency management and has the role of providing strategic guidance, support and services for emergency management activities in Western Australia. The State Government should provide financial and resourcing support as necessary to enable Local Governments to adequately deliver their extensive emergency management roles and responsibilities under the State Emergency Management Framework. The Local Government Sector should be engaged as a partner in policy and legislative reviews that impact Local Government emergency management roles and responsibilities. 					
	8.2 State Emergency Management Framework Local Governments are supported to undertake their emergency management responsibilities by a simple and streamlined State Emergency Management Framework with the primary objectives of:					
	 Protecting people, the economy, and the natural environment from disasters; 					



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations
	 Supporting communities in preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies; Clearly outlining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for Local Government and other emergency management stakeholders; Scalability and adaptability that supports Local Governments of varied capacity and capability; and Supporting agency interoperability through common systems and approaches to key activities including data management, communications, and hazard management.
	8.3 Sustainable Grant Funding Model for Emergency Management Local Government should be empowered to discharge its emergency management responsibilities through sustainable grant funding models that support a shared responsibility and all hazards approach to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from natural disasters. A sustainable grant funding model for Local Government emergency management:
	 Empowers Local Governments to undertake proactive approaches to preparedness, prevention, response and recovery; Supports the resilience of local communities through capacity-building activities and programs; Is responsive to the variations in Local Government resourcing and context; and Develops the skills, capacity and capability of the emergency management workforce; and Is consistent, flexible, timely, accessible, scalable, strategic and the guidance provided is comprehensive.
	8.11 Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA)
	 The State Government should fund the implementation of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Improvement Plan endorsed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC). A reformed LEMA system should: Clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of Local Governments in emergency management; Simplify the reporting processes and reduce the administrative burden of maintaining compliance; Provide a suite of scalable tools and guidance materials that are accessible through an online knowledge hub; Build the emergency management capacity and capability of Local Governments through the provision of targeted training, exercising support, human resources and sustainable funding;



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations
	 e. Assist Local Governments to continue to deliver their core business activities and provide public information during an emergency event; f. Improve the connectivity of Local Governments' various risk management and hazard planning processes through an integrated approach; and g. Enable resource sharing and collaboration across the Local Government sector. 5.4.3 Betterment (resilience) The Local Government sector supports increased funding for the replacement or restoration of damaged assets to a more resilient standard following an event.
8.5 Health (Public Buildings) Regulations Consultation	 RECOMMENDATION That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.5 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided below. WALGA RECOMMENDATION That WALGA endorse the submission on Health (Public Buildings) Regulations Consultation to the Department of Health. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY The Department of Health (DoH) is seeking feedback on the <u>Consultation Paper 2025 Health (Public Buildings) Regulations 1992</u> (Consultation Paper, which examines whether the Regulations should be repealed without replacement. Repealing the Regulations is not supported by the sector, as it would impede Local Governments' ability to proactively manage and mitigate public health risks. Revised Regulations are supported to provide a contemporary, risk- based approach to public building management, eliminating unnecessary building construction requirements and incorporating modern compliance and enforcement tools. WALGA received an extension of time from DoH to allow the submission to be considered by State Council as part of the May Agenda. ATTACHMENT WALGA's submission on the Health (Public Buildings) Regulations Consultation



Item / Matters for Decision As per State Council Agenda	Recommendations					
	POLICY IMPLICATIONS WALGA's submission is consistent with the following WALGA Advocacy Position 6.6 Building Act and Regulations Assessments of the effectiveness of building control systems across Australia have recognised that there is diminishing public confidence in					
	the building and construction industry, and that change is required to ensure buildings are safe and perform to expected standards. Now more than ever, the focus is on Local Government building departments to deliver good governance, local leadership and sustainable services that meet the needs of their communities whilst supporting local jobs and economic growth. The Association has the following endorsed positions:					
	 Support the retention of Local Government as the primary permit authority in Western Australia for decisions made under the Building Act 2011. Supports mandatory inspections for all classes of buildings; however, Local Government should not be solely responsible for all mandatory inspections. Advocate for the State Government to urgently prioritise legislative reform that addresses systemic failures in the current building control model and to provide clarification on the role of Local Government in building control to ensure building legislation supports the following objectives: Quality buildings that are cost efficient. Functional, safe and environmentally friendly buildings. Good decision making in all aspects of building. Efficiency and effectiveness in building management, administration and regulation. Openness and accountability with respect to all building matters. Recognition of the rights and responsibilities of all parties in building matters in an equitable manner. 					
	 Existing and proposed building control related fees and charges to be cost recovery for Local Government. WALGA will work with members, state agencies and industry groups to develop training opportunities and to promote the Local Government building surveying profession to ensure sustainability of Local Government building control services. WALGA supports the Australian Building Codes Boards Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings by supporting Local Governments to meet community strategic objectives of a net zero carbon future by 2050 through work with members, state agencies and industry groups. 					



1.6 Other State Council Agenda Items

Zone Delegates are invited to raise for discussion, questions or decision any of the items in the State Council Agenda, including the items for noting, Policy Team and Committee Reports or the Key Activity Reports.



1.4 Status Report on State Council Resolutions

Meeting	Resolution	Comment	Completion Date	Officer Responsible
5 March Item 8.1 Climate Change Advocacy Position	That State Council refer this advocacy item back to the Environment Policy Team for further development. RESOLUTION 003.1/2025	The Environment Policy Team considered motion 8.1 at the March meeting, following State Councils recommendation for further development. The Environment Policy Team agreed that further sector consultation needed to occur to fully understand the sector views in relation to the composite updated Advocacy Position on Climate Change and resolved for WALGA to develop an approach for sector consultation for consideration at the Environment Policy Team meeting in May.		Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy
5 March Item 8.2 Waste Management Legislation Advocacy Position	 That State Council replace the Waste Management Legislation Policy Statement and Advocacy Position 7.1 Waste Management Legislation with the following advocacy position: 1. Local Government <u>generally</u> supports Australian and State Government waste management legislation which: a. includes requirements for national and state waste strategies which support Local Governments to implement the strategies and achieve targets b. focuses on coordinated action and clear roles and responsibilities c. establishes a lead agency for waste management d. establishes and maintains a regulated product stewardship framework for all products entering the Australian market e. includes provisions to optimise market development and participation in waste processing. 2. Local Government calls for the Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2007 to be amended to include: 	Advocacy Positions Manual updated.		Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy



	 a. Waste education in the definition of Waste Services b. Circular Economy principles. RESOLUTION 004.1/2025 			
5 March Item 8.3 Appointment to Finance and Services Committee	That State Council appoint Mayor Caroline Knight, the State Council representative from the Peel Country Zone to the Finance and Services Committee. RESOLUTION 005.1/2025	Noted	March 2024	Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services
5 March Item 8.4 Finance and Services Committee Minutes – 19 February 2025	That State Council endorse the Minutes of the Finance and Services Committee meeting held on 19 February 2025. RESOLUTION 006.1/2025	Endorsed	March 2024	Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services
5 March Item 8.5 Local Government House Trust Board of Management Minutes – 19 February 2025	That State Council note the Minutes of the Local Government House Trust Board of Management meeting held on 19 February 2025. RESOLUTION 007.1/2025	Noted	March 2024	Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services
5 March Item 8.6 Honours Panel Minutes – 18 December 2024	That State Council note the Minutes of the Honours Panel meeting held on 18 December 2024. RESOLUTION 008.1/2025	Noted	March 2024	Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services
5 March Item 8.7 Selection Committee Flying	That State Council note the resolution contained in the 18 February 2025 Selection Committee Flying Minute. RESOLUTION 009.1/2025	Noted	March 2024	Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services



Minute – 18 February 2025				
5 March Item 8.8 LGISWA Board Minutes	That State Council note the Minutes of the LGISWA Board meeting held on 13 December 2024. RESOLUTION 010.1/2025	Noted	March 2024	Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services
5 March Item 8.9 LGIS Board Remuneration	 That State Council: 1. Endorse amendments to the LGIS Corporate Governance Charter to replace the use of the existing Average Weekly Earnings figure (Perth, ABS schedule 6302.0) to the Wage Price Index (reflecting ordinary time hourly rates of pay excluding bonuses for Western Australia; private and public sector; all industries for the prior 12 months), incorporating minor drafting improvements. 2. Approve the remuneration for LGIS Board Members to be adjusted upward by 3.3% for the 2025-26 financial year accordingly. RESOLUTION 011.1/2025 	Amendments to the LGIS Corporate Governance Charter endorsed. Remuneration for LGIS Board Members approved.	March 2024	Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services
5 March Item 8.10 Use of the Association's Common Seal	 That State Council: 1. Notes the delegated use of the common seal by the President and CEO being affixed to the Compliance Certificate for Building Loan Facility with Commonwealth Bank. 2. Notes the delegated use of the common seal by the President and CEO being affixed to the Letter of Offer (Reinstatement) with Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited for the LGIS WorkCare Bank Guarantee for 2025 on 5 February 2025. 3. Approves and ratifies WALGA entering into that Letter of Offer (Reinstatement), which increases the applicable 	Noted Letter of Offer approved and ratified.	March 2024	Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services



5 March Item 9.1 Infrastructure Policy Team Report	 Facility Limit to \$<redacted> to satisfy the requirements of WorkCoverWA and enable the continuation of the LGIS Workers Compensation arrangements.</redacted> RESOLUTION 012.1/2025 That State Council: Note the report from the Infrastructure Policy Team for the 5 March 2025 meeting. Determine to: Determine to: Delete Advocacy Position 5.2.8 (Towards Zero Road Safety Strategy 2008 – 2020). Amend the title of Advocacy Position 5.2.7 from Road Safety Strategy (Imagine Zero) to Driving Change Road Safety Strategy 2020-2030. Undertake further policy development and consultation with Members regarding the default open road speed limit in Western Australia. 	Advocacy Positions Manual updated.	lan Duncan Executive Manager Infrastructure
6 December Item 8.1 2024 Annual General Meeting Resolutions	 That: 1. the item 7.1 Amendments to <i>Cat Act 2011</i> - Allow Local Governments to Make Local Laws to Contain Cats to the Owner's Property be endorsed. 3. the following resolutions from the 2024 WALGA Annual General Meeting be referred to the Governance Policy Team for further work to be undertaken: 7.2Advocacy for Legislative Reforms to Counter Land-Banking 7.3Advocacy for Expansion of Differential Rating to Include Long Term Unoccupied Commercial Buildings (Property Activation Levy). 	Advocacy Positions Manual updated. Correspondence has been sent to the Minister for Local Government requesting the CAT Act be reviewed to provide Local Governments with the ability to contain cats on an owner's property. In addition, work has commenced on developing a template Cat Local Law to assist Local Government to make local laws to the extent of the current local law- making powers.	Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services



	RESOLUTION 089.5/2024	Work on items 7.2 and 7.3 is being carried out and an update will be provided for the next meeting.		
6 December Item 8.1 2024 Annual General Meeting Resolutions	 That: 2. the following resolutions from the 2024 WALGA Annual General Meeting be referred to the Environment Policy Team for further work to be undertaken: 7.2Advocacy for Legislative Reforms to Counter Land-Banking 7.4Action on Asbestos for Western Australia 7.6Advocacy for Accessibility. 4. the following resolution from the 2024 WALGA Annual General Meeting be referred to the People and Place Policy Team for further work to be undertaken: 7.5Addressing the Impracticality of Local Governments Funding Department of Communities and GROH Houses. RESOLUTION 089.5/2024 	Items 7.2, 7.4 & 7.6 will be considered at upcoming meetings of the Environment Policy Team. The People and Place considered motion 7.5 at the March meeting and carried the recommendation: That the People and Place Policy Team agree that the 2024 AGM motion 7.5 Addressing the Impracticality of Local Governments Funding Department of Communities and GROH Houses will be addressed as part of WALGA's advocacy approach on this issue.	Item 7.5 completed 19 March 2025	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy
6 December Item 8.2 Local Government Elections Advocacy Positions	 That item 1 be deferred, and the Secretariat further investigate implications of compulsory and voluntary participation in Local Government elections and report back to State Council. RESOLUTION 090.5/2024 That WALGA adopt the following Elections Advocacy Positions: <i>The Local Government sector supports:</i> 	Advocacy Positions Manual updated. Preparation of a report on implications of compulsory and voluntary participation in Local Government elections in progress. Letter written to Minister for Local Government advising on the five advocacy positions endorsed.		Tony Brown Executive Director Member Services



	 Councillors serve four-year terms with elections every two years and half of the Council positions spilled at each election. First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting system for Local Government elections. If Optional Preferential Voting (OPV) remains as the primary method of voting, the sector supports the removal of the 'proportional' part of the voting method for general elections. First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting system for internal Council elections. First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting system for internal Council elections. Councils holding elections by means of in-person, postal and/or electronic voting. Current legislative provisions of Mayor/President of Class 1 and Class 2 Local Governments being directly elected by the community and Class 3 and Class 4 Local Governments determining whether its Mayor or President is elected by the Council or by the community. RESOLUTION 091.5/2024 		
6 December Item 8.6 Bus Stop Infrastructure Agreement	 That State Council: 1. Provides in principle support for the proposed Bus Stop Infrastructure Partnership Agreement between WALGA and the Public Transport Authority 2024/25 to 2028/29. 2. Request the WALGA Secretariat negotiate with the Public Transport Authority seeking: a. Deletion of the word "typically" from Clauses 6.2, 8.1 (ii) and 8.6 (i) b. Indexation of funding provided under the Bus Shelter Subsidy Program (BSSP) and Bus Shelter Maintenance Assistance Scheme (BSMAS) during or at the end of the Agreement 	The outcome of negotiations with the PTA to amend the draft Agreement to incorporate the matters identified were documented and provided to the WALGA President and CEO for consideration in early April.	Ian Duncan Executive Manager Infrastructure



 3. Authorise the WALGA President to sign the Bus Stop Infrastructure Partnership Agreement, on the completion of best endeavours to negotiate with the Public Transport Authority. 4. Refer the request for WALGA develop an advocacy position that Commonwealth Disability Standards have a provision for minimum standards of public transport shelter to the Infrastructure Policy Team.
RESOLUTION 095.5/2024

1.5 COMPLETE ZONE STATUS REPORT

No outstanding items



Link to Key Pillar/s and Strategies:	Budget Implications
People Place Prosperity PerformancAdvocate Partner PromoteFacilitate Fund Monitor	Nil
Resolution/s	Action(s)
That the Kimberley Country Zone: 1. Notes the report from the WALGA President 2. Notes the State Council Agenda Items as circulated 3. Supports the WALGA recommendation on item 8.3 Native Vegetation Clearing regulations advocacy position and provides an additional Zone resolution to be added to the recommendation as per the following That the Kimberley Regional Group of Councils resolves and provides to State Councils	8.3 - Executive Officer and Secretariat to draft an alternative recommendation to the Native Vegetation Clearing regulations advocacy position and submit to the WALGA State Council for consideration.
submits to State Council: In accordance with its submission <i>"Clearing Legislation Review"</i> to WALGA on 18 December 2024, that the State Government:	
 Provides Legislative Clarity and Consistency The Western Australian Government undertake a review to resolve the current inconsistencies and overlaps between the Land Administration Act 1997, Environmental Protection Act 1986, and the Local Government Act 1995, particularly where these relate to the clearing of native vegetation and the delivery of public works by local governments. Enables Streamlined Gravel Extraction for Public Works The Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 be amended to include an explicit exemption from the requirement for a clearing permit for the extraction of gravel and other basic raw materials from Crown and private land (including in environmentally sensitive areas - in accordance with standard remediation practices), where such materials are required for public works purposes -including road construction, repair, and maintenance - aligning this exemption with the intent and powers already granted under "written law" in the Land Administration Act 1997 and the Local Government Act 1995. 	



Sensitive A That the exis the Environ activities - su bushfire man within Enviro essential pu not impeded 4. Supports all Decision conta 5. Acknowledg 6. Acknowledg Resolutions	r Safety Exemptions in Environmentally reas (ESAs) sting clearing permit exemptions under mental Protection Act 1986 for safety-related uch as emergency access, hazard reduction, and hagement - be clarified and extended to apply onmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), ensuring that blic safety and emergency response actions are by regulatory constraints. other recommendations in the Matters for ined within the State Council Agenda es the Items for noting es the Status Report on State Council		
Moved:	Shire of Broome	Responsible:	Executive Officer / Secretariat
Seconded:	Shire of Derby West Kimberley	Due date:	18/04/2025
Carried:	4/0		

5. Conclusion of Zone Matters: 9:53AM



6. Band 4 Local Governments Meeting Update

For Noting

Submitted by: Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services

Attachment 3: Band 4 Local Governments meeting update report

Background

Following the Band 4 roundtable meeting hosted by the Minister for Local Government, Hon Hannah Beasley, on 3 September 2024, WALGA was pleased to host a further meeting of Band 4 Local Governments to continue the discussion.

The meeting was held on 11 October at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. All 60 Band 4 Local Governments in the State were invited to attend. Overall, 72 representatives from 48 Local Governments attended the meeting.

The aim of the meeting was to identify and agree on the top issues facing Band 4 WA Local Governments, to enable the group to consider and develop potential solutions to these issues, before presenting to the Minister.

Caroline Robinson, Director of 150 Square facilitated the discussion.

Comment

As the main outcome of the meeting, the group identified the top four strategic and operational issues facing Band 4 Local Governments (from most pressing to least pressing):

- 1. Housing;
- 2. Audit;
- 3. Provision of medical services; and
- 4. Financial Assistance Grants (timing.

WALGA has since undertaken considerable work on the above issues.

An update report on the work done to date was recently circulated to all Band 4 CEOs and Presidents and is provided as an attachment to this item.

Resolution/s	Action(s)
For Noting	

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Attachment 3: Band 4 Local Governments meeting update report

WALGA

Band 4 Local Governments meeting | update

Summary of meeting

Following the Band 4 roundtable meeting hosted by the Minister for Local Government, Hon Hannah Beasley, on 3 September, WALGA was pleased to host a further meeting of Band 4 Local Governments to continue the discussion.

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The aim of the meeting was to identify and agree on the top issues facing Band 4 WA Local Governments, to enable the group to consider and develop potential solutions to these issues, before presenting to the Minister.

Caroline Robinson, Director of 150 Square facilitated the discussion.

The top strategic and operational issues identified during the meeting (from most pressing to least pressing) were:

- 1. Housing
- 2. Audit
- Provision of medical services
- Financial Assistance Grants (timing)

WALGA has since undertaken work on the above issues. A progress update is provided below.

Progress update

Housing

Policy and advocacy work

WALGA continues to advocate to the State Government to increase capital funding in areas of market failure. In November, WALGA hosted a Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH) workshop with representation from a diverse range of Local Governments and senior officials from the Department of Communities, Treasury and the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. The workshop considered the current and future GROH program build-to-lease model in the context of the current WA construction market with a view to policy changes. WALGA is waiting on the meeting outcome to be progressed by the State Agencies, noting that State Agencies' ability to progress has been impacted by the upcoming election and caretaker period.

The State 2024-25 Mid-year Review included a new \$400 million Housing Enabling Infrastructure Fund which seeks to increase housing supply by funding water and power infrastructure.

Band 4 Local Governments meeting | update

3 April 2025

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WALGA's 2025 State Election platform calls for the State Government to create a comprehensive long-term strategy to address the entrenched shortage of social, affordable and key worker housing and to undertake a review of the GROH program to improve coordination and responsiveness to regional housing needs. During the election campaign, Labor committed to a \$145 million Regional Housing Package, which includes;

- \$25 million Regional Housing Support Fund to provide grants to unlock and expedite housing delivery across regional WA; and
- \$104 million for the GROH new build program.

WALGA will reach out to the re-elected Labor Government to influence the delivery of the Housing Enabling Infrastructure Fund and the Regional Housing Package, including a call to work with the Local Government sector on the planning and delivery of capital investment programs, including ensuring Member views are considered in relation to critical housing needs.

ALGA is running a public, national election campaign on behalf of the Local Government sector including \$1.1 billion per year for enabling infrastructure to unlock housing supply. The Coalition has committed to a \$5 billion investment in enabling infrastructure. In December, the Australian and State Governments (Labor) committed to a \$105 million Housing Support Program which includes:

- \$50.6 million for Water Corporation infrastructure projects; and
- \$30.5 million for Western Power, DevelopmentWA and Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage projects that will deliver an estimated 4,565 residential lots and 19 social housing dwellings.

Introduction letters to incoming Ministers will provide the starting point for ongoing advocacy to both tiers of Government.

New Preferred Supplier Program

The WALGA Preferred Supplier Program (PSP) includes a Construction and Built Environments Panel (PSP012) which has 35 qualified builders available to Members when undertaking building projects. Included are a range of Preferred Suppliers able to deliver quality modular and prefabricated dwellings. The PSP offers Members a simplified procurement option whereby they can save time and money – the PSP is a recognised tender exemption under the *Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations 1996* and WALGA has legally drafted contract templates available for Members to use with this Panel. For further information on using the PSP for housing projects contact WALGA Contract Manager, Craig Grant, on cgrant@walga.asn.au or 9213 2037.

Audit

The meeting highlighted the following requirements.

- Define consistent requirements
- Request transparency on audit fees
- Provision of scope in time to allow Local Governments to gather the required information

In 2024, WALGA wrote to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations advising of concerns in respect to audit fee increases and also that the scope of 'financial' audits now appears to cover a whole range of issues such as non-financial policies and information technology services.

WALGA has continued to advocate as follows:

WALGA advocate to the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) to reform the audit process for Local Governments by seeking: e



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- Audits of Local Governments are completed and reported on in a timely manner and that the processes, procedures and scope of audits are consistently applied.
- That the OAG review the requirements for pre-audit information with a view to reducing the need for additional information where possible;
- That the OAG review their costing formulae for Local Government audits and show constraint in audit cost increases;
- That the OAG provide a breakdown on the cost of the audit and justification for any variance to the estimate to the Local Government as part of the final billing process;
- That auditors be required to improve their communication and information management and avoid repeated requests for information that has already been provided or that is publicly available;
- 6. That Local Governments only be required to communicate with contract Auditors (unless the OAG is directly auditing the Local Government) and the onus be placed on the contract Auditors to confirm their advice with the OAG before instructing the Local Government; and
- Seek an opportunity for Local Government to make representations in relation to any adverse findings prior to the publication of the report.

WALGA and LG Professionals have recently circulated the third annual audit of the performance of the audit process. Results will be collated and an item will be included in the June round of Zone meetings.

Provision of Medical services

The WALGA Local Government Primary Healthcare Survey Report has now been finalised. Tony Brown shared the report via email with all CEOs in January, including the invitation to be involved in the advocacy that would build on the Report findings. The report is also available on the WALGA website <u>here</u>. WALGA has developed an advocacy strategy that focuses on Local Government sector specific issues within the broader rural healthcare reform agenda. The advocacy strategy aims to:

- Increase awareness of the support Local Governments are providing to support GP services and the opportunity cost consequences;
- Secure the implementation of a Local Government Primary Healthcare program to support and reimburse sector costs;
- Raise awareness of the need to increase the funding and revise the formula for the medical facilities adjustor within the Financial Assistance Grants;
- Influence ALGA to elevate rural health access to a priority issue;
- Support Local Government members to advocate on local and regional GP support issues; and
- Increase sector awareness of supports and guidance for Local Governments that choose to invest in GP services.

The strategy includes targeted actions towards the Australian and State Governments, aligned to their roles within the provision of healthcare services as well as identifying mechanisms for policy collaboration such as the renegotiation of the National Health Reform Agreement in mid-2025.

Health is a key issue in both the 2025 Federal and WA State Elections. At the State level, the returning Labor Government has committed to:

- 53% boost to the PATS fuel subsidy and \$34 million to expand service eligibility;
- \$30 million in health initiatives for the Mid West, including \$7.5 million in operational funding to relocate the RFDS' Mid-West base from Meekatharra to Geraldton;
- \$30 million in additional health initiatives for the Kimberley; and
- \$16.3 million package to boost paramedic services in the Peel and South-West regions.

In the Federal election, Labor has commitment to a 10-year \$8.5 billion funding increase to bulk billing, increased nursing scholarships and GP training programs and an increase to the Federal



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funding for state public hospitals to 45% of the cost of care. The Liberal commitment includes regional health worker attraction, recruitment and retention initiatives. Similarly, the Nationals commitment includes increasing incentives and opportunities for medical professionals to train, live and work in the regions. Access to rural health is a key pillar in the <u>WALGA Federal Election</u> <u>Priorities</u>.

WALGA leveraged the increased media attention on access to healthcare ahead of the State election to write an opinion piece in the West Australian (**attached**) and continues to support regional Member advocacy efforts.

Introduction letters to incoming Ministers will provide the starting point for ongoing advocacy to both tiers of Government. In addition, WALGA is also supporting Members to put forward an ALGA motion on the subject and working with Rural Health West on increasing sector awareness of existing supports and guidance.

Financial Assistance Grants

The meeting identified the following issues:

- ALGA 1% of taxation revenue advocacy to Federal Government
- Timing of funding quarterly
- LRCIP use this formula for capital works
- Uncompetitive program for capital works
- Consistency of timing
- Pre-payment forgive and start again, then quarterly payments
- Compliance clarity of what they are

WALGA has requested that ALGA seek further information from the Federal Government about the timing and phasing of the Financial Assistance Grant payments. ALGA was informed that no decision has been made at this time and that there is some uncertainty this year with the upcoming Federal election. ALGA will continue to request early engagement and seek further information from the Government.



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Opinion Health

OPINION

Karen Chappel: Local councils can't keep picking up the slack on health

Karen Chappel The West Australian Sat, 15 February 2025 2:00AM ♥ Comments ◆



Karen Chappel. Credit: Peter Aquilina/RegionalHUB

Every Australian, no matter where they call home, should have equal access to primary health care services.

Yet, our current health care system is letting down millions of Australians, with the impact disproportionately felt by those living in rural, regional, and remote areas, including more than 500,000 here in Western Australia.

People living in rural, regional and remote areas have poorer health outcomes compared to those in the metropolitan area.

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HEALTH 🗭

HMC Capital interested in taking over Healthscope hospitals

Cheyanne Enciso

They face higher rates of hospitalisations, deaths, and injuries.

They suffer more from preventable, chronic illnesses, and are more likely to manage multiple long-term health conditions than those in metropolitan areas.

They wait longer to get a GP appointment.

This disparity is unacceptable.

Accessing medical care in these regions is a challenge. Many communities only have access to a part-time GP, or in some cases, a nursing post. In other areas, basic medical care can only be accessed by travelling long distances — sometimes more than 100km.

The shortage of GPs in the regions has placed additional pressure on hospital emergency departments. More than half of presentations to emergency departments in rural WA are non-urgent cases, which could have been addressed by a GP if one was available.





Karen Chappel. Credit: Jeff Henderson/RegionalHUB

The Commonwealth Government holds the reins when it comes to national health policy and funding general practice through Medicare. However, the failure of the current system has increasingly forced local governments to step in to ensure their communities have access to essential health services.

According to WALGA's local government primary health care services survey, 69 local governments spent \$6.8 million in 2021-22 to support primary health care in their communities. This support includes funding for accommodation, vehicles, and even financial assistance for GP surgeries that would be otherwise nonviable. This burden falls heavily on smaller communities, with the bulk of support for GP services provided by local governments with populations between 1000 and 5000.

This responsibility should not fall on local governments. This situation is stretching councils' budgets thin, diverting funds from other essential community services and infrastructure. They cannot, and should not, have to shoulder this cost.

As we approach the Federal and State elections, fixing the healthcare system will be a significant part of the debate. Both WA Labor and the Opposition have made various commitments aimed at improving health care in regional areas. While these promises are well-intentioned, they will not address the underlying problems within the health system.



We need the State and the Commonwealth to come together and take decisive action to fix the system.

According to the National Rural Health Alliance, there is a national rural health spending deficit of \$6.5 billion. The incoming governments must bridge this divide. We need system-wide, long-term reforms that ensure equitable provision of general practice and primary healthcare for regional, rural, and remote communities. This includes developing adequate funding models and implementing effective workforce planning, recruitment, and retention strategies.

In 2025, the Australian and all State and Territory governments will sit down to renegotiate the National Health Reform Agreement. This is the ideal opportunity to work together to achieve better outcomes for regional communities and alleviate the pressure on local governments to step in.

By tackling these issues head-on, we make sure that all Australians, regardless of where they live, have access to the primary healthcare services they need and deserve.

Karen Chappel is the president of the WA Local Government Association



7. Local Government (Development Assessment Panels) Regulations 2025

For Noting

Submitted by: Chris Hossen, Policy Manager, Planning and Building and Felicity Morris, Manager Governance and Procurement

Background

The State Government's 2021 updates to the *Action Plan for Planning Reform* included measures to improve consistency and transparency for DAP applications, including clarifying the respective role of Elected Members and officers to remove Elected Members from what were deemed to be administrative DAP functions.

These changes were not included in amendments to the *Planning and Development Act* 2005, but were included as part of the 2024 reforms to the *Local Government Act* 1995 through the insertion of a new section (s. 9.69 B) to allow for the creation of regulations that specify DAP functions that must be performed on behalf of the Local Government by the CEO or authorised officer.

On Tuesday 1 April 2025, new *Local Government (Development Assessment Panels) Regulations 2025* (the Regulations) were gazetted. The Regulations come into full effect from 1 May 2025, and will apply to all Development Assessment Panel (DAP) applications lodged from that date. The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) sent an LG Alert to the sector on 2 April advising of the new regulations.

The Regulations:

- require Responsible Authority Reports (RARs) to be prepared and submitted by the CEO of a Local Government, or an employee authorised by the CEO
 - CEOs of Class 1 and 2 Local Governments must authorise at least one employee
 - Local Governments will still be able to engage external consultants to assist in preparing RARs
- prohibit the Council from directing the CEO, an authorised employee or a consultant in preparing the RAR or directing the CEO to engage a particular consultant
- require the CEO and authorised employees to disclose conflicts of interests in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*, and not undertake any DAP functions in which they have a conflict of interest.

The Regulations are available on the WA Legislation website.



Policy Implications

WALGA <u>Advocacy Positions</u> 6.1 Planning Principles and Reform and 6.4 Development Assessment Panels (see Attachment A).

Comment

Local Governments have one month to consider and implement the appropriate authorisations, and any resulting changes to systems and processes. WALGA will produce template authorisations and will host an officer information session with the relevant departments to assist Local Governments.

While Councils will be prevented from directing staff in the preparation of RARs, the administration can continue to brief Council on the content and progress of any DAP applications. There are no changes to the composition of DAPs.

WALGA will continue to oppose changes that erode Local Government autonomy and influence in the WA planning system and will continue to advocate for reforms that recognise the benefits of local decision making in planning.

WALGA is commencing a review of its Development Assessment Panel advocacy position and will consult with the sector and zones as part of that process.

Questions regarding the Regulations can be directed to the local government reform team at <u>actreview@dlgsc.wa.gov.au</u> or the DAP secretariat at <u>daps@dplh.wa.gov.au</u>.

Resolution/s	Action(s)
For Noting	