

North Metropolitan Zone Minutes

18 February 2026

**Hosted by the City of Wanneroo
23 Dundobar Road, Wanneroo**

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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 were 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 were emailed 7 days prior to the meeting date.

Confirmation of Attendance An attendance sheet was circulated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety Update Report
2. Draft Minutes of previous meeting
3. Zone Status Report
4. President's Report
5. North Metropolitan Zone Standing Orders

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

Zone Chair, Cr Lewis Hutton opened the meeting at 6:34pm.

1.2 ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS	4 Voting Delegates from each Member Local Government
City of Joondalup	Cr Lewis Hutton (Chair) Cr Russ Fishwick JP Cr Denise Mercer (Deputy) Ms Kylie Bergmann, Manager Governance – non-voting
City of Stirling	Mayor Mark Irwin Cr Suzanne Migdale Cr Rob Papparde Cr Stephanie Proud JP
City of Wanneroo	Cr James Rowe Cr Bronwyn Smith Cr Eman Seif JP Cr Jordan Wright (Deputy) Ms Vicki Coles, General Counsel – non-voting
WALGA Secretariat	President Cr Karen Chappel AM JP, President Cr Paul Kelly, Deputy President Ms Kathy Robertson, Manager Association and Corporate Governance Ms Lucy Sheehy, CoastWA Local Government Facilitator

1.3 APOLOGIES

City of Joondalup	Cr John Raftis Cr Rebecca Pizzey Mr James Pearson, Chief Executive Officer – non-voting Mr Jamie Parry, Director Governance and Strategy – non-voting Ms Rebecca Maccario, Manager Strategic and Organisational Development – non-voting
City of Wanneroo	Cr Alex Figg Mr Bill Parker, Chief Executive Officer – non-voting
City of Stirling	Mr Stevan Rodic, Chief Executive Officer – non-voting Mr Brad Sillence, Manager Governance – non-voting
Members of Parliament	Hon Sabine Winton MLA - Minister for Education; Early Childhood; Preventative Health; - Member for Wanneroo Mrs Lorna Clarke MLA - Member for Butler Hon Meredith Hammat MLA - Minister for Health; Mental Health; Member for Girrawheen Hon Ayor Makur Chuot MLC Mr Mark Folkard MLA - Member for Mindarie

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We, the Zone members acknowledge the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to Country, culture and community. We embrace the vast Aboriginal cultural diversity throughout Western Australia, including Boorloo (Perth), on the land of the Whadjuk Noongar People, where this meeting is being held and we acknowledge and pay respect to Elders past and present.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Zone Delegates must declare to the Chair any potential conflict of interest they have in a matter before the Zone as soon as they become aware of it. Zone Delegates 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.

Nil.

4 DEPUTATIONS

Nil.

5 AGENCY REPORTS

5.1 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY REGULATION AND SAFETY UPDATE REPORT

The February 2026 report from the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (DLGIRS) was enclosed as an attachment to the Agenda.

Noted

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The previous meeting Minutes of the North Metropolitan Zone was circulated to Zone Delegates and was provided as an attachment to the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Russ Fishwick JP

Seconded: Cr James Rowe

That the Minutes of the meeting of the North Metropolitan Zone held on 19 November 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

CARRIED

7 BUSINESS ARISING

7.1 STATUS REPORT

A Status Report outlining any recent updates and/or actions taken on the Zone's previous meetings resolutions for both State Council and Zone items was enclosed as an attachment within the Agenda. These item updates will remain on the Status Report until completed or no further action is required by WALGA.

Noted

8 ZONE BUSINESS

8.1 ELECTED MEMBER PROTECTIONS

By the City of Joondalup

BACKGROUND

At the City of Joondalup Council meeting held on 9 December 2025, Council considered a Notice of Motion addressing challenges faced by elected members in the online and social media environment. These challenges raise significant concerns given the obligations for local governments under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* and the *Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022* to foster a safe and respectful environment for those serving the community.

The Council resolved to seek the support of the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) for protections for Elected Members in response to online bullying, harassment, intimidation and reputational harm and associated psychosocial safety risks.

Council also requested that the Minister for Local Government, the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety and the Work Health and Safety Commissioner be requested to give consideration of legislative reform to introduce protections of local government members in the course of their official duties, including during Council and Committee meetings.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

Online bullying, harassment, and defamation targeting Local Government Council Members (and family and friends) have become significant issues, often characterised by personal, high volume, and sometimes anonymous attacks. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this environment is discouraging individuals from nominating for council and, in some cases, preventing council members from completing their full terms. This is a concern for the sector, as it directly impacts the ability to attract and retain suitable candidates for council roles.

Individuals have the right to express their views and participate in the democratic political process, including the freedom to engage in political communication. While robust criticism is a normal and expected part of public life, this right does not extend to behaviour that crosses into defamation, harassment, or other unlawful conduct.

These behaviours may be subject to existing legal recourse, including action under defamation laws, discrimination laws, complaints through the eSafety Commissioner, and, in some circumstances, police intervention. However, these are generally not actions that a Local Government can pursue on behalf of a council member; they must be initiated by the individual themselves. Pursuing these avenues may involve a high evidentiary threshold, can be costly, and may take significant time to reach a resolution. Using public funds to support or finance these types of actions is often contentious and may raise community concern about the appropriate use of resources.

Legal representation policies generally provide Local Government funded legal support for matters arising from official duties, acting in good faith, and without improper conduct. It does not usually provide support for council members to take actions against members of the public for inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

Further investigation into the appropriateness, implications, potential consequences (including any unintended consequence), and key matters for consideration and identifying mechanisms to address this valid concern can be undertaken by WALGA for consideration by State Council.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Russ Fishwick JP

Seconded: Cr Denise Mercer

That the North Metropolitan Zone:

- 1. acknowledges the increasing vulnerability of Local Government Elected Members to online bullying, harassment, intimidation, and reputational harm, and the associated psychosocial safety risks under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*, particularly where harmful conduct occurs through social media and digital platforms;**
- 2. recognises that unlike State and Federal Parliamentarians, Local Government Elected Members do not benefit from absolute parliamentary privilege and only hold limited qualified privilege in the chamber when debating agenda matters. This leaves Elected Members vulnerable to significant personal legal and reputational risk when responding to misinformation, harassment or defamatory claims made outside formal Council proceedings;**
- 3. requests that WALGA advocate for the consideration of legislative reform to introduce protections of Local Government Elected Members in the course of their official duties, including during Council and Committee meetings;**
- 4. requests the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) to provide strengthened legal and procedural guidance for Elected Members responding to targeted misinformation, digital disinformation, or online harassment arising from the performance of their role, and further considers reviewing the Legal Representation Guidelines to clarify or broaden circumstances where representation may be available in such matters;**
- 5. requests that WALGA examine options which address the motion;**
- 6. requests the Minister for Local Government and LGIRS to commission a review into the use and/or influence of social media pages positioned as community or resident groups, and potential proxy pages, during the 2025 Western Australian Local Government Elections, to identify any breaches of existing codes or misuse of position, and to inform the development of stronger legislative and regulatory frameworks for future elections.**

CARRIED

8.2 2026 LOCAL GOVERNMENT HONOURS AWARDS

By Kathy Robertson, WALGA Manager Association and Corporate Governance

BACKGROUND

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.

Noted

8.3 WATER MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION PAPER UPDATE

By Rebecca Brown, WALGA Policy Manager Environment and Waste

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 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.

Noted

8.4 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ADVOCACY POSITION

By Rebecca Brown, WALGA Policy Manager Environment and Waste

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.

Noted

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

By Rachel Armstrong, Policy Manager Emergency Management

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.

Noted

8.6 REQUEST TO PRESENT

By Chantelle O'Brien, Zones Governance Officer

Kolbany Yanginy – Local Government Reconciliation Resource

WALGA and Reconciliation WA are offering presentations to Zones on the new [Kolbang Yanginy website](#), a collaborative project between Reconciliation WA, WALGA, and State Agencies with support from Lotterywest.

The online platform is designed to support Local Governments across Western Australia to build strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Focusing on key themes like reconciliation, partnerships and placemaking, Kolbang Yanginy provides advice, resources, case studies and an interactive map to build capability across Local Governments.

The website also provides information about legislative, regulatory and policy requirements with respect to Aboriginal heritage and native title, with links to further information from State Agencies.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Eman Seif JP
Seconded: Cr Suzanne Migdale

That the North Metropolitan Zone supports a deputation on Kolbany Yanginy website at a future meeting.

CARRIED

9 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.

9.1 AVIATION ADVOCACY POSITIONS

By Negar Nili, Policy Officer Transport and Roads

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.

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.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Jordan Wright
Seconded: Cr Stephanie Proud JP

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

CARRIED

9.2 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.

10 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

10.1 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

WALGA President Cr Karen Chappel presented the President's Report. The report was enclosed as an attachment within the agenda.

President Cr Karen Chappel thanked the Zone for their support over the last four years.

Noted

10.2 STATE COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO THE ZONE

North Metropolitan Zone State Councillors provided an update on the activities of State Council since the last Zone meeting.

Noted

11 OTHER BUSINESS

Zone Members thanked President Cr Karen Chappel and Deputy President Cr Paul Kelly for their service to the sector.

12 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the North Metropolitan Zone will be held on Wednesday, 22 April 2026 at the City of Joondalup commencing at 6:30pm.

13 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 7:35pm.