

MINUTES OF THE ZONE MEETING

at the Jurien Bay Education and Conference Centre, 69 Bashford Way, Jurien Bay
Friday 11 April 2025 commencing at 10:00 am

1 OPENING & WELCOME

The Zone President and Chair of the meeting, Cr Chris Antonio, welcomed delegates and introduced Cr Tony O'Gorman, President Shire of Dandaragan. Cr O'Gorman welcomed everyone to Jurien Bay, gave an acknowledgement to country and commented –

- Accommodation hard to get in Jurien Bay.
- Encouraging holiday type development.
- A new 103 unit development is proposed.
- 180 bay caravan park proposed for March 2026. Development contingent on seaweed problem in the marina being resolved.
- Application in for development of a motel on the site of the old lobster processing plant.
- Jetty Café has new owners.
- Foreshore development incorporates a regional skatepark, family picnic area and a market place area with room for 80 bays.

Mr Scott Wildgoose entered the meeting at 10:07 am.

2 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

2.1 Attendance

Delegates -

Cr Chris Antonio	Shire of Northam (President)
Cr Aaron King	Shire of Chittering (by Video)
Cr Keith Carter	Shire of Dalwallinu
Cr Tony O'Gorman	Shire of Dandaragan
Cr Julie Chester	Shire of Goomalling (by Video)
Cr Michael McKeown	Shire of Toodyay (by Video)
Cr Pauline Bantock	Shire of Victoria Plains (by Video)
Cr Dwight Coad	Shire of Wongan-Ballidu
Cr Kevin Trent	Shire of York (by Video)

Observers –

Ms Melinda Prinsloo	Shire of Chittering (by Video)
Mr Scott Wildgoose	CEO, Shire of Gingin (by Video) (from 10:07 am)
Cr Attila Mencshelyi	Shire of Northam
Ms Debbie Terelinck	CEO, Shire of Northam (by Video)
Cr Denese Smythe	Shire of York (by Video)
Ms Alina Behan	A/CEO, Shire of York (by Video)
Ms Kelly-Anne Murray	Executive Officer, Avon Regional Organisation of Councils (by Video)
Mr Chris Evans	Research, Evaluation, Project Support Officer, RDA Wheatbelt
Mr Mohammad Siddiqui	Director Wheatbelt Region, Main Roads WA (by Video) (from 10:11 am)
Ms Rebecca Brown	Policy Manager, Environment & Waste, WALGA
Ms Tracey Peacock	Road Safety Advisor, WALGA Roadwise (by Video)
Robert Dew	Zone Executive Officer

2.2 Apologies

Mr Brent Bailey	CEO, Shire of Dandaragan
Cr Lincoln Stewart	Shire of Gingin
Cr Tracy Lefroy	Shire of Moora (Zone Deputy President)
Mr Sean Fletcher	CEO, Shire of Victoria Plains
Mr Chris Linnell	CEO, Shire of York
Ms Kellie Todman	Manager Government & Industry Relations, CBH Group
Mr Rob Cossart	CEO, Wheatbelt Development Commission
Hon Shelley Payne MLC	Member for Agricultural Region

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

5 MINUTES

5.1 Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the Zone Meeting held 17 February 2025 by video conference. Copies of these Minutes have been circulated to all member Councils.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Zone Meeting held on 17 February 2025, as printed and circulated, be confirmed.

RESOLUTION

Cr J Chester moved and Cr A King seconded –

That the Minutes of the Zone Meeting held on 17 February 2025, as printed and circulated, be confirmed.

CARRIED

5.2 Business Arising from the Minutes

(a) Wheatbelt Forum (Item 7.2)

Last meeting invited expressions of interest from member local governments to host the 2026 Wheatbelt Forum. Expressions of interest to be received prior to the Zone's April 2025 meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

For Consideration

Consideration of this matter was deferred to later in the meeting (see Item 13).

(b) Other

No other matters were brought forward.

Mr Mohammad Siddiqui entered the meeting at 10:11 am.

6 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

6.1 WALGA State Council Agenda

Review of the Agenda for the State Council meeting to be held Friday 7 May 2025. The Zone can provide comment or submit alternate recommendations to State Council for consideration.

(a) Matters for Decision

8.1 Regulations for CEO KPIs and Online Registers – WALGA Submission (Page 6)

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA endorse the recommendations contained in the attached 'Regulations for CEO KPIs and public registers submission'.

WALGA 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.

The meeting recommended that the Zone support the recommendation to State Council.

8.2 Dog and Cat Management Advocacy Position Page 37)

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA replace Advocacy Position 2.12 Puppy Farming with a revised Dog and Cat Management advocacy position, as follows:

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.*

WALGA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Motions from Zones regarding the PetsWA Centralised Registration Database provide an opportunity to review the existing *Puppy Farming* advocacy position and replace it with a new *Dog and Cat Management* 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 system.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the new advocacy position at its meeting on 24 March.

The meeting recommended that the Zone support the recommendation to State Council.

8.3 Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Advocacy Position (Page 45)

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 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*
 - 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.*

WALGA 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.
- WALGA has made numerous representations and submissions to the State Government on this issue.
- WALGA's current advocacy positions 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.

Ms R Brown gave background to this item.

The Zone President pointed out that the Zone's position had been incorporated into the WA Local Government Association's advocacy position.

Cr J Chester expressed thanks that the concerns of the Shires of Goomalling and Victoria Plains had been listed to.

The meeting recommended that the Zone support the recommendation to State Council.

8.4 Submission on the State Recovery Arrangements (Page 51)

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the submission to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services on proposed revisions to the State Recovery Arrangements.

WALGA 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 *Emergency Management Act 2005* 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.
- 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.

The meeting recommended that the Zone support the recommendation to State Council.

8.5 Health (Public Buildings) Regulations Consultation (Page 82)

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA endorse the submission on Health (Public Buildings) Regulations Consultation to the Department of Health.

WALGA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Department of Health (DoH) is seeking feedback on the Consultation Paper 2025 Health (Public Buildings) Regulations 1992 (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.

Ms R Brown commented that there had been a lot of feedback from Environmental Health Officers expressing the view that reliance on planning was insufficient, that in carrying out inspections of public buildings they were finding problems and that there was a need for regular inspection of public buildings.

The meeting recommended that the Zone support the recommendation to State Council.

RECOMMENDATION

That the above recommendations and comments be endorsed.

RESOLUTION

Cr T O'Gorman moved and Cr D Coad seconded –

That the above recommendations and comments be endorsed.

CARRIED

(b) Other State Council Agenda Items

Delegates are invited to raise for discussion, questions or decision any of the items in the State Council Agenda including for Policy Team and Committee Reports, Matters for Noting / Information and Key Activity Reports

Policy Team & Committee Reports

- 9.1 Infrastructure Policy Team Report (Page 91)
- 9.2 People and Place Policy Team Report (Page 92)
- 9.3 Governance Policy Team Report (Page 94)
- 9.4 Environment Policy Team Report (Page 95)
- 9.5 Municipal Waste Advisory Council Report (Page 97)

Matters for Noting/Information

- 10.1 2025 State Election Outcome (Page 97)
- 10.2 Draft State Public Health Plan Submission (Page 102)
- 10.3 Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020 (RAWR Act) Review Response (Page 105)
- 10.4 Planning and Building Performance Monitoring Project (Page 108)
- 10.5 Large Scale Renewable Energy Update (Page 110)

Key Activity Reports

- 11.1.1 Report on Key Activities, Advocacy Portfolio (Page 112)
- 11.1.2 Report on Key Activities, Infrastructure Portfolio (Page 116)
- 11.1.3 Report on Key Activities, Member Services Portfolio (Page 119)
- 11.1.4 Report on Key Activities, Policy Portfolio (Page 124)

RECOMMENDATION

That the Policy Team and Committee Reports, Matters for Noting/Information and Key Activity Reports be noted.

RESOLUTION

Cr K Trent moved and Cr J Chester seconded –

That the Policy Team and Committee Reports, Matters for Noting/Information and Key Activity Reports be noted **CARRIED**

Cr D Coad asked where the containers returned under the containers for change scheme were recycled. Ms R Brown replied –

- The legislation requires the containers to be recycled.
- The containers are sold to the global market, noting that Australia has export restrictions on the export of waste. Some processing is first done in Australia.
- The WA containers for change scheme is arguably the best in Australia due to the requirement that containers have to be recycled. WA is unique in that lids are recycled. The scheme generates some 800+ jobs.
- Three reasons for lids to be removed:
 - Different plastics are used in the lids and the containers.
 - Harder to compact if lids are left on.
 - If lids are off, container is empty.
- WA Local Government Association happy to see the State Government commitment to include spirit and wine bottles from 2026 and expansion overtime to include other containers.
- Recyclers have to be accredited.
- All recycling is processed before going offshore.
- Believe that Containers for Change would be happy to present to the Zone.

Cr T O’Gorman commented that the Shire of Dandaragan was getting regular requests for smaller general waste bins.

Cr D Coad asked if there was any work on funding for expansion of waste facilities to include transfer stations. Ms R Brown replied that the State Waste Infrastructure Plan sets out the current and planned infrastructure needs within each region across the State.

6.2 WALGA President’s Report

Presentation of the WALGA President’s Report (attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the WALGA President’s Report be received.

RESOLUTION

Cr D Coad moved and Cr K Carter seconded –

That the WALGA President’s Report be received.

CARRIED

6.3 State Councillor's Report

Report by Cr C Antonio (attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the State Councillor's Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr J Chester moved and Cr T O'Gorman seconded –
That the State Councillor's Report be received.**

CARRIED

6.4 Zone Status Report

Report by WA Local Government Association on status of Zone resolutions for action by the Association – April 2025 (attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the April 2025 Status Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr K Carter moved and Cr D Coad seconded –
That the April 2025 Status Report be received.**

CARRIED

7 ZONE REPORTS

7.1 Zone President's Report

Report by Cr C Antonio.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Zone President's Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr D Coad moved and Cr J Chester seconded –
That the Zone President's Report be received.**

CARRIED

7.2 Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee

Report by the Zone's delegate, Cr P Bantock.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee Report be received.

Copy of Cr Bantock's report was circulated to delegates prior to the meeting. Cr Bantock commented –

- Webinars are being held monthly.
- Emergency WA app needs to be highlighted to communities.
- Terms of Reference have been adopted. Includes a Zone representative from the Avon-Midland and the Great Eastern Country Zones as voting delegates. Local governments invited to meetings but have no voting rights.

Cr T Gorman commented that he uses the Emergency WA app and has noted that as he moves around the State he gets notifications from other areas.

Cr D Coad asked if the Emergency WA app will replace local government notifications. Cr Bantock replied looking to have all emergency notifications coming from one trusted source, movement of vehicle and harvest ban information will remain with individual local governments.

RESOLUTION

**Cr P Bantock moved and Cr D Coad seconded –
That the Report on the Wheatbelt District Emergency Management be received.**

CARRIED

7.3 Other

There were no other reports.

8 AGENCY REPORTS

8.1 RoadWise (Wheatbelt North)

Presentation of RoadWise report.

RECOMMENDATION

That the RoadWise report be received.

Ms T Peacock commented –

- No written report for this meeting.
- New local bike planning grant program. Expressions of Interest open 14 April 2025. An online briefing session (Teams) to be held 15 April 10:00 am to 11:00 am. Program is open to all metropolitan and rural local governments for both new and upgrade works.
- Compass OIT (connected vehicle data for roads) is available to all local governments through a license from Main Roads WA. A training session is scheduled for May 2025.
- Roadwise Councils in the Zone (Northam, Dalwallinu, Gingin, Toodyay and Victoria Plains) have an opportunity for elected members to be involved at the governance level. She issued an invitation to catch up with her at her office at the Northam Visitors Centre.

Ms Tracey Peacock contact details – Phone: 0477 272 466; E-mail: tpeacock@walga.asn.au

RESOLUTION

By Consensus –

That the RoadWise report be received.

CARRIED

Adjournment: the meeting adjourned for morning tea.

Resumption: All those present at the time of adjournment were present on resumption.

8.2 Transport Portfolio (Main Roads WA, Department of Transport, Public Transport Authority)

Presentation of Main Roads report (attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Main Roads WA report be received.

Mr M Mohammad Siddiqui presented the Main Roads WA report.

Cr K Trent left the meeting at 11:25 am. Cr D Smythe became the Shire of York's delegate.

Cr A King requested an update on the Bindoon bypass. Mr M Siddiqui replied that no funding confirmation had been received for the next portion of work, draft design has been done; the Project Manager is willing to present to the Shire of Chittering.

Cr D Smythe asked for the SLKs for the work scheduled on the York-Chidlow Road. Mr Siddiqui replied 28.5 km from York towards Perth, 2.5 km realignment and bridges not included. Subject to funding.

Cr K Carter asked as to progress of work on the Great Northern Highway between Pithara and Dalwallinu. Mr Siddiqui replied that this work was top priority for the region, design has nearly been done and looking a delivery options.

Cr K Carter commented that the work between Dalwallinu and Wubin was very good. Mr Siddiqui commented that this had been undertaken by an in house team.

Cr D Coad enquired as to why the delay in work on the Great Northern Highway South of New Norcia to the Calingiri turnoff. Mr Siddiqui replied that he was not aware of any stoppages or suspension of work. The work was being done by Major Projects from Perth. He would follow up.

Cr D Coad referred to the upgrade of the Northam-Pithara Road and asked if the road from Pithara to Wongan Hills could be reassessed for RAV7 vehicles. Mr Siddiqui replied that the road would be reassessed when completed, two bridges at Northam only rated for RAV5 which restricts the entire road. Cr Coad referred to the need of contractors from Wongan Hills for RAV7 from Wongan Hills to Pithara.

Cr Antonio thanked Mr Siddiqui for his presentation. Mr Siddiqui replied that he was always available, encouraged local governments to visit and commented that there were some constraints to works because of funding.

RESOLUTION

**Cr A King moved and Cr D Coad seconded –
That the Main Roads WA report be received.**

CARRIED

Mr M Siddiqui left the meeting at 11:38 am.

8.3 RDA Wheatbelt

Presentation of the RDA Wheatbelt report (attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the RDA Wheatbelt report be received.

Mr C Evans presented the RDA Wheatbelt report and commented –

- The Lumen Wheatbelt Regional University study hub in Northam has been approved
- RDA Wheatbelt has secured funding for a Lumen study hub in Ellenbrook.
- Funding for study hubs in Esperance and Kalgoorlie were not approved.
- Many local government funding applications are not being approved due to business plans not being robust enough, Encouraged local governments to put plans to RDA Wheatbelt for review before being submitted. RDA Wheatbelt knows what assessors are looking for, knows the criteria and knows the unlisted criteria.
- Research from the Lumen University hubs shows local economies are tapping into the hubs with local businesses sponsoring students while they are working, 65% of students who study in regional areas remain in regional areas, there is a current brain drain with students studying in Perth or elsewhere.

RESOLUTION

**Cr D Coad moved and Cr T O’Gorman seconded –
That the RDA Wheatbelt report be received.**

CARRIED

8.4 Other

There were no other reports.

9 FINANCE

9.1 Financial Reports

Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Report for the period ending 31 March 2025 are attached to the agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

That the financial reports for the period ending 31 March 2025, as attached, be received.

RESOLUTION

Cr K Carter moved and Cr P Bantock seconded –

That the financial reports for the period ending 31 March 2025, as attached, be received.

CARRIED

9.2 Accounts for Payment

The following accounts are submitted for payment –

<u>Payee</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Amount</u>
R W & S Dew	Secretarial Services to Zone – June 2025 Quarter	4,380.00
	TOTAL	<u>\$4,380.00</u>

RECOMMENDATION

That the accounts as listed totalling \$4,380.00 be approved for payment.

RESOLUTION

Cr D Coad moved and Cr T O’Gorman seconded –

That the accounts as listed totalling \$4,380.00 be approved for payment.

CARRIED

10 ZONE BUSINESS

10.1 Draft Sewer Infill Program Demand Assessment and Advocacy Position

By Shire of Gingin

BACKGROUND

On the 20 February 2025, the Shire of Waroona presented a report to the Peel Country Zone requesting WALGA to undertake an assessment of the extent of the sewer infill gaps in Western Australian towns and cities and develop an advocacy position supporting a new State Government sewer infill program to assist with subdivision, housing, health and environmental values. This recommendation was supported by the Zone and was noted for further investigation by WALGA State Council on 5 March 2025.

The Shire of Gingin is presenting this report for the Avon Midland Zone to support the Peel Zone recommendation and add extra weight to WALGA’s deliberations.

Sewer infill gaps in Western Australian towns and cities remain as a significant constraint on subdivision, housing development, health values and environmental values. This report seeks the Western Australian Local Government Association’s (WALGA) support for an assessment of the extent of the problem across Western Australia and an advocacy position in favour of a renewed State Government sewer infill program.

Terminology

The phrases “deep sewer”, “sewer infill” and “reticulated sewer” are used variously in literature and consequently in this report, to represent the provision of a piped sewer system that collects sewerage at the property and delivers it to a treatment facility. The Water Corporation is responsible for the vast majority of these systems in WA. A “septic system” on the other hand is a system that treats sewerage on the property and allows it to infiltrate into the ground.

1. Sewer Infill Program History

The Water Corporation delivered the first sewer infill program under the State Government's direction, commencing in 1994 and, at the time, for a ten-year program period. This was driven by health and environmental concerns about the effect of onsite septic systems (Alexander, MLA, 25 August 1988, in Government Sewerage Policy, Explanatory Notes, 2019, pg.4).

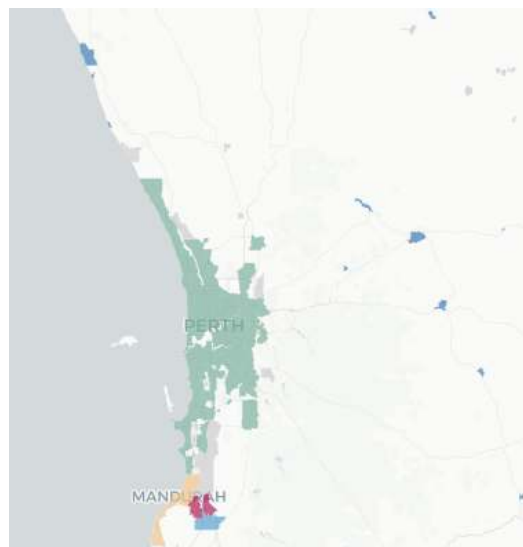
The various shortcomings of this program are detailed in the Report 18 Standing Committee On Environment and Public Affairs Inquiry Into Deep Sewerage in the Cockburn Area, presented By Hon Brian Ellis MLC (Chair) December 2009. In short, a lack of State Government funding for the ongoing program was the key issue and while this report dealt with City of Cockburn's specific deep sewer issues, it also examined this as a state-wide problem as part of it's brief.

Two key findings of this report are pertinent to this discussion.

- ***Finding 14: The Committee finds that the lack of deep sewerage inhibits development in many areas in Western Australia, including Port Hedland and a number of regional areas.***
- ***Finding 15: The Committee finds that the completion of the Infill Sewerage Program is of the highest priority.***

Of note is that the report cites three primary reasons for recommencing this program, namely - health, environment and development. A series of recommendations from this report seek to have the infill program restarted and in fact, expanded across WA.

WA's sewerage system is orientated around the metropolitan area as shown in the network map below:



The Shire of Gingin has some sewerage infrastructure in Lancelin and Seabird but nothing in Gingin itself or in other townsites. The map seems to show Northam, Toodyay, York and a few other areas in the Avon Midland zone have access to deep sewer but it's not a well-developed network and is likely impacting upon development opportunities across the Zone.

COMMENT

Sewer infill is not a headline issue; rather it is a fundamental and essential utility needed to enable urbanisation. The criticality of reticulated sewer is recognised in the State's Government Sewerage Policy 2019 which enunciates the health and environment imperatives that underpin this policy. However, the policy also exposes the problem that this essential utility has lagged behind development in WA, by limiting subdivision where reticulated sewer is absent. The policy position is effectively the defensive response to address this lag in many towns and cities across WA. A better solution is to address the sewer infill deficit.

1. Isn't This the Developer's Problem?

One argument made against the sewer infill program is that the cost of providing the utilities should be borne by the developer, who after all, will be making money from the subdivision. As a general principle this holds true. Many developers subdivide large suburban fringe land holdings that have been rezoned from agricultural to residential land. The land immediately lifts in value due to its rezoning and the economies of scale of bringing a large number on new houses to the market allow the developer to absorb the cost of new reticulated sewer and other utilities into the retail cost of the lots when sold.

This does not translate in the instance of already subdivided land residential in towns and cities across Western Australia that often have power, water and telecommunications infrastructure, but for historical reasons did not get reticulated sewer at the time of subdivision.

In the first instance the land value yield in the already subdivided residential lots which move from say R10 to R25 is real, but not large, in comparison to the lift in value derived from agricultural land being rezoned onto residential land. The margins are therefore immediately smaller.

Secondly, economies of scale are not achieved because the land is not owned by one landowner/developer. Rather development occurs on a lot by lot basis and the individual developer is very unlikely to be able to afford the sewer infill costs needed to extend the sewer pipe. While in theory the developer is able to recoup these costs from other developers when they eventually connect their properties to the new sewer pipe, in reality the upfront costs and the time taken to recoup the outlay for the developer mean that this is not a realistic financial option.

Despite the above, the 2019 WA State Government Sewer Policy makes the statement (p5.) that *"the requirement to connect to reticulated sewerage services does not undermine land supply", and "the continued growth of the Perth metropolitan and Peel regions, and other regional towns demonstrates land supply has not been adversely affected"*. This is true. Provided greenfield land continues to be opened up and urban sprawl remains the dominant and preferred housing model, then given the vast land of Western Australia, this can continue indefinitely. This is at odds, however, with the environmental impacts dilemma created because of urban sprawl and the sustainability issues at stake.

Getting the developer to pay for everything is also a short to medium term financially attractive option, but this ultimately fails to take advantage of the financial economies of providing utilities and infrastructure in higher density and the ultimate savings this provides a city or town. Beyond this urban sprawl does not compete well with the financial benefits of the time and travel savings that infill provides, meaning less efficiency and return on investment for the infrastructure in place.

This Government position also does not support the establishment of community infrastructure or local government services in developing areas, as reduced sewerage access creates restrictions on size and scale of infrastructure and services. Thus, the current framework does not contribute towards creating liveable neighbourhoods with the appropriate mix of land uses and density.

2. Sewer Infill and Housing Affordability

As discussed, power, water and telecommunications infrastructure are mostly in place in towns and cities. It is sewer infill that remains a significant cost barrier to further subdivision and housing development in towns and cities in Western Australia.

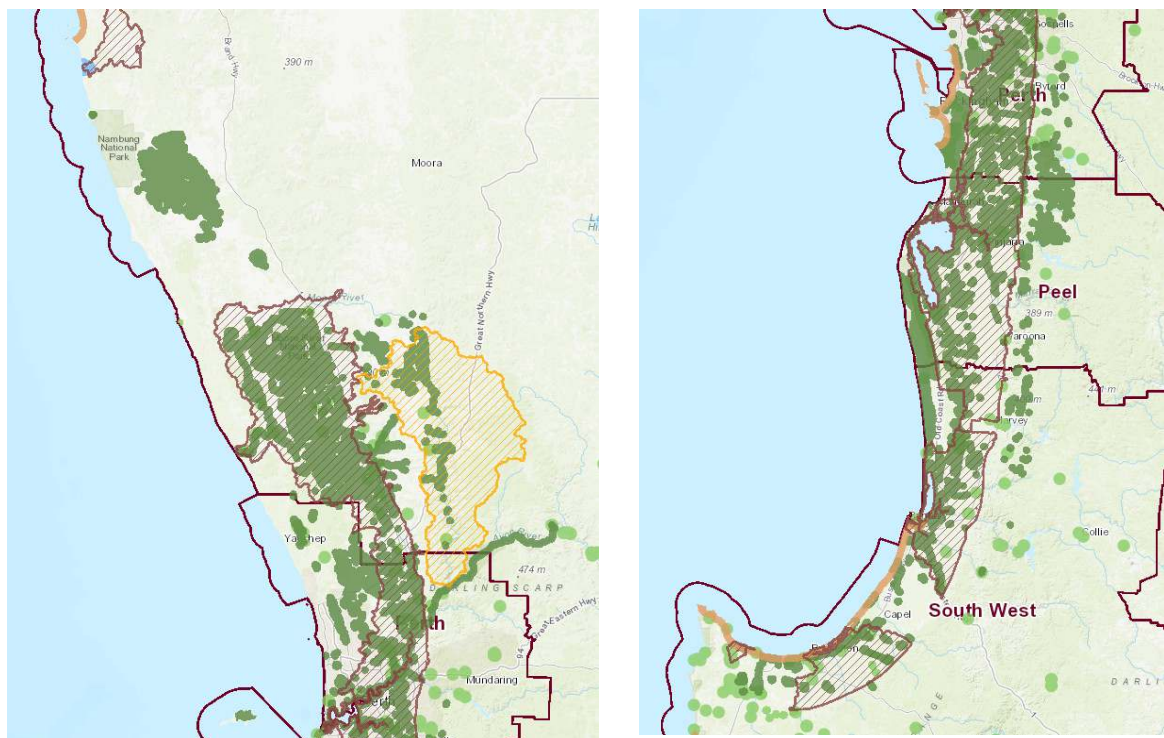
Because of this barrier the economics of affordable housing come into play – housing price affordability is contingent on land development cost affordability. Many towns and outer suburban fringe areas have reasonably affordable land, making the prospect of providing more affordable housing realistic were it not for sewer infill costs. Current sewerage restrictions mean that block sizes in the Gingin townsite cannot go smaller than 1 hectare (10,000 m²) which whilst maintaining rural characteristics, is not the best use of available land in proximity to the town centre. Even with 1,000 m² lots, which are still larger than most metropolitan sizes, a degree of housing diversity can cater for aged residents or those escaping the inner-city rental rises and living in a modest dwelling with ample room to provide irrigation of treated wastewater area – yet the Government Sewerage Policy does not advocate this for approach. The Government Sewerage Policy is metropolitan centric and inhibits growth in regional locations.

3. Sewer Infill as a Health and Environmental Solution

The development of the Government's Sewerage Policy 2019 centres on the position that "on-site systems are not to be considered as a comparable alternative to reticulated sewerage provision". While this position is true the policy has now led to a situation where a number of towns are effectively un-subdividable despite having residential zonings that support subdivision.

The reddish hachured areas on the map below denote "sewer sensitive areas" from north of Lancelin to Busselton. Unsewered land in this area cannot be subdivided below 1 hectare without reticulated sewer, making many (with a few exceptions) of the residential codes meaningless for lots with higher density than R1.

The green solid areas below are particularly sensitive in that they are wetlands. Separation to the water source distances apply to subdivision in these locations.



Figures 1 & 2 Sewer Sensitive Areas Mapping for Lancelin to Busselton

The extent of the environmental issue is clear from the Government Sewerage Policy mapping. Infill sewer will help alleviate the constraints on development due to environmental issues.

4. Sewer Infill's Contribution to the State and Federal Governments' Agendas on Affordable Housing

The WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030 aims to increase housing stock, increase housing diversity and remain affordable. Sewer infill as a program will help to deliver on Focus Area 1: Supply. One of the five levers to be pulled in achieving housing supply is to "*strategically unlock and optimise land*".

A sewer infill program is less prescriptive than the grants schemes now in place which target specific demographic housing outcomes. The sewer infill program addresses a key underlying element of the jigsaw puzzle that is housing. If implemented, it will bring housing stock online and will address the pressing health and environmental problems that come with onsite sewerage disposal.

The Federal Government's Housing Support Program is one initiative supporting the National Housing Accord. The Housing Support Program is described in the following terms.

\$500 million is available for state, territory and local governments over 2023-24 to 2024-25 to support the delivery of increased housing supply by funding projects that seek to deliver enabling infrastructure and provide amenities to support new housing development or improve building planning capability. More specifically the program will support:

- Infrastructure projects that support new housing, such as connecting essential services like water, power, sewage, and roads.*
- Infrastructure projects that provide amenities to support new housing, including shared facilities like community centres and parks.*
- Building planning capability, including resources to support increased delivery of new housing and master planning to support increasing housing in well-located areas.*

It is suggested that the infill sewer issue is so extensive and widespread that a State Government and Federal Government collaboration is needed to deal with this as an infrastructure program, in addition to individualised projects being supported with grants under current arrangements.

5. WALGA to Assess the Problem and Advocate

To validate the need and benefits of a sewer infill program, the collection of hard data on the extent of the sewer infill gap, the potential yield for further housing and the likely cost, would aid an evidence-based advocacy position. It is therefore recommended that WALGA undertake an assessment of the matter to better inform the development of an advocacy position on sewer infill in WA towns and cities. A very good starting point for this assessment could be the work done by WALGA to contribute to the Report 18 Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs Inquiry into Deep Sewerage in the Cockburn Area (pages 32-37). WALGA provided the views of its 55 of its members at that time and contributed to the report, an extract of which is provided below.

Because of the subdivision and development limitation for unsewered areas, regional centres and peri-urban townsites have been unable to grow to their full potential. Even within the metropolitan area, infill development has been blockaded due to the lack of reticulated sewerage and continuous deferral of the Infill Sewerage Program.

This causes many issues for regional towns and out-metro centres which are denied economic opportunities that would come with growth and sustainable development. It has long been acknowledged that higher density development is the way forward for Western Australians to cater for its increasing population. Higher density brings with it more social interaction, services and opportunities for community. Many of these regions wish to expand their town centres and are being prevented because there is either no deep sewerage available or it is only available to limited areas. This issue is increasing property costs in the country. The extra costs of installing large septic tank and leach drains systems often makes development unviable or too costly for homebuyers. Development costs in regional areas can also increase considerably if developers wish to install alternative sewerage treatment systems or provide connections to existing deep sewerage in the area.

Provision of community facilities like childcare centres, school and aged care homes are being affected because of the lack of deep sewerage. In some cases, aged care facilities have been granted an exemption but overall, these high density facilities are discouraged in areas without deep sewerage. The implication this has on the communities affected is widespread.

ADVOCACY POSITION IMPLICATIONS

There is an existing WALGA Advocacy Position on the high cost of development of regional areas and the prohibitive cost of utilities headworks.

2.4.6 Cost of Regional Development

Position Statement The Local Government sector supports the State Government addressing the high cost of development in regional areas for both residential and industrial land, including the prohibitive cost of utilities headworks, which has led to market failure in many regional towns.

Background

This was a member motion supported by members at the 2021 AGM and later endorsed for action by State Council in December 2021.

The Association has worked with senior officers from Development WA to understand the effectiveness of and changes required to the Regional Development Assistance Program that was designed to address the market failure in towns where the cost of land development exceeds the value of the land made available to market.

*State Council Resolution December 2021 – 294.7/2021
Supporting Documents WALGA AGM Minutes 202*

A new sewer infill advocacy position compliments the above-mentioned WALGA advocacy position in that it deals with a specific utility component of the cost of development of land. However, it is noted that the sewer infill problems also exists in metropolitan areas as well as regional towns in WA and so this new advocacy position would capture both cities and towns where this problem exists.

CONCLUSION

A sewer infill program addresses a key underlying element of the jigsaw puzzle that is housing. If implemented it will bring housing stock online and will address the pressing health and environmental problems that come with onsite sewerage disposal. Many regional towns and cities are limited by the lack of reticulated sewer, limiting growth, creating environmental issues, and limiting the ability to provide affordable housing. The prevalence of this issue across WA means that WALGA's support and advocacy is appropriate as a sector advocate. In providing this support it is hoped that WALGA may be able to influence the State Government direction in a way that also meets the State Government's desire to unlock sustainable development and housing. It is also hoped that WALGA may be instrumental in bringing together the State and Federal governments in addressing this issue, as sewer infill is a fundamental and essential utility needed to enable urbanisation.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone supports and endorses the Peel Country Zone's request for WALGA to undertake an assessment of the extent of the sewer infill gaps in Western Australian towns and cities and develop an advocacy position supporting a new State Government sewer infill program to assist with subdivision, housing, health and environmental values.

Mr S Wildgoose gave background to the submission.

Cr K Trent re-entered the meeting at 11:47 am and resumed the role as Shire of York delegate.

RESOLUTION

Cr K Trent moved and Cr T O'Gorman seconded –

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone supports and endorses the Peel Country Zone's request for WALGA to undertake an assessment of the extent of the sewer infill gaps in Western Australian towns and cities and develop an advocacy position supporting a new State Government sewer infill program to assist with subdivision, housing, health and environmental values.

CARRIED

10.2 Zone Priorities for Ministerial Briefings

By Dana Mason, External Affairs Manager, WALGA

BACKGROUND

Following the March election, the Cook Government has unveiled its new Cabinet, emphasizing regional representation by appointing a dedicated Minister for each region.

The new Cabinet structure shows that the Government intends to have a greater focus on regional WA during this term.

WALGA has written to all Ministers responsible for specific regions, inviting them to participate in upcoming meetings of their respective WALGA Zones.

WALGA will also provide each Minister with a written briefing on the key issues facing their region.

To ensure these briefings are comprehensive, WALGA is seeking input from the Zones to identify the top three to five priorities they would like highlighted.

The Zones provide an important opportunity for the Government to have a direct line of communication and engagement with regional WA and ensure that local issues are considered in the broader policy agenda.

WALGA will report on engagements with Ministers responsible for specific regions through the President's report at a future Zone meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone provide the below top three items to WALGA as the Zone's priorities:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

The following items were put forward –

Cr D Coad

- Cost of housing development
- Medical services
- Childcare
- Sewerage
- Expansion of waste facilities (including transfer stations)

Cr P Bantock

- Renewable energy

Cr A King

- Bindoon bypass

Cr K Carter

- Road asset preservation

Cr T O'Gorman

- Renewable energy
- Subregional planning
- Infrastructure

RESOLUTION

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone provide the below top three items to WALGA as the Zone's priorities:

- a. **Subregional planning**
(includes energy, provision of power, water and sewerage, community development, childcare and medical services)
- b. **Transport and roads**
(includes funding, future planning and the Bindoon bypass)
- c. **Telecommunications**
(includes regional mobile and internet services)

. **CARRIED**

10.3 Local Government (Development Assessment Panels) Regulations 2025

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 Advocacy Positions 6.1 Planning Principles and Reform and 6.4 Development Assessment Panels (attached to Agenda).

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 actreview@dlgsc.wa.gov.au or the DAP secretariat at daps@dplh.wa.gov.au.

RECOMMENDATION

For noting.

NOTED

10.4 Band 4 Local Governments Meeting - Update

By Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services

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.

ATTACHMENT

- Band 4 Local Governments meeting update report

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.

RECOMMENDATION

For noting.

NOTED

10.5 2025 Determination of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal for Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Members

By Kathy Robertson, Manager Association and Corporate Governance

BACKGROUND

The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (SAT) has issued its 2025 determination in relation to Local Government Chief Executive Officer remuneration and Elected Member fees and allowances.

WALGA made a submission to SAT on behalf of the sector late last year. The submission was considered by Zones and State Council in November/December last year. WALGA's submission recommended:

1. A 4% increase to Elected Member fees and allowances and CEO remuneration bands.
2. An increase to the Regional/Isolation Allowance, and publication of clear guidance to the sector outlining how the Allowance is applied in terms of methodology, criteria and weightings.
3. The creation of a new fee category for independent audit, risk and improvement committee members without bands, with the fee set at a level which recognizes the skills and knowledge required for such a role, and that the new category provides a fee for the independent chair position as well as independent member positions.

ATTACHMENT

- 2025 Determination of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal for Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Council Members

COMMENT

On 4 April, SAT released its latest Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Members Determination.

In summary, the 2025 Determination provides for the following:

- A 3.5% increase to CEO remuneration band ranges (plus the 0.5% additional Superannuation Guarantee).
- A 3.5% increase to the fee band ranges and some allowances for Elected Members (exclusive of superannuation where relevant).
- A reduction of the four band ranges for independent committee members to one band, with the range to be from \$0 to \$450.
- Provision for reimbursement of expenses for independent committee members has also been determined for the first time.
- A determination as to the rates for the independent chair of the audit, risk and improvement committee will be determined at a future date, to coincide with the commencement of the legislative changes.

The Tribunal have also committed to conducting a comprehensive survey of Local Governments in the latter half of 2025 to assess the:

- placement of CEOs within their band and the adequacy of the current remuneration ranges;
- placement of Elected Members within their band and the adequacy of the current fee ranges and suitability of allowances;
- effectiveness of the Regional/Isolation Allowance, Housing Allowance and motor vehicle provisions; and
- attraction and retention issues for CEOs and executives, particularly in the regions.

The Tribunal will then review the eligibility criteria to receive the Regional/Isolation Allowance, as well as the quantum and effectiveness of the Allowance.

The Determination comes into effect from 1 July 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

For noting.

NOTED

11 URGENT BUSINESS (as permitted by the Presiding Member)

No business was brought forward.

12 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Brief comments by Members of Parliament. There were no Members of Parliament present.

13 DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

Future meetings of the Zone are scheduled for –

20 June 2025	Shire of York
22 August 2025	Shire of Chittering
21 November 2025	Shire of Wongan-Ballidu
20 February 2026	Shire of Moora

RECOMMENDATION

That the next ordinary meeting of the Zone be held Friday 20 June 2025 and be hosted by the Shire of York.

Item 5.2(a) wheatbelt Forum was resubmitted.

The Shire of Chittering offered to host the Wheatbelt Forum scheduled for 2026.

RESOLUTION

Cr K Trent moved and Cr K Carter seconded –

That the next ordinary meeting of the Zone be held Friday 20 June 2025 and be hosted by the Shire of York . **CARRIED**

Ms R Brown drew attention to –

- the Waste and Environment Summit being held at the Esperance Civic Centre, Esperance, 4-5 June 2025.
- the Wheatbelt Futures Forum being held at Northam Recreation Centre, Northam, on 2 May 2025.

14 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair thanked attendees for their participation and declared the meeting closed at 12:17 pm.

<p style="text-align: center;">CERTIFICATION</p> <p>These Minutes were confirmed by the meeting held on</p> <p>Signed: (Chairman of meeting at which the Minutes were confirmed)</p>
