

South West Country Zone Minutes 24 April 2026

Hosted by the Shire of
Donnybrook-Ballingup
VC Mitchell Park - Marmion St,
Donnybrook

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PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

The below Prioritisation Framework was endorsed at the April 2024 South West Country Zone meeting.

Zone Delegates when drafting Agenda items and motions on policy or advocacy issues, using the below criteria as prompts for what kind of information to include. The Prioritisation Framework does not remove the need for judgements to be made and is intended to guide, not replace, decision-making.

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. Previous Meeting Minutes
2. LGIRS Local Government Division Report
3. Zone Status Report
4. President's Report
5. Zone Constitution

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

Zone Chair, President Donnelle Buegge opened the meeting at 9:01am.

1.2 ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS	1 Voting Delegates from each Member Local Government
Shire of August Margaret River	President Cr Julia Jean-Rice Ms Andrea Selvey, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Boyup Brook	President Cr Helen O'Connell Mr Leonard Long, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes	President Cr Stephen Carstairs Mr Garry Adams, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
City of Busselton	Mayor Phill Cronin Dr Garry Hunt PSM, Chief Executive Officer (Temporary) - non-voting Stephanie Addison-Brown- Manager Stakeholder Relations, non-voting
Shire of Capel	President Cr John Fergusson Ms Samantha Chamberlain, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting Mr Gary Clark, Chief Executive Officer (Temporary) - non-voting
Shire of Collie	Cr Joe Italiano (Deputy)

	Mr Phil Anastasakis, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
Shire of Dardanup	Cr Stacey Gillespie (Deputy) Mrs Natalie Hopkins, Director Corporate and Governance - non-voting
Shire of Donnybrook Ballingup	President Cr Vivienne McCarthy Mr Nick O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
Shire of Harvey	President Cr Michelle Campbell Ms Annie Riordan, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
Shire of Manjimup	President Donnelle Buegge (Chair) Mr Ben Rose, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
Shire of Nannup	Cr Cheryle Brown (Deputy) Mr David Taylor, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
WALGA Secretariat	Mr Saul Cresswell, Principal Policy Advisor Ms Negar Nili, Policy Officer Transport and Roads Ms Samantha Kennedy, Senior Policy Advisor Emergency Management
Agencies	
South West Development Commission	Ms Cate Brooks, Chief Executive Officer Ms Allison Christou, Director - Grants and Engagement
LGIRS Representative	Ms Amy Walsh, A/Principal Strategy Officer (<i>via MS Teams</i>)
RDA South West	Ms Vickie Walker, Projects Officer
Guest Speakers	
Climate Emergency Australia	Ms Sally MacAdams, Climate Emergency Australia Coordinator (<i>via MS Teams</i>)

1.3 APOLOGIES

MEMBERS

City of Bunbury	Mayor Jaysen De San Miguel Mr Alan Ferris, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Dardanup	President Cr Tyrrell Gardiner Mr Andre Schonfeldt, Chief Executive Officer non-voting delegate
Shire of Collie	President Cr Ian Miffling
Shire of Nannup	President Cr Tony Dean

Agencies

Australia's South West Ms Catrin Pickworth, Chief Executive Officer

Australian Government Mr Matt Beahan, Program Officer
Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We, the South West Country Zone of WALGA, acknowledge the Nyoongar people, the Traditional Custodians of this land, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil.

4 DEPUTATIONS

4.1 SHIRE OF DONNYBROOK-BALLINGUP

President Cr Vivienne McCarthy and Mr Nick O'Connor Chief Executive Officer

Mr Ross Marshall, Director Operations provided an update to the Zone on the VC Mitchell Park re-development.

Noted

4.2 CLIMATE EMERGENCY AUSTRALIA

Ms Sally MacAdams, Climate Emergency Australia Coordinator was invited and attended online to provide a deputation to the Zone on how Climate Emergency Australia can work with Local Governments.

Noted

5 AGENCY REPORTS

5.1 SOUTH WEST DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Ms Cate Brooks, Chief Executive Officer and Ms Allison Christou, Director Grants and Engagement provided a brief update to the Zone on the Innovative Industries of the Future Conference (IIF Conference) being run 27-28 October 2026.

Allison provided the draft prospectus seeking additional input from Zone delegates on topics and industry tour options. Sponsorship packages are also available for Local Governments to contribute to the IIF Conference. Cate highlighted upcoming State Budget events, including a Sundowner in Margaret River and a State Budget Lunch on 8 May, featuring Ministers Punch and Dawson, and the Premier.

Noted

5.2 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA – SOUTH WEST

Ms Vickie Walker, Project Officer, provided a brief update to the Zone.

RDA SW reiterated opportunities through Invest South West (investsouthwest.com.au) – a regularly updated website to promote investment opportunities free of charge.

The 'Rethinking Business As Usual' event on 17 June, will feature speakers and case studies at Capel Marron Farm showcasing thinking that breaks the mould. \$82.50 per ticket with staff packages available.

Noted

5.3 LGIRS LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIVISION REPORT

The April 2026 report from LGIRS Local Government Division was provided as an attachment within the Agenda.

Ms Amy Walsh, A/Principal Strategy Officer provided a brief presentation to the Zone on Statutory Approvals.

Email contact: legislation@lgirs.wa.gov.au

Noted

5.4 AUSTRALIA'S SOUTH WEST

Chief Executive Officer at Australia's South West, Ms Catrin Allsop, was an apology for this meeting.

Noted

5.5 AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS

Program Officer, Mr Matt Beahan, was an apology for this meeting.

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The previous meeting Minutes of the South West Country Zone have been circulated to Zone Delegates and was provided as an attachment to the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Julia Jean-Rice
Seconded: Cr Helen O'Connell

That the Minutes of the meeting of the South West Country Zone held on 20 February 2026 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. These item updates will remain on the Status Report until completed or no further action is required by WALGA.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Julia Jean-Rice
Seconded: President Cr Michelle Campbell

That the South West Country Zone:

1. Request WALGA to provide information in regard to the consistency of the Zone's Constitution with other Zones and the WALGA Constitution; and
2. Initiate a review of the Zone Constitution to be consistent with the WALGA Constitution.

CARRIED

8 ZONE BUSINESS

8.1 REQUEST TO PRESENT

By Chantelle O'Brien, WALGA

Polyphagous Shot-hole Borer (PSHB)

WALGA has worked closely with DPIRD and the Local Government sector to support the previous eradication and current transition to management phases since Polyphagous Shot-hole Borer (PSHB) was first detected in East Fremantle in August 2021.

WALGA is proposing to share this information and experiences with Zone Delegates of the South West Country Zone by way of a short presentation.

If supported, this presentation aims to assist with the preparedness of Local Governments in the South-West region by providing an overview of the experience of those within the Quarantine Area, ranging from tree impact, resourcing and research requirements. WALGA will also discuss advocacy key priorities and support provided to the sector.

Local Government Director General

The Director General of the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS), Ms Lanie Chopping has offered to attend various Zone meetings in 2026 to speak directly to the Zone on the current initiatives of LGIRS. Ms Chopping has requested to attend the August 2026 Zone meeting.

Local Government Inspector

The Office of the Local Government Inspector has requested the opportunity to attend Zone meetings during 2026.

WA's inaugural Local Government Inspector Tony Brown will provide an update on the functions of the Office of the Inspector, his priorities for 2026 and his expectations of the sector. The Local Government Inspector is a statutory officer and provides oversight of the local government sector through complaint handling, inquiries, compliance review, and education.

Mr Brown has been in the role since October 2025 with his powers under the Local Government Act 1995 commencing on 1 January this year.

Mr Brown would like the opportunity to attend the November 2026 Zone meeting.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Julia Jean-Rice
Seconded: President Cr Vivienne McCarthy

That the South West Country Zone:

1. **supports** a presentation from WALGA on Polyphagous Shot-hole Borer (PSHB) and preparedness for Local Governments in the region at the June Zone meeting;
2. **supports** a presentation from the LGIRS Director General, Ms Lanie Chopping at the August Zone meeting;
3. **supports** a presentation from the Local Government Inspector, Mr Tony Brown at the November Zone meeting.

CARRIED

8.2 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ADVOCACY POSITION

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA is undertaking sector consultation on a revised draft Climate Change Advocacy Position.
- This draft position was developed following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team of State Council.
- WALGA is seeking **Council endorsed feedback by 1 May 2026**.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's 2018 Climate Change [Policy Statement](#) and Advocacy Position state:

Local Government acknowledges:

1. *The science is clear: Climate change is occurring and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the dominant cause.*
2. *Climate change threatens human societies and the Earth's ecosystems.*
3. *Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, and to adapt to the impacts from climate change that are now unavoidable.*
4. *A failure to adequately address this climate change emergency places an unacceptable burden on future generations.*

Local Government is committed to addressing climate change.

Local Government is calling for:

1. *Strong climate change action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government.*
2. *Effective and adequately funded Commonwealth and State Government climate change policies and programs.*

The draft Advocacy Position in the Consultation Paper is:

1. *Local Government acknowledges the risks associated with, and is committed to, addressing climate change.*
2. *WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to provide:*
 - a. *the necessary climate leadership, coordination and action to ensure an orderly transition to achieve emission reduction targets and address the impacts of climate change*
 - b. *dedicated funding, guidance and practical support to assist Local Governments to undertake emissions reduction and adaptation actions.*

ATTACHMENT

The WALGA Climate Change Advocacy Position 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 under Part 3 s3.1(1A) of the *Local Government Act 1995* to:
 - a. to promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the district; and
 - b. **to plan for, and to plan for mitigating, risks associated with climate change;** and
 - c. in making decisions, to consider potential long-term consequences and impacts on future generations.

- 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

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 which is currently out for consultation with feedback due by 1 May 2026. WALGA has received feedback from some Councils and understands a number of Councils will be considering this matter in April. Zone delegates are encouraged to take this item to their Councils.

The Central Country Zone passed a motion at its February 2026 meeting which included writing to all other zones highlighting its alternative Advocacy Position (proposed in March 2025). WALGA worked to incorporate the Central Country Zone feedback prior to the release of the Consultation Paper.

WALGA is seeking **Council endorsed feedback** on the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position by **COB Friday, 1 May 2026** 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.

Noted

The Shire of Augusta Margaret River provided their Council-endorsed position for the benefit of Zone Members and reiterated the upcoming closing date for submissions.

That Council raise concerns with WALGA regarding the weakening of language in the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position, noting that these changes diminish the sense of urgency required to respond to the climate challenge, and endorse the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position subject to the additions underlined and deletions struck through below:

1. *Local Government acknowledges that:*
 - a. *Climate change is threatening our communities, local economies and the ecosystems that support us.*
 - b. *Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, and to adapt to the impacts from climate change that are now unavoidable.*
2. *WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to:*
 - a. *Provide the necessary climate leadership, ambition, coordination and action to ensure an urgent yet orderly transition to achieve emission reduction targets and address the impacts of climate change*
 - b. *Provide dedicated funding, guidance and practical support to assist Local Governments to undertake emissions reduction and adaptation actions and support their communities to adapt and build resilience.*

8.3 CSRFF AND PLAYON WA FUNDING – LACK OF CLARITY ON FUTURE ROUNDS

By the Shire of Harvey

BACKGROUND

South West Local Governments are experiencing sustained population growth and demographic change, alongside increasing participation from women and girls, older adults, and people seeking more flexible and informal recreation opportunities. At the same time, many existing facilities are approaching or have exceeded their intended lifecycle. Continued State investment is therefore essential to enable local governments to plan and deliver sport and recreation infrastructure in a coordinated and financially responsible manner.

At the Joint Sport and Recreation Officers Meeting held in March 2026, attended by the City of Bunbury and the Shires of Dardanup, Collie, Waroona and Harvey, concerns were raised regarding the status of the Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund (CSRFF) and the lack of clear information about the timing of future funding rounds.

It was noted that the CSRFF program is not currently open, and that the State Government's PlayOn WA initiative does not represent a new grant funding program. Rather, it comprises a combination of election commitments and previously approved CSRFF and Club Night Lights Program (CNLP) projects. This has contributed to ongoing uncertainty for local governments in planning and delivering sport and recreation infrastructure.

The Shire of Harvey submitted correspondence to the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon Rita Saffioti MLA, seeking clarity on the availability, timing and structure of future CSRFF and CNLP funding rounds.

Advice provided by the Department indicates that the State Government is currently reviewing the timing of future CSRFF and CNLP rounds as part of the broader PlayOn WA: 2030 initiative. This initiative includes a commitment to deliver over 2,030 new or upgraded pieces of sporting infrastructure by 2030, supported by \$332 million in the 2025–2026 State Budget.

While this commitment is acknowledged, the absence of clear timeframes, program details and forward funding pathways is creating challenges for local governments. This uncertainty is impacting the ability to progress strategic, shovel-ready projects, secure co-investment, and effectively support community sporting organisations.

It is also noted that the Minister has recently corresponded with the WALGA President regarding CSRFF, presenting an opportunity for coordinated advocacy through the WALGA South West Zone structure

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

WALGA recognises that ongoing uncertainty regarding the future of the Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund (CSRFF) and Club Night Lights Programs is having a significant impact on Local Governments ability to plan and progress projects.

WALGA wrote to the Minister for Sport and Recreation and the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport (CITS) on this issue in December 2025. The Minister responded on 17 February 2026, advising that investment in sporting infrastructure will focus on the delivery of the State Governments' PlayOn WA: 2030 by 2030 initiative and

election commitments. This response aligns with that received by the Shire of Harvey from CITS.

WALGA is continuing advocate regarding the importance of these programs and to seek clarity regarding the review and the future of the CSRFF and Club Night Lights Program programs.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Michelle Campbell

Seconded: Mayor Phill Cronin

That the South West Country Zone:

1. notes the current lack of clarity regarding the timing and structure of future Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund and Club Night Lights Program funding rounds; and
2. requests WALGA to advocate to the State Government for the provision of clear and timely information on future funding programs, including anticipated timelines, program structure and any proposed changes to funding criteria, to support effective local government planning and delivery of community sporting infrastructure.

CARRIED

8.4 MANAGEMENT OF WATER CORPORATION BRIDGES ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROADS

By Shire of Capel

BACKGROUND

The Water Corporation owns and manages an extensive network of irrigation and drainage channel assets along the Swan Coastal plain, including bridge structures where the channels intersect roadways. A significant number of these bridges are on local government roads and the integrity of those bridges has direct implications for local road networks. Despite being critical assets for local government, maintenance of the bridges is the responsibility of the Water Corporation as part of their overall asset management planning. Since the asset management priorities of the Water Corporation may not align with those of Local Government, these bridges have typically not been managed as a priority and many are in poor condition, being closed, load limited or soon to be load limited.

The issue, in terms of the scale of this asset management challenge, is significant with 269 Water Corporation bridges on local government roads across Waroona, Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Rockingham, Murray, Harvey, Dardanup, Capel, Busselton, and Armadale. Of these, 24 are load limited and 13 soon to be load limited. Within Capel, one bridge has been closed to all traffic and while it is in the process of being replaced, continues to severely impact the local community. The problem is anticipated to grow with many of the 269 bridges being at or near end of design life and a majority also being inverted U-beam structures not meeting current standards (for increased traffic volume and vehicle mass).

The current load limited bridges range between 10 to 20 tonnes maximum capacity which severely limits the type of vehicles able to use that route. Freight activities are impacted but also fire fighting and emergency response for larger appliances. At a minimum, this can cause detours adding to freight costs and delaying emergency response, therefore

potentially impacting community safety. For locations with no detour options, it can mean severe or complete business disruption and limited emergency response capability.

The matter is considered urgent by affected Local Governments, and a number of actions have already been taken. These include discussions at the South West Regional Road Group, letters and meetings with State Government Ministers, and meetings with Water Corporation. Concerns from various industry sectors have been raised and the matter has received media attention with the ABC news article from March 23rd 2026, titled "Water Corporation's revised bridge limits worry South West WA farmers" being notable.

The Water Corporation asset management plans and budgets are primarily focussed on their core business functions of water supply, wastewater and main drainage. The Water Corporation is also required to provide an annual dividend to the State Government which can curtail investment toward the investment in infrastructure renewals and upgrades.

Local Government's have the ability to access State and Federal grant funding to contribute toward the cost of asset renewal and upgrades, however consideration would need to be given to asset ownership as this model would be difficult to progress under the current Water Corporation owned arrangement. WALGA can play an important role in gathering the views of the local governments affected by this issue to determine the acceptability and desire for these critical bridge assets to be transferred to local government ownership. Under this scenario, the bridges concerned would need to be brought up to standard prior to any transfer to local government ownership to ensure that they do not inherit unforeseen liabilities.

The economic and safety implications to the region are clear and immediate, requiring a rapid replacement program and an effective ongoing asset management model. Such a model already exists and is employed successfully by local government in partnership with Main Roads WA for local government owned bridges. As agencies responsible for local roads and being the tier of government primarily engaging with community at grassroots level, local governments are considered well placed to manage these bridges and can access Federal and State funding to contribute toward the renewal and upgrade of these bridges. The Water Corporation acknowledges that it does not have road and bridge asset management as part of its core business and subsequently it is clear that bridge asset management is unlikely to be prioritised appropriately to meet local government and community needs.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

The impact of load limits being applied to Water Corporation owned bridges was raised by the Peel Country Zone in February and the South West Regional Road Group in March.

WALGA has met with the Water Corporation at an operational level to understand the existing situation and inform an advocacy approach.

In accordance with sound asset management principles, Local Governments should not seek or accept transfer of asset ownership without a clear understanding of the long-term costs associated with operating, maintaining and renewing these assets and an appropriate funding strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

That the South West Country Zone request WALGA to advocate to the WA State Government to develop a strategic solution to the asset management of Water Corporation bridges on state and Local Government roads by:

1. acknowledging the significant inadequacy of the current asset management and investment prioritisation associated with Water Corporation bridge assets;
2. requesting that the State Government establish a dedicated funding program for an urgent bridge renewal program to address community safety and access risks; and
3. transferring ownership of the bridges from the Water Corporation to the relevant road authority as they are renewed.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr John Fergusson

Seconded: Mayor Phill Cronin

That the South West Country Zone request WALGA to advocate to the WA State Government to develop a strategic solution to the asset management of Water Corporation bridges on state and Local Government roads by:

1. acknowledging the significant inadequacy of the current asset management and investment prioritisation associated with Water Corporation bridge assets; and
2. requesting that the State Government establish a dedicated funding program for an urgent bridge renewal program to address community safety and access risks.

CARRIED

8.5 FOREST PRODUCTS COMMISSION (FPC) RATES EQUIVALENT PAYMENTS – TREASURY REMITTANCE UNCERTAINTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGET IMPACTS

By Shire of Boyup Brook

BACKGROUND

The Forest Products Commission (FPC) has historically paid council rates directly to local governments in respect of its relevant freehold landholdings.

In September 2025, the FPC advised affected local governments that it would cease paying rates directly to Shires and would instead make rates-equivalent payments to the State Treasurer.

The Warren Blackwood Alliance of Councils (WBAC), comprising of the Shires of Boyup Brook, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Donnybrook-Balingup, Manjimup and Nannup together with the Shires of Cranbrook and West Arthur, has outlined that the FPC's position relies on section 43 of the *Forest Products Act 2000*. In summary, the State Government considers the FPC exempt from paying rates on certain unleased land and, pursuant to section 43(4), an equivalent amount is instead payable to the Treasurer, with the amount and timing determined by the Treasurer under section 43(6).

A significant concern raised by affected local governments is that this change was implemented during the 2025/26 financial year, after several councils had already adopted their annual budgets based on historical FPC rate payments. The change has occurred without practical transition arrangements or any clear advice as to whether, when, or how the equivalent payments received by Treasury will be remitted to affected local governments.

While the FPC has provided each affected Shire with a "sponsorship" payment for the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years, those payments do not reflect or fully replace the actual rates revenue historically received by local governments. They are not a transparent, equitable or legislatively grounded substitute for rating revenue and do not resolve the underlying structural funding issue. Based on current estimates, the sponsorship payments will still leave affected local governments in a deficit position in the 2026/27 financial year and beyond.

WBAC has advised that, for 2025/26, the collective shortfall across the seven affected Shires is approximately \$325,000, representing a substantial impact on small regional local governments.

Indicative 2025/26 impacts identified in January 2026 were as follows:

Boyup Brook:	\$135,000
Bridgetown-Greenbushes:	\$21,540
Donnybrook-Balingup:	\$9,383
Manjimup:	\$55,000
Nannup:	\$40,000
Cranbrook:	\$28,000
West Arthur:	\$35,000

These impacts are expected to increase with every additional property acquired by the FPC unless a clear and reliable mechanism is established to return equivalent payments to affected local governments.

Affected councils have identified that this revenue supports essential local infrastructure and services, including road maintenance, parks and gardens, community facilities, emergency services support, medical services, recreation programs, and local events. The loss of this revenue is therefore forcing councils to consider service reductions, project deferrals, and other budget adjustments.

Local governments also remain responsible for maintaining infrastructure and services relied upon by plantation operations, including local roads, emergency management capability, community facilities, and broader local services. The removal of this revenue, without a corresponding remittance mechanism, places increased pressure on remaining ratepayers and undermines the long-term financial sustainability of affected councils.

There is also significant concern that, in the absence of formal confirmation from the Western Australian Treasury that rates-equivalent payments collected from the FPC will be remitted to affected local governments, councils cannot confidently prepare annual budgets or long-term financial plans. Every additional property acquired by the FPC creates the risk of a further reduction in a local government's rating base, without certainty that the lost revenue will be returned in full, in part, or at all.

This creates an unstable and increasingly unpredictable revenue environment for small regional local governments and makes it more difficult for councils to make responsible decisions regarding service delivery, asset renewal, workforce planning, and capital investment.

Affected local governments have also noted the inequity of the current arrangement, particularly as private plantation operators continue to pay rates directly to local governments, whereas the FPC does not under the current model.

WBAC, together with the Shires of Cranbrook and West Arthur, has sought the establishment of a cross-portfolio process involving Local Government, Forestry and Treasury to determine a fair and sustainable mechanism for 2026/27 and future years, including forward modelling in respect of future FPC land acquisitions.

This matter now presents not only an immediate budget impact, but an ongoing structural funding risk for affected local governments. Urgent advocacy is therefore required to secure clarity, certainty, and a fair long-term solution prior to the finalisation of 2026/27 local government budgets.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

WALGA recognises the impact that the Forest Products Commission's (FPC) change to the payment of rates equivalent amounts has on Local Governments within the South West Country Zone (SWCZ), particularly given the timing of the application of the change prior to the 2025/26 financial year.

WALGA understands that the SWCZ and affected Local Governments, have already engaged directly with the Minister for Forestry on this matter and supports the SWCZ in seeking timely resolution of the immediate 2025/26 impacts and longer term certainty for future financial years.

WALGA acknowledges the significant impact that rating exemptions have on Local Government revenue, and their ability to provide essential community services.

This matter aligns with longstanding [WALGA Advocacy Positions](#) regarding rating, including the following:

2.1.1 Rating Exemptions Review

A broad review be conducted into the justification and fairness of all rating exemption categories currently prescribed under Section 6.26 of the Local Government Act 1995.

2.1.4 Rating Exemptions – Rate Equivalency Payment

Legislation should be amended so rate equivalency payments made by LandCorp and other Government Trading Entities are made to the relevant Local Governments instead of the State Government.

Additionally, [WALGA's 2026-27 State Budget Submission](#) calls for an independent organisation to undertake a broad review of rating exemptions.

A number of concerns regarding rating and rating exemptions have emerged across the sector, particularly over the past 6–12 months. WALGA is undertaking scoping work to consider the most effective way to address these matters through a coordinated, overarching and sector wide advocacy approach.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Helen O'Connell
Seconded: President Cr Vivienne McCarthy

1. That the South West Country Zone request WALGA to advocate, as a matter of urgency, to the Western Australian Treasurer, Minister for Forestry and Minister for Local Government to:
 - a. provide urgent written confirmation that the rates-equivalent payments made by the Forest Products Commission to the State under section 43 of the *Forest Products Act 2000* will be remitted in full to the affected Local Governments;
 - b. establish, prior to the finalisation of 2026/27 Local Government budgets, a clear, transparent, and ongoing mechanism for the calculation, remittance, and payment of those rates-equivalent amounts to affected Local Governments for 2026/27 and future financial years; and
 - c. Work with WALGA and affected Local Governments to develop and implement a fair and sustainable long-term solution, including policy and legislative reform if required, to ensure Local Governments are not financially disadvantaged by future Forest Products Commission land acquisitions.
2. That the South West Country Zone Member Local Governments individually advocate in support of WALGA's 2026-27 State Budget Submission which calls for an independent organisation to undertake a broad review of rating exemptions.

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 PROTECTING COUNCIL MEMBER AND EMPLOYEE PRIVACY ADVOCACY POSITION

By Meghan Dwyer, Governance Specialist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The South East Metropolitan Zone resolved to request WALGA advocate to amend s.5.95(1) of the *Local Government Act 1995* to specify that the right to inspect Primary and Annual Returns (Returns) contained in the Register of Financial Interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the residential address of the relevant person.
- Returns may include residential addresses, which are then made publicly accessible, creating privacy and safety risks.
- Council Members and employees are increasingly reluctant to disclose residential addresses due to safety and security risks, demonstrating that current legislation no longer aligns with contemporary expectations of privacy.
- Recent parliamentary scrutiny of similar requirements for Members of Parliament led to recommendations to remove full residential address disclosures, which the Government supported.
- In addition to Returns, Council Members must also provide a residential address when making their declaration of office.
- It would be appropriate for a review of all public disclosure requirements under the *Local Government Act 1995* to occur to ensure that they remain contemporary, effective, and aligned with modern standards of accountability and personal security.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the proposed advocacy position at its meeting on 23 March 2026.

ATTACHMENT

- Jurisdictional Comparison – Address Information in Council Member Returns and Declarations of Office (included below).

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The proposed advocacy position aligns to the WALGA 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, in particular:

- Influence – Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
- Support – Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The recommendation is for State Council to endorse a new [Advocacy Position](#).

Protecting Council Member and Employee Privacy

That WALGA advocates to the State Government to:

1. *Undertake a review of disclosure requirements for Local Government Council Members and employees under the Local Government Act 1995.*
2. *Undertake the necessary legislative amendments to strike an appropriate balance between transparency, personal safety, and contemporary community expectations of privacy, including:*
 - a. *Amend section 5.95(1) to prescribe that the right to inspect primary and annual returns contained in the register of financial interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the full residential address of the relevant person, and is instead limited to the suburb or locality.*
 - b. *Amend Form 7 of the Local Government (Constitutional) Regulations 1998 to remove the requirement to disclose a full residential address when making the declaration of office.*

BACKGROUND

At the 3 December 2025 meeting, State Council adopted new Advocacy Position 2.5.20 Electoral Material - Authorisation Statement Address Requirements in response to significant privacy and safety concerns arising from the obligation to publish a candidate's physical address on electoral materials.

When considering this item at the preceding round of Zone meetings, the South East Metropolitan Zone (SEMZ) resolved to request WALGA advocate to amend s.5.95(1) of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) to specify that the right to inspect Primary and Annual Returns (Returns) contained in the Register of Financial Interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the residential address of the relevant person.

State Council resolved to refer the SEMZ comments to the Governance Policy Team.

The Governance Policy Team endorsed the proposed advocacy position at its meeting on 23 March 2026.

COMMENT

Public disclosure regimes must strike an appropriate balance between public transparency and personal safety. The inclusion of personal identifying information in publicly accessible documents has become increasingly problematic. As digital publication and internet search capabilities have expanded, material that once had limited circulation can be copied and distributed with ease. This environment has reinforced the need to carefully consider how much personal information is necessary to make publicly available, and the risks that may arise when doing so.

Local Government Act

The Act establishes a range of public disclosure obligations designed to promote transparency and accountability. However, digital publication, increased data availability, and heightened personal safety concerns have created new risks that were not contemplated when these provisions were first drafted.

Returns require relevant persons to disclose personal financial information. Information disclosed includes the address of each parcel of real property, located in the district or in

an adjoining district, in which the person had an interest and the nature of the interest in each parcel of real property (s.5.79). In practice, this often results in the disclosure of a Council Member or employee's residential address.

Returns are required to be included in the register of financial interests. Section 5.94(b) of the Act requires any register of financial interest to be made available to the public, and s.5.96 requires the Local Government to provide copies upon request.

Although s.5.93 of the Act establishes penalties for the improper use of information, information can now be copied and distributed almost instantly. In many cases, the harm may occur well before any investigation or action can be commenced.

In addition to the requirement for Council Members to disclose interests in real property as part of their returns, s.2.29 of the Act, together with Form 7 of the *Local Government (Constitution) Regulations 1998*, requires each Council Member to provide their full residential address when making their statutory declaration of office. Although this declaration is not required to be made publicly available under s. 5.94(b) of the Act, some Local Governments livestream or publish recordings of the proceedings. As a result, full residential address details become publicly accessible.

Emerging risks and issues

Local Governments have observed increasing reluctance from Council Members and employees to provide their residential address. Reasons include:

- being registered as a silent elector under the *Electoral Act 1907*,
- experiences or risks of family or domestic violence,
- concerns that leave of absence approvals may signal when a residence may be unoccupied,
- role-related risks, such as potential targeted harassment by dissatisfied community members.

Disclosure of personal residential addresses can also expose individuals to cybersecurity and identity-theft risks, as this information can be combined with other data to build detailed personal profiles. Publicly accessible addresses may make individuals more vulnerable to targeted scams, social engineering, and unwanted contact, increasing both digital and physical security risks.

Parliamentary disclosure obligations

The disclosure of the residential addresses of Members of Parliament in their Primary and Annual Returns has recently been considered by the [Legislative Assembly Procedures and Privileges Committee in Report No.1: Protecting privacy and other reasons to update the Members of Parliament \(Financial Interests\) Act 1992](#).

The Committee recommended that the Government review the relevant legislation, "with a view to addressing the requirement for the disclosure of full residential addresses and to consider broader legislative updates necessary to ensure the Act remains contemporary, effective, and aligned with modern standards of accountability and personal security."

The [Government response](#) supported this recommendation.

Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing

The objectives of the new *Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024* (PRIS Act) include promoting responsible and transparent practices in the handling of personal

information and balancing the public interests of protecting the privacy of personal information with the free flow of information by agencies.

Most privacy provisions in the PRIS Act come into effect on 1 July 2026.

The following sections of the PRIS Act intersect with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*:

- The information privacy principles do not apply to information that is already publicly accessible. This includes information in documents that are either generally available to the public or made available for public inspection under another written law (s.22).
- An individual may request a public entity to remove their personal information from a public register if making the information publicly available would substantially affect any individual's safety or wellbeing. If the public entity is satisfied that the grounds exist, the public entity must comply with the request unless the public entity is satisfied that the public interest in maintaining public access to the information outweighs any individual interest in the information not being made publicly available (s.77).

While this appears to provide a mechanism for individuals to address specific safety and privacy concerns, it would be preferable to ensure that the legislative requirements avoid unnecessary risks to all Council Members and employees.

WALGA will seek to engage with the Information Commissioner and Deputy Privacy Commissioner to clarify the way in which these and other PRIS Act provisions will apply to Council Members.

Review and amendments to the Local Government Act

As Local Government Council Members and employees share the same safety concerns as Members of Parliament it would be appropriate to echo the Procedures and Privilege Committee and advocate for a broad review of all public disclosure requirements under the *Local Government Act 1995* to ensure that they remain contemporary, effective, and aligned with modern standards of accountability and personal security. A review would allow a clearer, risk-aware framework to be established that protects individuals while preserving appropriate transparency.

Within this broader reform, several targeted amendments are necessary. It is proposed that s. 5.95(1) be amended so that the right to inspect information in the register of financial interests under s. 5.94(b) is limited to the suburb or locality of each property, rather than the full residential address of the relevant person. Additionally, the requirement for Council Members to provide their full residential address in the statutory declaration of office should be removed. These amendments are consistent with practices adopted in other Australian jurisdictions and reflect the approach now being reconsidered for Members of Parliament.

Importantly, these changes would not weaken transparency or accountability. Council Members and employees would still be required to disclose their full residential address in Returns, and would continue to declare direct financial, indirect financial, proximity, and impartiality interests when they arise in decision-making processes. This ensures that relevant interests remain publicly recorded when they matter, without unnecessarily exposing personal residential details. By limiting public access to only what is necessary,

the legislative framework can better protect individual safety while preserving the integrity of the disclosure regime.

ATTACHMENT: JURISDICTIONAL COMPARISON – ADDRESS INFORMATION IN COUNCIL MEMBER RETURNS AND DECLARATIONS OF OFFICE

DISCLOSURES IN RETURNS	
<p>Victoria <u>Local Government Act 2020</u> <u>Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020</u></p>	<p>CEO must prepare summary of personal interests information disclosed in the last personal interest return.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes the town or suburb, but not the street address or number of the land that is the place of residence <p>Other matters to be included or excluded are prescribed.</p> <p>Includes that a specified person may request in writing information not be included if the CEO consider including the information would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be reasonably likely to place the personal safety of any person at risk, or unreasonably expose a business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage <p>Summary of personal interest returns available to members of the public.</p> <p>Detailed personal interests returns are only available to certain persons.</p>
<p>New South Wales <u>Governance Information (Public Access) Act 2009</u></p>	<p>From the <i>Information Access Guideline 1 - For Local Councils on the disclosure of information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Returns should be made publicly available on the council's website unless there is an overriding public interest against release or to do so would impose unreasonable additional costs on council. A consideration against disclosure is where release of the information may expose a person to a risk of harm or of serious harassment or serious intimidation. In the circumstances where council decides that there is an overriding public interest against disclosure, consideration should then be given to whether it is practicable to release an edited copy of the record (for example redacting the individual's signature or residential address) If it is practicable to do so, then the information should be deleted from a copy of the record and the remainder of the return made available on the council's website. Where information is deleted from a return, council should keep a record indicating, in general terms, the nature of the information redacted.
<p>Queensland <u>Local Government Regulation 2021</u></p>	<p>Suburb or locality of the land is required (not full address).</p>

South Australia Local Government Act 1999	Personal addresses are not to be published nor are any addresses where the CEO is satisfied that the inclusion in the Register of the address of a person would place at risk the personal safety of that person, a member of that person's family or any other person.
Tasmania	Currently does not require councillors to lodge a personal interests return. The Tasmanian government is implementing a new framework to strengthen the management of local government councillor conflicts of interest, with reforms expected before the 2026 elections.

INFORMATION IN COUNCIL MEMBER DECLARATIONS OF OFFICE	
Victoria Local Government Act 2020 Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020	Address not required.
New South Wales Local Government Act 1993	Address not required.
Queensland Local Government Regulation 2021	Address not required.
South Australia Local Government (General) Regulations 2013	Address not required.
Tasmania Local Government (General) Regulations 2025	Address not required.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the following new Advocacy Position:

Protecting Council Member and Employee Privacy

That WALGA advocates to the State Government to:

1. *Undertake a review of disclosure requirements for Local Government Council Members and employees under the Local Government Act 1995,*
2. *Undertake the necessary legislative amendments to strike an appropriate balance between transparency, personal safety, and contemporary community expectations of privacy, including:*
 - a. *Amend section 5.95(1) to prescribe that the right to inspect primary and annual returns contained in the register of financial interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the full residential address of the relevant person, and is instead limited to the suburb or locality.*
 - b. *Amend Form 7 of the Local Government (Constitutional) Regulations 1998 to remove the requirement to disclose a full residential address when making the declaration of office.*

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Julia Jean-Rice
Seconded: Mayor Phill Cronin

That the South West Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.1, subject to the addition of point 2(c) as below:

- c. Requests that WALGA urgently advocate to the State Government for legislative amendment to section 4.87 of the *Local Government Act 1995* to explicitly prevent candidates from being compelled, in practice, to disclose their residential address on electoral material, including by providing for alternative non-residential physical address options, while preserving electoral transparency and accountability.

CARRIED

9.2 WATER MANAGEMENT ADVOCACY POSITION

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A new Water Management Advocacy Position and the retirement of position 6.14 Planning for Water is proposed.
- The new Position has been developed following consultation and feedback on WALGA's *Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper*.
- 28 Local Governments provided more than 200 comments on the paper, with the main issues being:
 - equitable access to consistent and reliable water;
 - water licensing and allocation;
 - integrated regional and catchment-scale water planning;
 - water for Public Open Space (POS);
 - funding
 - for critical infrastructure - drainage and irrigation, alternative water sources and sewerage infill and headworks.
 - for water efficiency and water sensitive urban design initiatives.
 - expanding and improving the Waterwise Council Program;
 - access to data and information to inform decision making; and
 - addressing the impacts of stormwater runoff.
- The outcomes sought in 6.14 Planning for Water have been realised in the recently released State Planning Policy 2.9.
- The Environment Policy Team endorsed retiring the position and the new position at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

ATTACHMENT

- [Water Management Discussion Paper](#)
- [Water Management Consultation Summary Report](#)

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

This item relates to the following WALGA Strategic Pillars:

- Influence
 - Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
 - Empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.

- Support - Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed that the following new [Advocacy Position](#) be **endorsed**:

Water Management

1. *Access to consistent, reliable and adequate water supplies is critical for Local Government operations, community health, amenity, environmental sustainability and economic activity.*
2. *WALGA is calling on the State Government to:*
 - a. *Modernise water management legislation and regulation, including:*
 - i. *Undertaking a review of the water licensing and allocation system to ensure equitable access and prioritise high value community use including for public open space.*
 - ii. *Developing a State-wide framework for integrated regional and catchment-scale water planning.*
 - b. *Adequately, sustainably and equitably fund critical water infrastructure programs for Local Government, including:*
 - i. *Drainage and irrigation upgrades.*
 - ii. *Alternative water sources (recycled water, stormwater harvesting, desalination and groundwater replenishment) and disused water asset transfer.*
 - iii. *Small-scale sewerage infrastructure headworks and infill sewerage.*
 - c. *Expand the Waterwise Council Program statewide and provide:*
 - i. *Increased support and resources to assist Local Government in delivering water efficiency measures.*
 - ii. *Incentives for Local Governments to undertake water efficiency initiatives.*
 - d. *Improve water data access and capability for Local Governments to ensure evidence-based decision making.*
 - e. *Provide effective leadership, guidance, education and enforcement to address the impacts of stormwater runoff.*

It is proposed that the following Advocacy Position be **retired**:

6.14 Planning for Water

As part of the Water Management Report endorsement process, formal support from the relevant Local Government should be required where:

1. *It is intended that the Local Government will become the infrastructure asset manager; or*
2. *The proposed location of water infrastructure assets will impact Local Government assets or facilities.*

The outcomes sought in Position 6.14 have been realised in the recently released [State Planning Policy 2.9](#).

BACKGROUND

WALGA identified the need to consolidate and expand on current Water related [Advocacy Positions](#) and has undertaken initial consultation, through targeted engagement and consideration of issues raised by the sector previously. To inform the development of a new Advocacy Position, WALGA developed a Discussion Paper to gain feedback from the sector on their current challenges and needs in relation to water management across the state.

WALGA released the Discussion Paper for comment in late November 2025, with an initial deadline of 15 January 2026 for comment, however based on feedback from the sector this deadline was extended to Thursday, 12 March.

28 Local Governments have provided feedback, 14 of those Council/CEO level feedback. The feedback provided by Local Governments was comprehensive, with over 200 individual comments received across the submissions. WALGA acknowledges the significant time and consideration given by Members in providing that level of feedback.

The main themes of the feedback reflect those explored in the Discussion Paper and are consistent across Local Government:

- Legislation which is inequitable and outdated, particularly for licensing and allocation.
- State legislation should align with the National Water Agreement, particularly strategic, long term integrated planning and equitable access to drinking water.
- Aging and insufficient water infrastructure.
- Support and resourcing needed to explore and mainstream alternative water sources.
- Reactive approaches to headworks and sewerage servicing constraining development, particularly in regional and high-growth areas.
- Public Open Space (POS) in relation to planning decisions not accounting for the water needed to sustain these areas.
- Statewide expansion of the Waterwise Council program and improvement in program support and design.
- High interest in improving and supporting water efficiency and water sensitive urban design outcomes.
- Water data gaps and poor data sharing limits sound decision making.
- Water quality as an emerging and under-recognised issue.

WALGA has consolidated the feedback into a Consultation Report which summarises the main themes and issues raised by the sector and how it has been addressed in the draft Advocacy Position.

COMMENT

The new Position has been informed by the information, issues and priorities identified in feedback received from Local Governments on the WALGA Discussion Paper.

A new Advocacy Position is timely given the release of [Made Possible by Water](#) by the State Government on 21 March 2026, a document outlining WA's water future. A comprehensive Advocacy Position on this issue will be essential to assist WALGA's advocacy and influence how the Government delivers the priorities identified. Some of the matters identified in the draft Advocacy Position are reflected in Made Possible by Water, including expansion of the WaterWise Program and delivery of new water sources.

The Environment Policy Team endorsed the new Advocacy Position and the retirement of Position 6.14 at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council:

1. Endorse the following new Advocacy Position:

Water Management

1. *Access to consistent, reliable and adequate water supplies is critical for Local Government operations, community health, amenity, environmental sustainability and economic activity.*
 2. *WALGA is calling on the State Government to:*
 - a. *Modernise water management legislation and regulation, including:*
 - i. *undertaking a review of the water licensing and allocation system to ensure equitable access and prioritise high value community use including for public open space*
 - ii. *developing a state-wide framework for integrated regional and catchment-scale water planning.*
 - b. *Adequately, sustainably and equitably fund critical water infrastructure programs for Local Government, including:*
 - i. *drainage and irrigation upgrades*
 - ii. *alternative water sources (recycled water, stormwater harvesting, desalination and groundwater replenishment) and disused water asset transfer*
 - iii. *small-scale sewerage infrastructure headworks and infill sewerage.*
 - c. *Expand the Waterwise Council Program statewide and provide:*
 - i. *increased support and resources to assist Local Government in delivering water efficiency measures*
 - ii. *incentives for Local Governments to undertake water efficiency initiatives.*
 - d. *Improve water data access and capability for Local Governments to ensure evidence-based decision making.*
 - e. *Provide effective leadership, guidance, education and enforcement to address the impacts of stormwater runoff.*
-
2. *Retires Advocacy Position 6.14 Planning for Water.*

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Donnelle Buegge
Seconded: President Cr Julia Jean-Rice

That the South West Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.2 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

9.3 OFF ROADS VEHICLES ADVOCACY POSITION

By Rebecca Hicks, Policy Advisor Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that Advocacy Position 3.12 Off Road Vehicles (ORV) be retired.
- The *Control of Vehicles (Off-road Vehicles) Act 1978* (the ORV Act) provides the legislative framework for the use of off-road vehicles within permitted areas in WA.
- Nine Local Governments own and maintain Off Road Vehicle (ORV) areas.
- Advocacy Position 3.12 Off Road Vehicles was adopted by State Council in 2018 in response to concerns from Members about the use of permitted ORV areas.
- Amendments to the ORV Act in 2025 address the core objectives of the ORV Advocacy Position, particularly as it relates to registration and enforcement.
- The retirement of the ORV Advocacy Position was endorsed by the People and Place Policy Team at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

ATTACHMENT

- [*Control of Vehicles \(Off-road Areas\) Amendment Act 2025*](#)

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Retiring this Advocacy Position aligns with the following WALGA Strategic Pillars:

- Influence
 - Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
 - Empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support
 - Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed that Advocacy Position [3.12 Off Road Vehicles](#) be **retired**.

Legislation relating to off road vehicles should be reviewed to align registration and licensing of off-road vehicles with other vehicle types are users. In addition, educational resources should be developed in consultation with users, regulators, and vendors relating to safety, regulatory compliance and other associated matters.

BACKGROUND

The *Control of Vehicles (Off-road Vehicles) Act 1978* (the ORV Act) prohibits the use of Off Road Vehicles (ORVs) in areas outside of permitted areas and makes provisions for the use of ORVs in permitted areas. The Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) is responsible for administering the legislation and providing [information and support](#) to users and Local Governments. The legislation defines ORVs as including, but

not limited to, trail bikes, quad bikes, beach buggies and road licensed vehicles such as four-wheel drives when used in off-road locations.

The use of ORVs outside of permitted areas can have impacts on Local Governments and communities including community safety in public spaces, road safety and environmental impacts. These issues fall under the scope of other legislation.

Nine Local Governments currently maintain and operate permitted areas: the Cities of Greater Geraldton, Karratha, Kwinana and Swan and the Shires of Carnarvon, Dandaragan, Gingin, Port Hedland and York.

WALGA's Advocacy Position was adopted by State Council in 2018, in response to Member concerns regarding the use of permitted ORV areas.

The ORV Act was amended in 2025 to align penalties and enforcement expectations with other WA transport legislation. The *Amendment Act* includes provisions to introduce online and label registrations and increase penalties for existing offences. The majority of the ORV Amendment Act commenced with immediate effect in August 2025. Sections of the legislation relating to registration labels are dependent on system design changes to the online registration platform. The legislation regulations and commencement date are expected by the end of 2026.

In 2024, the [State Government announced \\$4.8 million](#) in grant funding for Local Governments to develop new and upgrade existing ORV areas. This funding recognises the key role Local Government plays in the upkeep and management of ORV areas.

COMMENT

The ORV Amendment Act addresses the core objectives of the WALGA ORV advocacy position, particularly as it relates to registration and enforcement. As the intended outcomes of the advocacy position have been achieved, it is proposed that Advocacy Position 3.12 Off Road Vehicles be retired. WALGA will work with LGIRS to provide advice and support on the commencement of the Act regulations for Members managing permitted areas.

WALGA has engaged with Members that currently manage ORV permitted areas. Six Local Governments have responded and provided their support for the retirement of the advocacy position.

WALGA will continue to monitor emerging issues associated with ORVs, with a particular focus on usage outside of permitted areas.

The proposed retirement of the ORV advocacy position was endorsed by the People and Place Policy Team at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council retire Advocacy Position 3.12 *Off Road Vehicles*.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr John Fergusson

Seconded: President Cr Julia Jean-Rice

That the South West Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.3 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

9.4 HOMELESSNESS ADVOCACY POSITION

By Hannah Godsave, Manager Community Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that the 2019 Advocacy Position 3.11 Homelessness be updated.
- While responding to homelessness is a State and Australian Government responsibility, the impacts of homelessness intersect with multiple areas of Local Government service delivery and requires them to manage community expectations.
- Western Australian Local Governments are reporting increased numbers of people experiencing homelessness, including Local Governments that have historically experienced minimal impact.
- WALGA undertook a survey of Members in early 2026 to better understand the impact on the sector and inform a review of the current Advocacy Position.
- The updated Position reflects the sector's view that the Australian and Western Australian Government should provide leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular specialist services, social and affordable housing and wraparound services.
- The People and Place Policy Team endorsed the revised position at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

This item relates to the following WALGA Strategic Pillars:

- Influence
 - Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
 - Empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support
 - Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed that the **existing** Advocacy Position [3.11 Homelessness](#):

WALGA recognises that Local Government through its planning, health, community development and regulatory powers can facilitate positive local and regional responses to end homelessness, however does not see that it has a lead role. Rather, Local Government's

role is one of a stakeholder that requires early engagement in the understanding of collaborative approaches that improve the quality of life for people experiencing homelessness in all of its manifestations.

be **replaced** with a new Advocacy Position as follows:

WALGA calls on the Western Australian and Australian Governments to provide leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular:

- 1. Ensuring specialist homelessness services are responsive to need, place-based and people-centred.*
- 2. Investing in social and affordable housing and wraparound services.*

BACKGROUND

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness as when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

The ABS Census of Population and Housing provides the authoritative data source on people experiencing homelessness. The 2021 Census reported 9,729 people experiencing homelessness in WA. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare provides more contemporary data based on interactions with specialist homelessness services. In 2024-25, almost 289,000 (1 in 115) people engaged with specialist homelessness services in WA, of which 47% were accessing homelessness support for the first time.

While responding to homelessness is a State and Australian Government responsibility, the impacts of homelessness intersect with multiple areas of Local Government service delivery, including the maintenance of public spaces, planning and zoning for appropriate services and revenue-related functions such as rates and grants administration. Local Governments must also manage community expectations about how they will respond to homelessness.

WALGA's current advocacy position was adopted by State Council in 2019 in the lead up to the release of [*All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030*](#) (the Strategy) released by the State Government. The Strategy sets out a vision for a whole of community response, led by the Department of Communities, working towards ending homelessness in Western Australia. The Strategy identifies a predominantly supportive role for the Local Government sector in addressing homelessness, while also acknowledging that some Local Governments directly provide homelessness and accommodation services. Suggested sector contributions in the Strategy include facilitating local partnerships, identifying rough sleepers, sharing local area knowledge to inform State Government resourcing decisions, and connecting people to specialist services. This supportive role for the Local Government sector is reflected in the current Advocacy Position.

At the National level, the [*National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness*](#) provides a five-year funding and accountability framework between the Australian and State/Territory Governments to support social housing and homelessness services until June 2029. The bilateral schedule for Western Australia sets out a \$165.9 million homelessness funding contribution from both parties.

COMMENT

Local Governments have been reporting increased numbers of people experiencing homelessness, including Local Governments that have historically experienced minimal impact. Local Governments have shared that they are facing growing pressure to meet both their defined obligations and community expectations for comprehensive responses, including specialist homelessness services triage, investment in housing and support service provision.

To better understand the issues being raised by Members, WALGA conducted a sector survey on homelessness in early 2026. 68 responses (49%) were received, 26 metropolitan and 42 regional, with representation from all WALGA Zones. Key findings from the survey include:

- 74% of respondents report an increase in the significance of homelessness in their Local Government area in the last two years.
- 60% of respondents report an increase in enquires from community members regarding homelessness in the last two years.
 - Key issues raised in community enquiries are rough sleeping and persons living in vehicles.
- 23% of respondents consider there is no role beyond defined responsibilities for Local Government in response to homelessness.
- 61% of respondents consider preventative measures to reduce homelessness and facilitating connections to specialist service providers as an appropriate role for Local Government in response to homelessness.
- 83% of respondents rank State and Federal Government funding as the highest or second highest priority enabler to respond to homelessness.
- 51% of respondents report that current specialist homelessness services are not adequate within their Local Government area.
- Respondents rank affordable housing as the top priority for support/services to address homelessness, followed by wraparound services and specialist support services.

Informed by survey responses and acknowledging the support role of Local Government identified in the State Strategy, the updated position calls on the Australian and Western Australian Government to provide the necessary leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular specialist services, social and affordable housing and wraparound services.

The People and Place Policy Team endorsed the revised position at its meeting on 19 March 2026 meeting.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council replace Advocacy Position 3.11 Homelessness with the following:

WALGA calls on the Western Australian and Australian Governments to provide leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular:

- 1. Ensuring specialist homelessness services are responsive to need, place-based and people-centred.*
- 2. Investing in social and affordable housing and wraparound services.*

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Julia Jean-Rice

Seconded: Mayor Phill Cronin

That the South West Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.4 as contained in the State Council Agenda subject to the addition of point 3 below:

3. Improving the collection, analysis and timely sharing of homelessness data to ensure it is robust, contemporary and sufficiently granular to support local and regional decision-making, including enabling Local Governments to understand local needs, existing service delivery and gaps in service provision.

CARRIED

Supporting commentary

Local Governments are increasingly experiencing dynamic and fluctuating patterns of homelessness, driven by factors including housing market pressures, seasonal employment, cost-of-living impacts, service accessibility and population movement. These changes often occur over short timeframes and are not captured in current national datasets.

The report appropriately references Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data as the primary authoritative dataset on homelessness. However, Census data is lagged by design, collected at five-year intervals, and does not reflect the rapid changes in homelessness presentations occurring at the local level. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data referenced in the report is a more contemporary source, improves timeliness but is limited in its ability to support place-based planning, often lacking the geographic resolution required to inform Local Government understanding of conditions within their district.

Local Governments are expected to manage community expectations and advocate for preventative and responsive approaches, yet frequently do so without access to clear, current and localised data that identifies:

- the scale and nature of homelessness in their area;
- the services funded and operating locally;
- service capacity, accessibility and constraints; and
- emerging or unmet needs.

Strengthening homelessness data collection and sharing arrangements to provide current, granular and locally relevant information would improve the effectiveness of State Government investment, support coordinated place-based responses, and ensure Local Governments are meaningfully engaged.

9.5 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 OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Shire of Harvey acknowledged the passing of David Smith OAM

The Zone congratulated WALGA President, Mayor Mark Irwin on his work since commencing in the role, particularly acknowledging his efforts during a challenging period

10.2 PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

The City of Busselton raised the topic of psychosocial hazards for Elected Members. In particular, that there should be a support system around psychosocial hazards, especially for Mayors/Presidents and Deputy members.

The City suggested making the “Dealing with Difficult People” WALGA training compulsory for Elected Members.

The Zone AGREED to add an item for discussion in the June Agenda around this issue. WALGA will provide information about what current support exists, including training on leadership and communication skills, and support available through LGIS.

11 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

11.1 WALGA PRESIDENT’S REPORT

The President’s Report was provided as an attachment within the Agenda.

Noted

11.2 WALGA STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

South West Country Zone State Councillor, President Donelle Buegge presented on the previous State Council meeting.

Noted

12 FINANCIAL REPORT

12.1 SOUTH WEST COUNTRY ZONE FINANCIAL REPORT

April 2026 Report		
South West Country Zone		
Cashflow		
Period Ending 31 Dec 25		
		Actual
		\$
Opening Cash Balance		23,636.43

Income	
Subscription Income	7,200
Total Income	7,200
Expenses	
Bank Charges	49
Sponsorship	-
Plaques	383
Total Expenses	432

The South West Country Zone AGREED that the financial report for April 2026 be deferred until the June meeting as the balance was not in the report.

13 EMERGING ISSUES

Nil.

14 2026 MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS

Remaining meeting dates for 2026 are listed below. Please note if any changes need to be made.

MEETING DATE	HOST LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Friday, 19 June 2026	Collie
Friday, 21 August 2026	Dardanup
Friday, 20 November 2026	Capel

15 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the South West Country Zone will be held on Friday, 19 June 2026 at the Shire of Collie commencing at 9:00am.

16 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 12:01pm