

South West Country Zone Minutes

23 August 2024

**Hosted by the Shire of Harvey
102 Uduc Road, Harvey**

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PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

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

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. Draft Minutes of previous meeting
2. August 2024 Update – Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries
3. President's Report

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

The Chair, President Cr Tony Dean opened the meeting at 9:06am.

1.2 ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS

1 Voting Delegates from each Member Council

Shire of August Margaret River	President Cr Julia Meldrum Ms Andrea Selvey, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Boyup Brook	Mr Leonard Long, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes	President Cr Jenny Mountford Ms Nicole Gibbs, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
City of Bunbury	Deputy Mayor Tresslyn Smith (Deputy) Mr Alan Ferris, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
City of Busselton	Mayor Phill Cronin Mr Tony Nottle, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Capel	President Cr Doug Kitchen Ms Samantha Chamberlain, Acting Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Collie	Cr Joe Italiano (Deputy)

	Mr Scott Geere, Director Operations, non-voting delegate
Shire of Dardanup	President Cr Tyrrell Gardiner Mr Theo Naudé, A/Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Donnybrook Balingup	President Cr Vivienne McCarthy
Shire of Harvey	President Cr Michelle Campbell Ms Annie Riordan, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Manjimup	President Cr Donnelle Buegge Mr Jason Giadresco, Director Development Services, non-voting delegate
Shire of Nannup	President Cr Tony Dean (Chair) Mr David Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
WA Local Government Association Secretariat	Mr Chris Hossen, Policy Manager Planning and Building Mr Max Bushell, Senior Policy Advisor Road safety and Infrastructure
South West Development Commission	Ms Mellisa Teede, Chief Executive Officer
RDA South West	Mr Charles Jenkinson, Director Regional Development
Guest Speakers	
Economic Regulation Authority	Mr Steve Edwell, Chair Sowmya Hindiskere, Executive Support Officer
SW Compassionate Communities	Dr Julieanne Hilbers, Deputy Chair

1.3 APOLOGIES

Shire of Boyup Brook	President Cr Richard Walker
City of Bunbury	Mayor Jaysen De San Miguel
Shire of Collie	President Cr Ian Miffing Mr Matt Young, Acting Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Capel	Mr Gordon MacMile, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate

Shire of Dardanup	Mr André Schönfeldt, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup	Mr Tim Clynch, Chief Executive Officer (Temporary), non-voting delegate
Shire of Manjumup	Mr Ben Rose, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries Australia's South West	Mr Brendan McNally, Regional Manager Peel-South West Ms Catrin Allsop, Chief Executive Officer

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.

Whadjuk Noongar People, where WALGA is located and we acknowledge and pay respect to Elders past and present.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

President Cr Julia Meldrum declared an impartiality interest to Zone Agenda Item 8.7 Review of Local Government Grant Scheme as a Local Government Member of the DFES Local Government Grant Scheme Committee.

4 DEPUTATIONS

4.1 SHIRE OF HARVEY

President Cr Michelle Campbell and Ms Annie Riordan, Chief Executive Officer

Shire of Harvey President Cr Michelle Campbell and Ms Annie Riordan, Chief Executive Officer provided an update to the Zone on current priorities and key projects.

Noted

4.2 ECONOMIC REGULATION AUTHORITY

Presentation by Steve Edwell, ERA Chair.

The ERA is WA's independent economic regulator and regulates electricity, gas, water and rail. The presentation focused on the energy transformation and regional service reliability, including initiatives in Western Power's current Access Arrangement to monitor actions by Western Power to address reliability concerns.

Western Power ERA Report and presentation are **attached** with the Minutes.

Noted

4.3 SOUTH WEST COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES NETWORK

Professor Samar Aoun and Dr Julieanne Hilbers from South West Compassionate Communities Network provided some information on The South West Compassionate Communities Network (SWCCN).

The SWCCN has been working in partnership with the City of Bunbury since 2018 to build our collective ability to have conversations about death, dying and caregiving. In 2022-23 the SWCCN had numerous conversations with the community which led to the development of the Compassionate Bunbury Charter and a Toolkit which have been endorsed by the City of Bunbury.

The presentation outlined the pivotal role Local Government plays in fostering and recognising Compassionate Communities. Wouldn't it be great for the entire South West to be recognised as a Compassionate Community? Let's work together to make this a reality.

A copy of the presentation is **attached** with the Minutes.

Noted

5 AGENCY REPORTS

5.1 SOUTH WEST DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Mellisa Teede, Chief Executive Officer, provided an update to the Zone on the South West Development Commission Strategic Plan 2024-2027 and on the Innovative Industries of the Future Conference to be held in Bunbury on 5-6 November 2024.

Noted

5.2 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA – SOUTH WEST

Charles Jenkinson, Director Regional Development, provided a brief update to the Zone.

Noted

5.3 DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Murray Carter, Executive Director Rural Fire Division from Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), provided a brief update to the Zone on:

- General DFES fire season update (previous and outlook for next)
- Performance of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) over the previous season / improvements for pending season
- Update on bushfire mitigation funding / developments for LG's

Noted

5.4 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SPORT AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Brendan McNally, Regional Manager Peel and South-West, was an apology for this meeting.

The August DLGSC update was attached with the Agenda.

Noted

5.5 AUSTRALIA'S SOUTH WEST

Catrin Allsop, Chief Executive Officer, was an apology for this meeting.

Noted

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the South West Country Zone meeting held on 21 June 2024 have previously been circulated to Member Councils and were provided as an attachment to the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Julia Meldrum
Seconded: President Cr Donnelle Buegge

That the Minutes of the meeting of the South West Country Zone held on 21 June 2024 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

CARRIED

7 BUSINESS ARISING

7.1 STATUS REPORT

By Chantelle O'Brien, Zone Executive Officer

BACKGROUND

Status Report for August 2024 which contains WALGA's responses to the resolutions of previous Zone Meetings.

Agenda Item	Zone Resolution	WALGA Response	Update	WALGA Contact
19 April 2024 Zone Agenda Item 8.1 Caravan and Camping Regulations Advocacy	That the South West Country Zone: 1. Supports changes to Part 2(b) of the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997 that allow Local Governments to consider camping on private property for a period of greater of three months.	State Council Resolution That State Council endorse a new Caravan Park and Camping Grounds Regulations Advocacy Position:	August 2024	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@w alga.asn.au 9213 2039

	<p>2. Allows Local Governments to establish policy to guide approvals beyond 3 months to ensure that camping is locally appropriate and provide for circumstances where tiny homes can be occupied on a more permanent basis; and</p> <p>3. Calls on WALGA to adopt a sector wide advocacy position in relation to 1 and 2, above.</p>	<p>Part 2 of the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997 should be amended to allow Local Governments to:</p> <p>1. Consider camping on private property for a period of greater of three months.</p> <p>Establish policy to guide approvals beyond 3 months to ensure that camping is locally appropriate and provide for circumstances where caravans, predominantly in the form of tiny homes on wheels, can be occupied on a more permanent basis.</p> <p>RESOLUTION 046.3/2024</p>		
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Noted

8 ZONE BUSINESS

8.1 COMMUNITY WATER SUPPLIES PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM – EXPANSION

By the Department of Water and Environment Regulation

BACKGROUND

- The Community Water Supplies Partnerships (CWSP) program provides grants of up to \$100,000 for community water supply improvements. The program aims to encourage the planning and establishment of reliable non-potable water supplies to meet emergency farmland and firefighting water needs and reduce scheme water use.
- An additional \$1.5 million in funding has been allocated to expand the CWSP to Local Government Authorities in the South West and Great Southern (Denmark) that were previously not eligible to apply.
- Applications for projects under the expansion of the CWSP for additional LGA areas are currently open and will close 11 November 2024, or until funds are exhausted.

COMMENT

Currently there are only a couple of applications that have been submitted. Below is the link to more information and how to make an application:

[Community Water Supplies Partnerships program | Western Australian Government](#)

Feedback would be appreciated:

1. If there are any issues or concerns with applying.
2. If water additional water infrastructure is not required.
3. As the program is new to these regions that projects ideas are still under consideration.
4. Any other comments.

If you would like to provide feedback, please send to Renae Thorpe, renae.thorpe@dwer.wa.gov.au

Noted

8.2 DAMA UPDATE

By the Shire of Dardanup

BACKGROUND

Attachments:

- Attachment A: DAMA Incoming Queries Overview as of 31 July 2024
- Attachment B: Supporting strong and sustainable region – Review of Regional Migration Settings, Discussion Paper – June 2024

Endorsement Activity (refer to Attachment A for detailed information)

As of 31 July 2024, the South West DAR received a total of 97 applications for endorsement in 2024, an increase of 90% compared to 31 July 2023. Endorsement applications have consisted of almost equal numbers of **New Endorsements** from businesses that are entering the DAMA system for the first time, and **Variation Requests** from businesses that have been endorsed previously but have returned to the DAR to request additional nominations as their business requirements changed.

In terms of nomination numbers (each endorsement application may request one or more nominations) the activity for the 2024 calendar year to 31 July was 246 nominations compared to 236 for the entire 2023 calendar year. Projected nominations for the 2024 calendar year are expected to reach 350-450 by 31 December. See Attachment A for a breakdown of activity by occupation type and industry area.

Clearly the substantial increases in activity are a reflection of maturation of the South West DAMA as it becomes more securely established and well known in the region. Many Registered Migration Agents (RMA) are now more familiar with the DAMA system and this has resulted in increased demand for endorsement. Around 90% of all endorsement applications are prepared and submitted by RMAs rather than by a business owner/employee/delegate. It is envisaged that the DAMA will over the current 5 year term will enable the nomination of approximately 1600 overseas workers with a combined annual salary approaching \$112 million per annum.

Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT) Increase

As part of the independent review into Australia's current migration system, in 2023 it was announced by Hon. Clare O'Neill, Minister for Home Affairs that the minimum salary requirements for employer-sponsored visa would be increased to \$70,000 for all new nominations from July 1, 2023. The previous rate of \$53,900 had remained unchanged since 2013. As part of the annual review of visa requirements TSMIT was increased by 4.5% to a new threshold of \$73150 effective 1 July 2024.

The new salary requirement may have the potential to have a negative impact on the DAMA program, particularly in the Agriculture and Hospitality space where there has been most of the take-up. Although at the time of the announcement, half of the applications for endorsement made in 2023 would not have met the new salary requirements, even with a 10% concession, businesses have accommodated the changes in 2023 and 2024. This indicates that indeed many businesses have looked more closely

at their salary offerings and are taking into account guaranteed overtime and penalties when determining salaries for overseas skilled workers.

Therefore the TSMIT increase is not proving to be a problem and has resulted in a more transparent and robust salary framework which in turn will lead to economic advantages in the region.

Salary Concession

The South-West DAMA had an existing concession to the TSMIT requirements of 10% (equal to 90% of TSMIT), provided there was evidence that the Award or Market rate aligned with this lower amount. Due to the increase from 1 July 2024, the salary concession (which is available for many DAMA occupations) makes for a minimum salary requirement of \$65,835, which may be out of reach of the Award rates for many of the occupations that have utilised the DAMA (Child Care workers, Nursing Support Workers, Fruit and Vegetable Farm workers, Waiters).

In May 2023, an application was made as part of the South West DAMA outstanding Deed of Variation request to increase the current TSMIT concession to 20% to allow for inclusion of those occupations of which Market or Award rate fall below the current TSMIT requirements. It is not surprising that this was rejected by Home Affairs as it directly opposes the policy position taken by the current Commonwealth Government on protecting the interests of vulnerable overseas workers. In addition many of the businesses with current DAMA endorsement although locally operated are not locally owned and hence any salary concession only serves to disadvantage the South West economy by extracting salary income from the region (potentially \$5-6 million per annum based on 10% concession) and by making South West businesses less attractive to visa applicants compared to their counterparts elsewhere.

Deed of Variation request – DAMA Changes

After a consultation period over the 2022/2023 new year with South-West businesses, an application was lodged with the Department of Home Affairs in early March 2023 to vary the current South-West DAMA agreement (56 additional occupations). A second round of occupation requests were added in April 2024 (14 additional occupations).

The request included the following:

- A change to the post-code range to only include the post-codes of the participating 12 local government areas.
- An increase to the number of nominations from 200 to 400 per calendar year for the remainder of the agreement
- Request to include 70 (additional occupations to the current list of 56 occupations) bringing the final total to 126 occupations.
- Request to simplify and enhance the path to Permanent Residency.
- Requested an increase to the TSMIT concession from 10% to 20%

Processing of these requests was delayed pending Ministerial approval but were progressed between April and July this year.

All of these changes have now been endorsed by Home Affairs except the increase of the 20% salary concession which has been maintained at 10%. In addition, the total

nomination for the South West DAMA been increased to 1200 total over the next three years (400 per year).

Coincidentally the WA State DAMA was established on 1 July 2024 and operates in all regional locations which are not covered by existing regional DAMAs. The WA DAMA does not charge fees and does not offer a concession on the current TSMIT hence businesses are required to pay a minimum \$73150 to their overseas workers if the market rate is less than that amount. The WA DAMA has been a positive development as it allows South West Businesses to access occupations (particularly Skill levels 1-3) which are not currently covered by the South West DAMA.

As part of the Deed of Variation the South West DAMA will now offer an accelerated pathway to permanent residence which is aligned with other DAMAs. With approval from their sponsor a temporary visa holder may be able to progress to a permanent visa after two years, rather than three years as required previously. This is a major development in that it will make the South West DAMA appealing to both sponsors and visa their nominees and hopefully will help retain overseas workers in the region.

The Deed of Variation was signed by the DAR (Shire of Dardanup) on 7 August 2024 and will come into effect when countersigned by the Commonwealth. This is imminent and when executed will be implemented immediately. Stake holders will be notified by email and the DAMA website will be updated to reflect the changes.

Aged Care Labour Agreement

In May 2023 an industry specific Labour Agreement was signed for the Aged Care Sector. This may have impacts on the South-West DAMA in the Aged Care specific occupations (Aged or Disabled Carer and Nursing Support Worker) as it offers some benefits not applicable to the South-West DAMA, such as direct entry to Permanent Residency, is not location-specific, has larger nomination ceilings and a lower salary requirement not linked to TSMIT.

Businesses expressing interest in Aged Care occupations have been referred to this specific Labour Agreement so that the South West DAMA quotas can be retained for other occupation groups.

Migration Review (see Attachment B)

Further announcements have been made in relation to the Migration review undertaken by the Federal Government, including a permanent residency pathway for all employer-sponsored visa holders which is now reflected in the South West DAMA through the Deed of Variation.

The Commonwealth has been conducting ongoing Migration reviews with a particular emphasis on strategies to attract and retain overseas workers in regional employment. Attachment B is a submission lodged by the South West DAR on 25 July 2024.

Sources

Executive Summary (above) and Attachment A – Statistics to 31 July 2024, prepared by Richard Stacey, DAMA Officer, South West DAMA, 7/8/24

Attachment B – Submission to Regional Migration Review, prepared by Richard Stacey and edited by André Schönfeldt, CEO Shire of Dardanup, 23 July 2024

Attachment A

DAMA Incoming Queries Overview as of 31 July 2024

The following is an overview of the incoming queries relating to the DAMA since the start of the 2024 program year.

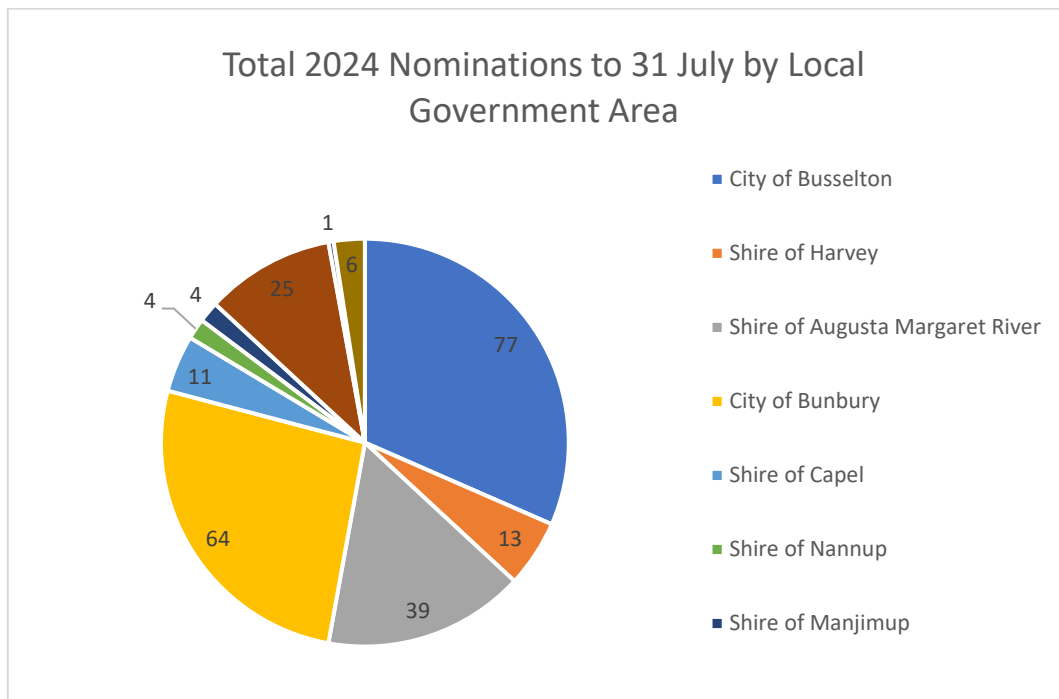
Applications for Endorsement for the South-West DAMA – July

In July the DAMA Officer received 14 applications for endorsement (for 29 nominated positions), from the following LGAs:

City of Bunbury (10), Shire of Augusta Margaret River (4), City of Busselton (10), Shire of Dardanup (1), Shire of Manjimup (2) and Shire of Capel (2).

July nominations (29) returning to normal levels after record levels in June. The long-term average for nominations has stabilised from 36 per month to the end of June, to 35 per month to the end of July.

To date applications for endorsement (and hence nominations) have been initiated by businesses in 10 of the 12 Local Government Areas covered by the South-West DAMA. See the distribution below to end of July.



Applications for Endorsement – Occupations

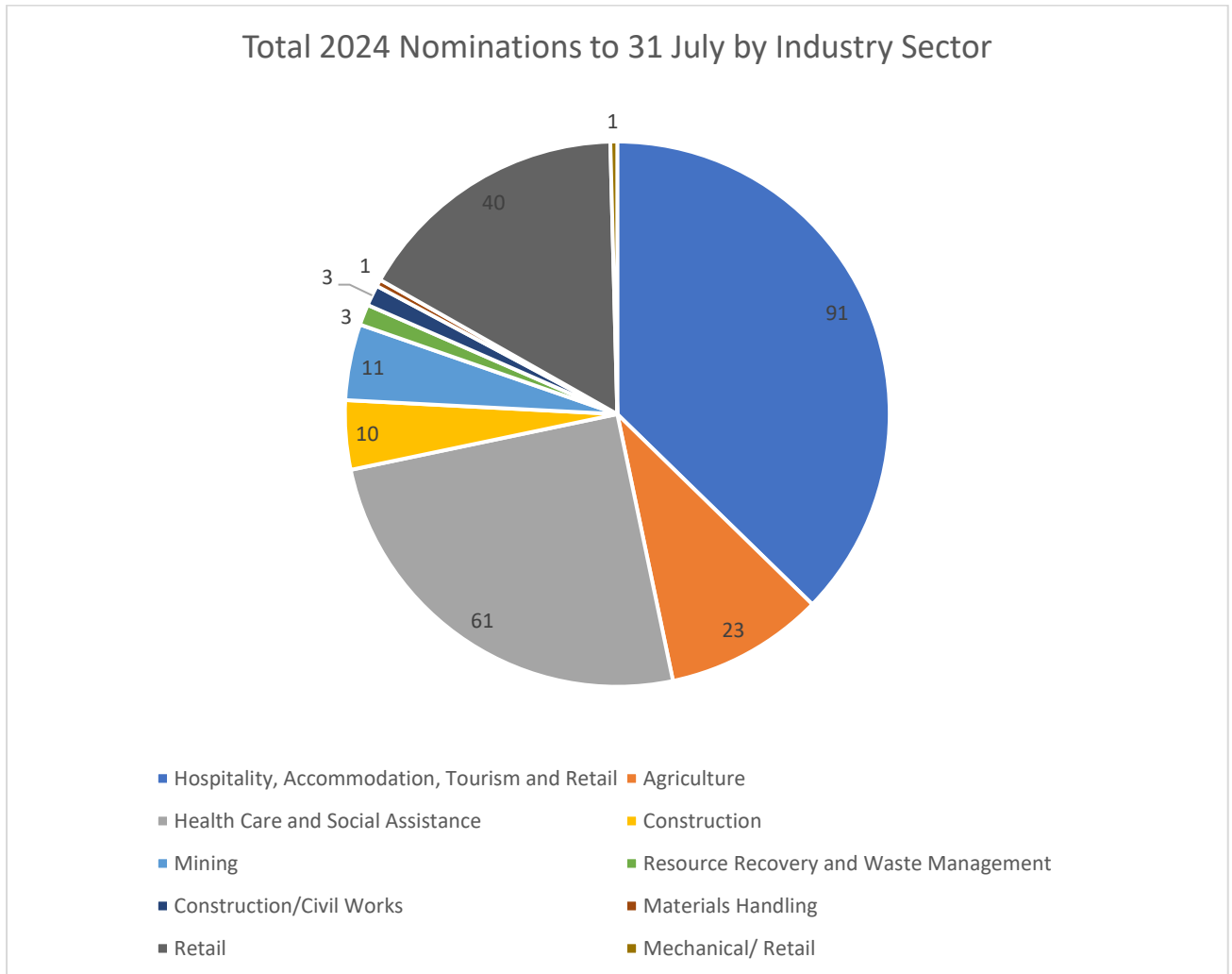
The nominated occupations are shown in the table below. To 31 July there are now 244 nominees in 30 (up from 29) distinct occupations: Currently the South-West DAMA offers 56 occupations (unchanged) with a new agreement due to take effect in August increasing the scope to 126 occupations and the nomination quota to 1200 over the remaining three year of the DAMA Agreement.

Nominations by Occupation	July 2024	1 Jan - 31 July 2024
Retail Supervisor	10	25
Vegetable Farm Worker		8
Cook	2	49
Waiter	6	23
Vineyard Worker	4	13
Aged or Disabled Carer		7
Bar Attendant (Supervisor)	2	9
Child Care Worker (Non-group Leader)		26
Nursing Support Worker		17
Waiter (Supervisor)		2
Diesel Motor Mechanic		1
Earthmoving Plant Operator		6
Loader Operator		2
Truck Driver (General)		4
Accommodation and Hospitality Manager NEC		1
Fruit or Nut Farm Worker	1	2
Excavator Operator		1
Baker		8
Plant Operator		3
Childcare worker - Grp Leader		1
Waiter Supervisor		3
Bar Attendant - Supervisor		1
Head Housekeeper (HotelSvc Mgr)		1
Concreter		3
Driller		10
Pastrycook		5
Child Care Worker (Group Leader)	2	9
Hospitality Worker NEC		1
Hospitality Worker (Tours)		1
Motor Mechanic	1	1
Restaurant Manager	1	1
Totals to 31 July	29	244
Projected total to 31 Dec 24 based on current growth		350-450

Nominations by Industry Sector - 2024

The **Hospitality Accommodation, Tourism and Retail Sector**, in combination with the **Healthcare and Social Assistance Sector** continue to dominate demand and collectively account for around three quarters of the total nominations to date.

In July there was a significant increase in demand for workers in the Food- Retail and Viticultural occupations.



Businesses in the South-West – Expressions of interest

New enquiries from businesses in the South-West (1-31 July 2024)

There have been 17 new unique enquiries from **businesses** since the last update, these are from the following LGAs:

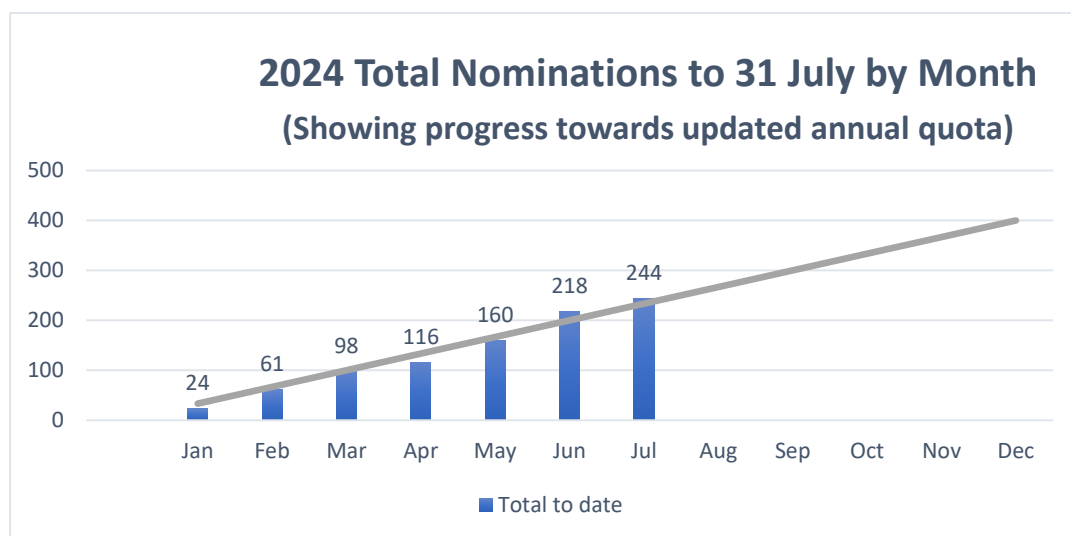
- Shire of Augusta Margaret River (2)
- City of Busselton (2)
- Shire of Dardanup (1)
- City of Bunbury (4)
- Shire of Harvey (1)
- Shire of Collie (1)
- Elsewhere (6)

In addition, there have been 19 enquiries in July from other interested parties including individuals seeking work (17) and other migration agencies (2). The DAMA Officer was invited to attend the July meeting of Geographe Wine Industry Association meeting (Thursday 25 July) where current and proposed DAMA occupations related to the wine industry were discussed.

Management of existing quotas, potential for growth and policy changes

Growth continues to be driven by a combination of new applicants, and an increasing number of returning applicants wishing to modify (vary) their nominations from previous endorsement applications. Businesses enter into a five year Labour Agreement with the Commonwealth hence there is increasing demand to modify the number and nature of nominations as the Labour Agreement is implemented.

The South West DAR has successfully negotiated with the Commonwealth a new Deed of Variation for the South West DAMA with an expanded range of occupations (from 54 to 126) which will take effect from early August. The new WA State DAMA is working effectively in conjunction with the regional DAMAs and has significantly increased the range of occupations available to regional businesses including the South West. The WA DAMA offers similar concessions such as English language and age, but does not offer salary concessions (10%) on minimum income thresholds.



Attachment B

Supporting strong and sustainable regions – Review of Regional Migration Settings, Discussion Paper – June 2024

Responses to Questions 1-8 raised in the review paper.
 Prepared by the Shire of Dardanup as DAR (Designated Area Representative) for the South West DAMA.

Date: 23 July 2024

Questions

1. How can the various temporary and permanent visas available to the regions work together to better meet skills needs? For example, Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMAs) and regional employer sponsored visas.

DAMAs have the potential to target local skills shortages but currently the differences between DAMAs on the concessions they can offer is creating uncertainty among potential visa applicants. The concessions on English competency, age, work experience and progression to permanent resident status have served to broaden the eligibility of visa applicants and this has been effective in encouraging visa applicants to DAMA regions.

2. Should there be a regional occupation list? How should regional occupation lists work alongside the Core Skills Occupation List? What should be considered in compiling the regional occupation list?

Multiple lists are causing confusion for both potential sponsors and visa applicants and only add to sponsor and visa applicant overheads by requiring visa eligibility to be determined by Migration Professionals (e.g. Registered Agents/Lawyers). Simplification is required.

To remain relevant each DAMA needs to be able to change their Occupation List in a responsive and timely fashion. Failure to do so alienates those potential sponsors that have actively participated in decision making processes with the local DAMA to address local skills shortages. Failure to accommodate changing needs renders the local DAMA irrelevant.

3. Could the definitions of regional be aligned across the various regional visas? How can definitions be structured to better account for the unique circumstances of regions?

Regions are well defined in Western Australia through legislation. It is recommended that each of these regions be allowed to develop their own DAMA and through that have more opportunities to respond to the unique circumstances of the region.

A Statewide DAMA remains beneficial to assist with broader migration and support metropolitan migration needs which may be different in a State like WA than the rest of Australia. The Perth and Peel metropolitan area, could also be seen as a region, for a regional DAMA to assist in this space.

4. How can we reform Working Holiday Maker program visa settings to limit exploitation, while still ensuring regional Australia can access the workers it needs? For example, are there innovative strategies to incentivise Working Holiday Makers to choose regional Australia as their preferred destination, without tying the incentives to specified work visa requirements?

Clearly WHM visa holders can be at a disadvantage in negotiating salaries with employers. The ability to secure appropriate qualifying work experience for working holiday visa extension places pressure on the visa holder to compromise on their salary expectation to secure a place.

A possible innovative approach would be to incentivise regional work through income tax rebates for WHM workers. This would involve review of wage records and hence would discourage intentional or accidental wage theft.

As stated in the report wage exploitation of temporary migrants offends our national values of fairness. It harms not only the employees involved, but also the businesses which do the right thing. It has potential to undermine our national reputation and is counterproductive in the short and longer term.

Another option is simply to require the working holiday makers to work in regional areas regardless of which industry they work in, thereby forgoing the specific requirement for this to be on rural production or related activities. Allow working holiday makers to apply their skills and experience even in professional capacity may further assist in retaining some of these skills over longer periods.

5. How can we ensure a more consistent approach to lower paid migration across various visa products, as well as reflect our commitment to maintain the primacy of our relationships with the Pacific?

No comment.

6. Noting the limitations of visa settings, what factors encourage more migrants to choose to settle in the regions and improve retention?

Fairness in housing, salaries, and equitable access to services so that migrants can afford to bring their families with them, or in the case of working holiday visa holders to establish and involve themselves (and their potential families) in the local community.

Whilst DAMAs can include concessions to salaries, this should be considered in the context of the average wages paid for similar positions within the region. There is often a big disparity between working within metropolitan areas where higher wages can be afforded by employers, than in regions where low patronage may make similar wages levels unaffordable for the regional employers. Losing such facilities due to not being able to afford the wages is not a good outcome for the regions. Therefore, it is recommended that the concessions should reflect the region's average wage for a particular skill.

Liveability and the availability of work or education opportunities for the migrant's partner or extended family can often contribute to the attractiveness of a region. In the South West of WA competing with wages paid by mining companies in the north of the State makes it particularly hard for local small businesses to attract and retain Australian employees, who have the mobility to live within the South West Region, and fly in and out of the region where they are employed. Having regional based DAMAs assists to a degree with retention, however the role of the DAR (Designated Area Representative) is to ensure that exploitation does not occur.

7. Do provisional visas successfully encourage large scale retention of migrants in the regions? Is the length of a provisional visa the right length? Should both the regional employer sponsored visa and the regional nominated visa have the same provisional visa arrangements?

Visa applicants need to be re-assured that the visa path they choose is in the best interests of the visa applicant and is sustainable for the sponsor. The interests of all parties is best served by simplification and rationalisation of visa arrangements.

Apart from Working Holiday Makers, very few highly skilled migrants would consider relocating from another country giving up family, friends and current career paths, for a temporary opportunity with no clear path to permanency. Having someone temporarily in a position and needing to replace them because their visa ran out and they are no longer eligible or never was for Permanent Residency, would have a significant impact on both sides of the border.

8. How can we improve planning for regional migration, especially given the return of migrants to regional Australia post-pandemic? Should there be more flexibility provided to states and territories in planning for regional migration?

Certainly. States and territories, and the regions within them must have the flexibility to plan to adapt to changing skills requirements while at the same time maintaining uniform minimum standards for salaries/wages, fair access to health cover, fair access to subsidised childcare and fee-free education for migrant families. Encouraging skilled migrants to separate from their dependent families to satisfy local skills shortages does nothing to address skills shortages in the longer term.

There is a significant role for regional DARs to support and monitor the settlement of temporary and permanent migrants to assist with migrant retention in their respective regions.

Noted

8.3 STATE COUNCIL REGIONAL MEETING – ZONE FORUM

By Meghan Dwyer, Executive Officer Governance

At the June Zone meeting the following format and content was suggested by Member Local Governments for the Zone Forum to be held as part of the WALGA Regional Country State Council being hosted by the City of Busselton from Thursday 5 – Friday 6 December:

- Presentations from each of the following subgroups:
 - Warren Blackwood Alliance of Councils (Shires of Boyup Brook, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Donnybrook-Balingup, Manjimup and Nannup)
 - Bunbury Geographe Economic Alliance (City of Bunbury and Shires of Capel, Dardanup and Harvey)
 - Shire of August Margaret River
 - Shire of Collie
 - City of Busselton
- Site visits, if applicable and if the program can accommodate them.

The Zone agreed that the Executive Officer would prepare a program for presentation to the August Zone meeting. The following program has been developed:

10:30am	Arrive at the Shire of Dardanup Morning tea Tour of Administration, Library and Community building <i>1hr for disembarking, morning tea, tour and boarding</i>
11:30am	Depart Shire of Dardanup
12:45pm	Arrive City of Busselton
12:45pm to 1:30pm	Lunch <i>All Zone Local Government Elected Members, CEOs and senior staff invited</i>
Zone Forum Presentations 1:30pm to 4:00pm	- <i>All Zone Local Government Elected Members, CEOs and senior staff invited</i> Welcome Presentations (approximately 20-25mins each presentation) and opportunity for questions and answers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warren Blackwood Alliance of Councils (Shires of Boyup Brook, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Donnybrook-Balingup, Manjimup and Nannup)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunbury Geographe Economic Alliance (City of Bunbury and Shires of Capel, Dardanup and Harvey) • Shire of August Margaret River • Shire of Collie • City of Busselton
Busselton Walking Tour 4:00pm to 5:00pm <i>Optional extension</i> <i>5:00pm to 5:30pm</i>	<i>State Councillors only at this stage, additional participants to be considered subject to practicalities</i> City of Busselton - CEO, Tony Nottle, and Director Economic and Business Development, Maxine Palmer Saltwater Site Tour New Left Coast Chocolate Shop site New Marine Discovery Centre site <i>Interim Marine Discovery Centre</i>
7:00pm to 10:00pm WALGA Dinner	<i>Zone Delegates and CEO's will be invited, at WALGA's cost. Elected Members and officers may attend. However, this will be subject to capacity and at the cost of the respective Local Government or individual.</i> Shelter Brewing Co

Following this meeting WALGA will:

- Send a formal invitation to the identified presenters to provide a presentation at the Zone Forum
- Send an email to all Zone Delegates and CEOs of Local Governments within the Zone, providing a preliminary schedule of events and asking them to 'save the date'. Local Government CEOs are requested to provide information to all Elected Members, and senior staff, as appropriate.

WALGA will send formal invitations to events in early September.

Noted

8.4 TELCO COMMUNICATION COVERAGE IN RURAL AREAS

By the Shire of Manjimup

BACKGROUND

Concerns have been raised by both the Shire of Manjimup Bush Fire Advisory Committee (BFAC) and Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) that mobile phone coverage throughout the Shire of Manjimup has been significantly impacted, particularly in the Western and Northern parts of the Shire. Concerns raised are that in recent years a smaller coverage area exists than in previous years, less signal strength and call dropouts.

Localised evidence suggests that areas such as Palgarup, that previously had reasonable coverage has now got very little and the western areas of Manjimup (Yanmah / Ringbarkers / Glenoran) are now experiencing a lower coverage area, call dropouts and inconsistent reception.

First Responders have voiced their concerns about having to rely on the mobile phone network when involved in responding to an incident. Whilst First Responders have a reasonable emergency radio network, there has been a reliance in recent years to

communicate with local and state authorities and keep the relevant Communication Centres up to date via the phone network.

The rural community have also raised concerns with Councillors and Staff that they could be unable to contact authorities in the time of an emergency, leaving them in a vulnerable situation. Business owners have expressed disappointment with lack of data they are able to get through the network and not receiving phone calls from potential clients due to lack of coverage.

It is clear that the wider community believe that the coverage has decreased in recent years even when more communication towers have become operational in the area. The Shire of Manjimup LEMC has requested staff of the areas commonly used telecommunication company to attend a LEMC meeting on several occasion, the officers from that company have argued LEMC's claims that the coverage in the area has been impacted and have suggested that the Shire of Manjimup is the only Local Government that has raised lack of coverage concerns.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

The Australia Government has funded and is undertaking a National Audit of Mobile Coverage to better identify mobile coverage black spots across Australia to help target future investment, and to provide an independent resource that better reflects on ground experiences of mobile coverage provided commercially by mobile providers.

Accenture Australia has been contracted to undertake the Audit on behalf of the Government and it will run until 30 June 2027.

A three month pilot has been undertaken covering 3 major roads in each jurisdiction. In WA these were Albany Highway, Great Eastern Highway / Eyre Highway and sections of Great Northern Highway / Brand Highway / Indian Ocean Drive route.

The main Audit will involve drive testing around 180,000 km of regional and rural roads every year for 3 years. Accenture will also place devices in up to 77 locations—across all states and territories to conduct testing over an extended period over the 3 years. This will assist in identifying seasonal variations in mobile coverage.

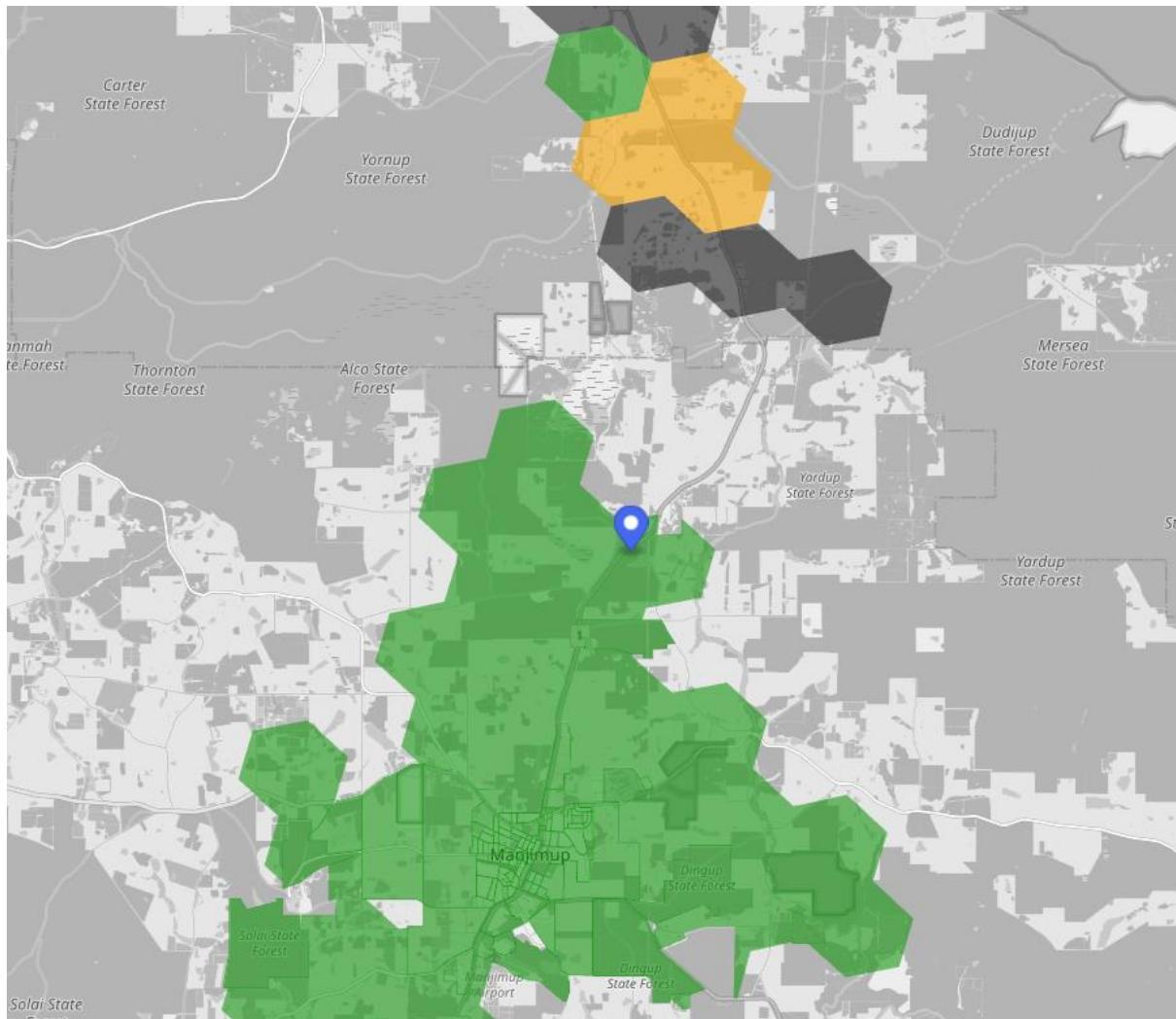
The Audit will measure coverage and performance across Optus, Telstra and TPG, and also cover 3G (while it is available), 4G and 5G services.

Audit data from drive and static testing will be complemented by crowd-sourced data collected by Accenture. Crowd-sourced data can provide information on mobile coverage and network performance. Importantly, it reflects coverage where people actually use their mobiles.

During this initial phase of the Audit, crowd sourced data and data collected from the pilot Audit are available to the public via the [Mobile Audit Visualisation Tool](#). The data and coverage maps presented here are compiled through community input and field testing, capturing real-world user experiences at given moments in time. Further information about the nature and methodology for collecting the data is available and in the Visualisation Tool. This information will be updated as the Audit progresses. An extract from this crowd sourced data covering part of the Shire of Manjimup is copied below. There is insufficient data captured so far from the areas of interest identified.

As pilot and main audit data becomes available, the coverage maps will be updated with data collected through drive-testing and static locations. Crowd-sourced data is collected via the Accenture Crowdsourcing platform and draws upon on 150,000 active users in Australia at any one time contributing to 3.5 billion samples annually.

The Audit is a component of the Government's Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia.



WALGA has an advocacy position (5.15 Regional Telecommunications) in relation to improving mobile telecommunications coverage, resilience and capacity. Submissions to the 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review (Commonwealth) and the Public Administration Committee Inquiry into regional telecommunications in Western Australia were endorsed by WALGA State Council earlier this year.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Donnelle Buegge

Seconded: President Cr Julia Meldrum

That WALGA:

1. advocate through the State Government for an independent investigation into mobile phone coverage in rural Western Australia particularly the Lower South West land division and
2. advocate via both the State and Federal Government for a greater and more reliable mobile coverage network throughout the rural areas of Western Australia.

CARRIED

8.5 REQUEST TO PRESENT – SOUTH WEST ABORIGINAL MEDICAL SERVICES

By Chantelle O'Brien, Governance Support Officer

BACKGROUND

WALGA Secretariat has received a request from a representative from the South West Aboriginal Medical Services (SWAMS), seeking the opportunity to provide a deputation to the members of the South West Country Zone.

The deputation would include:

1. a brief re-introduction to SWAMS, the only Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation south of the metropolitan area, covering over 38,000 square kilometers.
2. updates on the multiple South West sites; and
3. an introduction to new services, including Aged Care Services and Disability Services.

Additionally, the presentation will offer Local Governments an update on the progress of the South West Aboriginal Health HUB, which will be located at Jaycee Park, thanks to the generous land donation by the City of Bunbury. Funded by Commonwealth and State funding, this HUB will significantly enhance the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in the Southwest region.

The CEO, and Manager of Executive Services have tentatively requested to attend the November meeting in Manjimup.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Vivienne MacCarthy

Seconded: President Cr Julia Meldrum

That the South West Country Zone approves a representative from SWAMS to attend the November 2024 Zone meeting to provide a deputation as above.

CARRIED

8.6 WALGA HONOURS AWARDS

By Chantelle O'Brien, Governance Support Officer

BACKGROUND

WALGA celebrated their 2024 Honours awards recipients at an event on Friday, 2 August at Winthrop Hall. For the first time, a WALGA awards event was held solely to acknowledge and appreciate the extraordinary efforts of Elected Members and Local Government Officers in service of their Local Government, the sector and the community.

There were 46 recipients of Honours awards in the 2024 program, including two Local Government Medal recipients. Four new WALGA Life Members were also inducted.

3 Honours recipients were from Local Governments from the South West Country Zone:

Hon Paul Domenic Omodei	Shire of Manjimup	Local Government Medal
Cr Ian Earl	Shire of Augusta Margaret River	Eminent Service Award
Mr Paul Carter	City of Busselton	Merit Award

Congratulations to all Honours recipients!

Nominations for the 2025 Honours Program will open early next year.

Noted

8.7 REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEME – LATE ITEM

By the City of Busselton

President Cr Julia Meldrum declared an impartiality interest as a Local Government Member of the DFES Local Government Grant Scheme Committee.

BACKGROUND

The City of Busselton has recently written to the Western Australian Minister for Emergency Services Stephen Dawson, and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) Commissioner Darren Klemm, calling for an immediate review of the local government grant scheme (LGGs) application processes, and the subsequent associated communication and administration processes deployed by DFES in processing the grant.

Since June 2022 the City has repeatedly raised concerns with DFES in relation to the inadequacy of the LGGs model and application processes including:

- Poorly defined grant objective and outcomes.
- Lack of transparency of decision-making criteria.
- Lack of transparency and communication of funding decisions.
- Lack of definition of minimum baseline standard and servicing requirements that LG brigades should be managed at.
- A requirement for the model to be informed by regional and state-wide asset management planning for current and future brigade locations to inform the maintenance/replacement or planning for new facilities at a LG level.
- Need for increased allocation of funding by the state for Bushfire Brigades (BFB).

In 2017, the Economic Regulation Authority through the *Review of the Emergency Services Levy (ESL)* issues paper assessed the effectiveness of the ESL model. A recommendation of this review was that LGGs manual should be sufficiently broad to not be too prescriptive, in turn allowing for flexible decision making by DFES based on needs guided by the objectives of achieving:

- At least a minimum level of services; and
- Allocation of funds that provides the greatest net benefit.

In 2022 the Office of Auditor General undertook a review of the Funding of Volunteer Emergency and Fire Services in WA. This audit identified gaps in the DFES documentation of funding decisions and processes, along with lack of alignment of funding allocations to current and emerging risks to community. This audit recommended that DFES should by 31 December 2023:

1. Improve its administration of Grants Scheme funding to volunteer services to better inform decision making by:
 - a. more completely documenting funding decisions and procedures
 - b. defining and communicating the process to update eligible items within the Grants Scheme Manual
 - c. using available volunteer, cost and incident data to periodically review funding allocations to ensure they are clearly linked to the mitigation of key risks to the community
 - d. clearly defining and communicating Grants Scheme objectives and outcomes to LG entities
2. Work with the local government sector to adopt a State-wide strategic approach to Grants Scheme funding based on a more comprehensive understanding of LG entities' longer term operating and capital costs.

DFES agreed to achievement of these actions within the stipulated timeframe, yet in the LGGs Manual for Capital and Operating Grants FY 2024/25 published in December 2023, included a note within the foreword that these actions had not been implemented but would be in time for future editions of the manual.

How has DFES worked with the local government sector to adopt a State-wide strategic approach to the Grants scheme funding? The City of Busselton has proactively attempted to obtain from DFES on numerous occasions clarity in relation to strategic asset management planning for brigades within our local government area and wider region to inform our internal asset management planning and budgeting for BFB facilities. Despite multiple meetings and requests for such information no detail has been forthcoming.

At the time of the 2022 OAG review, in Western Australia there were 563 BFB units and 64 SES units annually funded via LGGs. Under the 2024/25 LGGs allocations there was \$35.408 million to be allocated to fund the operating and capital requirements for these ~630 units across the state.

The structure of funding prioritisation was allocated as per the table below:

2024/25 BUDGET	\$35.408M
Expenditure Items	
BFS & SES Fleet Assets – Annual build program	\$17.268M
BFS & SES Operating Grants - Total	\$14.176M
BFS Facility – previous approval commitments - instalments	\$0.800M

BFS Facility – previous approval commitments – escalation	\$1.120M
Minor programmes – SES Vertical Rescue & First Aid training	\$0.100M
Contingency – Operating Grant Acquittal overspends	\$0.500M
Balance available for LG Capital Grant funding requests	\$1.444M

It is concerning, that an allocation of \$1.444m for capital requirements (greater than \$5,000) for 630 units statewide is considered sufficient by the State to effectively manage the whole-of-life asset management requirements for volunteer BFB and SES facilities.

DFES in their communications to local governments on the allocation of LGGS funding in the 2024/25 budget highlighted that the BFB and SES Capital Grants Committees assessed capital grant funding requests totalling \$39million dollars.

In the 2023/24 LGGS budget the BFB and SES capital grant requests totalled \$48million with only \$2.467million available to be allocated.

In the 2022/23 LGGS budget the BFB and SES capital grant requests totalled \$42million with only \$4.5 million available to be allocated.

This sets a concerning pattern of underfunding for capital renewal, upgrades and replacement of BFB and SES units. How can local governments apply whole-of-life asset management practices for effective management of these capital assets when the funding allocation is clearly insufficient?

How can local governments obtain clarity in relation to the prioritisation and justification applied by the Capital Grant committees when assessing where to allocate capital funding when an application that is declined by the committee minimal reasoning or justification of the decision is provided to local governments.

In addition, the City of Busselton is also concerned that the current process for allocation of BFB and SES operating grants are also insufficient to allow local governments to feel assured that they have sufficient funding to effectively manage such units. Operating allocations are determined by a method of calculation based on the average of the previous two years completed acquittals and the current years operating allocation, indexed with the prevailing cost escalation factor.

When there are no minimum defined base line standards or maintenance requirements defined by the State for effective management of BFB and SES units, how can a local government accepting an operating grant allocation be confident that the allocation will sufficiently ensure that the units under their responsibility are being managed and maintained at an appropriate standard?

What analysis does DFES undertake with review of units across the state to determine what the variance in associated costs and management standards are?

How can local governments feel confident when deploying their BFB units to support a response in another local government area that the units under the management of other organisations have the same standards of management and training applicable to their own brigades so there is assurance of a minimal level of competency of deployed volunteers, and also assurance that appliances utilised on such deployments meet the same minimum requirements that are applied to a local governments own appliances?

The City has proactively addressed gaps as identified through internal standards for:

- Annual WHS audits and reviews for all our BFB facilities and appliances.
- Implemented minimum standards and replacement cycles for volunteer PPE
- Implemented minimum training requirements to be considered fire ground ready
- Implemented annual review of appliance equipment, to ensure the standards and provision match the minimum equipment provisions applied for newly commissioned appliances.
- Implemented standard maintenance programs for BFB facilities and appliances

In addition, the City has also developed strategic asset management plans that apply to the maintenance and capital requests for our BFB facilities to ensure a whole-of-life management is applied for these assets.

However, in many ways local governments are still flying blind. The lack of funding available for capital works under the LGGS has an implication that BFB facilities and appliances are not being managed in line with the identified whole-of-life asset management standards identified by the City.

The pattern of underfunding capital requests through the LGGS allocations for the past three years suggests that BFB and SES assets statewide are being underfunded. If there is a lack of available funding for capital works, at the identified required point of intervention it also means that there is a significant risk that statewide BFB and SES assets are not able to be effectively managed by local governments without access to other funding streams outside LGGS.

WALGA has an advocacy position statement (8.8 Local Government Grants Scheme) established in July 2022, Local Government supports:

1. A full, independent review of the LGGS to investigate and analyse how ESL funds are allocated to Local Government via the LGGS;
2. A redesign of the LGGS to remove the ineligible and eligible list and create a sustainable, modern, equitable grants program that funds Local Government emergency management activities across prevention, preparedness and response;
3. An audit of existing buildings, facilities, appliances, vehicles, and major items of equipment for both Local Government Volunteer Bushfire Brigades (BFB) and State Emergency Services (SES) to inform the preparation of a Comprehensive Asset Management Plan and to guide future funding requests; and
4. in the interim, an immediate increase in the quantum of State Government funding to enable the provision of funding of operating and capital grant applications in full, to provide all resources necessary for the safe and efficient operation of Local Government Bushfire Brigades, in accordance with obligations of the Work Health and Safety 2020 legislation.

In late 2023 the responses of 102 Local Governments to the WALGA Emergency Management Survey indicated a resounding need for improvements to the LGGS, with transparency of decisions, clarity in communication and a need for LGGS funding priorities to be informed by an audit of LGGS facilities.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

As noted in the Item, the Zone's recommendation aligns with WALGA's existing LGGS advocacy position:

8.8 Local Government Grants Scheme

Position Statement

Local Government supports:

- 1. A full, independent review of the LGGs to investigate and analyse how ESL funds are allocated to Local Government via the LGGs;*
- 2. A redesign of the LGGs to remove the ineligible and eligible list and create a sustainable, modern, equitable grants program that funds Local Government emergency management activities across prevention, preparedness and response;*
- 3. An audit of existing buildings, facilities, appliances, vehicles, and major items of equipment for both Local Government Volunteer Bushfire Brigades (BFB) and State Emergency Services (SES) to inform the preparation of a Comprehensive Asset Management Plan and to guide future funding requests; and*
- 4. in the interim, an immediate increase in the quantum of State Government funding to enable the provision of funding of operating and capital grant applications in full, to provide all resources necessary for the safe and efficient operation of Local Government Bushfire Brigades, in accordance with obligations of the Work Health and Safety 2020 legislation.*

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WALGA is continuing to advocate strongly on this issue, including as a key 2025 WALGA State Election priority.

WALGA would welcome further information and examples from Local Governments on their experience with LGGs applications to inform this advocacy.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Mayor Phil Cronin
Second: President Cr Doug Kitchen

That WALGA:

- 1. Advocate through the State Government for an independent review and redesign of the LGGs, carried out in consultation with Local Governments, prior to releasing to the guidelines for the 2025/26 LGGs application process in December 2024.**
- 2. Advocate for timely definition by DFES of minimum operating standards, equipment, training, and service requirements for BFB facilities, appliances and volunteers.**
- 3. Advocate for DFES to undertake an audit of all existing BFB facilities within the 2024/25 Financial year, to inform the development of a comprehensive strategic Asset Management Plan to guide whole of life management of BFB facilities and future funding requests.**
- 4. Advocate the State Government to increase available funding in the 2025/26 State budget, for LGGs to sufficiently fund whole of life management of BFB facilities, in a manner compliant with the minimum standards DFES has set for VFRS facilities and sufficient to ensure BFB facilities can be managed in the accordance with obligations of the *Work Health and Safety 2020* Legislation.**

CARRIED

9 STATE COUNCIL AGENDA – MATTERS FOR DECISION AND NOTING

Zone delegates to read and consider the September 2024 WALGA State Council Agenda, which has been provided as an attachment with this Agenda.

The Zone can provide comment or submit an alternative recommendation that will then be presented to the State Council for consideration.

9.1 STATE COUNCIL MATTERS FOR DECISION

8.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS ANALYSIS 2015-2023

By Emma Heys, Governance Specialist

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA advocate to the State Government:

1. *For an independent Local Government election audit, focusing on the Western Australia Electoral Commission's (WAEC) cost allocation methods and costing applications used, to confirm that marginal cost recovery principles are applied and that the costing program is being effectively managed.*
2. *For the requirement for the WAEC to develop and implement Service Level Agreements with Local Governments, similar to those agreements currently used in New South Wales and Victorian Local Government elections and that includes:*
 - a. *transparency of costing methodology,*
 - b. *direct engagement with Local Governments pre and post elections, and*
 - c. *the roles and responsibilities of the WAEC and Local Governments in the conduct of elections.*
3. *For the introduction of a provision for private service providers to enter the market for the conduct of Local Government elections.*
4. *For a mandated WAEC Report to Parliament specific to Local Government elections post each election cycle, outlining costs, results, voter turnout and matters for improvement both in the conduct of elections and the legislation, if relevant.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of a comprehensive review and analysis of five election cycles up to and including the 2023 Local Government election against the backdrop of legislative reforms to the Local Government electoral process in Western Australia.
- With a focus on postal elections conducted exclusively by the Western Australian Electoral Commission (WAEC), the analysis has found evidence of the rising cost of conducting Local Government elections in Western Australia.
- Elected Member feedback, costs vs service comparisons and engagement by the sector with WALGA's governance services over the 2023 Local Government election period, are the basis for the recommendations as outlined above.
- The Governance Policy Team considered this item at its meeting of 7 August and endorsed the position for consideration by State Council

8.2 ENERGY TRANSITION ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY BENEFIT FRAMEWORK ADVOCACY POSITION

By Daniel Thomson, Manager Economics

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse a new Energy Transition Engagement and Community Benefit Framework Advocacy Position as follows:

It is essential that the energy transition currently underway delivers economic opportunities, ensures reliable and affordable electricity, and the greatest possible benefits for the community.

WALGA calls on the State Government to develop a comprehensive framework to manage the impact of the energy transition that includes local engagement and the realisation of community benefits from energy transition projects as a priority.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Western Australia's energy industry is transforming to achieve the goal of net zero emissions by 2050.
- In Western Australia there is no framework that provides a consistent approach to how proponents of major energy projects consult with local communities and how they can share in the benefits.
- WALGA will advocate for the State Government to develop a framework to guide consultation and benefit sharing with local communities during the energy transition.
- A joint meeting of the Environment Policy Team and Infrastructure Policy Team held on 10 July endorsed the position for consideration by State Council.
- This draft advocacy position should be considered in conjunction with the accompanying draft WALGA advocacy positions Renewable Energy Facilities (Item 8.3) and Priority Agriculture (Item 8.4).

8.3 RENEWABLE ENERGY FACILITIES ADVOCACY POSITION

By Kieran McGovern, Policy Officer Planning

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse a new Renewable Energy Facilities Advocacy Position as follows:

The growth in the number, size, and complexity of renewable energy facilities across Western Australia is expected to continue as energy generation and other traditional industries de-carbonise their facilities and operations. The renewable energy state planning framework requires changes to ensure it is fit for purpose to guide the ongoing development of this sector.

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

1. *Adopt a new State Planning Policy for renewable energy facilities, to replace the existing Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities, that:*
 - a. *Facilitates the orderly development of renewable energy facilities across Western Australia;*
 - b. *Outlines the key planning and environmental considerations, for the location, siting, design and operation of renewable energy facilities and their associated infrastructure;*
 - c. *Provides a framework that clearly stipulates the minimum required documentation and technical reports that need to be submitted with proposals for renewable energy facilities;*
 - d. *Supports the development of Local Planning Policies by Local Governments to further guide locally appropriate planning consideration of renewable energy facilities;*
 - e. *Provides a clear relationship with:*
 - i. *State Planning Policy 2.5 - Rural planning and Development Control Policy 3.4 - Subdivision of rural land, to ensure planning decisions adequately balance the need to protect and preserve rural land for rural purposes;*
 - ii. *State Planning Policy 2.4 - Planning for Basic Raw Materials to ensure proposals for renewable energy facilities consider their impact on basic raw material supply at the earliest stage of the planning process; and*
 - iii. *State Planning Policy 2.9 - Planning for Water to ensure water resources impacted by renewable energy facilities are identified and adequately managed.*
 - f. *Includes policy measures to address:*
 - i. *concerns relating to the location of these facilities and their associated infrastructure on agricultural land, their proximity to lot boundaries, town sites and sensitive land uses, and potential impact on airport operations and rural activities;*
 - ii. *planning for renewable energy facilities in industrial areas in relation to the coordination of these facilities, their appropriateness in the 'General Industry' zone and impacts and suitable location on heavy industry sites;*
 - iii. *the need for local engagement and the realisation of community benefits from the development of renewable energy facilities.*

2. *Review the definition of 'renewable energy facility' considering the increasing size and scope of facilities and consider creating definitions based on the scale of the facility (Utility-scale and other), and the form of facility (solar energy and wind energy).*

3. *Provide guidance to Local Governments on the consideration of green hydrogen production facilities on rural land where it is an incidental use to a renewable energy facility.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A 2023 WALGA Annual General Meeting resolution and subsequent resolution by the Great Eastern Country Zone requested *WALGA establish and promote policies to protect and prioritise the preservation of agricultural land against its displacement by*

non-agricultural activities that lead to a net reduction of the State's productive agricultural land.

- The Central Country Zone resolved to request WALGA to advocate to the State Government *to develop a more comprehensive and effective approach to guide the management and placement of renewable energy facilities; including but not limited to wind, solar, battery renewable diesel and associated infrastructure.*
- The existing State Government *Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities* does not adequately address these concerns, leading to inconsistent application and approvals of renewable energy facilities across the State.
- WALGA will advocate for the existing *Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities* to be amended and elevated to a State Planning Policy, including more nuanced provisions which provide greater guidance to Local Governments and applicants, and allow for renewable energy land uses to be classified as either small or large facilities.
- A joint meeting of the Environment Policy Team and Infrastructure Policy Team on 10 July endorsed the position for consideration by State Council.
- This draft advocacy position should be considered in conjunction with accompanying draft WALGA advocacy positions Energy Transition Engagement and Community Benefit Framework (Item 8.2) and Priority Agriculture (Item 8.4).

8.4 PRIORITY AGRICULTURE ADVOCACY POSITION

By Kieran McGovern, Policy Officer Planning

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse a new Priority Agriculture Advocacy Position as follows:

The state planning framework should provide sufficient statutory protections for areas identified as high quality agricultural land.

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

1. *Amend the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 to:*
 - a. *Create a new model zone under Schedule 1, Part 3, Clause 16 for land identified as high quality agricultural land known as the 'Priority Agriculture' zone, with the following objectives:*
 - i. *to retain priority agricultural land for agricultural purposes; and*
 - ii. *limit the introduction of sensitive land uses which may compromise existing, future and potential agricultural production.*
 - b. *Define 'Priority Agriculture' zone under Schedule 2, Part 1, Clause 1 to align with the definition provided in State Planning Policy 2.5 - Rural planning.*
2. *Review the areas which have been identified by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development as high quality agricultural land and expand the extent of mapping to address the whole of Western Australia.*
3. *Undertake a 'health check' of State Planning Policy 2.5 - Rural planning and Development Control Policy 3.4 - Subdivision of rural land, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A 2023 WALGA Annual General Meeting resolution and subsequent resolution by the Great Eastern Country Zone have requested *that WALGA establish and promote policies to protect and prioritise the preservation of agricultural land against its displacement by non-agricultural activities that lead to a net reduction of the State's productive agricultural land.*
- WALGA prepared a *Research Paper: Protection of Productive Agricultural Land* that provides policy context, previous WALGA advocacy and analysis of State and Local Government approaches to agricultural land use protections.
- This work identified that a lack of consistency between the sub-regional planning strategies across the different regions of WA has impeded the implementation of best practice planning controls into local planning frameworks, and thus inconsistent application across the State.
- This advocacy position recommends statutory protections of areas that have been identified as high quality agricultural land, through amending the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015* to include a model zone for 'Priority Agriculture'. This will provide the ability for Local Governments to adopt the model zone into their local planning schemes.
- A joint meeting of the Environment Policy Team and Infrastructure Policy Team endorsed the position for consideration by State Council on 10 July 2024.
- This draft advocacy position should be considered in conjunction with accompanying draft WALGA advocacy positions Energy Transition Engagement and Community Benefit Framework (Item 8.2) and Renewable Energy Facilities (Item 8.3).

8.5 PLANNING PRINCIPLES AND REFORM ADVOCACY POSITION

By Coralie Claudio, Senior Policy Advisor Planning

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council:

1. Retire Advocacy Position 6.2 Planning Reform; and
2. Replace Advocacy Position 6.1 Planning Principles with the following:

6.1 Planning Principles and Reform

1. *The Local Government sector supports an efficient and effective planning system guided by legislation, policy, and processes that:*
 - a. *facilitates the creation of sustainable and liveable communities and places;*
 - b. *has a focus on strategic planning that delivers on long-term objectives and outcomes that balance social, environmental, cultural, and economic interests;*
 - c. *is easy to understand, accessible and transparent;*
 - d. *recognises the diversity of Western Australia and ensures that local environment, context, communities and character are appropriately reflected in planning frameworks and decision making;*
 - e. *ensures decisions are made by the level of government closest to and most impacted by a planning proposal; and*

- f. *establishes consistent planning frameworks and streamlines planning processes where there is a demonstrated benefit in doing so.*
2. *Reforms to the planning system should:*
 - a. *be guided by the above principles;*
 - b. *deliver community benefit;*
 - c. *promote system efficiency, including through the use of technology;*
 - d. *be evidence-based and informed by robust, transparent data;*
 - e. *proceed at an appropriate pace to enable effective implementation;*
 - f. *be informed by engagement with the community; and*
 - g. *be amended only with WALGA involvement and/or consultation/involvement with Local Government.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that the Advocacy Positions 6.1 Planning Principles and 6.2 Planning Reform be replaced with a new contemporary combined position that reflects the current planning system and planning reform agenda.
- The updated position identifies key elements that would create an effective and efficient planning system and how planning reform can be developed, prioritised, and implemented to achieve this.
- The updated position has been informed by feedback from Local Government officers, including WALGA's Planning Advisory Group and previous WALGA submissions on State Government planning reform initiatives.
- The Environment Policy Team endorsed the advocacy position at their meeting on 29 July.

8.6 PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP POLICY STATEMENT AND ADVOCACY POSITION

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council:

1. Rescind the existing Extended Producer Responsibility Policy Statement and Advocacy Position 7.5 Extended Producer Responsibility.
2. Endorse a new Product Stewardship Advocacy Position as follows:
 1. *Industry should take responsibility (physical and/or financial) for the waste that it generates through the entire life cycle of the products it produces through the implementation of effective product stewardship. Without effective Product Stewardship, there will be increasing costs for the community, resource recovery targets will be difficult to reach and a transition to a circular economy is unlikely.*
 2. *Effective Product Stewardship is characterised by:*
 - a. *Producers and importers taking responsibility for post consumption product impacts.*

- b. *Schemes covering the entire cost of product recycling or recovery, including transport.*
 - c. *Leveraging existing Schemes and collection locations.*
 - d. *Being easy and convenient for the community to access.*
 - e. *Having equitable national coverage and access for all, including regional and remote locations.*
 - f. *Being evidence based.*
 - g. *Consistent regulation and implementation across Australia using national Product Stewardship legislation.*
 - h. *Timely action and industry cooperation during Scheme development and implementation.*
 - i. *Being demand based and aiming to recover the maximum amount of material, rather than being limited by targets.*
 - j. *No additional cost to consumers when the product is disposed of post consumption.*
3. *Local Government calls on the Commonwealth Government to implement effective Product Stewardship schemes for all products that drive environmentally and socially sustainable outcomes through the design, manufacture and distribution of products that can be more easily reused, repaired, recovered or recycled.*
 4. *If national action is not progressed within a reasonable timeframe, or in a way that meets the needs of the Western Australian community, then Local Government supports a State based approach to Product Stewardship.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\) Policy Statement](#) was first endorsed in 2004 and reviewed and amended in 2008.
- The Statement outlines the rationale for Local Government support for EPR, as a way of ensuring producers take responsibility for their products at the end of life, and some of the key elements of successful Schemes.
- WALGA's [Local Government Principles for Product Stewardship](#) was endorsed in 2022. The Principles provided more detail on key design elements for Schemes and have been used to inform advocacy.
- Following discussion at the April Municipal Waste Advisory Council (MWAC) and Officers Advisory Group meetings it was agreed to review the EPR Policy Statement and incorporate the Local Government Principles into a new Product Stewardship Policy Statement and Advocacy Position.
- The Product Stewardship Policy Statement and Advocacy Position has been updated to:
 - Include a greater focus on the potential for Product Stewardship to influence the design of products, as well as their post consumption disposal.
 - Identifying the increasing cost burden on Local Government and the community of increasing complex products.
 - Focus on ensuring all products have a clear and funded end of life pathway.
- The MWAC endorsed the new Policy Statement and Advocacy Position in June.

8.7 SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT STATE WASTE STRATEGY

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the Draft State Waste Strategy Submission.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The [Draft State Waste Strategy](#) (Draft Strategy) and [State Waste Infrastructure Plan](#) were released on 29 May. This follows the release of the [Strategy Directions Paper](#) in May 2023. WALGA provided a comprehensive [Submission](#) on the Directions Paper.
- Given the significant impact of the Strategy on Local Government, WALGA was granted an extension to the deadline to allow the draft submission to be considered by WALGA Zones and State Council.
- The focus of the Draft Strategy is:
 - Better outcomes for regional and Aboriginal communities
 - Increasing our focus on waste avoidance
 - Better management of priority materials
 - Realising the economic potential of recycling
 - Contingency planning and climate resilience.
- New Targets are also proposed for each of the Avoid, Recover and Protect areas.
- WALGA's draft submission on the Draft Strategy was informed by Local Government written feedback and feedback received at a webinar held on 19 July.
- This Municipal Waste Advisory Council (MWAC) endorsed the draft submission on 31 July 2024.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Doug Kitchen

Seconded: Mayor Phil Cronin

That the South West Country Zone supports all WALGA recommendations in the Matters for Decision as contained in the September 2024 State Council Agenda and as listed above.

CARRIED

9.2 POLICY TEAM AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

9.1 ENVIRONMENT POLICY TEAM REPORT

By Nicole Matthews, Executive Manager Policy

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council note the report from the Environment Policy Team to the 4 September 2024 meeting.

9.2 GOVERNANCE POLICY TEAM REPORT

By Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council note the report from the Governance Policy Team meeting for the 4 September 2024 meeting.

9.3 INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY TEAM REPORT

By Ian Duncan, Executive Manager, Infrastructure

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council:

1. Note the report from the Infrastructure Policy Team to the 4 September 2024 meeting.
2. Determine to retire the following Advocacy Positions:
 - a. 5.2.4 Seat Belt Legislation
 - b. 5.8 Ports
 - c. 5.12 Infrastructure WA

9.4 PEOPLE AND PLACE POLICY TEAM REPORT

By Nicole Matthews, Executive Manager Policy

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council:

1. Note the report from the People and Place Policy Team to the 4 September 2024 meeting.
2. Determine to:
 - a. retain the following Advocacy Positions with amendment:
 - i. 3.2.1 Local Public Health Plans
 - b. rescind the following Advocacy Position:
 - i. 3.5 Crime Prevention

9.5 MUNICIPAL WASTE ADVISORY COUNCIL (MWAC) REPORT

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council note the report from the Municipal Waste Advisory Council to the 4 September 2024 meeting.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Julia Meldrum
Seconded: President Cr Donnelle Buegge

That the South West Country Zone:

1. notes all Policy Team and Committee Reports as contained in the September 2024 State Council Agenda; and
2. supports the WALGA recommendations in the Infrastructure and People and Place Policy Team Reports as contained in the September 2024 State Council Agenda and as listed above.

CARRIED

9.3 MATTERS FOR NOTING/INFORMATION

- 10.1 Local Government Legislative Reform
- 10.2 Report on Local Government Road Assets and Expenditure 2022/23

Noted

9.4 KEY ACTIVITY REPORTS

- 11.1.1 Report on Key Activities, Advocacy Portfolio
- 11.1.2 Report on Key Activities, Infrastructure Portfolio
- 11.1.3 Report on Key Activities, Member Services Portfolio
- 11.1.4 Report on Key Activities, Policy Portfolio

Noted

10 OTHER BUSINESS

11 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

11.1 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Chris Hossen, Zone Executive Officer provided a brief update to the Zone on behalf of the WALGA President. The report was provided as an attachment within the Agenda.

Noted

11.2 WALGA STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

President Cr Julia Meldrum, Deputy State Councillor presented on the previous State Council meeting, as she attended on Cr Dean's behalf.

Noted

12 FINANCIAL REPORT

12.1 SOUTH WEST COUNTRY ZONE FINANCIAL REPORT

June 2024 Report	Actual	Comments
	-	
	\$	
Opening Cash Balance	19,883	
Income		
Subscription Income	7,200	All 12 members invoiced & funds collected
Total Income	7,200	
Expenses		
Bank Charges	65	
Meeting expenses	26	
Plaques	491	3 x plaques for retiring members
Total Expenses	582	
Closing Cash Balance	26,501	

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Tresslyn Smith
Seconded: President Cr Vivienne MacCarthy

That the South West Country Zone financial report for June 2024 be received.

CARRIED

12.2 SOUTH WEST COUNTRY ZONE UPDATE TO AUTHORISED ASSOCIATE

By Yuhan Richards, WALGA Finance Manager

BACKGROUND

So that the WALGA Financial Controller, Mr Rick Murray can be authorised to manage the Zone's finances for taxation, registration, and annual reporting requirements through the ATO online services, the Zone will need to grant access on members behalf. To ensure adequate cover of authorised officers, the South West Country Zone is requested to approve access to the following finance team member:

Associates

Richard Andrew Murray Chief Financial Officer

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Julia Meldrum
Seconded: President Cr Donnelle Buegge

That Richard Andrew Murray is authorised as Associate for the South West Country Zone.

CARRIED

13 EMERGING ISSUES

Nil.

14 2024 MEETING DATES AND LOCATIONS

Meeting dates for 2024 are listed below. Please note if any changes need to be made.

MEETING DATE	HOST LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Friday, 23 February 2024	Bunbury
Friday, 19 April 2024	Donnybrook-Balingup
Friday, 21 June 2024	Dardanup
Friday, 23 August 2024	Harvey
Friday, 22 November 2024	Manjimup

15 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the South West Country Zone will be held on Friday, 22 November at the Shire of Manjimup commencing at 9:00am.

16 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 12:40pm.