

Central Country Zone Minutes

Friday 11 April, 2025

Hosted by the Shire of Wickepin

Commenced at 9.30am

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Policy and Advocacy Prioritisation Framework

The Central Country Zone adopted the Framework on 12 April 2024.

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) |

ATTACHMENTS

The following are provided as attachments to the Minutes

1. Item 3 Host Presentation
2. Item 7.1 DLGSCI Report
3. Item 7.4 Mainroads Report
4. Item 9.1 Cost Shift and Compliance Report

The full 7 May 2025 State Council Agenda [can be found here](#) as well as attached.

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

The Chair declared the meeting open at 9.30am.

1.2 HOUSEKEEPING – ZONE CHAIR

1. Welcome:

The Zone Chair, President Cr Des Hickey, welcomed Zone members and provided OSH/bathroom/exit information to those in attendance.

2. Share your name and Local Government:

Delegates were reminded to ensure that they call their name and Local Government when taking the floor to allow for accurate Minutes to be recorded.

1.3 ATTENDANCE

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Shire of Beverley | President Cr David White Mr Steve Gollan Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Corrigin | President Cr Des Hickey (Chair) Deputy President Cr Sharon Jacobs Ms Natalie Manton Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Cuballing | Cr Adrian Kowald Cr Scott Ballantyne |
| Shire of Dumbleyung | President Cr Amy Knight Mr Gavin Treasure Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Kulin | Cr Robbie Bowey |
| Shire of Lake Grace | Deputy President Stephen Hunt Mr Alan George Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Narrogin | President Leigh Ballard Cr Clive Bartron Mr Dale Stewart Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Pingelly | President Cr Jackie McBurney Mr Andrew Dover Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Quairading | President Cr Trevor Stacey Deputy President Cr Jonathan Hippisley Ms Natalie Ness, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Wagin | President Cr Phillip Blight Dr Kenneth Parker, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Wandering | President Cr Sheryl Little Deputy President Cr Alan Price Mr Ian Fitzgerald, A\Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of West Arthur | Deputy President Cr Karen Harrington Mr Vin Fordham Lamont, Chief Executive Officer |
| Shire of Wickepin | President Cr Julie Russell Cr Lindsay Corke Mr Peter Clarke, A\Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |

Guests

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| University of Western Australia (UWA) | Dr John Duncan |
| 150SQUARE | Associate Professor Nik Callow |
| Wheatbelt Development Commission | Caroline Robinson, Consultant |
| | Grant Arthur, Director Regional Development |
| | Emma Everett, Regional Development Officer |
| Main Roads WA | Yogesh Shinde, Operations Manager Narrogin |
| Water Corporation | Michael Roberts, Regional Manager Goldfields & Agricultural Region |
| Regional Development Australia WA | Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development |

Members of Parliament

Hon Steve Martin MLC, Member for the Agricultural Region

WALGA

Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services
Connor Warn, Policy Officer Environment
Naomh Donaghy, Governance and Organisational Services Officer
Rodney Thornton, Regional Road Safety Advisor

1.4 APOLOGIES

MEMBERS

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Shire of Beverley | Deputy President Cr Dee Ridgway |
| Shire of Brookton | President Cr Katrina Crute |
| | Cr Tamara de Lange |
| | Mr Gary Sherry Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Cuballing | President Cr Eliza Dowling |
| | Deputy President Cr Rob Harris |
| | Mr Chris Paget Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Dumbleyung | Deputy President Cr Grant Lukins |
| | |
| Shire of Kulin | President Cr Grant Robins |
| | Mr Alan Leeson Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |
| Shire of Lake Grace | President Cr Len Armstrong |
| Shire of Pingelly | Deputy President Cr Peter Wood |
| Shire of Wagin | Deputy President Bryan Kilpatrick |
| Shire of West Arthur | President Cr Neil Morrell |
| Shire of Wickepin | Deputy President Cr Wes Astbury |
| Shire of Williams | Cr Jarrad Logie |
| | Mr Peter Stubbs, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting |

GUESTS

| | |
|--|--|
| Department of Local Government, Sport, & Cultural Industries | Samantha Cornthwaite, Regional Manager Wheatbelt |
| CBH Group | Kellie Todman, Manager Government and Industry Relations |
| Main Roads | Mohammad Siddiqui, Director Wheatbelt Region |
| Wheatbelt Development Commission | Rob Cossart, Chief Executive Officer |
| | Renee Manning, Principal Regional Development Officer - Central East |

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Lachlan Hunter MP, Member for the Central Wheatbelt
Hon Sabina Winton MLA, Member for the Wheatbelt
Hon Colin de Grussa MLC, Member for Agricultural Region
Rick Wilson MP, Federal Member for O'Connor

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Elected Members must declare to the Chairman any potential conflict of interest they have in a matter before the Zone as soon as they become aware of it. Councillors and deputies may be directly or indirectly associated with some recommendations of the Zone and State Council. If you are affected by these recommendations, please excuse yourself from the meeting and do not participate in deliberations.

NIL

3 HOST COUNCIL PRESENTATION

President Cr Julie Russell, Shire of Wickpin, extended a welcome to delegates and guests and provided a presentation on projects and issues facing the Shire of Wickpin.

This presentation is attached to the Minutes (**Attachment 1**)

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

NIL

5 GUEST SPEAKERS / DEPUTATIONS

All Deputations have a time limit of 20 minutes, which includes questions time.

5.1 SPEAKERS FOR THE APRIL ZONE MEETING

5.1.1 University of Western Australia (UWA)

Dr John Duncan and Associate Professor Nik Callow

UWA are spearheading a project in relation to Water Smart Dams; looking at dam water supplies combining in-the-field monitoring and developing apps to model dam performance. UWA spoke about this project, as well as the work that has been done on regional and on-farm water security options and planning tools.

They also talked about/demonstrate the Water Evaluation Tool - an app that has been developed to support modelling dam performance to meet demand.

NOTED

5.1.2 Cost Shift and Compliance Project Update

Caroline Robinson, Consultant, 150SQUARE

The Zone welcomed Caroline Robinson, Consultant from 150SQUARE to present the findings of the Cost Shift and Compliance Project carried out on behalf of the Zone, as initiated by the Zone in August 2024.

NOTED

6 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Any Members of Federal and State Government in attendance are invited to provide a brief update on matters relevant to the Zone.

Hon Steve Martin MLA, Member for the Agricultural Region

NOTED

7 AGENCY REPORTS

7.1 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SPORT AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Samanta Cornthwaite, Regional Director Wheatbelt

The DLGSC was an apology for this meeting, The Report is now attached to the Minutes **(Attachment 2)**

NOTED

7.2 WHEATBELT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Grant Arthur, Director Regional Development

Grant Arthur provided an update to the Zone.

NOTED

7.3 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA WHEATBELT

Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development

The RDA report was attached to the Agenda.

NOTED

7.4 MAIN ROADS WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Yogesh Shinde, Operations Manager Narrogin

The MainRoads report was circulated in advance of the meeting, now attached to the Minutes **(Attachment 3)**

Yogesh Shinde presented to the Zone.

NOTED

7.5 CBH GROUP

Kellie Todman, Manager - Government & Industry Relations

Kellie Todman was an apology for this meeting.

NOTED

The meeting took a break at 11.03am, resumed at 11.13am

8 MINUTES

8.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2025

The Minutes of the Central Country Zone meeting held on 14 February 2025 have previously been circulated to Member Councils.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Leigh Ballard

Seconded: Deputy President Cr Karen Harrington

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Central Country Zone held on 14 February 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

CARRIED

8.2 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2025

8.2.1 (Item 9.1.4) Telstra Closure of 3G Services

Shire of Dumbleyung

BACKGROUND:

At the February meeting, the Zone Resolved;

Moved: President Cr Amy Knight

Seconded: Deputy President Stephen Hunt

That WALGA Central Country Zone instigates a region wide survey on the impacts of Telstra's 3G network closure on its residents and report back on the results of the survey at its next April 2025 meeting.

Since the February meeting, a region wide survey was distributed to the Zone. At the time of writing the Agenda, there were **255** responses. A report was circulated prior to the meeting.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Amy Knight

Seconded: President Cr Phil Blight

That the Central Country Zone write to Telstra's Regional General Manager, Boyd Brown, sharing the full findings of this survey, and requesting a response on how Telstra will actively address the issues within the report.

CARRIED

8.2.2 (Item 13.1) Letter to the Minister for Regional Development

Shire of Dumbleyung

BACKGROUND:

At the February meeting:

The Shire of Dumbleyung suggested that the Zone write the letter of thanks and acknowledgment to the Minister for Regional Development on Wheatbelt Development Commission efforts to coordinate and submit a successful \$32.8M Wheatbelt Regional Housing Initiative proposal through the Federal Government Housing Support Program (Stream 2).

This letter was sent as per Attachment 2 of the Agenda, we are awaiting a response.

NOTED

8.2.3 (Item 13.2) Round Table update

BACKGROUND:

At the February meeting:

The Shire of Wandering requested an update on the Band 4 Roundtable discussions which commenced late last year. A report will be provided at the April one meeting.

By Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services

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

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

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

Caroline Robinson, Director of 150 Square facilitated the discussion.

COMMENT

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

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

WALGA has since undertaken considerable work on the above issues.

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

NOTED

8.3 MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2025

The Minutes of the Central Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 1 April 2025 were provided as an attachment to the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: President Leigh Ballard

That the Minutes of the Central Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 1 April 2025 be endorsed.

CARRIED

8.4 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2025

8.4.1 (Item 7.6) Minutes on a Page

BACKGROUND:

The Great Eastern Country Zone have recently adopted an additional standard item in their meetings. After a Zone meeting, in addition to the official Minutes being distributed to all Delegates/meeting attendees, "Minutes on a Page" are distributed to Member Local Governments for all Elected Members to view. This is a condensed, '*need to know*' version of the Minutes, done in an effort to;

- keep the whole Council informed of Zone business
- inform non Delegates on what happens at Zone meetings
- encourage Elected Members to become Delegates in the future.

The Executive Committee were asked to discuss if "Minutes on a Page" would be beneficial to the Central Country Zone.

Executive Comment:

The Committee are in support of this addition to the Zone process.

NOTED

8.4.2 (Item 6.2.1) Ministerial Speakers

BACKGROUND:

At the February (Zone) meeting, the Executive Committee discussed Ministerial speakers for the 2025 Zone meetings.

Letters were issued to;

- *Minister for Local Government, Hon Hannah Beazley*
- *Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti*
- *Minister for Agriculture, Hon Jackie Jarvis*
- *Minister for Wheatbelt Region, Hon Sabine Winton*

The Minister for Transport, the Hon Rita Saffioti MLC, has advised she is unavailable. We have requested a written update on the portfolio priorities.

Letters have been reissued to the Minister for Local Government and the Minister for Agriculture, following the election.

WALGA have written to all Ministers who have been allocated a region, to attend future Zone meetings. The Executive will write to Minister Winton, advising of the Central Country Zone meeting dates.

Secretariat Comment

Following the April Executive Committee meeting, The Executive officer issued an invite to *Hon Sabine Winton MLA* to attend all Central Country Zone meetings, and to speak at an upcoming meeting.

We are awaiting a response.

NOTED

9 ZONE BUSINESS

9.1 COST SHIFT AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT UPDATE

BACKGROUND:

At the August 2024 meeting of the Zone it was resolved;

That the Executive Committee resolution be endorsed by the Central Country Zone.

"That the Zone engage an independent consultant to review the figures of the top four Cost Shift Items and top four Compliance Costs, following which the Item will be brought back to the Executive Committee for further action."

The Zone authorises the Executive Committee to engage an independent consultant within the constraints of the Central Country Zone budget.

The Zone welcomes Darren Mollenoyux, Consultant from 150SQUARE to present the findings of this project.

A report was circulated prior to the meeting (**Attachment 4**).

Zone comment:

This item, and the recommendations within the report will be included in the June Agenda, for Discussion.

NOTED

9.2 PROVISION OF GP SERVICES

Shire of Lake Grace

BACKGROUND:

As a follow on from the WALGA hosted meeting of Band 4 Local Governments held on 11 October at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre, where Chief Executive Officers and Presidents from all 60 Band 4 Local Governments in the State were invited to attend to discuss the top issues affecting local governments, the Shire of Lake Grace called a meeting of six local governments (band 3 and band 4) and key stakeholders on Friday 29 November 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the financial and in-kind contributions made by local governments to

secure medical service providers in their communities. It was also decided that submissions be made to both the state and federal governments for budget consideration.

Caroline Robinson from 150 Square was contracted to prepare the submission and subsequent actions.

A Position Paper was prepared on behalf of the Shires of Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Kojonup, Narembreen, Lake Grace and Ravensthorpe and was submitted to the Federal Budget Pre-Submission process for consideration.

In addition, these members of the alliance agreed that a motion be prepared and submitted to the ALGA National Assembly of Local Government being held in Canberra from 24-27 June 2025.

The Shire of Lake Grace is putting the motion to ALGA on behalf of the group of local governments listed above collectively now the 'Alliance of RM 6 and RM 7 Councils'

The Motion reads;

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to increase the Financial Assistance Grants for regional and remote local governments (RM6 and RM7) to assist in funds associated with attracting and retaining general practitioners, therefore redirecting ratepayer funds to local government responsibilities.

The full submission is included in the attachments of the Agenda.

It is planned at this stage to send up to 4 delegates to the Assembly which will also include meetings with the relevant government departments.

This action aligns with the Local Government Primary Healthcare Services Survey undertaken by Rural Health West and commissioned by WALGA in 2023 and endorsed by State Council in December 2024

Zone members are requested to note the motion submitted to the National Assembly of Local Government regarding financial assistance for the provision of medical services to regional and remote local governments. If successful in the campaign positive benefits may be seen across all local governments in like positions.

Secretariat Comment

WALGA supports the Alliance of RM 6 and RM 7 Councils' (the Alliance) motion submitted to the ALGA NGA calling for increased Australian Government financial support for Local Governments supporting the provision of essential healthcare services for their communities. The provision of healthcare services in Australia is both an Australian and State responsibility, principally through the Medicare system at the Federal level. Raising this issue at the ALGA NGA provides an opportunity to elevate the issue to an ALGA priority at the National level and gain support from Local Governments experiencing similar cost imposts in other jurisdictions. It is pleasing to hear that the WALGA commissioned Local Government Primary Healthcare Services Survey Report (Survey Report) was useful in the development of the Alliances' Position Paper and ALGA motion.

Equitable access to primary healthcare is an important issue for many WALGA, including some that fall outside of the rural zone according to the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area (RRMA) classification. Reflective of the financial impact on the sector and building on the Survey Report, WALGA has begun a strategic advocacy plan which includes targeted actions for the Australian and State Governments, leveraging the opportunities of elections, new Cabinet compositions and the renegotiation of the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) between the Australian

Government and States and Territories. WALGA continues to offer its support to the Alliance on this important issue.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Deputy President Stephen Hunt

Seconded: Cr Robbie Bowey

That the Central Country Zone receives the report and notes the submission to the ALGA National Assembly.

CARRIED

9.3 ADVOCACY FOR STATEWIDE COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENTS FUND (CEF) FRAMEWORK & RENEWABLE ENERGY GUIDELINES

By Dale Stewart /Shire of Narrogin

BACKGROUND

The Shire of Narrogin has recently adopted its *Community Enhancements Fund Policy*, a clear, consistent, and equitable approach to ensuring communities benefit from the renewable energy transition. The Shire is currently processing five (5) large-scale wind, solar, and BESS proposals and has identified the need to ensure social licence and community return are enshrined in both local and State policy frameworks.

In November 2024, the Shire also published a *Renewable Industry Framework & Advocacy Statement*, calling for a five-pillar approach supported by all levels of government and the renewable energy sector.

Without a statewide framework, regional local governments risk being left to negotiate independently with major proponents, risking inconsistency, inequity, or missed opportunities.

Shire of Narrogin - TWA Policy

[Renewable Energy in the Shire of Narrogin » Shire of Narrogin](#)

Shire Comment

Adopting a WALGA-led advocacy position based on the Narrogin model would promote best practice across WA and address current policy gaps. The approach complements WALGA's advocacy on responsible renewable development and reflects growing sector and community expectations.

The Shire of Narrogin is requesting the support of the Central Country Zone to elevate this matter to WALGA State Council and the State Government.

Secretariat Comment

WALGA recognises the work and leadership of the Shire of Narrogin in preparing their *Narrogin – Love the Life, Power the Future – Community Enhancements Fund (CEF) Policy*.

We continue to advocate to the State Government for the development of an Engagement and Community Benefit Framework, as well as a State Planning Policy for renewable energy.

WALGA have begun preparation of a best practice Community Benefits and Engagement Guide, designed to support Local Governments when engaging with proponents and the community. The Shire of Narrogin's Policy will be an important input into this Guide.

WALGA is also conducting research relating to Local Government rating and payment in lieu of rates in respect to renewable energy projects. This project will involve preparing an EOI for consultants to provide advice on current rating provisions available to Local Governments, including differential rating and reviewing other rating methods from other states including Victoria's Payment in Lieu of Rates (PILOR) Scheme.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Leigh Ballard

Seconded: Deputy President Karen Harrington

That the Central Country Zone of WALGA:

- 1. Supports the Shire of Narrogin's Community Enhancements Fund (CEF) Policy as a best-practice model for equitable benefit-sharing from large-scale renewable energy projects;**
- 2. Requests WALGA State Council to advocate to the State Government for the development of a Statewide Community Enhancements Fund Framework, consistent with the key principles of the Shire of Narrogin's CEF Policy, including:**
 - **A minimum indexed contribution from renewable energy proponents based on installed capacity;**
 - **Local government management of restricted cash reserves for community benefit;**
 - **A dedicated component for Indigenous Nations Funds (recommended 10%);**
 - **Alignment with local government strategic planning;**
 - **Transparent governance, community engagement, and annual reporting.**
- 3. Further requests WALGA to advocate for the adoption of a broader Renewable Industry Framework for WA as outlined in the Shire of Narrogin's Advocacy Position, including:**
 - **Consistent planning standards for renewable energy development (e.g., setbacks, zoning);**
 - **A State-mandated community engagement framework;**
 - **Legacy workforce housing solutions in lieu of short-term TWAs;**
 - **A uniform Payment in Lieu of Rates (PILoR) model for wind, solar and BESS facilities;**
 - **Empowerment of local governments to manage benefit-sharing and rating mechanisms.**

CARRIED

9.4 ZONE PRIORITIES FOR MINISTERIAL BRIEFINGS

By Dana Mason, External Affairs Manager, WALGA

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

The Central Country Zone identified its priority issues at the February 2024 Zone meeting and may like to use these as a basis for identifying their top priorities;

1. Challenges faced by Band 4 Local Governments relating to State/Federal Government services being provided by Local Governments together with Local Government compliance requirements.
2. Essential Services – power, telecommunication and water.
3. Housing - including Land Development in relation to Headworks costs

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

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

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Jackie McBurney

Seconded: Cr Robbie Bowey

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

- a) **Housing- including Land Development in relation to Headworks costs**
- b) **Essential Services – power, telecommunication and water.**
- c) **Lack of policy framework around renewables.**

CARRIED

9.5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT PANELS) REGULATIONS 2025

By Chris Hossen, Policy Manager, Planning and Building and Felicity Morris, Manager Governance and Procurement

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

The Regulations:

- require Responsible Authority Reports (RARs) to be prepared and submitted by the CEO of a Local Government, or an employee authorised by the CEO
 - CEOs of Class 1 and 2 Local Governments must authorise at least one employee

- Local Governments will still be able to engage external consultants to assist in preparing RARs
- prohibit the Council from directing the CEO, an authorised employee or a consultant in preparing the RAR or directing the CEO to engage a particular consultant
- require the CEO and authorised employees to disclose conflicts of interests in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*, and not undertake any DAP functions in which they have a conflict of interest.

The Regulations are available on the [WA Legislation website](#).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA [Advocacy Positions](#) 6.1 Planning Principles and Reform and 6.4 Development Assessment Panels.

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

NOTED

9.6 AUDIT FEE 2025 - CHANGE IN CHARGING PRACTICE OF OFFICE OF AUDITOR GENERAL

Mr Gary Sherry, Shire of Brookton

BACKGROUND

The Office of the Auditor General's (OAG) indicative fee for the Shire of Brookton audit for the 2024-25 financial report is \$47,077 (GST Exclusive). The indicative fee represents an increase of 6.75% compared to the prior year invoiced audit fee (2023-24 - \$44,100).

Historically the OAG has issued the invoice at the conclusion of the audit and the issuing of the audit opinion. The OAG has decided to modify this practice to align with the approach adopted across the professional services industry where billing typically occurs on a progressive basis (e.g. upon completion of key milestones or agreed timeframes). The remainder of the indicative fee will be issued at the conclusion of the audit and once the audit report has been issued

The OAG has now introduced interim billing upon completion of the interim audit phase for an amount not exceeding 50% of the indicative fee, following our review of past invoice practice.

COMMENT

The Shire of Brookton are amazed that the OAG, at 31 March 2025 and without any prior notice, now requires the Shire of Brookton to make an unbudgeted payment of up to 50% of the 2024/25 audit indicative fee by the end of May 2025.

The 2024/25 audit indicative fee of up to \$23,538 is an unbudgeted expense.

While not opposed to the practice of invoicing on a progressive basis, that the OAG could provide only one months notice of this change of invoicing practice is staggering.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: President Cr Julie Russell

That the Central Country Zone of WALGA writes to the Auditor General and WA Parliament Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations (cc the Minister for Local Government) to express concern that;

- 1. the Office of the Auditor General has increased the cost of audits by amounts greater than annual inflation again; and**
- 2. has, without consultation with local government, modified their invoicing practices and now require local government to pay 50% of their 2024/25 audit in this financial year**
- 3. that the Office of the Auditor General's commitment to greater transparency and cost control made to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations has not been achieved**

CARRIED

9.7 2025 DETERMINATION OF THE SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES TRIBUNAL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS AND ELECTED MEMBERS

By Kathy Robertson, Manager Association and Corporate Governance

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

Attachment

- [2025 Determination of the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal for Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Council Members](#)

Comment

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

In summary, the 2025 Determination provides for the following:

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

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

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

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

The Determination comes into effect from 1 July 2025.

NOTED

10 ZONE REPORTS

10.1 CHAIR REPORT

President Cr Des Hickey

There was no Chair Report for this meeting.

Resolved

10.2 GREAT SOUTHERN DISTRICT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (DEMC)

President Jackie McBurney

President Jackie McBurney provided an update regarding the sharing of information from this committee. Any relevant information will be sent forward to WALGA for distribution to Zone Delegates.

NOTED

10.3 WHEATBELT INTERAGENCY HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN ADVISORY GROUP

President Jackie McBurney

President Jackie McBurney provided an update.

NOTED

10.4 WALGA ROADWISE

Rodney Thornton, Regional Road Safety Advisor

Rodney Thornton provided a report to the Zone.

NOTED

11 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

11.1 STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

Cr Phillip Blight

The February State Councillor report was attached to the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: Cr Clive Barton

That the State Councillor Report be received.

CARRIED

11.2 WALGA STATUS REPORT

By Tony Brown, Executive Officer

COMPLETE ZONE STATUS REPORT April 2025

| Zone | Agenda Item | Zone Resolution | WALGA Response | Update | WALGA Contact |
|-----------|---|--|---|------------|--|
| Central C | 14 February 2025 Zone Agenda Item 9.1.3 Support for Public Ownership of WA Freight Rail Network | That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to: 1. Supports State Government efforts to ensure the on-going sustainability and growth of freight rail in Western Australia; 2. Seeks a commitment from the in-coming State Government to: a. focus on ensuring a competitive freight rail network and services reduce freight on roads; providing road safety, environmental benefits; and b. work with Local Governments and other stakeholders to maximise the local economic growth opportunities provided through effective management of the rail network and corridors. | The Infrastructure Policy Team supported including the proposed advocacy position in a new or consolidated policy statement in relation to freight rail following consultation with Local Governments and other stakeholders to better define the social, economic and environmental benefits sought from a publicly controlled freight rail network. | April 2025 | Ian Duncan Executive Manager Infrastructure iduncan@walga.asn.au 9213 2031 |
| Central C | 5 March 2025 State Council Agenda Item 8.1 Climate Change Advocacy Position | That State Council replace the 2018 Climate Change Policy Statement Advocacy Position 4.1 Climate Change with the following advocacy position: WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to: 1. provide the necessary climate leadership, coordination, and action to deliver a climate change response that improves and maintains the quality of life for all Western Australians for generations to come. 2. provides funding and resources and support to Local Government to enable local communities to respond to the effects of climate change | State Council ALTERNATE MOTION That State Council refer this advocacy item back to the Environment Policy Team for further development. RESOLUTION 003.1/2025 CARRIED | April 2025 | Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039 |
| Central C | 26 August 2023 Zone Agenda Item 9.2 Water | That the Central Country Zone: 1. Rejects Water Corporation attempts to classify regional sites as a 'Non-Standard Water Service' | WALGA is developing a Background Paper for whole of sector consultation and reviewing its Water Advocacy Position/s and has | April 2025 | Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au |

| | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|--|-------------------|--|
| | Corporation – Non-Standard Water Services | <p>(unless specific agreement is reached with a Local Government Authority);</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Formally writes to Water Corporation and the Minister for Water confirming this position; Requests that WALGA supports the position of the Central Country Zone and rejects the Water Corporation's attempts to classify regional sites as a 'Non-Standard Water Service'; and Requests WALGA to engage with the Minister for Water to retain the current services, unless specific agreement is reached with a Local Government Authority. | <p>included the need for equitable access to drinking water as a key pillar.</p> <p>In developing this paper, WALGA is undertaking significant targeted consultation with Local Government CEOs and officers across the State.</p> | | 9213 2039 |
| Central C | 15 November 2024 Zone Agenda Item 9.1.4 PetsWA Centralized Pet Registry Scheme Revenue | <p>That the Central Country Zone request WALGA;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> advocate to the Government of Western Australia that 100% of the revenue derived from pet registrations (both dogs and cats) continue to be returned directly to local governments to effectively administer the Dog Act 1976 and Cat Act 2011. recommend that the new centralized PetsWA Pet Registry Scheme, administered by the State Government, should not retain any commission or portion of the registration fees for its operations, as the current fee structure does not adequately cover the costs associated with pet management at the local government level. | <p>This item has been referred to the Governance Policy Team.</p> <p>The Policy Team has recommended as follows:</p> <p>That WALGA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> replace Advocacy Position 2.12 <i>Puppy Farming</i> with a new <i>Puppy Farming</i> advocacy position, as follows: <p><i>The WA Local Government sector:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Advocates that fees reflect completed cost modelling to ensure that Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with animal management legislation.</i> <i>Urges that any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011 be paid by the State Government.</i> <i>Requests that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.</i> <i>Acknowledges the benefit of de-sexing of dogs not used for approved breeding purposes.</i> <i>Supports a Centralised Registration Database that is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government revenue.</i> <i>Requests that the Centralised Registration Database be restricted to a centralised registration system (excluding animal related complaints and infringements) that integrates</i> | April 2025 | <p>Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au</p> |

| | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|--|-------------------|---|
| | | | <p><i>with Local Government's existing corporate systems.</i></p> <p>g) <i>Supports the legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.</i></p> <p>h) <i>Supports a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from professional registered breeders.</i></p> <p>This item is listed in the State Council Agenda.</p> | | |
| Central C | 19 November 2021 Zone Agenda Item 12.1 Sector ICT solution | That the Zone request WALGA to research providers and the viability of an in-house IT system. | <p>Work continues to be undertaken to support Members seeking ICT solutions.</p> <p>A project to scan and enhance the PSP panel has been initiated, with an Infopage distributed to Members in late 2024-</p> <p>It is intended consultancy resources will be utilised to support the preparation of scope of service documentation and related tools to support procurement processes through the PSP.</p> <p>This work is ongoing and being led by WALGA's Commercial Development Team. Any queries can be directed to Brian Ging.</p> | April 2025 | Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au |

Zone Comment

This is an opportunity for Member Councils to consider the response from WALGA in respect to the matters that were submitted at the previous Zone Meeting.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Jackie McBurney

Seconded: Deputy President Cr Sharon Jacobs

That the Central Country Zone, WALGA Status Report for April 2025 be noted.

CARRIED

11.3 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The WALGA President's Report was attached to the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Jackie McBurney

Seconded: President Cr Julie Russell

That the Central Country Zone notes the WALGA President's Report.

CARRIED

12 WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA – 7 May 2025

Zone Delegates were invited to read and consider the WALGA State Council Agenda, which was provided as an attachment with the Agenda and 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.

The full Agenda can also be viewed [HERE](#)

12.1 REGULATIONS FOR CEO KPIS AND ONLINE REGISTERS – WALGA SUBMISSION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.1)

By Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services and Felicity Morris, Manager Governance and Procurement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Consultation is open on the draft Local Government Regulations Amendment Regulations 2024 (the Draft Regulations), which give effect to reforms relating to the publication of online registers, publication of CEO performance criteria and performance reviews, and other CEO matters.
- The Local Government legislation reform platform from the State Government indicated that one of the reform outcomes was "Reducing red tape, increasing consistency and simplicity".
- The overwhelming sector feedback is that these reforms will not achieve this aim and will instead increase red tape without any clear public benefit.
- Sector feedback has been collated and identifies overarching concerns listed in this report.
- The attached submission, informed by this feedback, is recommended for endorsement.

ATTACHMENT

- [Regulations for CEO KPIs and public registers Draft WALGA submission](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's existing advocacy positions are based on the high-level reform proposals provided for public consultation in 2022.

The current [Advocacy Positions](#) are:

2.2.4 CEO Recruitment Panel

The Local Government sector supports the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries establishing a panel of approved panel members to perform the role of the independent person on CEO recruitment panels.

2.5.27 Online Registers

The Local Government sector supports requiring Local Governments to report specific information in online registers on the Local Government's website, including registers for leases, community grants, interests disclosures, applicant contributions and contracts (excluding contracts of employment).

2.5.28 Publishing CEO Key Performance Indicators

1. *The Local Government sector conditionally supports the reporting of CEO Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are consistent with the strategic direction and operational function of the Local Government, subject to exemptions for publishing KPIs of a confidential nature.*
2. *The Local Government sector does not support results of CEO performance reviews being published.*

BACKGROUND

The *Local Government Amendment Act 2023* (2023 Amendment Act) contained the Tranche 1 reforms to the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act). This included the following changes which are yet to commence:

- Requirements for Local Government CEO's performance criteria and performance reviews to be published.
- Establishment of a panel of independent persons for CEO performance reviews.
- A requirement for Local Governments to publish and maintain registers on their website.

The draft Local Government Regulations Amendment Regulations 2024 (the Draft Regulations), which will give effect to these reforms, have been released for public consultation. The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) have requested comment by 8 May. Information is available on the [DLGSC website](#), including a copy of the [Draft Regulations](#) and a [DLGSC Consultation Paper](#).

WALGA circulated a discussion paper and request for comment to all Local Governments on 30 January.

COMMENT

Responses received from Local Governments indicate serious concerns with the detail of the Draft Regulations. Overarching concerns include:

- The creation of red tape and excessive administrative burden, in conflict with a stated aim of the reform, and without clear public benefit.
- Continued proliferation of compliance requirements for Local Governments, including overlapping but inconsistent reporting obligations.
- Unreasonable implementation timeframes given existing Local Government workload, cumulative burden of ongoing program of reform and upcoming elections.
- Confusion and lack of clarity (plain English drafting) in the Draft Regulations.

Specific concerns are discussed in relation to each proposal.

CEO matters: Publishing performance criteria and reports on performance review

Of the submissions that provided comment on this aspect of the Draft Regulations, over half expressed strong opposition to publication of CEO KPIs and performance reviews. Opposition was based on factors including the inconsistency with public sector practice, risks to CEOs, mechanisms for reporting on organisational rather than individual performance and the erosion of Local Government autonomy. A small number of Local Governments broadly supported the regulations or their intent. In addressing the content of Draft Regulations 18AA and 18FAA, submissions raised concerns with the proposed reporting of target achievement and the mechanisms for exclusion of performance criteria from publication.

CEO matters: Independent persons panel (CEO recruitment)

Key concerns included a lack of clarity about the selection criteria and processes to be followed by the Departmental CEO in establishing the panel, the capacity for Councils to appoint independent members from within their own districts, and the management of conflicts of interest.

CEO matters: Certification, recruitment and termination

There were divided views on the requirement for separate certification, but support for the retention of a requirement to conduct a selection process before contract expiry, the option

to include additional information in a performance criterion and the proposed modification of the CEO Standards in relation to termination during probation.

Registers: General considerations

Local Governments articulated a range of concerns that are applicable to all registers, including the administrative burden, unreasonable commencement and retrospectivity, lack of clarity and difficulty in applying the requirements, and the implications of the *Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024* (the PRIS Act).

Lease register

Submissions raised considerable concerns with this proposed register. Issues include the breadth of the lease definition, safety and confidentiality for residents and community groups, commercial in confidence information and the ability of Local Governments to generate best value from assets, whether through commercial returns or community benefits.

Grants and sponsorships register

Some Local Governments provided general support for the register, subject to the exclusion of retrospectivity. However, the majority of submissions identified concerns regarding the value threshold, privacy and confidentiality, and a lack of clarity in the calculation of value.

Development contributions register

The majority of submissions expressed concerns regarding the administrative burden with limited improvements in transparency and oversight of Developer Contribution Plans (DCPs) than is currently provided for under the state planning framework. This burden is exacerbated by the retrospectivity and short implementation timeframe. Those Local Governments with a high number of DCPs advise that this is likely to lead to delays and increased costs in the administration of DCPs. Privacy considerations and practical issues with the calculation of interest for individual contributions, and the list of items and percentage of expenditure were also identified.

Contracts for goods and services register

All submissions that commented on the contract register highlighted concerns including the administrative burden associated with the unreasonably low threshold value and duplication of existing reporting requirements. Members raised heightened fraud risks, and issues relating to commercial in confidence information. There is also a lack of clarity regarding the definition of contract and contract value.

This sector feedback and detailed analysis of the Draft Regulations has informed the preparation of the attached draft WALGA submission.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: President Leigh Ballard

That the Central Country Zone opposes the draft regulations which are contrary to theme 2 of the reforms being 'reducing red tape, increasing consistency and simplicity'

CARRIED

12.2 DOG AND CAT MANAGEMENT ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.2)

By Felicity Morris, Manager Governance and Procurement and Marnie Herrington, Governance Specialist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Motions from Zones regarding the PetsWA Centralised Registration Database provide an opportunity to review the existing *Puppy Farming* advocacy position and replace it with a new *Dog and Cat Management* advocacy position.
- The purpose of the new position is to reflect the progression of the *Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021* and the emerging concerns of the Local Government sector regarding the PetsWA centralised registration system.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the new advocacy position at its meeting on 24 March.

ATTACHMENT

- [Comparison table between current Advocacy Position 2.12 Puppy Farming, and proposed advocacy position Dog and Cat Management.](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This item is to replace existing Advocacy Position 2.12 *Puppy Farming* with a new *Dog and Cat Management* position.

The current Advocacy Position is as follows:

2.12 Puppy Farming

1. The WA Local Government sector:

- a) Welcomes a cost modelling review of the financial impact on Local Governments to ensure that Local Government is able to fully recover costs and not be disadvantaged in ensuring compliance of any new legislation to Stop Puppy Farming.*
- b) Acknowledges the benefit of de-sexing of dogs not used for approved breeding purposes, and request further information on the complexities associated with de-sexing of dogs prior to considering supporting the proposal.*
- c) Supports a centralised dog registration system that is developed, operated and maintained by State Government.*
- d) Supports appropriate legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.*
- e) Does not support the transition of pet shops to adoption centres.*
- f) Requests there be a Local Government-specific consultation process in relation to the proposed amendments to the Animal Welfare Act to*

introduce Standards and Guidelines for the Health and Welfare of Animals including dogs.

- g) Supports a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from professional registered breeders.*
- h) Requests the State Government discontinue the use of the term 'Farming' due to the negative connotation that may be associated with other regulated industries, and consider re-naming the initiative 'Stop Puppy Mills'.*

2. The Local Government sector advocates that:

- a) any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act be paid by the State Government; and*
- b) the Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and at minimum, be adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.*

The recommended new Advocacy Position is as follows:

Dog and Cat Management

In regard to the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the PetsWA Centralised Database, the WA Local Government sector advocates:

- a) that fees reflect completed cost modelling to ensure that Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011.*
- b) that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.*
- c) that the PetsWA centralised registration database is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government registration fee revenue.*
- d) that the function of PetsWA be restricted to the registration of dogs and cats, exclude ancillary functions such as animal related complaints and infringement notices, and integrate with existing Local Government corporate systems.*
- e) for the continued legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.*
- f) for a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from approved breeders.*

A table comparing the current and proposed advocacy position can be seen in Attachment A.

BACKGROUND

Stop Puppy Farming Legislation

- At its September 2018 meeting, State Council adopted a detailed position in relation to the Stop Puppy Farming Initiative (*Resolution 103.6/2018*).
- At its March 2020 meeting, State Council resolved that "WALGA write to the Minister and request that he withdraw the Stop Puppy Farming Bill and more appropriately consult with the sector, traditional custodians and the wider community, or failing that, that he remove any reference to Local Government in the bill as the sector does not endorse it in its current form" (*Resolution 13.1/2020*).
- At its September 2021, State Council adopted additional points to the advocacy position, supporting WALGA continuing to advocate that:

- a. any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act be paid by the State Government; and
- b. the Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and at minimum, be adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.

(Resolution 275.5/2021)

- In December 2021, the *Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021* (the Act) was passed by Parliament. The Act amended both the *Dog Act 1976* and the *Cat Act 2011* in several ways.
- The implementation of the legislation is occurring in phases, with existing pet shops needing to transition to adoption centres by obtaining a 'pet shop approval' through their Local Governments by 26 May.
- It is anticipated that dog breeding approval provisions and mandatory sterilisation of dogs (unless an exemption is in place) will take effect later in 2025. In August 2024, the State Government awarded a contract to Seisma Group to establish PetsWA (the new centralised registration system for dogs and cats), which is anticipated to be operational later in 2025.

Fees and cost recovery

In a letter to WALGA dated 1 November 2021, Minister John Carey confirmed that “the State Government has committed to covering the costs associated with the establishment of the Centralised Registration System, to centrally record the registration of all domestic cats and dogs within Western Australia”. However, the State Government position relating to ongoing costs associated with the system and the particulars about revenue generated from registrations has not been made clear.

In early 2024, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) released a Consultation Paper prepared by consultants Marsden Jacob Associates on the new and existing fees and charges under the *Dog Act 1976* and *Cat Act 2011*. WALGA provided a submission in line with State Councils advocacy position as follows.

That WALGA:

1. *Welcomes a cost modelling review of the financial impact on Local Governments to ensure that Local Government is able to fully recover costs and not be disadvantaged in ensuring compliance of any new legislation to Stop Puppy Farming;*
2. *Supports a centralised dog registration system that is developed, operated and maintained by State Government;*
3. *Any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act be paid by the State Government; and*
4. *The Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed biennially and at minimum, be adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.*

Zone resolutions

Central Country Zone

At the Central Country Zone Meeting of 15 November 2024, the Zone considered an item which raised concerns that the administrative costs of the PetsWA central registration system would be withheld by the State Government from registration fees collected by Local Governments. As already noted, registration fees are already insufficient to cover the costs of Local Government cat and dog management responsibilities.

The Zone resolved:

That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to:

- a) *advocate to the Government of Western Australia that 100% of the revenue derived from pet registrations (both dogs and cats) continue to be returned directly to Local Governments to effectively administer the Dog Act 1976 and Cat Act 2011.*
- b) *recommend that the new centralized PetsWA Pet Registry Scheme, administered by the State Government, should not retain any commission or portion of the registration fees for its operations, as the current fee structure does not adequately cover the costs associated with pet management at the Local Government level.*

North Metropolitan Zone

At the North Metropolitan Zone Meeting of 20 November 2024, the Zone considered an item which raised concerns that the community would be able to lodge complaints through the PetsWA centralised registration system and that infringements would be issued through the system. As no integration with Local Government systems has been advised, this would create a duplicate workload for officers.

The Zone resolved:

That WALGA advocate to the State Government for the PetsWA Centralised Registration Database scope to be restricted to a centralised registration system (excluding complaints and infringements) that integrates with Local Government's existing corporate systems.

COMMENT

As the Act has progressed, the existing advocacy position should be reviewed to reflect the current state.

A comparison between the current and proposed advocacy position is provided in Attachment A, with key themes addressed below.

Cost Recovery

Under the *Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021*, Local Governments will have increased responsibilities, including approvals to breed and pet shop approvals, as well as associated investigation and enforcement functions. WALGA has continued to advocate to the State Government for fees and charges to be set at a level that achieves full cost recovery and that any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act be paid by the State Government. The proposed advocacy position retains these key positions.

The fees from registrations and animal related infringements do not currently cover all costs associated with Local Government responsibilities. There is a risk that the State Government could administer the PetsWA system in a way which reduces Local Government income from registrations.

WALGA's existing advocacy position supports PetsWA to be managed by the State (Advocacy Position 2.12.b). The proposed *Dog and Cat Management* Advocacy Position expands on the existing position to make it absolutely clear that there should be no loss of registration fee revenue to the Local Governments in administering the database.

Scope of PetsWA

The Act provides for a centralised registration system, known as PetsWA, to be managed by the State Government. DLGSC has been tasked with the implementation of the system.

The contract to develop PetsWA was awarded on 2 August 2024 and is expected to launch in the second half of 2025. PetsWA is intended to replace the dog and cat registers managed by individual Local Governments with a single online system, used state-wide. PetsWA will allow dog and cat owners to register their pets and make payments online.

In addition to uncertainty about revenue from fees and charges under PetsWA, there is ambiguity about the scope of information recorded within PetsWA. DLGSC has noted that PetsWA could be used to manage public complaints, request ranger visits, manage dangerous dog notices, and issue infringements. This could increase administrative burden on Local Government staff by duplicating data entry with existing record management systems, as there is no clarity on the extent of the integration with Local Government's existing systems.

To avoid this, PetsWA should be integrated with Local Government's existing systems and the scope should be restricted to its original function as a centralised registration system.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

In regard to the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the PetsWA Centralised Database, the WA Local Government sector advocates:

- i) that fees reflect completed cost modelling to ensure that Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011.*
- j) that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.*
- k) that the PetsWA centralised registration database is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government registration fee revenue.*
- l) that the function of PetsWA be restricted to the registration of dogs and cats, exclude ancillary functions such as animal related complaints and infringement notices, and integrate with existing Local Government corporate systems.*
- m) for the continued legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.*
- n) for a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from approved breeders.*

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: Cr Scott Ballantyne

That the Central Country Zone recommend:

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

In regard to the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the PetsWA Centralised Database, the WA Local Government sector advocates:

- 1. that all Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011 through a combination of appropriate fees and State Government funding that encourages compliance and serves the interests of all Western Australians regardless of where they live**
- 2. that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.**
- 3. that the PetsWA centralised registration database is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government registration fee revenue.**
- 4. that the function of PetsWA be restricted to the registration of dogs and cats, exclude ancillary functions such as animal related complaints and infringement notices, and integrate with existing Local Government corporate systems.**
- 5. for the continued legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.**
- 6. for a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from approved breeders.**

CARRIED

12.3 NATIVE VEGETATION CLEARING REGULATIONS ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.3)

By Nicole Matthews, Executive Manager Policy and Ian Duncan, Executive Manager Infrastructure

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The effectiveness, cost and complexity of the regulatory system for native vegetation clearing has been a longstanding concern for Local Governments, particularly in relation to its impacts on the delivery of road and other infrastructure projects.
- WALGA has made numerous representations and submissions to the State Government on this issue.
- WALGA's current [advocacy positions](#) relating to the regulation of clearing of native vegetation were endorsed by State Council in 2004 (5.2.1) and 2006 (5.2.2).
- Numerous reviews and significant legislative and policy changes aimed at streamlining regulatory requirements have occurred since that time which has resulted in some improvement, however, problems persist.
- The updated Advocacy Position, seeks to respond to feedback and issues raised by the sector, calls the State Government to:
 - implement **legislative, policy and process changes**, including the imposition of statutory timeframes for assessments and appeals; increasing the duration of clearing permits; providing a permanent exemption to enable clearing in previously legally cleared transport corridors; and strengthening environmental data sharing requirements.
 - allocate **adequate resources** to implement an expedited process for road safety and state and federally funded or co-funded projects; a dedicated Local Government unit to process applications and support the sector; timely compliance and enforcement action; and implement a state-funded collection and provision of data.
 - undertake **bioregional planning** and implement **strategic solutions for environmental offsets** for Local Government.
 - **reduce duplication** between the State and Australian government regulatory systems.
- At their joint meeting on 24 March, the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Teams recommended that State Council endorse the Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations advocacy position.

ATTACHMENT

- [WALGA Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Issues Paper](#)
- [Road Safety Briefing Note](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This item is to replace existing Advocacy Positions 5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act and 5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves with a new *Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations* position.

The current [Advocacy Positions](#) are as follows:

5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act

Impact on Road Reserves Position Statement. The Local Government sector supports continued advocacy to minimise the impact on road reserves and in regards to

Regulations, processing times, access to vegetation data and a Code of Practice on maintenance activities.

5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves

The Local Government sector supports Schedule 2 of the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 as a permanent exemption for the maintenance of existing transport corridors and supports the continued advocacy for improvements to processing and timelines of the current clearing legislation.

The proposed Advocacy Position is as follows:

Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations

WALGA calls on the Western Australian Government, in consultation with Local Government, to undertake legislative and policy reform to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the regulatory system for clearing native vegetation in Western Australia, including:

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

BACKGROUND

Western Australia is one of the most biodiverse places on Earth and has significant regional endemism, meaning it has plants and animals that only live in a particular location (Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute). Eight of Australia's 15 declared biodiversity hotspots are in WA and the South West Ecoregion, (running from Shark Bay in the northwest to Esperance in south east with a narrow strip along the southeastern coast to the border between WA and SA) is one of only 34 internationally recognised Global Biodiversity Hotspots (and the only in Australia). A Global Biodiversity Hotspot is defined as a geographical region that has at least 1,500 vascular plant species and has lost at least 70 per cent of its original supporting habitat.

In Western Australia the clearing of native vegetation is primarily regulated under Part V Division 2 of the [Environmental Protection Act 1986](#) (EP Act) and [Environmental Protection \(Clearing of Native Vegetation\) Regulations 2004](#) (Regulations). Under section 51C of the EP Act clearing of native vegetation is an offence unless a permit has been granted, or an exemption applies.

The Regulations provide exemptions for routine land management practices, including for clearing done for maintenance in existing, previously legally cleared transport (road and rail) corridors, provided that the previous clearing occurred within the preceding 10 years (Regulation 5, Item 22). Schedule 2, cl. 2 of the Regulations specify the extent of maintenance clearing for an area or purpose:

| Area or purpose | Extent of clearing |
|---|--|
| Crossover area | Clearing to the extent previously cleared for the area. |
| Lateral clearance area | Complete clearing to the width and height previously cleared for that stretch of road or railway. |
| Maintenance and protection of transport corridor infrastructure | Clearing to the extent necessary to – a) Maintain the efficacy and safety of the infrastructure; b) Protect the infrastructure (for example from fire); and c) Provide access to the infrastructure to maintain it. |
| An area that is a public roadside facility | Clearing to the extent necessary to maintain (but not extend) the intended use of the area. |
| Sight line area | Clearing to the extent previously cleared for that area. |

Schedule 2, cl. 1 of the Regulations provides the following definitions:

- *crossover area* means the area occupied by a crossover from a road to a property adjacent to the road and any associated sight line areas;
- *lateral clearance area*, in relation to a stretch of road or railway, means the area (if any) parallel to and immediately adjacent to the stretch of road or railway that is ordinarily cleared;
- *public roadside facility* includes a camping area, rest area, information bay, road train assembly area or parking area or a footpath or cycle track in the road reserve;

- *transport corridor infrastructure*, in relation to a stretch of road or railway, includes barriers, signs, guideposts, drains, levies, embankments, gutters, bridges, overpasses and other similar structures or works.

While this exemption does not apply in an environmentally sensitive area, an area that would otherwise be an environmentally sensitive area is not an environmentally sensitive area to the extent it is in a maintenance area of transport corridor.

The Australian Government regulates clearing that is likely to impact a matter of National Environment Significance through the application of Parts 7 - 9 of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000*.

The effectiveness, cost, complexity and timeframes associated with the regulatory system for native vegetation clearing have been a longstanding concern for Local Governments, particularly in relation to impacts on the delivery of road projects, which make up approximately 60 per cent of Local Government clearing permit applications and 30 per cent of referrals (Dec 2021 – Oct 2024). WALGA has made numerous representations and submissions to the State Government on this issue.

WALGA has three [advocacy positions](#) related to native vegetation clearing regulation dating (2004, 2006, 2018). Numerous reviews and significant legislative and policy changes have occurred since that time, aimed at streamlining regulatory requirements, including the Western Australian Offset Policy (2011) and Guideline (2014), the Review of the Western Australian Offsets Framework (2019), the implementation of cost recovery for clearing permit applications (2019), the release of the [Native Vegetation Policy for Western Australia](#) in 2022, the [Independent \(Vogel-McFerran\) Review of WA Environmental Approvals Processes and Procedures](#) (2023) and amendments to the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* in 2020 and 2024.

As a result of these changes, the exemption for clearing in previously cleared transport corridors increased from 5 to 10 years, a referral process was introduced for low impact clearing and minor scheme amendments no longer require referral to the Environmental Protection Authority.

While these changes have resulted in some improvements, problems persist. This was recognised by the Vogel-McFerran Review, which found that “approvals processes have become overly complex, time-consuming, and costly – holding back economic development without any benefit to the environment”.

In 2024, to inform the development of an updated advocacy position on native vegetation clearing regulation, WALGA undertook research and analysis of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) and the Office of the Appeals Convenor data, previous submissions and Zone resolutions/feedback and held a sector webinar to inform the development of an [Issues Paper](#). The Paper was considered by the Environment Policy Team and included in the November 2024 Zone meeting Agendas for feedback.

The main themes from the consultations, Zones and issues paper feedback were:

- key challenges faced by the sector related to the complexity of the regulatory system, costs associated with the process and the time taken for assessment and appeals; and
- these challenges can delay critical road and infrastructure projects and impact Local Government's ability to attract and retain grant funding.

COMMENT

A consolidated, updated advocacy position will enable WALGA to comprehensively advocate for members to address the challenges of operating in a complex and costly regulatory environment, whilst balancing the protection of the environment.

The updated Advocacy Position calls on the State Government to:

- Implement **legislative, policy and process changes** including:
 - the imposition of statutory timeframes for assessments and appeals;
 - a permanent exemption for clearing in previously legally cleared transport corridors;
 - increasing the duration of clearing permits; and
 - strengthening environmental data sharing requirements.
- Allocate **adequate resources** to implement an expedited process for road safety and state and federally funded or co-funded projects; a dedicated Local Government unit to process applications and support the sector; timely compliance and enforcement action; and implement a state-funded collection and provision of data.
- Undertake **bioregional planning** and implement **strategic solutions for environmental offsets** for Local Government.
- **Reduce duplication** between the State and Australian government regulatory systems.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA replace the following Advocacy Positions:

5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act

5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves

with an updated Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Advocacy Position as follows:

WALGA calls on the Western Australian Government, in consultation with Local Government, to undertake legislative and policy reform to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the regulatory system for clearing native vegetation in Western Australia, including:

1. *Amending the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and associated regulations to remove unnecessary process, complexity and improve timeframes, including:*
 - a. *introducing statutory timeframes for the determination of referrals, permit applications, **and appeals investigations and prosecutions.***
 - b. *increasing the default duration of Area and Purpose Permits to 10 years*
 - c. *provide a permanent exemption for clearing of previously legally cleared transport corridors*

- d. *strengthening environmental data sharing requirements to ensure proponents cannot opt-out of sharing data collected for environmental assessment and monitoring purposes.*
- 2. *Ensuring the regulatory system is adequately resourced to:*
 - a. *implement an expedited process for clearing permits for projects that prevent death and serious injury (road safety), and state and federally funded or co-funded projects*
 - b. *establish a dedicated Local Government unit within the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to:*
 - i. *case manage Local Government referrals and clearing permit applications*
 - ii. *provide guidance and training for Local Governments, particularly in relation to roadside vegetation management*
 - iii. *support partnerships with Local Governments in strategic environmental offsets*
 - ~~c. *enable timely investigation and enforcement action for illegal clearing*~~
 - d. *increase investment in the collection and provision of statewide biodiversity data, including:*
 - i. *funding and coordinating a state-wide biodiversity survey program to standardise habitat and vegetation mapping*
 - ii. *making biodiversity data more discoverable, accessible and useable.*
- 3. *Undertaking bioregional planning for native vegetation management, with a focus on highly cleared areas and implementing strategic solutions for environmental offsets that can be utilised by Local Government.*
- 4. *Working with the Australian Government to reduce duplication between the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.*

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Amy Knight

Seconded: Cr Scott Ballantyne

That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.3, with amendments to 1a, and the deletion of 2c as provided above.

CARRIED

12.4 SUBMISSION ON THE STATE RECOVERY ARRANGEMENTS (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.4)

By Rachel Armstrong, Policy Manager Emergency Management

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) is consulting on revised State Recovery Arrangements via [Engage WA Emergency Management](#). Formal consultation closes Friday, 2 May.
- WALGA was granted an extension to enable the draft submission to be included as an Item for Decision in the 7 May State Council Agenda.
- The revised arrangements integrate lessons from past recoveries, current best practices, and clarify roles and responsibilities.
- There are no significant changes to Local Government roles and responsibilities under the *Emergency Management Act 2005* and State Emergency Management Framework.
- The Commonwealth - State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements - Western Australia (DRFA-WA) are not part of the State Emergency Management Framework and are outside the scope of the review.
- WALGA's draft submission was shared with Local Governments and the draft final version incorporates feedback.
- WALGA's submission is generally supportive of the revised State Recovery Arrangements, which provide improved clarity on roles and responsibilities in recovery, particularly for State Government, and clearer arrangements for transitioning from response to recovery and from recovery to business as usual.
- WALGA's submission highlights the need for State Government investment in streamlined, appropriate and effective funding mechanisms for recovery and resilience building, and the need to ensure adequate support to Local Governments.
- The People and Place Policy Team noted the draft submission at its 18 March meeting.

ATTACHMENT

- [Draft State Recovery Arrangements – WALGA submission](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's submission on the State Recovery Arrangements is aligned to the following [Advocacy Positions](#) :

8.1 Emergency Management Principles

- 1. The State Government bears fundamental responsibility for emergency management and has the role of providing strategic guidance, support and services for emergency management activities in Western Australia.*
- 2. The State Government should provide financial and resourcing support as necessary to enable Local Governments to adequately deliver their extensive emergency management roles and responsibilities under the State Emergency Management Framework.*
- 3. The Local Government Sector should be engaged as a partner in policy and legislative reviews that impact Local Government emergency management roles and responsibilities.*

8.2 State Emergency Management Framework

Local Governments are supported to undertake their emergency management responsibilities by a simple and streamlined State Emergency Management Framework with the primary objectives of:

- 1. Protecting people, the economy, and the natural environment from disasters;*
- 2. Supporting communities in preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies;*
- 3. Clearly outlining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for Local Government and other emergency management stakeholders;*
- 4. Scalability and adaptability that supports Local Governments of varied capacity and capability; and*
- 5. Supporting agency interoperability through common systems and approaches to key activities including data management, communications, and hazard management.*

8.3 Sustainable Grant Funding Model for Emergency Management

Local Government should be empowered to discharge its emergency management responsibilities through sustainable grant funding models that support a shared responsibility and all hazards approach to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from natural disasters. A sustainable grant funding model for Local Government emergency management:

- 1. Empowers Local Governments to undertake proactive approaches to preparedness, prevention, response and recovery;*
- 2. Supports the resilience of local communities through capacity-building activities and programs;*
- 3. Is responsive to the variations in Local Government resourcing and context; and*
- 4. Develops the skills, capacity and capability of the emergency management workforce; and*
- 5. Is consistent, flexible, timely, accessible, scalable, strategic and the guidance provided is comprehensive.*

8.11 Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA)

- 1. The State Government should fund the implementation of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Improvement Plan endorsed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC).*
- 2. A reformed LEMA system should:*
 - a. Clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of Local Governments in emergency management;*
 - b. Simplify the reporting processes and reduce the administrative burden of maintaining compliance;*
 - c. Provide a suite of scalable tools and guidance materials that are accessible through an online knowledge hub;*
 - d. Build the emergency management capacity and capability of Local Governments through the provision of targeted training, exercising support, human resources and sustainable funding;*
 - e. Assist Local Governments to continue to deliver their core business activities and provide public information during an emergency event;*
 - f. Improve the connectivity of Local Governments' various risk management and hazard planning processes through an integrated approach; and*
 - g. Enable resource sharing and collaboration across the Local Government sector.*

5.4.3 Betterment (resilience)

The Local Government sector supports increased funding for the replacement or restoration of damaged assets to a more resilient standard following an event.

BACKGROUND

Since 2020, Western Australia has faced complex recovery challenges from events like Cyclone Seroja, Wooroloo bushfires, and Kimberley floods, necessitating greater State involvement. The review of State Recovery Arrangements aims to integrate lessons from past recoveries, update best practices, and clarify roles.

There are no changes to Local Government's responsibility to manage recovery following an emergency affecting the community in its district as set out in the *Emergency Management Act 2005* (s36b). There are no substantive changes to Local Government roles and responsibilities for recovery under the State Emergency Management Framework.

The proposed changes to the State Recovery Arrangements include:

- introducing four State Strategic Recovery Priorities which are informed by the National Principles for Disaster Recovery in the [Australian Disaster Recovery Framework](#).
- implementing a new four-tiered Model for State Involvement in Recovery where the State's involvement increases with the complexity of the recovery.
- clarifying roles and responsibilities for Local Government, Hazard Management Agencies, State agencies, and support organisations. The improved clarity in State roles in recovery should make it easier for Local Governments to access the support they need to coordinate community-led recovery.
- emphasising greater community engagement in recovery.
- reduced emphasis on an Impact Statement as a trigger for transitioning recovery coordination from the Hazard Management Agency (HMA) to Local or State Government and a new requirement for transition arrangements to be planned/agreed with Local Governments.
- clarifying the requirement for a planned transition from recovery arrangements to 'business-as-usual' service delivery for Local and State Government.

WALGA and Local Governments have been involved in preliminary consultations to support the development of the revised State Recovery Arrangements, including through the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC), WALGA's Local Government Emergency Management Advisory Group (LGEMAG) and Local Government Focus Groups.

COMMENT

WALGA requested and was granted an extension to enable the draft submission to be included as an Item for Decision in the 7 May State Council Agenda.

WALGA's draft submission incorporates feedback from preliminary consultation, WALGA's advocacy positions, and input from the sector via the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Review and the 2023 Local Government Emergency Management Survey. This feedback has consistently demonstrated support within the sector for shared responsibility for recovery, with the level and type of support required varying with the size, scale and complexity of the event and Local Government capacity.

Overall, the amended State Recovery Arrangements provide much improved clarity on how responsibility for recovery is to be shared and therefore a better foundation for recovery coordination.

The submission recommends:

1. The State Government should develop streamlined, appropriate and effective funding mechanisms to invest in Local Government recovery and resilience building.
2. Investment in recovery should not be limited by the eligibility requirements of the DRFA-WA and should meet the recovery requirements of Local Governments and Communities.
3. The DRFA-WA must be urgently reviewed to streamline administration, approvals and evidentiary requirements, address the cash-flow impacts of the reimbursement model and enable resilient reconstruction / betterment following a disaster.
4. The State Government should invest in effective risk assessment and risk reduction, in addition to ensuring to providing effective and fit for purpose State Recovery Arrangements.

State Strategic Recovery Priorities

5. WALGA supports the proposed four State Strategic Recovery Priorities: 1. Assist people to meet their recovery needs; 2. Enable community-centred recovery; 3. Restore community function and wellbeing; 4. Foster community disaster resilience.

Model for State Involvement in Recovery

6. WALGA supports the proposed 4-tier Model for State involvement in Recovery.
7. WALGA supports the roles assigned to Local Government under each recovery level (R1-4). The roles and responsibilities are aligned to current roles and responsibilities.
8. WALGA supports the roles assigned to State Government under each recovery level (R1-4), which provide improved clarity.

Roles and responsibilities

9. WALGA supports the roles and responsibilities allocated to Local Governments in the revised State Recovery arrangements, including section 6.3 of the revised State EM Policy, with minor amendments as outlined in Appendix 1. The roles and responsibilities in the revised arrangements are aligned to current roles and responsibilities.
10. WALGA recommends that the revised State Recovery Arrangements clearly reinforce the role of the State Recovery Coordinator to confirm individual Local Government's capacity to undertake their allocated roles and responsibilities during recovery and ensures additional support is provided as required.
11. WALGA supports the roles and responsibilities allocated to Hazard Management Agencies and Controlling Agencies in section 6.6 of the revised State EM Policy, which provide improved clarity.
12. WALGA supports the roles and responsibilities allocated to State agencies in section 6.7 and Appendix F of the revised State EM Policy, which provide improved clarity.
13. The revised State Recovery Arrangements should formalise coordination protocols between Local Governments and State agencies to enable rapid mobilisation of essential workers in disaster impacted communities.
14. The revised State Recovery Arrangements should consider inclusion of roles, responsibilities and coordination protocols for essential services, as coordinated restoration of essential services is fundamental to early recovery.
15. The revised State Recovery Arrangements should reinforce compliance with data sharing arrangements under 6.1.72 of the EM Act to ensure that State Agencies are sharing information effectively in recovery and include this as a specific function of the State Recovery Coordinator / Controller.

Greater emphasis on engaging community

16. WALGA supports the greater emphasis on engaging communities in planning recovery, and the flexibility in approach so that this can be adapted to meet Local Government and community needs and capacities.

Phases of Recovery

17. WALGA supports amendments to the State EM Plan to introduce three phases of recovery: 1) Recovery Planning. 2) Response and Early Recovery. 3) Recovery Operations.
18. Considering Phase 3) Recovery Operations:
 - a. The requirements for Local Governments to review and evaluate the Local Operational Recovery Plan should be scalable to the Local Government's capacity, and the recovery level and context and supported by simple and effective guidance.
 - b. All monitoring and evaluation requirements for DRFA-WA programs, if applicable, should be coordinated by the State Government.
19. Recovery Operations should be supported by pre-prepared State-level Urgent Recovery Programs and surge capacity for implementation.
20. Streamlined guidance should be provided for needs assessment, review and evaluation. The approach should be scalable to the Local Government's capacity, and the recovery level and context.

Public Information and Communication

21. WALGA supports nomination of DFES, instead of the State Emergency Public Information Coordinator to coordinate State-level recovery public information and communications. DFES should consult and coordinate with Local Governments on recovery communications.

Transition between response and recovery

22. WALGA supports the proposed requirements for a planned transition of recovery coordination by agreement between the Hazard Management Agency and Local Government for R1 and R2 recoveries.
23. WALGA supports the proposed requirements for a planned transition of recovery coordination between the Hazard Management Agency and State Government for R3 and R4 recoveries with a written transition plan.

Transition from recovery to 'business-as-usual' service arrangements

24. WALGA supports the proposed requirements for the State to plan the de-escalation of State recovery involvement and transition to 'business as usual' service arrangements. The requirements for a transition plan are clearly described and sufficient, however should be outlined in a written plan.

Requirement for an Impact Statement

25. WALGA supports the requirement that the HMA prepares an Impact Statement in all Level 2 and 3 incidents.

Local Operational Recovery Plans

26. WALGA supports the general requirement for a Local Operational Recovery Plan to be prepared for R2, R3 and R4 events.
27. The Local Recovery Guideline should be revised to provide better guidance to Local Governments on how to prepare a Local Operational Recovery Plan.

28. State Recovery support should be provided to prepare a Local Operational Recovery Plan, if requested by the Local Government.
29. WALGA Recommends renaming the Local Operational Recovery Plan to [Event] Recovery Action Plan.

Executive Government Forum

30. WALGA supports provisions to enable strategic oversight and direction for complex recovery issues via referral to an existing cross-government executive forum or a Director General/Chief Executive Officer-level forum.

The People and Place Policy Team noted the draft submission at their 18 March meeting.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: Cr Clive Barton

That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.4 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

12.5 HEALTH (PUBLIC BUILDINGS) REGULATIONS CONSULTATION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.5)

By Coralie Claudio, Senior Policy Advisor, Planning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Department of Health (DoH) is seeking feedback on the [Consultation Paper 2025 Health \(Public Buildings\) Regulations 1992](#) (Consultation Paper), which examines whether the Regulations should be repealed without replacement.
- Repealing the Regulations is not supported by the sector, as it would impede Local Governments' ability to proactively manage and mitigate public health risks.
- Revised Regulations are supported to provide a contemporary, risk-based approach to public building management, eliminating unnecessary building construction requirements and incorporating modern compliance and enforcement tools.
- WALGA received an extension of time from DoH to allow the submission to be considered by State Council as part of the May Agenda.

ATTACHMENT

- [WALGA's submission on the Health \(Public Buildings\) Regulations Consultation](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's submission is consistent with the following [WALGA Advocacy Position](#)

6.6 Building Act and Regulations

Assessments of the effectiveness of building control systems across Australia have recognised that there is diminishing public confidence in the building and construction industry, and that change is required to ensure buildings are safe and perform to expected standards. Now more than ever, the focus is on Local Government building departments to deliver good governance, local leadership and sustainable services that meet the needs of their communities whilst supporting local jobs and economic growth. The Association has the following endorsed positions:

- 1. Support the retention of Local Government as the primary permit authority in Western Australia for decisions made under the Building Act 2011.*
- 2. Supports mandatory inspections for all classes of buildings; however, Local Government should not be solely responsible for all mandatory inspections.*
- 3. Advocate for the State Government to urgently prioritise legislative reform that addresses systemic failures in the current building control model and to provide clarification on the role of Local Government in building control to ensure building legislation supports the following objectives:*
 - a. Quality buildings that are cost efficient.*
 - b. Functional, safe and environmentally friendly buildings.*
 - c. Good decision making in all aspects of building.*
 - d. Efficiency and effectiveness in building management, administration and regulation.*
 - e. Openness and accountability with respect to all building matters.*
 - f. Recognition of the rights and responsibilities of all parties in building matters in an equitable manner.*
- 4. Existing and proposed building control related fees and charges to be cost recovery for Local Government.*
- 5. WALGA will work with members, state agencies and industry groups to develop training opportunities and to promote the Local Government building surveying*

profession to ensure sustainability of Local Government building control services.

6. *WALGA supports the Australian Building Codes Boards Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings by supporting Local Governments to meet community strategic objectives of a net zero carbon future by 2050 through work with members, state agencies and industry groups.*

BACKGROUND

The *Health (Public Buildings) Regulations 1992* (the Regulations) were established to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of people using public buildings in Western Australia. The current definition of a public building is broad, and captures most public areas where people gather for a pre-determined purpose, including for entertainment, sports and recreation, worship and educational purposes.

These Regulations set standards for the construction, maintenance, and operation of public buildings, covering aspects such as occupancy limits, emergency exits, evacuation plans, ventilation, lighting and sanitary facilities. Local Governments play a crucial role in enforcing the Regulations, specifically by conducting routine inspections to ensure ongoing compliance with health and safety standards.

In 2018, the DoH released a Discussion Paper *Managing public health risks in public buildings in Western Australia*, that sought feedback on two options: repealing the Regulations without replacement or providing new, updated Regulations under the *Public Health Act 2016*.

WALGA's submission at the time supported the latter option as Regulations would continue to allow for the assessment and maintenance of the operational safety of public buildings that would maintain patron safety and provide adequate control and enforcement tools for Local Government officers.

This was the position of DoH when the Consultation Summary Report was published in 2019. The report also noted that the Regulations shouldn't duplicate the construction requirements in building legislation and instead focus on the ongoing management of public health risks associated with the building. No updated Regulations were released.

In February, DoH released the Consultation Paper that re-examined if the Regulations should be repealed without replacement. The paper outlines relevant legislative and regulatory changes since 2019 and further examines the need for Regulations in addition to the WA building legislation and the National Construction Codes (NCC) that set safety standards and protocols for building construction.

COMMENT

WALGA does not support the repealing of the Regulations, as it would impede Local Governments' ability to undertake routine inspections, proactively managing and mitigating public health risks related to public buildings.

WALGA's submission acknowledges that the Regulations are outdated, and they should be reviewed and updated to ensure they are contemporary, fit for purpose and focus on the ongoing management of public buildings, rather than building construction requirements.

Health provisions, specifically the ongoing management of public buildings, are not appropriately placed within building legislation, and the building sector is not adequately trained or resourced to effectively manage ongoing public health risks.

Additionally, the general public health duty under the updated *Public Health Act 2016*, along with other legislation and inspections undertaken by government agencies, does not provide effective management and compliance mechanisms to address public building safety.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

RESOLUTION

Moved: Deputy President Cr Rob Harris

Seconded: President Cr Phil Blight

That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.5 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

12.6 OTHER STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS

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

NIL

13 EMERGING ISSUES

NIL

14 NEXT MEETING

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held on 10 June 2025 commencing at 7.30am, via MTeams.

The next Central Country Zone meeting will be held on 20 June 2025 commencing at 9.30am. This meeting will be hosted by the Shire of Williams.

15 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 12.41pm.