

MINUTES OF THE ZONE MEETING

held at the Northam Recreation Centre Hospitality Room, 44 Peel Terrace
Friday 18 February 2022 commencing at 10:15 am

1 OPENING & WELCOME

The Zone Deputy President and Chair of the meeting, Cr Denese Smythe, welcomed delegates and observers and introduced Cr Chris Antonio, President, Shire of Northam. Cr Antonio welcomed delegates to Northam and presented a video highlighting the 2021 Women's Hot Air Balloon Championship bid for Northam. He invited delegates to a tour of the Recreation Centre and the adjacent Aquatic Facility Complex following the meeting.

2 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

2.1 Attendance

Delegates -

Cr Denese Smythe	Shire of York (Deputy President & Chair of Meeting)
Cr Aaron King	Shire of Chittering (via Video)
Cr Keith Carter	Shire of Dalwallinu
Cr Barry Haywood	Shire of Goomalling
Cr Chris Antonio	Shire of Northam
Cr Rosemary Madacsi	Shire of Toodyay
Cr Pauline Bantock	Shire of Victoria Plains (via Video)

Observers –

Mr Matthew Gilfellow	Shire of Chittering
Cr Julie Chester	Shire of Goomalling
Mr Peter Bentley	Shire of Goomalling
Cr Julie Williams	Shire of Northam
Mr Jason Whiteaker	Shire of Northam
Cr Beth Ruthven	Shire of Toodyay
Mr Chris Linnell	Shire of York
Ms Nicole Matthews	A/Executive Manager, Strategy, Policy & Planning, WALGA
Ms Lyn Fogg	Governance Specialist, WALGA (via Video)
Mr Daniel Thomson	Economist, WALGA
Mr Cliff Simpson	Road Safety Advisor (Wheatbelt North), WALGA
Mr Yogesh Shinde	A/Network Manager Wheatbelt, Main Roads WA
Mr Suvrat Patel	Asset Management Officer Wheatbelt, Main Roads WA
Ms Samantha Cornthwaite	A/Regional Manager Wheatbelt, Department of Local Government, Sport & Cultural Industries
Hon Martin Aldridge MLC	Member for Agricultural Region (via Video)
Robert Dew	Zone Executive Office

2.2 Apologies

Cr Mary Angus	Shire of Chittering
Cr Jan Court	Shire of Gingin
Mr Aaron Cook	Shire of Gingin
Cr Ken Seymour	Shire of Moora
Ms Suzie Hazlehurst	Shire of Toodyay
Cr Stuart Boekeman	Shire of Wongan-Ballidu
Ms Mandy Walker	Director Regional Development, RDA Wheatbelt
Hon Mia Davies MLA	Member for Central Wheatbelt
Hon Sandra Carr MLC	Member for Agricultural Region
Hon Colin de Grussa MLC	Member for Agricultural Region
Mr Shane Love MLA	Member for Moore

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cr D Smythe expressed condolences on the passing of Mr Gordon Marwick, past President and Honorary Freeman of the Shire of York.

5 MINUTES

5.1 Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the Zone Meeting held 19 November 2021 at Gingin. Copies of these Minutes have been circulated to all member Councils.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Zone Meeting held on 19 November 2021, as printed and circulated, be confirmed.

RESOLUTION

Cr R Madacsi moved and Cr B Haywood seconded –

That the Minutes of the Zone Meeting held on 19 November 2021, as printed and circulated, be confirmed. **CARRIED**

5.2 Business Arising from the Minutes

(a) Zone Meeting Format (Item 5.2(a))

The audio/visual equipment as approved by the last meeting has been ordered. It was anticipated that the equipment would be available for this meeting, however supply has been delayed.

RECOMMENDATION

For Noting

NOTED

(b) Wheatbelt Conference (Item 5.2 (b))

Last meeting noted that the proposal for a future Wheatbelt Conference had not progressed. The meeting requested that this item remain on the agenda until further notice. It was noted that any consideration of a future Wheatbelt Conference will need to take into account the prevailing COVID-19 situation and any restrictions that may be in place for gatherings.

RECOMMENDATION

For Information

NOTED

(c) Other

No other matters were brought forward.

6 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

6.1 WALGA State Council Agenda – Special Meeting

Review of the Agenda for the special meeting of State Council to be held Wednesday 23 February 2022. The Zone is able to provide comment or submit alternate recommendations to State Council for consideration.

Matters for Decision

3.1 Local Government Reform Proposal Submission (Page 4)

WALGA Recommendation

1. *That the recommendations contained in the 'Local Government Reform Proposal Submission' be endorsed.*
2. *That WALGA:*
 - a. *seek assurance from the Minister for Local Government that further detail on the proposed reforms will be provided to the sector for comment prior to the formulation of a draft Local Government Act Amendment Bill; and*
 - b. *seek a formal commitment from the Minister for Local Government that WALGA actively participates in the legislative drafting process necessary to formulate a draft Local Government Act Amendment Bill.*

WALGA Executive Summary

- The Minister for Local Government, Hon. John Carey MLA, commenced the consultation period for the Local Government Reform Proposals on 10 November 2021.
- WALGA distributed a Discussion Paper to the sector on 24 November 2021, including commentary on the sector's current positions contained in the reform proposals together with recommendations on new positions required on matters not canvassed in the reforms.
- Feedback from Local Governments was initially requested by 5 pm on Wednesday, 12 January 2022, however this was adjusted following the Minister's extension to the consultation period.
- WALGA received 65 submissions by close of response on Friday, 28 January 2022

Copy of WALGA's Local Government Reform Proposal Submission attached to the Agenda.

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

RECOMMENDATION

That the above recommendation and comments be endorsed.

RESOLUTION

Cr C Antonio moved and Cr B Haywood seconded –

That the above recommendation and comments be endorsed.

CARRIED

6.2 WALGA State Council Agenda

Review of the Agenda for the State Council meeting to be held Wednesday 2 March 2022. The Zone is able to provide comment or submit alternate recommendations to State Council for consideration.

Matters for Decision

5.1 Short-Term Accommodation Regulatory Scheme (Page 5)

WALGA Recommendation

That the draft Short-Term Accommodation Regulatory Reform submission be endorsed

WALGA Executive Summary

- In December 2021, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) released *Draft Position Statement: Planning for Tourism and Guidelines* (the position statement) for public consultation.

- The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGCS) simultaneously sought comment on the implementation of a new state-wide registration system for short-term accommodation.
- The proposal is in response to the State Government's acceptance of the recommendations of the Inquiry into Short-Stay Accommodation by the Legislative Assembly's Economics and Industry Standing Committee in 2019.
- The proposals are broadly consistent with the Inquiry's findings that Local Governments are best placed to plan for tourism within their communities and WALGA's existing Advocacy Position on short-term accommodation.

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

RECOMMENDATION

That the above recommendation and comments be endorsed.

RESOLUTION

Cr C Antonio moved and Cr B Haywood seconded –

That the above recommendation and comments be endorsed.

CARRIED

Matters for Noting/Information

6.1 COVID-19 – Update (Page 16)

Please note: The information in this report is current as of 31 January 2022. Supplementary information will be provided at Zone and State Council meetings, as well as through other channels, including regular COVID-19 Updates from the WALGA President and CEO.

WALGA Recommendation

That the COVID-19 Update report be noted.

WALGA Executive Summary

- At the time of writing the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is circulating Western Australia with community cases reported in many regions of the State.
- The reopening of Western Australia's borders that was scheduled for February 5 has been delayed, with further reviews of border controls to be considered over the next 2-3 weeks.
- State of Emergency Directions, particularly in relation to mandatory vaccination, proof of vaccination and mask wearing have had significant implications for Local Governments.
- WALGA has continued to provide dedicated COVID-19 support and advocacy for Members, including regular updates, webinars, guidance and analysis.

Ms N Matthews gave an update and commented that WA Health's COVID-19 alert level is at amber; there has been change to the close contact criteria; it is expected that there will be an increase in the community cases of COVID-19; the WA Local Government response team is available to assist local governments.

Mr J Whiteaker asked if there was any clarification around enforcement of the health directions particularly for local government staff. Ms Matthews replied that the Directions have the force of law, that the Police are the only ones who can enforce the Directions although staff can ask a person who is not complying with the requirements to leave a premises.

6.2 2022-23 Federal Budget Submission (Page 19)

WALGA Recommendation

That the 2022 WALGA Federal Budget Submission be noted.

WALGA Executive Summary

- The WALGA President has written to the Federal Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer to support the initiatives identified in ALGA's 2022-23 Federal Budget Submission.

- WALGA's submission also seeks a commitment to address additional issues of particular importance for WA Local Governments:
 1. funding to build the capacity, reliability and resilience of telecommunications infrastructure across remote, regional and peri-urban areas;
 2. additional funding for road programs, including Local Government road priorities across the agricultural region; and
 3. the creation of a funding model for managing coastal erosion hot spots and additional funding from the Commonwealth to support the implementation of coastal hazard risk planning;
- The submission was provided to Commonwealth Treasury, the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer in January 2022, and will be sent to all WA Members of Federal Parliament in coming weeks.

6.3 Detection of Polyphagous Shot-hole Borer and Implications for Local Government (Page 21)

WALGA Recommendation

That State Council note:

1. *The emerging biosecurity threat following the detection of the polyphagous shot-hole borer (PSHB) in the metropolitan area.*
2. *That PSHB has the potential to significantly impact on Local Governments' street trees and public open space.*
3. *The response activities being coordinated by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, including the imposition of a Quarantine Area Notice covering 17 Local Government areas and expanded surveillance program.*

WALGA Executive Summary

- Polyphagous shot-hole borer (PSHB), an exotic wood-boring beetle not previously found in Australia, was detected in Perth in September 2021.
- Establishment of this pest would have significant impact on amenity trees, native vegetation and the fruit and nut industries.
- There is currently no known effective eradication treatment for PSHB. Early detection, removal and advanced treatment of infested trees/branches and tree stumps are the best control methods.
- A PSHB Quarantine Area (QA) has been imposed across 17 metropolitan Local Government areas that restricts the movement of wood and plant material from properties within the QA and requires machinery used to process green waste to be cleaned before leaving the QA.
- The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) has expanded PSHB surveillance to selected regional towns by distributing pest specific traps (which will remain in place for up to six months).
- DPIRD is continuing to work with Local Governments, other government agencies and residents to control PSHB populations while the incursion is fully considered as part of the nationally coordinated response to pest incursions.
- WALGA has facilitated DPIRD briefing sessions for the sector, is providing updates to the sector and has established a dedicated webpage for downloadable resources for Local Government to support communications to residents.
- WALGA will continue to work with DPIRD to ensure the implications of the incursion for Local Governments are considered in the ongoing response to PSHB.

6.4 State Planning Policy 2.9: Planning for Water - Submission (Page 23)

WALGA Recommendation

That the endorsed Draft State Planning Policy 2.9: Planning for Water submission be noted.

WALGA Executive Summary

- In August 2021, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) released *Draft State Planning Policy 2.9: Planning for Water* (the policy) and policy guidelines for public consultation.
- The draft policy is an amalgamation of six different state planning policies related to water, and the Government Sewerage Policy.
- WALGA provided extensive input on the draft policy's formulation as a member of the stakeholder reference group.
- Many of WALGA's recommendations were included in the draft policy and guidelines. Consequently, WALGA's submission proposed mostly minor amendments to strengthen existing provisions and support the policy's implementation.

- State Council endorsed the submission by Flying Minute on 8 November 2021. The submission was provided to the DPLH on 8 November 2021.

6.5 Submission to Salaries and Allowances Tribunal – Local Government Remuneration Inquiry
(Page 25)

WALGA Recommendation

That the endorsed Submission to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal Remuneration Inquiry for Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected member be noted.

WALGA Executive Summary

- The Salaries and Allowance Tribunal (SAT) are undertaking their annual Inquiry into Local Government Chief Executive Officer and Elected Member Remuneration, with submissions sought by Friday, 28 January 2022.
- Due to the timeframes involved, the submission was endorsed by State Council by Flying Minute following consideration by the State Council Governance and Organisational Services Policy Team.
- The submission makes three recommendations relating to Elected Member remuneration and the Regional/Isolation Allowance that may be payable to Chief Executive Officers as follows:
 - That Elected Member Fees and Allowances (including maximum reimbursable expenses) are increased by up to four percent.
 - That the maximum payable Regional/Isolation Allowance be increased for Local Governments that are particularly isolated, long distances from population centres with low amenity.
 - That the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal publish the methodology, criteria, and weightings for the Regional/Isolation Allowance.

RECOMMENDATION

That the above matters for noting/information be noted.

RESOLUTION

**Cr C Antonio moved and Cr R Madacsi seconded –
That the above matters for noting/information be noted.**

CARRIED

Organisational Reports

7.1 Key Activity Reports

- 7.1.1 Report on Key Activities, Commercial and Communications (Page 27)
- 7.1.2 Report on Key Activities, Governance and Organisational Services (Page 29)
- 7.1.3 Report on Key Activities, Infrastructure (Page 32)
- 7.1.4 Report on Key Activities, Strategy, Policy and Planning (Page 34)

7.2 Policy Forum Reports (Page 37)

7.3 Policy Team Reports

- 7.3.1 Environment and Waste Policy Team Report (Page 38)
- 7.3.2 Governance and Organisational Services Policy Team Report (Page 39)
- 7.3.3 Infrastructure Policy Team Report (Page 42)
- 7.3.4 People and Place Policy Team Report (Page 44)

RECOMMENDATION

That the above organisational reports be noted.

RESOLUTION

**Cr C Antonio moved and Cr R Madacsi seconded –
That the above organisational reports be noted.**

CARRIED

6.3 WALGA President's Report

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

RECOMMENDATION

That the WALGA President's Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr R Madacsi moved and Cr B Haywood seconded –
That the WALGA President's Report be received.**

CARRIED

6.4 State Councillor's Report

Report by Cr Ken Seymour.

RECOMMENDATION

That the State Councillor's Report be received.

No report.

6.5 Zone Status Report

Report by WA Local Government Association on status of Zone resolutions for action by the Association – February 2022 (attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the February 2022 Status Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr C Antonio moved and Cr R Madacsi seconded –
That the February 2022 Status Report be received.**

CARRIED

7 ZONE REPORTS

7.1 Local Government Agricultural Freight Group

(a) Minutes

Minutes of the Local Government Agricultural Freight Group meetings held 26 November 2021 and 4 February 2022 (attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Local Government Agricultural Freight Group meetings held 26 November 2021 and 4 February 2022 be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr B Haywood moved and Cr C Antonio seconded –
That the Minutes of the Local Government Agricultural Freight Group meetings held 26 November 2021 and 4 February 2022 be received.**

CARRIED

(b) Matters from the Minutes

• Chair

The Zone's delegate to the Group, Cr Barry Haywood, was elected as Chair of the Group. Under the Group's Terms of Reference, the Zone from whom the Chair is elected is entitled to appoint a further delegate to the Group.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cr _____ be appointed as the Zone's delegate to the Local Government Agricultural Freight Group to replace Cr Barry Haywood who has been elected as Chair of the Group.

Cr K Carter advised that Cr Steve Carter had expressed interest in the position of Zone delegate to the Local Government Agricultural Freight Group.

RESOLUTION

**Cr B Haywood moved and Cr C Antonio seconded –
That Cr Steve Carter be appointed as the Zone’s delegate to the Local Government Agricultural Freight Group to replace Cr Barry Haywood who has been elected as Chair of the Group.**

CARRIED

• Role of the Group

There considerable discussion on the role of the Group with a consensus that the Group should continue. A review of the Group’s Objectives is to be undertaken at the Group’s last meeting in 2022 (currently scheduled for October).

NOTED

• Investment in Agricultural Supply Chain Infrastructure

At the Group’s November meeting it was resolved –

- (a) That a draft letter to the Federal Government seeking additional funding for road and rail be prepared for consideration by delegates; and
- (b) That the draft letter be considered at a meeting to be held by video conference early in 2022.

The draft letter was considered at the Group’s February meeting and was approved (see attached to the Minutes of the Group’s February meeting).

NOTED

• WA Agricultural Supply Chain Improvements

At the Group’s November meeting it was resolved –

That the State Minister for Transport be requested to –

- (a) Provide an update on the Revitalising Agricultural Regional Freight Strategy and the Government’s plan for the implementation of the infrastructure projects identified in the Strategy.
- (b) Provide clarity on the allocation of the \$200m from the first package of the Agriculture Supply Chain Improvement Program.
- (c) Provide a timeframe for implementation of the funding under the Agriculture Supply Chain Improvement Program.
- (d) Initiate an on-line, publicly available, mapping system of future road funding projects and priorities showing data on existing initiatives, road condition and proposed improvements.

The draft letter was considered at the Group’s February meeting and with some minor adjustments was approved (see attached to the Minutes of the Group’s February meeting).

NOTED

• Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group is scheduled for Friday 8 April 2022.

NOTED

(c) Delegates Report

Cr B Haywood may care to comment.

Cr B Haywood commented that the last meeting of the Group had been a good meeting; it was agreed that an approach be made to the State Government for an update on improvements to the WA agricultural supply chain and to the Federal Government for additional investment in agricultural supply chain infrastructure. Hon Melissa Price MP had been contacted.

RECOMMENDATION

That the report of the Local Government Agricultural Freight Group be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr B Haywood moved and Cr C Antonio seconded –
That the report of the Local Government Agricultural Freight Group be received. CARRIED**

7.2 Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee

Report by Zone Delegate Cr C Antonio on activities of the Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee.

Cr Antonio commented on –

- There have been recent cases of COVID-19 in Cunderdin and Goomalling.
- All recent meetings of the Committee have been around COVID-19.
- Funding is available for hardship due to COVID-19.
- Business continuity plans.
- Rapid Antigen Test kits are available for purchase in Northam.
- If a RAT returns a positive result persons are to have a PCR test and isolate until negative.
- Increased community transmission in the Wheatbelt is expected in the next two weeks.
- Local governments will only be informed of COVID-19 hotspots if WA Health is unable to trace all close contacts. Local governments can contact WA Health for details.
- Original modelling forecast the peak of community transmission in April, this has been modified and is now expected in the next two weeks.

Cr R Madacsi commented that the medical centre in Toodyay was experiencing problems obtaining Rapid Antigen Test kits.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Report on the Wheatbelt District Emergency Management be received.

RESOLUTION

Cr C Antonio moved and Cr B Haywood seconded –

That the Report on the Wheatbelt District Emergency Management be received. CARRIED

8 AGENCY REPORTS

8.3 Transport Portfolio (Main Roads, Department of Transport, Public Transport Authority)

Presentation of the Transport Portfolio report.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Transport Portfolio report be received.

Mr Y Sinde tabled a written report (circulated to delegates following the meeting) and commented on current and future works.

RESOLUTION

Cr R Madacsi moved and Cr C Antonio seconded –

That the Transport Portfolio report be received. CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 11:21 am.

RESUMPTION: The meeting resumed at 11:39 am. With the exception of Ms L Fogg, Mr Y Sinde and Mr S Patel, all those present at the time of adjournment were present on resumption. Mr P Arulsingham entered the meeting at this time.

8.1 Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

(a) Presentation of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries report.

(b) Consideration of any topics or presentations the Zone would like the Department to give to the next Zone meeting.

Ms S Cornthwaite reported on Local Government reform proposals and commented that submissions close on 25 February 2022.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr C Antonio moved and Cr B Haywood seconded –
That the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries Report be received.**
CARRIED

8.2 RDA Wheatbelt

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

RECOMMENDATION

That the RDA Wheatbelt Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr C Antonio moved and Cr R Madacsi seconded –
That the RDA Wheatbelt Report be received.**
CARRIED

8.4 RoadWise (Wheatbelt North)

Presentation of report from RoadWise (Wheatbelt North) (attached to Agenda).

Mr C Simpson presented the RoadWise (Wheatbelt North) report and commented on –

- Declining of applications for Black Spot funding highlights the need for road safety audits.
- Local Government Road Safety Awards 2022.
- Statistical data on road deaths in WA for 2021. Happy to talk to local governments on what can be done.

RECOMMENDATION

That the RoadWise (Wheatbelt North) Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr C Antonio moved and Cr R Madacsi seconded –
That the RoadWise (Wheatbelt North) Report be received.**
CARRIED

8.5 Other

There were no other reports.

9 FINANCE

9.1 Financial Reports

Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Report for the period ending 31 January 2022 are attached to the agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

That the financial reports for the period ending 31 January 2022, as attached, be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr C Antonio moved and Cr K Carter seconded –
That the financial reports for the period ending 31 January 2022, as attached, be received.**
CARRIED

9.2 Accounts for Payment

The following accounts are submitted for payment -

<u>Payee</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Amount</u>
R W & S Dew	Secretarial Services to Zone – March 2022 Quarter	3,721.00
	TOTAL (no GST)	<u><u>\$3,721.00</u></u>

RECOMMENDATION

That the accounts as listed totalling \$3,721.00 be approved for payment.

RESOLUTION

Cr C Antonio moved and Cr B Haywood seconded –

That the accounts as listed totalling \$3,721.00 be approved for payment.

CARRIED

10 ZONE BUSINESS

10.1 Work Health and Safety Act

BACKGROUND

On 3 November 2020 State Parliament passed the Work Health and Safety Act 2020 and it was assented to on 10 November 2020. Transition to the new laws was originally scheduled for January 2022 is now expected in March 2022.

At the Zone's November 2021 meeting the Shire of Moora expressed concerns with the provisions of the Act, particularly the provision of the new offence of industrial manslaughter and the impact on bushfire volunteers, and the lack of adequate advice and direction to regional communities and volunteer services.

COMMENT

The Shire of Moora hosted a forum on 26 November to discuss the potential impact on volunteers in regional areas, particularly volunteer firefighters, of the requirements of the Work Health and Safety Act. Representatives from the Department of Mines, Industrial Regulations and Safety, LGIS, Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the WA Local Government Association were in attendance. An invitation to attend was extended to neighbouring Shire Presidents, CEOs and Chief Bush Fire Control Officers.

Notes from the forum, prepared by the President, Shire of Moora, are attached to the Agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

For comment

Ms N Matthews commented on –

- WA Local Government Association webinar in February.
- LGIS preparing a resource for local government on what the legislation means.
- WALGA has raised local government concerns with the State Government.
- It is understood that in September the State Government will be bring forward its consolidated emergency management legislation.

10.2 WALGA Submission on Guideline: Native Vegetation Referrals Under Part V of the Environmental Protection Act 1986

BACKGROUND

At the November 2021 meeting the Shire of Toodyay submitted a proposal requesting that WALGA amends its submission on the Guidelines: Native Vegetation Referrals under Part V of the Environmental Protection Act 1986. The Shire strongly recommends:

1. Provision of clearly defined benchmarks that will need to be met for successful exemption.
2. Availability of a fast-tracked assessment process for exemptions provided to local governments that can demonstrate within their jurisdictions:
 - a) assessment of native vegetation using a method that meets DWER and DMIRS approval;
 - b) identification of ecosystems and native vegetation associations, spatial extent and temporal change in the jurisdiction; and
 - c) identification of impact and that this does not negatively impact environmental outcomes.
3. Makes allowance for variation in local government resources used in the methodology, provided that purpose is demonstrated.

Mr Gary Middle, the then Acting Environmental Policy Manager at WALGA, advised that he would take this matter to the Local Government Roadside Regulation Working Group and report back to the Zone's February meeting. Mr Middle has since left his role at WALGA.

COMMENT

Renata Zelinova (Policy Officer, Biodiversity and Natural Area Management) from WALGA's Environment team has provided the following update/information for the Zone in relation to this matter -

- DWER published the final guidelines on the new native vegetation clearing referral process in October 2021 so there is no scope to make changes to it unless DWER reviews the new process.
- The final guidelines reflect majority of changes recommended in WALGA's submission, of the 25 recommendations only three were not addressed and three were partially addressed.
- On 10 December 2021, WALGA and DWER held an event focusing on ways to improve the efficiency of clearing permits and referrals. This event was attended by two representatives from the Shire of Toodyay (including the Shire President), two from the Shire of York, one from Northam and one from Wongan-Ballidu. Similar event is planned for 2022.
- At this event, Local Governments identified priority DWER guidelines for updating, with guidelines on exemptions from clearing requiring a permit being the highest priority. This has been submitted to DWER who are in the process of updating key guidelines and fact sheets over the next year.
- DWER still maintains a team that oversees clearing applications from Local Government and Local Governments are encouraged to contact DWER prior lodging an application to clarify any local matters.
- The next DWER Local Government Roadside Clearing Regulation Working Group meeting is scheduled for 10 March 2022, including a new representative from the Wheatbelt region (to be determined this week).

RECOMMENDATION

For noting

NOTED

Cr R Madacsi commented that it was disappointing that no response had been received on this matter. Ms N Matthews advised that she will follow this matter up.

10.3 Rehabilitation of Extractive Industries Sites

BACKGROUND

At the November 2021 meeting Cr R Madacsi referred to an issue with the rehabilitation of extractive industries sites where a site was not being actively used but the license was being renewed on the basis that the resource was not exhausted to avoid the need for closure and rehabilitation of the site.

Mr Gary Middle, the then Acting Environmental Policy Manager at WALGA, advised that he would follow this matter up. Mr Middle has since left his role at WALGA.

COMMENT

WALGA has advised that the matter has been passed on to their Environment Team for response/update.

RECOMMENDATION

For noting

NOTED

10.4 COVID-19 Preparedness in the Regions

The WA Country Health Service has enquired if the Zone would be interested in receiving a presentation from WACHS regarding COVID-19 preparedness in the regions. The presenters would be –

Wendy Newman, Deputy Board Chair, WACHS

Melissa Vernon, Executive Director Service and Operations Hub Development and EOC, WACHS.

Does the Zone have any particular concerns or issues which it would like addressed in a presentation by WACHS?

RECOMMENDATION

That representatives of WA Country Health Service be invited to give a presentation on COVID-19 preparedness in the regions to the Zone's next meeting (22 April 2022).

RESOLUTION

Cr C Antonio moved and Cr D Smythe seconded –

That representatives of WA Country Health Service be invited to give a presentation on COVID-19 preparedness in the regions to the Zone's next meeting (22 April 2022). CARRIED

11 URGENT BUSINESS (as permitted by the Presiding Member)

11.1 Prohibited/Restricted Burning Times

RESOLUTION

Cr C Antonio moved and Cr B Haywood seconded –

That the WA Local Government Association be requested to look at the dates declared for the prohibited and restricted burning times with a view to advocating for the times declared to be reviewed to reflect changes in weather conditions and current farming practises. CARRIED

Secretarial Note:

The Prohibited and Restricted Burning Times were last declared in 2012, although some adjustments have been made since then for individual local governments.

12 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Hon Martin Aldridge commented on –

- Parliament rises this week.
- There has been a case of COVID-19 in Parliament.
- Parliament has a back log of legislation to deal with.
- He inspected the areas impacted by recent fires. Some fires are Western Power related.
- A lot of time has been spent on how prepared country hospitals are and the impact on their capacity with increased community transmission of COVID-19.
- Work Health and Safety Act –
 - Appreciate the concerns of local government.
 - Believe there is a greater appetite by local governments to consider whether they wish to retain fire services.
 - Emergency services legislation will provide a mechanism to transfer fire services from local governments.

Cr C Antonio asked as to the modelling around the Omicron variant of COVID-19. Hon M Aldridge replied that he had been told that modelling had indicated an increase from about four weeks from the border relaxation, which was about now. He felt that we will move into a response phase very quickly.

13 DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

Future meetings of the Zone are scheduled for –

22 April 2022 (Good Friday 15 April 2022)	Shire of Dalwallinu
24 June 2022 (National General Assembly 19-22 June 2022?)	Shire of Dandaragan
26 August 2022	Shire of Victoria Plains
25 November 2022	Shire of York

RECOMMENDATION

That the next ordinary meeting of the Zone be held Friday 22 April 2022 and be hosted by the Shire of Dalwallinu.

RESOLUTION

Cr R Madacsi moved and Cr K Carter seconded –

That the next ordinary meeting of the Zone be held Friday 22 April 2022 and be hosted by the Shire of Dalwallinu.

CARRIED

Cr J Williams left the meeting at 12:35 pm.

14 GUEST SPEAKERS

14.1 Office of the Auditor General

Patrick Arulsingham, Senior Director Financial Audit, provided an update on the financial audit process and performance audit program reports.

Zone members have put forward the following matters for comment by the Office of the Auditor General –

- 1) Auditors not attending a local government office in person when undertaking an audit. It was been pointed out that in these circumstances Shire staff spent a significant amount of time scanning and forwarding documents required for the audit. This adds to the costs of the audit which, since the Office of the Auditor General took over local government audits, has doubled.

Mr Arulsingham commented that there were issues around COVID-19 and other matters, but will give feedback to contractors to ensure requests for information are not excessive and are reasonable to do the audit work.

- 2) The considerable delays in the audit process which has meant that Annual Electors Meetings are having to be held later. Many local governments aim to have their Annual Electors Meeting held prior to Christmas, however this is now not achievable and meetings now look to be held as late as February or March.

Mr Arulsingham commented that improvements have been made for sign off of audits by 31 December. The Auditor General has written to local governments. There have been issues around State sector audits which took longer and had a record number of qualifications. Will endeavour to get local government audits done on time. The quality of records will assist.

- 3) The intent of having an independent Auditor review a local government has been sound practise. However, disconcertingly we now in essence have a local government being audited and then the auditor being audited. This greatly delays the process of finalising the audit. It is proposed that once the independent Auditor completes their process and provides the audited statements to the Auditor General then, provided there are no matters of significance raised, the local government completes their process without waiting on the Auditor General to review. This way the Auditor General can take their time in reviewing the completed audits and if they have an issue with the appointed Auditor's process, they can take this up with the Auditor.
- 4) There has been considerable discussion that the Auditor General's staff have not had an appropriate exposure to local government and have in essence been trained on site by local government officers as to how local government works. It is acknowledged that it will take time for the Auditor General's staff to become accustomed to local government and it is suggested that moving forward new staff be paired with experienced independent Auditors to properly learn the sector.
- 5) What does the Audit General intend to do about the *"increasingly complex reporting and audit issues contributing to longer audits across the entire public sector"* which is a statement made by the Auditor General herself in her attached letter to our Shire and one of the reasons the Auditor General admits to delaying the audit process. The Shire of Victoria Plains certainly feels the impact of the complex audits and the complexity takes up a large amount of our time, especially when our Auditor did not visit our Shire in person during the 21-22 audit. Instead, our Shire staff had to scan and collate the info our Auditor wanted and send the info to them. While our Shire is pleased with the outcome of our audit, we have spent a lot of time on this Audit. The Shire of Victoria Plains has a small workforce and the audit impact reduces our ability to service the community and undertake our regulatory duties.

Mr Arulsingham acknowledged the increasing burden on local governments of financial audits. The OAG is working on addressing the complexity of financial records to be maintained. Soft copies of records help the audit process. Audits will be undertaken on site as much as possible and OAG will continue to pass on to contract auditors the need to remain on site.

Hon M Aldridge left the meeting at 12:48 pm.

Mr Arulsingham commented that the audit debrief will incorporate local government feedback.

15 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair thanked attendees and the Shire of Northam for hosting the meeting and declared the meeting closed at 12:50 pm.

CERTIFICATION

These Minutes were confirmed by the meeting held on

Signed:
(Chairman of meeting at which the Minutes were confirmed)