

Western Councillor



ISSUE 123 | JAN/FEB 2023



P5

AFTER THE FLOODS:
COUNCILS BAND TOGETHER
TO HELP FITZROY CROSSING

P8

YOUR GUIDE TO
WALGA TRAINING
IN 2023

Local governments working together.

At LGIS, protecting our local government members is what we do.

We make sure our members have the right cover to suit their needs. If disaster strikes, our local government specialists help get them, and their community, back on their feet as soon as possible.

It's our members who make Western Australia such a great place to live – their roads get us around, we meet in their libraries and recreation centres, they manage our waste, and provide connection for the elderly. Every day they provide the countless services and support which makes us a community.

We believe that's worth protecting.



To find out how you can get the most out of your LGIS membership, visit lgiswa.com.au or call 9483 8888.



WALGA and Main Roads WA invite you to the 2023 WA Transport and Roads Forum which will be held on Wednesday, 8 March at the Crown Perth.

Challenge your thinking, share knowledge and network with your Local Government peers at the 2023 WA Transport and Roads Forum.

Hear from Government leaders on the latest strategies for the Local Government sector plus exciting news on the use of recycled materials in our roads.

Register at <https://walga.asn.au/trf23>

Date: Wednesday, 8 March 2023

Time: 8:45am - 5:00pm

Venue: Crown Perth

Cost: \$70 (incl GST)

RSVP by Wednesday, 1 March 2023

Information included in this flyer is correct at the time of printing and may be subject to change without notice.



mainroads
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Peer Support Team

A practical way to provide mediation and conciliation support to Local Governments in Western Australia.

The Peer Support Team is an initiative between the WA Local Government Association (WALGA) and Local Government Professionals WA.

The team was formed to provide conciliation, negotiation and mediation support to Local Governments that identified issues of relationship conflict between Councillors, or between Councillors and senior staff.

The key objective is to assist Local Governments resolve these issues

of conflict and reduce the need for formal investigations or enquiries.

The team will meet with the affected Councillors and staff individually, as well as in a group setting, allowing all parties to freely express their views in a neutral environment. The team will then assist the Local Government to develop outcomes and a path forward that is suitable for all involved.

So, to head off possible conflict or for the best resolution in situations where it already exists, call Nick Sloan or Candy Choo on the numbers below.

LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
PEER SUPPORT
TEAM HOTLINE
NUMBERS

Nick Sloan
CEO
WALGA
Tel 9213 2025

Candy Choo
CEO
LG Professionals WA
Tel 9271 1136



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Welcome to Issue 123 of Western Councillor

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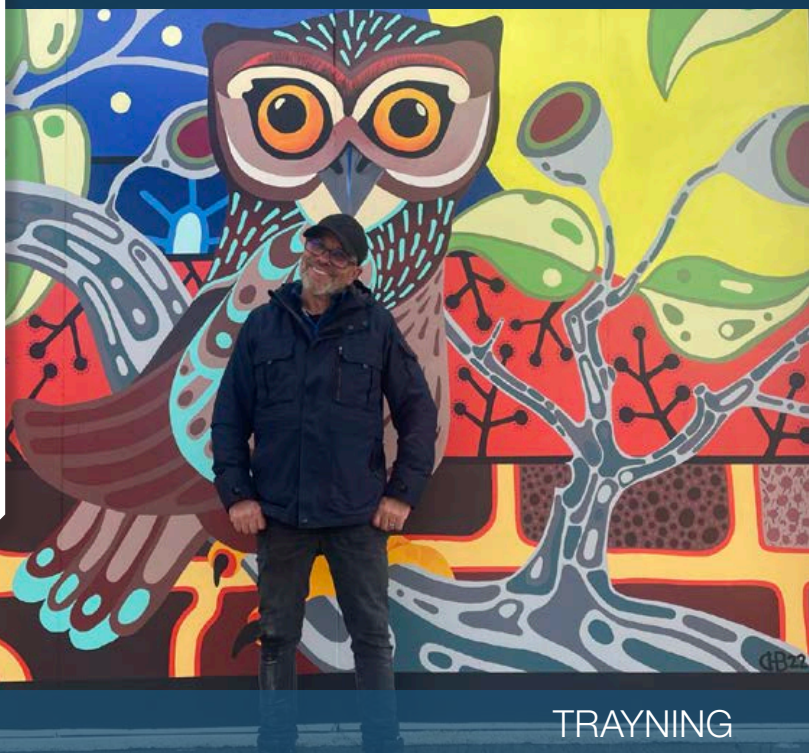
The City of Stirling's Enchanted Woodlands event provided a magical afternoon of family fun at Jackadder Lake Reserve. Residents followed the trail around the lake to discover unicorn rides, picnic areas, musical performances, fairy folktales, face painting, a pop-up bar, sensory friendly zone, kids' crafts, art and more.



BAYSWATER



GREATER GERALDTON



TRAYNING



Chief Executive Officer
Nick Sloan

FROM THE CEO'S OFFICE

There are myriad issues facing Local Governments in Western Australia and WALGA, through its membership on the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), escalates these through a national lens to the Commonwealth.

The 2023-24 ALGA pre-budget submission utilises the collective voice of 537 councils from across the nation to elevate issues of national significance affecting Local Government and local communities.

Many of these issues are focussed on one key factor – building resilience.

Renewable energy challenges, rising sea levels, and more frequent and intense natural disasters are among the issues at the front of mind.

Local Governments are doing the heavy lifting to address our changing landscape – they are building sea walls, improving roads, investing in renewable energy, committing to emissions reductions, and supporting green space.

This work safeguards our communities and, in many cases, delivers enduring financial benefits.

Funding these projects, however, is not a burden Local Government can carry alone. This is reflected in ALGA's 2023-24 Federal Budget submission.

In recent years we have seen the impact of WA's main transport corridor being interrupted due to an uncontrollable bushfire, communities have been left to pick up the pieces as a tropical cyclone crossed the State further south than many thought was possible, and this year we have seen the Fitzroy River flood to unprecedented levels.

The legislating of an emissions reduction target by the Federal Government last year was a welcome

move, but it will require significant investment and collaboration.

There is no lack of will among WA Local Governments to be part of the solution, but many of our Councils lack the resources to scale up projects to effectively meet the challenges associated with a changing climate. Throw in the acute skilled labour shortage in regional WA and it can be hard to see a way to put policy into action.

For many of our coastal Local Governments delaying action is not an option – their seaside parks and infrastructure are being impacted by coastal erosion today.

It is why WALGA is calling on the Productivity Commission to investigate a funding framework to share the cost of coastal hazard management between all three tiers of government.

Of course, much of this work is unachievable without the people to do it.

Capacity constraints are being felt right across Australia and regional WA is among the hardest hit.

Infrastructure investment is a core component of easing these constraints and it is pleasing to see ongoing commitment to the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program, Roads of Strategic Importance Program, and Roads to Recovery.

Demands on WA's road network continue to increase, however, and maintenance costs are putting huge pressure on Local Government budgets.

Contributing to the capacity constraints being felt across the State is a chronic lack of building surveyors who play a key role in WA's building regulation and housing supply system.

A nationwide program similar to Victoria's Women Building Surveyors Program to attract women already working in Local Government to the role would help.

So too would a wider program that encourages uptake of the building surveyor profession through partial or full offsetting of study costs or paid work experience in Local Government by the Federal Government.

With support from the State and Federal Government, we can make headway in addressing some of the crucial issues being faced by local communities throughout WA.



President
Cr Karen Chappel

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Well, what a start to the year it has been.

I'm still buzzing from WALGA's Urban Forest Conference which saw about 300 delegates descend on Curtin University to hear about the pressing need to reverse canopy decline and the brilliant minds and ideas putting words to action.

It was heartening to see such a strong representation of Local Government officers and Elected Members, and particularly interesting to hear about how Local Governments are increasing tree canopy.

This I hope sends a clear message to State Government and other stakeholders that the communities Local Governments represent want to see more action in this space, sooner rather than later.

On a more sober note, it is two months since devastating flooding caused widespread damage to homes, businesses and infrastructure in and around Fitzroy Crossing.

Thankfully, no lives were lost but there has been significant loss of cattle and wildlife, massive damage to the road network and infrastructure, and the clean-up for communities is still underway.

The Shire of Derby-West Kimberley has been at the forefront of the recovery effort and has been well supported by its neighbours in the Shires of Broome, Halls Creek and Wyndham-East Kimberley.

WALGA continues to advocate for more funding from Federal and State Governments to assist Local Governments with emergency

management, preparedness, prevention and recovery.

We have joined with ALGA in a pre-budget submission to the Federal Government, which includes seeking a commitment to a \$250 million a year Regional Infrastructure Recovery Program to enable disaster-declared regional Councils to support communities and rebuild to a more resilient standard.

In this year's State Budget Submission, WALGA has included funding initiatives for the Local Government Grant Scheme, the Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) Program, the Mitigation Activity Funding Grant Program and coastal erosion hot spots.

Another ask in the State Budget Submission is returning the Local Government share of motor vehicle licensing revenue to 27% over the course of the next State Road Funds to Local Government Agreement, due for renewal this year.

Other issues I expect we will be raising with Government include housing, regional health, cybersecurity, biosecurity and Local Government reforms.

Local Government Minister John Carey has announced the Local Government reforms will be split into two Bills.

The first will deal with election reforms, including tiered limits on Councillor numbers, no wards for smaller Councils, optional preferential voting, popularly elected Mayors and Presidents, and caretaker periods, as well as other reforms around standardised Council meeting procedures, recording of meetings, communication agreements between Councils and CEOs, and community and stakeholder engagement charters.

That Bill will be introduced as early in the Parliamentary year as possible with the aim of having it passed before the October Local Government elections.

The second Bill will deal with the early intervention elements of the reforms, including the establishment of an Inspector and Inspectorate.



Minister for Local Government
Hon John Carey MLA

FROM THE MINISTER

Happy new year to everyone across Western Australia. I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer holiday season.

The peak of summer often brings extreme weather and natural hazards. I know that, every summer, Local Governments across the State continue to work hard to keep their communities safe.

I would especially like to recognise the work of Local Governments across the Kimberley, responding to Ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie.

This catastrophic event has created unprecedented challenges, however, the State Government, working alongside local communities will be in it for the long haul throughout the recovery process.

2023 is shaping up to be another landmark year for reform across the Local Government sector.

We're committed to driving and implementing the most significant Local Government reforms in more than 25 years.

These reforms will strengthen local democracy and community engagement for residents, ratepayers and local communities.

By now, Local Governments would have completed their Ward and Representation Reviews.

I want to thank all Local Governments who have seized the opportunity to undertake a Ward and Representation Review.

I appreciate that this can be a challenging process to navigate, and I commend the way that so many Councils have worked constructively, with their

communities, to consider the best way forward.

For example, I know of one fairly large Local Government which has now proactively taken steps towards adjusting a ward which – through a combination of historical circumstances – has less than 15 electors, represented by one member on council.

Both the removal of wards for small Councils and setting limits on the number of Council members based on population are common sense reforms that follow recent trends and will reduce costs for ratepayers.

With more than a thousand Councillors across Western Australia, it is very clear that Local Government areas are over-governed.

While the Ward and Representation Reviews are a significant milestone in this process, there is also work continuing in the delivery of other election reforms.

In particular, the introduction of optional preferential voting will yield significant benefits in bringing local elections more in line with State and Federal elections.

Preferential voting is used in Local Government elections in all other Australian jurisdictions and at the State and Federal level.

Optional preferential voting will be introduced alongside new provisions to backfill extraordinary vacancies if there are eligible candidates from a recent ordinary election for that office.

This will yield significant cost and time savings for Local Governments and their residents and ratepayers, by greatly reducing the need for extraordinary elections.

It also promotes running for council at elections, because candidates who narrowly miss out at an election may still have an opportunity to serve on council if a vacancy occurs.

As always, I remain committed to engaging with the sector through this process.

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and my office continue to engage with WALGA and Local Government Professionals WA to ensure reforms deliver the best possible outcomes for our communities.



WA Nationals Leader
Shane Love

FROM THE SHADOW

The devastating Kimberley floods have again highlighted the integral role of Local Government in emergency management.

Rain associated with ex-tropical cyclone Ellie resulted in the worst flood in WA's history in January with damage to homes, businesses and major road infrastructure across a massive area.

There's no question that the rebuild and recovery will be a long, slow process.

As the tier of government that is closest to the community, Local Government is a key player in disaster resilience, preparation and response.

Familiar with the local demographic and the built and natural environment, Local Government authorities know the lay of the land.

Cyclone Seroja impacted 12 shires in my electorate of Moore in April 2021.

In the wake of the category three tropical cyclone, these Local Governments went to work immediately, conducting welfare checks, checking for live power lines, clearing roads of debris, providing emergency accommodation, and distributing food.

Their communication and coordination role proved to be extremely difficult with a mobile phone network that had been decimated by the cyclonic winds.

Following a natural disaster such as the Kimberley floods or Tropical Cyclone Seroja, DFES staff and volunteers and the ADF arrive to render assistance, but Local Governments are there for the long haul, playing an integral, long term role in the disaster response and recovery phase.

In their capacity as first responders, Local Government must be adequately funded and resourced and it is imperative Local Government is consulted in the development of emergency management policy.

It's timely to reflect on the recovery following Seroja which made landfall near Kalbarri on 11 April 2021.

Considered the largest natural disaster in WA's history, Seroja impacted a 133,000sqkm area, with the resulting 10,000 insurance claims worth over \$400 million.

Almost two years on, less than \$7 million of the \$104.5 million Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement package has reached those affected.

Hundreds of applications for funding are yet to be processed.

As some Mid West residents contemplate a third winter without a roof over their heads, lessons from Seroja need to be learnt so the Kimberley flood victims have the best chance of a rapid recovery.

As a result of multiple severe weather events across Australia since January 2020, one in every 25 Australian adults has lodged a weather-related insurance claim, according to the Insurance Council of Australia.

The ICA says some \$12.3 billion was paid out for 788,000 claims relating to events such as floods, storms and cyclones to November 2022.

Urgent action is needed from the government on climate change and in the meantime, the risk of underinsurance and non-insurance is huge.

NEW CONSTRUCTION AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS PANEL TO REDUCE PROJECT PRESSURE

Andrew Blitz, Commercial Development Manager

WALGA has introduced a new Preferred Supplier Panel (PSP) to support building and works.

The initial categories for the new contract now available are:

- PSP012-001 Modular and Prefabricated Dwellings
- PSP012-002 Construction – New Buildings
- PSP012-003 Building Refurbishment and Remediation
- PSP012-004 Building Demolition, Earthworks and Site Remediation

Following the conclusion of a recent tender the panel contract will commence with 34 appointed suppliers.

From there the contract will be progressively evolved through additional tenders and the introduction of future new categories for design and construct, architectural and design services, aquatic infrastructure construction, and supply of construction materials.

One of the features of the new contract is a comprehensive and contemporary legal framework that is available for use by WALGA members through the Preferred Supplier Panel.

This contract documentation was commissioned for development from HSF and has involved significant investment into a robust contracting model that takes Local Government operating requirements and current market compliances into account.

The new WALGA contract aspires to enhance capacity and streamline procurement.

In establishing the new contract WALGA has engaged with members, the Master Builders Association and the Department of Communities' Housing and Assets arm.

The West Australian market for developers remains at very high demand, and coupled with supply chain and inflationary pressure, the capital works and asset maintenance activity within Local Government has been adversely impacted.

Whilst not able to resolve all supply issues or overcome all capacity and budgetary constraints the Construction and Built Environments PSP is designed to reduce these pressures and most importantly apply contractual terms that minimise the incidence of dispute.

Comprehensive schedules that identify input-cost elements, controls and mechanisms for variation, and clarity of responsibilities will assist to properly cost and assess bids and improve budgeting.



Nonetheless, feedback from the sector continues to suggest many projects have been deferred due to the surge in construction costs experienced over the past year.

Through the analysis of ABS data, it was reported in January 2023 that although elevated prices could be expected to continue this year, they would not continue to rise exponentially.

Housing Industry Association Deputy Executive Director Phil Vaughan said: "the change in construction pricing has been driven by both increases in material and labour costs."

"Material costs have largely stabilised and while we may still see some increases, we do not expect the level experienced in 2021/22."

Through its own economic analysis, WALGA incorporates construction cost information into the Local Government Cost Index, supported by cost escalation forecasts for Western Australia from macromonitor.

Following the extensive development period WALGA is pleased to now have the new Construction and Built Environments PSP available for members and is optimistic building and refurbishment projects done through the PSP will deliver significant benefits and efficiencies.

For further information about the new WALGA PSP please email preferredsupplier@walga.asn.au



AFTER THE FLOODS

In early January the Fitzroy Valley was soaked by the worst flooding on record in Western Australia. Homes were inundated, livestock lost and Highway 1 cut in two by the collapse of the Fitzroy River Bridge.

As the floodwaters subsided, State and Federal Government services – including the Army – rolled in and rolled up their sleeves to help. In the thick of it all were staff, Councillors and contractors from the Shire of Derby-West Kimberley and neighbouring Shires desperate to get the place they call home back on its feet.

SPECIAL REPORT PAGES 6-7 ►

COMMUNITY STANDS STRONG IN FACE OF HISTORIC RIVER TORRENT



Shire of Derby-West Kimberley president **GEOFF HAEREWA** lauds support from Local Governments across Australia in the wake of the Fitzroy Flood crisis

Homes inundated, pastoral country turned into an inland ocean, and the nation's national highway rendered impassable.

It is nearly two months since the Martuwarra (Fitzroy River) unleashed a force never before recorded in Australia.

At its peak on January 4 the Martuwarra reached 15.8m – nearly 2m above its previous record – and was funnelling the equivalent of 20 years of Perth's water use through its broken banks every day.

The ancient river which sustains life in the Kimberley engulfed its vast floodplain.

While images of rising water around homes and livestock and native animals struggling against the torrent were the first to catch national media attention, the true scale of the disaster was laid bare when the waters receded.

The "flood-proof" Fitzroy River Bridge was destroyed and Highway 1 had been left in tatters for kilometres either side of the river.



PHOTO: Dangu Warra Warra

Once the initial threat subsided the clean-up began in earnest – residents in the flood zone were the first to start, and were joined by help from the outside as soon as it could arrive.

Shire of Derby-West Kimberley President Geoff Haerewa said hearts and minds were in the right place from the beginning, but recovery efforts were hampered early on by challenges getting boots on the ground.

"It was a priority to make sure we had food, fuel and medical supplies on the shelves," he said.

"Sadly through various circumstances the road was out between Broome and Derby, the availability and time for barges to come from Broome to Derby, and also the air bridge being supplied by the Defence Force among other providers was challenging.

"With the vast area they have had to service as well as animal welfare – trying to get fodder and food to stranded animals out there – it has been one mammoth, incredible task that is not to be underestimated."

Local Government's role during the initial few weeks was primarily around sharing local knowledge of and capability in the region, with State and Federal agencies – including the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the Australian Army – leading the response effort.

That knowledge was critical to know who could do what, where help was needed most, and what resources needed to be prioritised.





PHOTO: Wangki Yupurnanupurnu Radio/Natalie Davey

Mr Haerewa said staff and Councillors of the Shire – whose resources are stretched at the best of times – went above and beyond.

“The demands on us were just incredible,” he said.

“Our acting CEO has done a fantastic job with the timing of consultation happening in and out of our region.

“A Shire Councillor while I was away at the beginning of this stepped in to really help articulate information as much as possible.

“The job that was done, all the volunteers and people on the ground at the time of the initial emergency, a really heartfelt thankyou to all of them.”

Mr Haerewa said his Shire’s Kimberley neighbours – the Shires of Broome, Halls Creek and Wyndham-East Kimberley – were all quick to roll up their sleeves to help, offering everything from personnel to equipment to get Derby-West Kimberley communities back on their feet.

He also commended WALGA’s support and the mountain of assistance offered by Councils across Western Australia and even those interstate dealing with their own flood crises.

For a Council which counts 71 people on its staff and fewer than 9,000 residents across its 120,000sqkm landscape, the support proved invaluable.

As for what comes next, Mr Haerewa said the community was prepared for a long road ahead working with stakeholders to build a future recovery strategy for the region’s communities.



PHOTO: Murray PeterChant

LGA50220 Diploma of Local Government – Elected Member

The LGA50220 Diploma of Local Government – Elected Member program is the highest level of qualification an Elected Member can obtain through WALGA Training.

The program helps build confidence to provide efficient leadership, particularly in relation to good decision making in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995* and relevant regulations.

It will give individuals the opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge through developing a deeper understanding of legislative and regulatory requirements and how they apply to the roles and responsibilities of an Elected Member.

Shire of Esperance Councillor Leonie de Haas, pictured, is currently undertaking the Diploma and has already seen the benefits to her role.

"I feel that the knowledge I have gained from this course has given depth and been beneficial to my position as a Councillor with the Shire of Esperance," Cr de Haas said.

"Being able to work with Councillors from other Shires and share experiences with them has taught me a lot about the workings of metropolitan Shires as well.

"Making the decision to do the Diploma of Local Government has been one of the best decisions that I have made in recent times."

With challenging assessments and engaging training sessions, Cr de Haas said she was thoroughly enjoying her studies with WALGA Training.

Places are limited and highly sought after.

If you are interested or have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the WALGA Training team via training@walga.asn.au or on (08) 9213 2088.

The team is currently confirming enrolments so don't miss out on starting this valuable opportunity for you and your local community.

Our 2023 course offerings are listed below.

TRAINING UPDATE

SPECIALISED COURSES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS



TRAINING COURSE LIST

Professional Development for Elected Members

- Effective Community Leadership **New content*
- Dealing with Conflict **New content*
- Strategic Decision Making (IPR) **New content*
- Strategic Policy Development **New content*
- Oversee Asset Management Strategy **New content*
- CEO Performance Review **Popular*
- CEO Recruitment **New course in 2023*
- Economic Development Essentials for Elected Members **New course*
- Professionally Speaking **Popular*

- The Role of Mayors and Presidents **New content*
- Record Keeping Awareness for Elected Members (1.5 hrs via ZOOM) **New course*

Strategic and Statutory Planning

- Planning Practices – Essentials **Popular*
- Planning Practices – Advanced **Popular*

Emergency Management

- Emergency Management Foundations for Local Government
- Community Disaster Recovery for Local Government
- Recovery Coordinators Course for Local Government
- Emergency Management for Local Government Leaders

NEXT CHAPTER FOR LGIS AS NEW CEO TAKES THE REINS

By James Sheridan, CEO, LGIS

2023 marks a year of change for your mutual indemnity scheme, LGIS. I stepped into the role of LGIS CEO in January, with Jonathan Seth after nine years stepping into the Executive Chair role.

I am looking forward to leading LGIS and working with the sector to navigate the challenges it faces as the regulatory environment changes and we continue to see significant natural disasters.

Jonathan and I will work closely to ensure a smooth transition of leadership. In the first half of the year we will be out visiting members. I look forward to meeting many of you and discussing the issues that are important to your organisation and community.

For some of you I will be a familiar name and face, with a strong professional and personal connection to the WA Local Government sector and LGIS. I have over 17 years of experience in public sector, risk management and insurance; and for the past six years have been based in the Northern Territory establishing and leading a new mutual scheme with the Local Government Association of the NT and NT Local Governments.

STANDING WITH OUR KIMBERLEY MEMBERS

Unfortunately for our members and their communities in the Kimberley, 2023 has started with one of the worst flooding events in recorded history following Tropical Cyclone Ellie.

We worked with WALGA, taking advantage of their close relationship with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), to get our loss adjuster to the North West by mid-January. As you will know, securing flights and travel to flood-affected and isolated communities was incredibly difficult. By accessing a DFES flight we were able to quickly start the process of itemising and quantifying members' losses. Our loss adjuster was on the ground from 18 January and we are moving quickly to assist our members in reinstating key community infrastructure.

Our critical incident debriefing services are also available to all members and their staff who have been impacted by the floods.

MAYORS, PRESIDENTS AND CEOS ATTEND VOLUNTEER BUSHFIRE FIGHTER FORUM

More than 80 Local Government representatives attended the volunteer bushfire fighter and work, health and safety



(WHS) forum in November last year. The event aimed to address some of the issues raised by the sector on their responsibilities in managing bushfire brigades in the wake of WHS changes.

WALGA President Karen Chappel opened the event and the group were provided with updates from WorkSafe Commissioner Darren Kavanagh, Department of Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm, Jonathan Wyatt Partner, Kennedys and WALGA CEO Nick Sloan, who provided an update of the Association's advocacy work. There was plenty of discussion and DFES Commissioner Darren Klemm was particularly generous with his time, participating in a frank Q&A session with attendees.

Guests were provided with the LGIS Bushfire Fighters Toolkits which included all of the resources available on the LGIS website including handbooks for managers and volunteers, forms and templates, and guides.

Attendees valued the event and the information received, however many reflected on the complex nature of the issue which intrinsically has a high level of uncertainty. In 2023 we will continue to work with members and WALGA to navigate the complexity of this issue and look after our valued volunteers.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your Local Government's issues please contact me on 9483 8855 or talk to your account manager.

ELECTED MEMBER PROFILE



CR SHANEANE WELDON

DEPUTY PRESIDENT, SHIRE OF LAVERTON

Disclaimer: This profile is written in consultation with and by Cr Weldon and does not reflect any views of fellow Elected Members, the Shire of Laverton nor the WA Local Government Association.

WHAT IS YOUR 'DAY JOB' AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO YOUR ROLE AS A COUNCILLOR?

My day job is basically working for my own company, which allows me the flexibility to sit on a few boards and of course the Shire of Laverton. I often relate my experience as a director to my role as a Councillor on the Laverton Shire. As a Shire Councillor, the experience I have gained has given me the experience to share with these other boards. It's about making shared decisions that positively impact the wider community. Reflecting on my role as both a self-employed person, and as a Councillor, it is important to not only have the necessary skills for good governance, which also includes strategic planning and financial management, but to also have commitment and dedication to your role. This includes reading agendas and reports, having the information, so that we can make good sound decisions for good outcomes.

WHAT SPURRED YOU ON TO RUN FOR COUNCIL?

I felt like getting involved with the Shire and being part of the decision making for whatever's going on in town. Also being an Indigenous person, I felt like the Council needed to hear directly from an Indigenous person and what our perspective is rather than the Council making decisions for the people without their input.

HOW HAS LOCAL GOVERNMENT CHANGED OVER THE YEARS?

One of the first changes at a local level I saw was the abolishing of the ward system in our Council. There used to be a Country ward and Town ward. Other changes is that there is more engagement and interaction with other Local Governments in the region as opposed to say 20 years ago. I also believe that there are more female Councillors on Councils which is a huge change in terms of gender equality, and more Aboriginal people are getting on Council. The increased diversity among Elected Members is a good change.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU HAVE FACED IN YOUR TIME ON COUNCIL?

I guess explaining things from a cultural perspective and giving Council background information, so a better understanding is shared before making decisions. Understanding reports and understanding and keeping up with changes in policies and departments has also been a challenge. I have often challenged other community people to put their hand up and stand for Council, with lots of support and encouragement.

WHAT DOES A GOOD WEEKEND LOOK LIKE IN LAVERTON FOR YOU?

When my children were smaller, I used to love taking them to the swimming pool. Nowadays, I take my grandchildren to the pool for a cool down. A good start to the weekend in Laverton begins with a nice cup of coffee at the Great Beyond where you usually bump into the locals for a catch up, and usually a meal at the local pub is another way to catch up with visitors to town or the locals who you don't see during the week. I have a few relatives in town, so now and then we would go out bush and spend time on country.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF LIVING IN THE REGION?

The benefits are there's no traffic or traffic lights, except when you're out on the main road to Kalgoorlie and passing huge trucks travelling back and forth to the mines. You get to know everyone and everything, and you get to know and understand the issues on a better level.

AND CHALLENGES OF LIFE IN THE REGION?

The biggest challenge living in the north-east Goldfields is the distance from your main provincial town with the services. People living out here depend on some of these services which visit on a monthly basis. If residents don't have their own vehicle for transport, then they must rely on a weekly bus service. People have to plan trips whether it be medical or personal, to coincide with other business, so that the trip to these main towns or the city is organised to get as much done as possible to make the trip worthwhile.

The other major challenge is food shopping. With the cost of living on the rise all over Australia, take a step back and double or triple that cost in remote areas such as here. The price of food is astronomical. And again, if you haven't got the transport to travel to the main town for a weekly shopping trip, you have no choice but to buy local. You have to think about how you're going to transport this food back, the space, and you need to keep it cool or frozen. A simple shopping trip can become a full-on project.

You have to take into account, the cost of fuel, opening hours of fuel outlets, be prepared for vehicle breakdowns, and communication. There are black spots for communication throughout the whole region. You cannot assume you will have mobile coverage 100 per cent of the time.

Travelling in remote areas, is one of the biggest challenges facing anyone. If people are planning to travel on unsealed roads they need to travel according to the conditions of the road, be prepared for any form of breakdown, and most importantly let people know where you are travelling. If you're going to travel at night, be aware that there are properties with unfenced boundaries near the roads, which involves watching out for wandering stock on roads, not to mention the roos.

WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT TO DATE AS A COUNCILLOR?

There's been many, but to mention a few, I must say the proudest would be having the Aboriginal flag flown outside the Shire office, and having our Aboriginal language under the English wording, on the welcome and exit signs at each of the town entrances. The town upgrade is definitely one of the highlights, which includes the building of a new pool compound on the same site, and the extension of the Great Beyond Centre. There is a lot of changes that has happened to this wonderful little town over the years, and I am proud to say that for the past 16 years, I have been a part of that.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR SOMEONE THINKING OF RUNNING FOR COUNCIL?

Anyone who is passionate about their town and the issues, please join Local Government and be a part of the change in your community. It's not okay to sit back, talk, and criticise what Council is doing. Put your hand up and have a go and be a part of the decision making. Don't be intimidated by the people around the table, gain your confidence and speak the truth for what you believe to be the best for the community. You can't go in with the view of what you can personally get out of it. No, you must always have the best interest of the community in your heart and soul. Another good advice is to speak to the current Councillors to get an understanding of the role and get to know the background of the Shire as to what it entails, the landscape of the region, the local issues impacting services for the residents and also have a vision for the future. It is a great experience, and there's so much to learn and be a part of change.

Around the Nation

News from State Associations across the country

ALGA



Time right to rethink road networks

One of Australia's foremost roads experts says extensive flood damage to Australia's roads in the past two years should be a catalyst for decision-makers to rethink the way our road network is built and managed.

Australian Road Research Board boss Michael Caltabiano sat down with ALGA to canvass the actions needed to tackle the nation's \$3.8 billion water-damaged roads problem.

Mr Caltabiano said use of more water-resistant material would enable quicker recovery after significant rainfall.

"At ARRB, we have completed the research component of new and next generation materials to fulfill this role and now is the time to partner with Local Governments across Australia to implement a step change," he said.



"There is no better time than during disaster recovery to think differently and build – rebuild – the damaged infrastructure in a way that is more resilient and more sustainable to withstand future flooding events."

Among new materials being tested to improve the durability of roads is tyre rubber, an eco-friendly option which has better resistance to cracking and therefore a lower risk of water ingress which causes potholes and failures.

Tyre rubber has the added benefit of diverting waste from landfill.

In the face of more extreme weather events such as the record flooding in Fitzroy Crossing in January Mr Caltabiano said road maintenance schedules and construction standards need to be modified.

"Right now, we are doing the same level of maintenance, when we should be building and maintaining our roads for what we can expect in the future," he said.

"We are keen to work with more councils to deliver longer lasting solutions, that are going to deliver safer roads for all users."

Alongside new construction material, ARRB is also using vehicles equipped with high-tech gear to better survey sealed and unsealed roads at traffic speed.

NSW



Election focus on strengthening Local Government

With a State election in full swing and Councils at "breaking point" Local Government NSW has called on the state's next parliament to address 10 key themes to steer the sector out of troubled waters.

The NSW public will head to the polls on March 25 where they will decide between the incumbent Dominic Perrottet-led Coalition or Chris Minns' Labor Party.

LGNSW has revealed a long list of election priorities ranging from natural disaster resilience and homelessness to skills shortages and financial sustainability.

LGNSW President Darriea Turley said the State election was taking place at a critical juncture for Local Government.

"Councils across NSW employ 55,000 people, look after \$177 billion of community assets and most importantly are the beating heart of the communities they represent," Cr Turley said.

"But despite the sector's vital importance, councils are at breaking point due to a myriad of challenges that need urgent attention."

"Our financial model is not fit-for-purpose with a rate cap methodology that is detached from the economic reality.

"Meanwhile, years of disastrous weather events have caused extreme damage to our road network and infrastructure."

Cr Turley said these pressures came amid a dire economic outlook where cost-of-living pressures were mounting, affordable housing was in desperately short supply and the ability of councils and communities to determine what development occurs in their area diminished.

NT



Fresh faces elected to LGANT Board

Three new faces have joined the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory board.

At the LGANT annual general meeting City of Darwin Lord Mayor Kon Vatskalis was re-elected to serve another term as President of the nine-member board.

Cr Vatskalis will be joined by fresh faces Cyril Tasman from the Central Desert Regional Council, Cr Sharon Beswick from Coomalie Community Government Council and West Arnhem Regional Council Cr James Woods.

Crs Matt Peterson, Peter Clee, Georgina McLeod, Kym Henderson and Peter Pangquee were all re-elected.

During the LGANT Convention Local Government stalwart Damien Ryan was awarded life membership for his tireless work on the LGANT executive from 2010 to 2020, as the Mayor of Alice Springs from 2008 to 2021 and on the board of the Australian Local Government Association from 2012 to 2020.

WASTE UPDATE

E-WASTE BAN AND CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME EXPANSION ON THE RADAR



WASTE HIGHLIGHTS

• Regulatory Reform

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation finished off 2022 with consultation on Environmental Regulation Reform.

The next stages in this significant reform process are expected this year and will impact all Local Governments operating facilities licensed or regulated under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

• Container Deposit Scheme Recovery

The WA Containers for Change Program has continued to increase resource recovery, reduce litter and provide positive environmental, social and economic outcomes.

Since the Scheme's inception in October 2020, it has recovered more than 1.67 billion containers and generated more than 800 jobs in WA.

Some \$6.1m has been donated to schools, charities and community groups through Containers for Change.

The State Government is seeking feedback on expanding the scope of containers covered by the Scheme to include wine and spirit bottles and other beverage containers.

• E-Waste Landfill Ban

In January this year, consultation commenced on the State Government's commitment to ban electronic waste (e-waste) from landfill by 2024.

For this to be successful, an effective product stewardship scheme which covers the costs of recycling all types of e-waste needs to be in place.

This will be an area of advocacy for WALGA in 2023.

LOOK SHARP

WALGA recently completed a program funded by the Department of Health to distribute sharps collection containers to Local Governments for use in public facilities.

Some 24 Local Governments participated in the Program with nearly 300 sharps units distributed to provide the community with a safe and convenient way to dispose of used sharps.

Uniform signage and a small number of the units are available from WALGA on request for a limited time. Email waste@walga.asn.au.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE PROGRAM

The five-year, \$8.5m, HHW Program is in its final year. WALGA is working with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to develop a new Program.

Since 2011 the HHW Program has collected and recovered or appropriately disposed of more than six million kilograms of HHW from the community.

This has been made possible by the 15 Local Governments and regional Councils which provide the facilities for the community.

Dates for your diary

- **Non-Metropolitan Waste and Environment Summit**
11 May, with tours 12 May,
Denham, Shire of Shark Bay
- **Waste & Recycle Conference**
13-14 September 2023,
Crown Towers, Perth

JAN/FEB AROUND THE STATE IN PICTURES

The following pictures celebrate the achievements of Local Government in Western Australia. Any WA Local Government that has held an event or function and wants to have it featured in Western Councillor is encouraged to contact the *WALGA Communications Team* via email: communications@walga.asn.au

ARMADALE

The City's annual Christmas Carols in Memorial Park saw the return of the Christmas Parade this year for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Children were delighted as they watched the Christmas parade featuring colourful characters handing out lollies and performances by local community groups. Santa Claus and Mrs Claus travelled up Jull Street Mall in their little red car and received a warm welcome from the assembled crowd. A highlight of the evening was the local primary schools and community choirs combining to perform Jingle Bells in AUSLAN and vocals. The inclusive carols event featured AUSLAN interpreters and songbooks available in braille which meant everyone could join in with great gusto to sing along and welcome in the festive season.

Pictured: Cr John Keogh, Deputy Mayor Cr Kerry Busby, Mayor Ruth Butterfield, Cr Paul Hetherington. Credit: Kelly Pilgrim-Byrne, 7 to 1 Photography.



ASHBURTON

The Shire of Ashburton celebrated the completion of the combined Childcare and Emergency Services precinct in Tom Price. The \$6.75m childcare centre offers 96 spaces through day-care, after-school care and vacation programs in a purpose-built environment that will foster learning and creativity. The \$4m Emergency Services Precinct provides the local Bushfire Brigade and SES an accessible base to coordinate emergency response, training, and other community activities.

BAYSWATER

The new City of Bayswater skate park was proudly launched in December at Wotton Reserve, Embleton. Mayor Filomena Piffaretti and Transport Minister Rita Saffioti opened the \$2.5 million facility before 8-year-old prodigy Mia Kretzer dropped in to skate WA's biggest vert ramp at 3.9 metres high and 13.5 metres wide. The City thanks the State Government through Metronet for funding the construction of the new skate park.



BELMONT

As a part of the annual Let's Celebrate Festival, the City of Belmont ran the Brighten Up Belvidere event series. The Belvidere Street area came to life with live entertainment, family friendly activities and street performers over the course of three weekends.



BROOME

Shire of Broome Environmental Health Officer Rachael Donovan was busy checking for mosquito larvae in the days following heavy rain associated with ex-tropical cyclone Ellie which led to record flooding further east in the Kimberley. Here she is hard at work in a drainage channel in Broome.

CAMBRIDGE

Kate Ryan, pictured left with Mayor Keri Shannon, won the best sustainable verge transformation at the Town of Cambridge's 2022 Sustainable Verge Garden Awards. The annual awards recognise residents who upgrade and maintain their verges with a focus on waterwise landscaping. Five prizes were awarded to residents who put their own personal stamp on a sustainable verge that added to the Town's appeal. Ms Shannon said each recipient did a brilliant job creating a sustainable verge that enhanced their streetscape and benefited the local environment.



COCKBURN

About 100 businesses, government representatives and service support organisations from Cockburn, Perth, Indonesia and Singapore attended the City of Cockburn's inaugural Cockburn Indonesian Digital Exchange Forum on 7 December. It featured a live stream digital exchange between Cockburn businesses, industry leaders and their Indonesian counterparts presenting on the blue economy and defence, health and medical, education and vocational training, digital and cyber security, and agribusiness.

Pictured: Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier Jessica Shaw and City of Cockburn Mayor Logan Howlett, centre, with forum participants.

COTTESLOE

The Town of Cottesloe Carols by Candlelight was held on Cottesloe Civic Centre's main lawn on Saturday, 10 December. It was wonderful to see so many members of our community come along and enjoy an evening of music and carols performed by the Salvation Army Brass Band, A Capella West Chorus, North Cottesloe Primary School Vocal Ensemble and the Cottesloe Crooners. Santa also made a special guest appearance.



CUE

The Shire of Cue celebrated the opening of the Cue Youth and Community Centre in the refurbished railway building. Situated next to the town oval, the Cue Youth and Community Centre is perfectly placed and will be utilised as an event venue when available. The project was supported by Lotterywest and the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program.

ESPERANCE

An annual celebration of youth, the Shire of Esperance facilitated the Edge of the Bay Festival on the foreshore. The Battle of the Bay Skate and BMX Competition is the highlight leading into a night of live and local music. This community event activates the Youth Precinct and, as the largest skate competition in WA, attracts more than 3,000 spectators and 70 competitors.



GREATER GERALDTON

One of Geraldton's most adored public art pieces, the Horizon sculpture, was welcomed back to the Beresford Foreshore last month after suffering a structural failure. Award-winning artist Lucy Humphrey worked with the City of Greater Geraldton to ensure warmer weather wouldn't affect the sculpture's integrity, with the acrylic on the replacement piece sturdier than its predecessor. It is one of the top attractions in Geraldton and is a must-see when visiting.

GOSNELLS

A long-term City of Gosnells project to rehabilitate a 10-hectare reserve, where the Southern and Canning rivers meet, received a welcome boost with \$250,000 in Swan Canning Riverpark Urban Forest funding from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. The rivers have community significance for their cultural, recreational and environmental values. The project will improve the quality of water entering the river system and its benefits will flow downstream.



HARVEY

The Shire of Harvey has started 2023 live and in colour thanks to five artists who participated in the Mural Arts Project. The project involved experienced artists transforming local buildings into unique works of art. Locals and visitors can now see incredible murals at Wokalup Tavern (artist Andrew Frazer), Harvey Pool (Ian Mutch), Binningup Community Centre (Jamie Wyatt), Harvey Recreation and Cultural Centre (Luke O'Donohoe) and Leschenault Estuary Eco Museum (Jack Bromell). The Mural Arts Project was developed and launched to increase the vibrancy of public spaces and is part of the Shire's Creative Communities 2027 Strategy.

JOONDALUP

Mayor Albert Jacob joined Premier Mark McGowan, Lands Minister John Carey and Member for Joondalup Emily Hamilton to announce a significant funding injection from the State Government to deliver Perth's first coastal pool at Ocean Reef Marina. The City is working with DevelopmentWA to bring the much-anticipated marina to fruition, with the transformational project to be an iconic destination for local residents and visitors.



KARRATHA

The City of Karratha was presented with the Rinehart Development of Northern WA Award at the annual Western Australia Community Achievement Awards. The judges said the City had successfully built infrastructure to accommodate current and future industry and community demands. The City's budgeting was also commended, with judges noting its debt-free bottom line and position in 2020 as the largest LGA by revenue in regional WA.

Pictured: City of Karratha Director Phillip Trestail and Hancock Prospecting Sponsorships Manager Marguerite Olivier.

KWINANA

The lights on the Christmas tree in the heart of the City were lit up to herald Christmas in Kwinana ahead of the beloved lolly run. Construction company BGC saved the day, safely transporting lolly bags from Victoria in the wake of freight disruptions affecting WA. Four lolly run trucks filled with about 100 volunteers delivered nearly 30,000 lolly bags and Christmas cheer to children in every street across the City from 17 to 23 December.



MEEKATHARRA

The Shire of Meekatharra Youth Services Team was a proud winner at the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries Community Achievement Awards. The Youth Services Team won the Making a Difference Award and People's Choice Award categories. The Youth Services Team are worthy winners of the awards which reflect their dedicated commitment to the Meekatharra community.

Pictured: Lachlan Macdonald, Margie Elliot, Trinity Thorne, Asharnta Anderson, Jada Baumgarten and Andrew Binsiar.

MUNDARING

A reception was held to thank the Landcare Friends and Catchment Group Volunteers engaged in protecting and enhancing the Shire of Mundaring's natural environment. Councillors and staff were present to celebrate the volunteers' milestones and success stories. The event was an opportunity to network and showcase new ideas with guests who each received a branded high-visibility vest in recognition of their work to sustain the Shire's natural assets.



MURRAY

The Shire of Murray held its annual Christmas on the Murray celebration in December. The community event on the banks of the Murray River attracted hundreds of residents. Murray Youth for Youth ran a green screen photo booth, there were Christmas carols from local choirs and a jazzy concert the Avenue Jazz band. Plus of course a visit from Santa who entered via the Pinjarra suspension bridge.



PLANTAGENET

A unique new entry statement is welcoming visitors to Mount Barker. Measuring 8m high and 10m long the new sign is believed to be the largest freestanding billboard in regional WA. The sign was created by The Walldogs and community during the 2022 Mountains and Murals Mount Barker Festival. It aims to make residents feel they have arrived home and visitors feel welcomed and curious about what the region has to offer.

ROCKINGHAM

Thousands of people gathered along the Rockingham Foreshore to celebrate the arrival of 2023 at the City of Rockingham's annual New Year's Eve Celebration. The event was highlighted by two stunning fireworks displays over the waters of Cockburn Sound and a headline performance from hit West Australian rock band Eskimo Joe. The celebration was hosted as part of the City's Summer Series of free, family-friendly, smoke-free and alcohol-free events.



SOUTH PERTH

The City of South Perth recognised its wonderful volunteers at a special Thank You Celebration in December. Josh Serafini (pictured left) was named Volunteer of the Year for his work with the Karawara Food Relief Program that provides food donations, community connections and weekly meal deliveries. Dena Gower received the City's most prominent individual award, Freeman of the City. Dena became the first Noongar woman to receive the honour, which her daughter Dorothy Clinch and James Woods received on her behalf.



STIRLING

The City of Stirling's Enchanted Woodlands event provided a magical afternoon of family fun at Jackadder Lake Reserve. Residents followed the trail around the lake to discover unicorn rides, picnic areas, musical performances, fairy folktales, face painting, a pop-up bar, sensory friendly zone, kids crafts, art and more.

SUBIACO

Back for its 35th year, the free sunset@subi live music series featured The Australian Beatles tribute band who got everyone up and dancing. Held across several weekends in the City of Subiaco's beautiful parks, this year's concert line-up included jazzy versions of Christmas classics, pop-rock hits, and lively salsa rhythms.



TRAYNING

The Shire of Trayning's KTY Town Team became the 100th registered under the Town Teams movement. Trayning's Don Mason Community Centre and Youth Hub got a refresh before a street party was held to celebrate the event. Despite some rain and cold weather, it was a positive and successful experience for the KTY community.

WAGIN

The gardens team at the Shire of Wagin recently planted crepe myrtles to recognise the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, making a great addition to the streetscape and beautifying Chellev Park (named for Chas Chellev, Wagin Mayor 1937-1941). Chellev Park is adjacent to Ram Park, home of the Giant Ram, and with the recently opened Ninja children's park, forms a welcoming garden space on entry to Wagin.



EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY BATTERIES IN WA

Synergy is working with industry, the State Government and Local Government authorities across WA to explore cleaner, smarter and more efficient ways to make, use, store and trade energy.

According to Synergy Account Manager Bec Elshaw, Synergy is continuing to run a range of programs and pilots which explore alternative energy sources for WA's energy supply and storage solutions that could help the stability of the electricity network.

"As WA's main electricity network evolves and adapts to meet the needs of the WA community, there is a greater need to integrate more distributed energy resources (DER) which could include community batteries," said Ms Elshaw.

"PowerBank was a pilot program that was run in three phases to explore the potential benefits that integrated community batteries could offer households and the wider WA community in the future."

THE ROLE OF HOME AND COMMUNITY BATTERIES IN WA'S FUTURE

"The PowerBank 3 pilot built on earlier phases of the pilot, with a significant increase in scale and improved product design," explained Ms Elshaw. "For the first time, PowerBank participants were able to grow and 'bank' their excess solar electricity over the course of their billing cycle, which allowed them to offset their energy consumption during the 'peak' time period, by using their 'bank' of virtually stored energy."

While the PowerBank pilot has now concluded, the community batteries will remain connected to the SWIS to assist with network stability during times of peak demand.

Ms Elshaw said PowerBank 3 provided valuable insights into the role electricity storage products such as home and community batteries could play in WA's energy future.

According to Synergy statistics, the total collective savings of participants in PowerBank 3 was \$270,900 which represented an average saving of \$726.30 per participant over the pilot period.

PowerBank 3

- The third phase of the pilot, known as PowerBank 3, ran during 2021 and 2022.
 - 12 utility-scale community batteries were connected to the South West Interconnected System (SWIS) in Ellenbrook, Kalgoorlie, Ashby, Canning Vale, Two Rocks, Vasse, Port Kennedy, Yokine, Parmelia and Meadow Springs.
 - More than 350 Synergy customers with existing solar PV systems participated in PowerBank 3 and trialled virtual[#] battery storage technology.
 - Without the costs of a home battery system, each participant was able to virtually[#] store up to 6kWh or 8kWh of excess electricity generated by their solar PV system between 7am and 3pm.
 - Participants also trialled a 'time of use' electricity pricing plan, the PowerBank Saver Plan, to encourage changes in their consumption habits.
- [#]Virtual storage means there is no physical battery connected to the premises storing electricity generated. Individual customers were allocated virtual storage capacity in the community battery based on their chosen storage option and the PowerBank Saver Plan terms and conditions.

"In addition to the direct cost-savings participants were able to enjoy, on a wider scale, community batteries could help to provide cost-effective solar storage options to help smooth supply and demand, which has benefits for all electricity users in the area. This could open up the capacity for more solar and other renewable energy sources to be connected to the network in the future."

"Renewable energy products, time of use electricity plans, technology and services such as My Account to help manage electricity use and the rollout of advanced metering across the network are other

examples of how WA is continuing to embrace new energy technology."

Synergy is working with your LGA to support WA's transition to a renewable energy future. For more information, please contact Bec Elshaw by email at bec.elshaw@synergy.net.au or call 0457 199 222.

**Total collective savings of all 373 participants in PowerBank 3 pilot from 10 March 2021 to 30 September 2022, based on costs the participants incurred on the Power Saver Plan (including daily supply charges and the daily subscription fee) against the costs they would have incurred on the Synergy Home Plan (A1) for the same period. The average saving per participant is indicative only, calculated by summing all of the participants' savings and dividing by the total participants.*

You have the power.

My Account gives you more power, over your power. It's an account management tool that lets you track your electricity usage, manage and change payment options, and it's full of simple energy saving tips.

synergy.net.au/myaccount

synergy



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