

# Northern Country Zone Minutes

**15 June 2026**

**Hosted at City of Greater  
Geraldton**

**Multipurpose Centre**

**Commencing at 10:00am  
(lunch served from 12:15pm)**

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## PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

How to use the Framework:

- If the majority of the factors are towards the left column, the issue is a high priority.
- If the majority of the factors are towards the middle, the issue requires action, but is not a high priority.
- If the majority of the factors are towards the right column, the issue is a low priority.

|  |             |  |            |
|--|-------------|--|------------|
| <b>Impact on Local Government Sector</b><br>Impact on Local Government sector without intervention   | High        | Medium   | Low        |
| <b>Reach</b><br>Number of member Local Governments affected  | Sector-wide | Significant<br>(multiple regions, Zones, or bands) | Few        |
| <b>Influence</b><br>Capacity to influence decision makers  | High        | Medium   | Low        |
| <b>Principles</b><br>Alignment to core principles such as autonomy, funding, general competence  | Strong      | Partial  | Peripheral |
| <b>Clarity</b><br>Policy change needed is clear and well-defined   | Clear       | Partial  | Unclear    |
| <b>Decision-maker support</b><br>Level of support among decision-makers (political and administrative)   | High        | Medium   | Low        |
| <b>Public support</b><br>Level of support among the public or other stakeholders   | High        | Medium   | Low        |
| <b>Positive consequences for WALGA</b><br>Prospect of positive consequences for WALGA. E.g. enhanced standing among members or leverage for other issues.                                    | High        | Medium   | Low        |
| <b>Negative consequences for WALGA</b><br>Prospect of negative consequences for WALGA for not undertaking the advocacy effort. E.g. diminished standing among members or other stakeholders. | High        | Medium   | Low        |
| <b>Partnerships</b><br>Potential for partnerships with other stakeholders  | Yes (3+)    | Possibly (1-2)                                     | No (0)     |

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Zone Delegates are requested to provide sufficient written notice, wherever possible, on amendments to recommendations within the State Council or Zone agenda to the Zone Chair and Secretariat prior to the Zone meeting.

Agenda Papers are emailed 7 days prior to the meeting date.

Confirmation of Attendance An attendance sheet will be circulated prior to the commencement of the meeting, please register your attendance by printing your name against your Council on the attendance sheet.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Minutes of the previous meeting
2. State Councillor Zone Report
3. President's Report
4. Zone Status Report
5. LGIRS Report May 2026
6. Incoming correspondence from GSCZ – Cost Shifting in Local Government

## 1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

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### 1.1 OPENING

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Chair, President Cr Karen Chappel opened the meeting at 10:12am and welcomes members and guests.

### 1.2 ATTENDANCE

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#### MEMBERS

#### 1 Voting Delegates from each Member Council

Shire of Carnamah

President Cr Merle Isbister (voting delegate)  
Mr Stuart Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate

Shire of Chapman Valley

President Cr Nicole Batten (voting delegate)  
Mr Jamie Criddle, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate

Shire of Coorow

President Cr Guy Sims (voting delegate)  
Ms Mia Maxfield, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate

City of Greater Geraldton

Mayor Jerry Clune (voting delegate)  
  
Mr Ross McKim, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate

Shire of Irwin

Cr Isabelle Scott (voting delegate)  
Mr Shane Ivers, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate

Shire of Mingenew

President Cr Hellene McTaggart (voting delegate)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Shire of Morawa                             | President Cr Karen Chappel ( <b>Chair</b> )<br>Cr Ken Stokes, deputy delegate<br>Mr Marty Symmons, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate |
| Shire of Northampton                        | President Cr Elizabeth (Liz) Sudlow (voting delegate)<br>Mr Andrew Campbell, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate                       |
| Shire of Perenjori                          | President Cr Jude Sutherland (voting delegate)<br>Mr Clinton Strugnell, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate)                           |
| Shire of Three Springs                      | Cr Nadine Eva (voting delegate)<br>Cr Jenny Mutter, deputy delegate<br>Mr Mark Dacombe, Temporary Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate  |
| WA Local Government Association Secretariat | Ms Kirsty Martin, Executive Manager Member Services<br>Ms Kelsey Nicholson, Executive Assistant   |
| <b>Invited Guests</b>                       |   |
| Federal Member for Durack                   | Hon Melissa Price MP  |
| Mid West Development Commission             | Mr Nils Hay - Chief Executive Officer   |
| Member for Western Australia, ALP           | Hon Sandra Carr MLC   |
| <b>Guest Speakers</b>                       |   |
| Local Government Inspectorate               | Mr Tony Brown, Local Government Inspector   |

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### 1.3 APOLOGIES

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|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Shire of Carnamah         | Cr Dwayne Wooltorton, deputy delegate   |
| Shire of Chapman Valley   | Cr Trevor Royce, deputy delegate  |
| Shire of Coorow           | Cr Giulia Censi, deputy delegate  |
| City of Greater Geraldton | Cr Jenna Denton, deputy delegate  |
| Shire of Irwin            | Cr Andrew Gillam, deputy delegate   |
| Shire of Mingenew         | Cr Naomi Obst (voting delegate)<br>Cr Jonathan Holmes, deputy delegate<br>Mr Matt Fanning, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Shire of Northampton   | Cr Richard Burges, deputy delegate                                       |
| Shire of Perenjori   | Cr Daniel Bradford, deputy delegate                                      |
| Minister for Agriculture and Food;<br>Fisheries; Forestry; Small Business;<br>Mid West | Hon Jackie Jarvis MLC  |
| Member for Mid-West  | Shane Love MLA   |
| Member for Geraldton   | Ms Kirrilee Warr MLA, Shadow Minister for Local<br>Government, Fisheries |
| CBH  | Kellie Todman, Manager Govt & Industry Relations                         |
| Regional Development Mid West<br>Gascoyne  | Mark Holdsworth, Executive Officer                                       |
| Main Roads   | Ms Janet Hartley-West - Regional Director Mid<br>West-Gascoyne           |
| Department of Fire and Emergency<br>Services   | Mr Mark Bowen, Superintendent Midwest<br>Gascoyne Region                 |

## **2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We, the Northern Country Zone of WALGA, acknowledge the Yamatji people, the Traditional Custodians of this land that we meet on today, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **4 DEPUTATIONS**

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

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### **4.1 HON MELISSA PRICE MP – MEMBER FOR DURACK**

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The Honourable Melissa Price MP provided an update to the Zone on her recent engagement with Ministers regarding the fuel crisis, as well as broader issues impacting the electorate of Durack.

Ms Price spoke to challenges in regional health, including the increasing financial burden on Local Governments in supporting access to local doctors.

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### **4.2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR**

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Mr Tony Brown, Local Government Inspector provided a presentation to the zone on the functions of the Local Government Inspectorate.

## 5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Minutes of the Northern Country Zone meeting held on **20 April 2026** have previously been circulated to Member Councils and were provided as an attachment to the Agenda.

### RESOLUTION

**That the Minutes of the meeting of the Northern Country Zone held on 20 April 2026 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.**

Moved: President Cr Merle Isbister  
Seconded: President Cr Jude Sutherland

CARRIED

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## 5.1 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

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## 6 WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA

Zone Delegates are invited to read and consider the WALGA State Council Agenda, which can be found via the link [here](#).

The Zone can provide comment or submit an alternative recommendation on any of the items, including the items for noting. The Zone comment will then be presented to the State Council for consideration at their meeting.

The State Council Agenda items requiring a decision of State Council are extracted for Zone consideration below.

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### 6.1 CLIMATE CHANGE ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.1)

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*By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste*

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A new climate change Advocacy Position is proposed to replace the position endorsed by State Council in 2018.
- WALGA released a Consultation Paper and draft Climate Change Advocacy Position in January 2026 for Council endorsed feedback by 1 May 2026.
- 39 Council endorsed submissions and two officer level comments were received:
  - 18 (44%) supported the draft Position.
  - 18 (44%) supported the draft Position with comments and/or proposed changes.
  - four (10%) did not support the draft Position and proposed an alternative.
  - one (2%) did not support the Advocacy Position.
- The draft Advocacy Position has been refined in response to the feedback received, noting that the majority of submissions either supported the draft position in its entirety or supported with comment and/or amendment:
  - *"to meet the needs of their communities"* has been added to Point 1 to better reflect Local Government context.
  - Point 2b has been revised to:

- Include explicit reference to increasing risk and expanded legislative requirements and align with language in the *Local Government Act* (mitigation, rather than emissions reduction).
- Be clear that Local Government must be provided with the funding, guidance and practical support required to meet increasing risk and legislative requirements.
- At its meeting on 25 May 2026, the Environment Policy Team considered this item and recommended that State Council replace the current Climate Change Policy Statement and Advocacy Position 4.1 with the new Advocacy Position.

#### ATTACHMENT

- [Climate Change Advocacy Position Consultation Report](#)

#### RECOMMENDATION

That State Council replace the Climate Change Policy Statement and Advocacy Position 4.1 with a new Climate Change Advocacy Position as follows:

1. *Local Government acknowledges the risks associated with, and is committed to addressing, climate change to meet the needs of their communities.*
2. *WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to:*
  - a. *Provide the necessary climate leadership, coordination and action to ensure an orderly transition to achieve emission reduction targets and address the impacts of climate change.*
  - b. *Ensure that Local Government has the funding, guidance and practical support required to meet increasing risk and expanded legislative requirements to plan for, mitigate and adapt to climate impacts.*

#### RESOLUTION

**That the Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.1 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.**

Moved: President Cr Nadine Eva

Seconded: Mayor Gerry Clune

CARRIED

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## 6.2 TRAIN STATION PRECINCTS ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.2)

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*By Coralie Claudio, A/Manager Planning and Building*

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In November 2025, the State Government [announced](#) it would commence the preparation of Improvement Plans and Improvement Schemes for ten train station precincts across the Perth metropolitan region.
- A new Train Station Precinct Advocacy Position is proposed, which identifies the need for collaborative, place-based, and infrastructure-led precinct planning that enables housing delivery while respecting local planning frameworks and maintaining community confidence, supported by strong State Government coordination and funding.

- The position is intended to support timely and direct engagement with the State Government on sector priorities for current and future State-led train station precincts.
- The draft position has been informed by a review of Council resolutions and feedback from Local Governments, including those associated with the initial ten identified train station precincts.
- The Environment Policy Team endorsed the position at its meeting on 18 May 2026.

#### ATTACHMENT

- [Rationale New Advocacy Position: Train Station Precincts](#)

#### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the following new Advocacy Position:

##### *Train Station Precincts*

1. *Local Government supports a coordinated approach to the planning and development of train station precincts that is transport-orientated, place responsive and provides for increased housing density and diversity.*
2. *In developing Train Station Precinct Improvement Plans and Schemes the State Government should:*
  - a. *Respect, acknowledge and build on existing and progressing local planning frameworks.*
  - b. *Ensure effective collaboration, partnerships and coordination across Government agencies and with Local Government.*
  - c. *Prioritise redevelopment of State-owned land to deliver optimal housing and mixed-use outcomes.*
  - d. *Undertake meaningful and ongoing community engagement.*
  - e. *Directly fund and/or implement funding mechanisms to deliver public realm and infrastructure requirements.*
3. *Decisions on any future State-led train station precincts must be evidence-based, transparent and made in consultation with Local Government.*

#### RESOLUTION

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

Moved: President Cr Hellene McTaggart  
 Seconded: President Cr Nicole Batten

**CARRIED**

### **6.3 SUBMISSION ON THE CAT ACT REVIEW (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.3)**

*By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager Environment and Waste and Felicity Morris, Manager Governance and Procurement*

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On 13 February 2026 the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) opened consultation on the second statutory review of the *Cat Act 2011* (the Cat Act).
- All elements of the Cat Act are under review, including registration, enforcement/compliance, sterilisation, microchipping, breeding and limits on the number of cats.

- WALGA used current Advocacy Positions, previous submissions, a webinar with the sector and opportunity to comment on a draft submission to gather feedback.
- The submission identifies that reform to the legislation is required, in relation to:
  - Consolidation of the Cat Act and *Dog Act 1976*;
  - Stronger provisions for consistent non-compliance;
  - Clear definitions for owned and unowned cats;
  - Development of a Model Cat Local Law;
  - A limit on the number of cats; and
  - Lowering the age of sterilisation.
- Consultation by LGIRS closes at 5:00pm on Monday, 31 August 2026.
- A joint meeting of the Governance and Environment Policy Teams on 25 May 2026 recommended that State Council endorse the submission.

#### **ATTACHMENT**

- [Submission on the Review of the \*Cat Act 2011\*](#)

#### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the submission on the Review of *Cat Act 2011*.

#### **RESOLUTION**

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

Moved: President Cr Guy Sims  
 Seconded: President Cr Nadine Eva

**CARRIED**

## **7 EXECUTIVE REPORTS**

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### **7.1 ZONE PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

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#### **Noted**

Zone President, President Cr Karen Chappel had no update to provide the zone.

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### **7.2 WALGA STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT**

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#### **Noted**

WALGA State Councillor, President Cr Liz Sudlow presented the report on activities of the State Council since the last Zone meeting. The report was enclosed as an attachment with the agenda.

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### **7.3 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

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#### **Noted**

The WALGA President's report was provided as an attachment to the agenda.

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## 7.4 STATUS REPORT

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*By Chantelle O'Brien, Zone Governance Officer*

### Noted

The Northern Country Zone status was provided as an attachment to the agenda and noted as received.

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## 7.5 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA – MID WEST

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### Noted

Mark Holdsworth, Director, Regional Development was an apology and no updated was provided.

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## 7.6 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INDUSTRY REGULATION AND SAFETY

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### Noted

The May 2026 DLGIRS update was included as an attachment to the agenda and noted as received.

## 8 ZONE BUSINESS FOR DECISION

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### 8.1 DETAILED INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2025 TO 31 MAY 2026

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#### Summary

The following is based on the transactions that occurred between 01 July 2025 and 31 May 2026.

| NORTHERN COUNTRY ZONE OF WALGA<br>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT<br>For the period 1 July 2025 to 31 May 26 |           |                   |   |
|---|-----------|-------------------|---|
|   | Date      | Amount            | Description   |
| Statement Balance B/F   | 1/07/2025 | <b>\$9,980.95</b> |   |
| Deposit   | 09/12/25  | \$2,000.00        | Shire of Three Springs Annual Subscription 2025/26    |
|   | 09/12/25  | \$2,000.00        | Shire of Perenjori Annual Subscription 2025/26        |
|   | 09/12/25  | \$2,000.00        | Shire of Northampton Annual Subscription 2025/26      |
|   | 09/12/25  | \$2,000.00        | Shire of Mingenew Annual Subscription 2025/26         |
|   | 09/12/25  | \$2,000.00        | Shire of Morawa Annual Subscription 2025/26           |
|   | 09/12/25  | \$2,000.00        | City of Greater Geraldton Annual Subscription 2025/26 |
|   | 09/12/25  | \$2,000.00        | Shire of Irwin Annual Subscription 2025/26            |
|   | 09/12/25  | \$2,000.00        | Shire of Coorow Annual Subscription 2025/26           |
|   | 09/12/25  | \$2,000.00        | Shire of Chapman Valley Annual Subscription 2025/26   |

|                                  |          |                    |   |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------|---|
|                                  |          |                    | Shire of Carnamah Annual Subscription<br>2025/26  |
| Total Receipts                   | 09/12/25 | \$2,000.00         |   |
|                                  |          | <b>\$20,000.00</b> |   |
| Payments Made                    | 02/10/25 | -\$72.00           | Microsoft Exchange online subscription<br>annual 010825-310726                              |
|                                  | 02/10/25 | -\$75.00           | Northern Country Zone EO Mailbox Fees   |
|                                  | 03/10/25 | -\$31.55           | Officeworks -Zone meeting Snacks<br>Officeworks- Name Plates for Zone<br>Meeting            |
|                                  | 03/10/25 | -\$78.07           |   |
|                                  | 27/10/25 | -\$818.18          | Timeless Zone Meeting morning tea<br>November NCZ Meeting - Morning Tea &<br>Lunch catering |
|                                  | 16/12/25 | -\$545.45          |   |
|                                  | 29/05/26 | -\$569.15          | April NCZ Meeting - Catering  |
| Total Payments Made              |          | <b>-\$2,189.40</b> |   |
| Closing Cash Balance             | 31/05/26 | <b>\$27,791.55</b> |   |
| Amount held in trust by<br>WALGA |          | <b>\$27,791.55</b> |   |

Annual subscriptions totalling \$20,000 were invoiced in accordance with the November Zone Meeting Minutes. Payments have been received from all local governments. Expenditure incurred between 1 July 2025 and 31 May 2025 amounted to \$2,189.40, resulting in a closing account balance of \$27,791.55.

## RESOLUTION

**That the Northern Country Zone financial report for May 2026 be received.**

Moved: President Cr Elizabeth Sudlow

Seconded: President Cr Nicole Batten

**CARRIED**

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## 8.2 2026-27 BUDGET

*By Kirsty Martin, Zone Executive Officer, WALGA*

The Northern Country Zone is required to review and adopt an annual budget for each financial year.

A draft budget for the 2026/27 financial year has been prepared. The draft budget takes into account:

- Prior year actual and forecast expenditure which gives a year-to-date forecast based on known and anticipated costs.
- The estimated opening cash balance as at 1 July 2026.

The Budget includes the collection of subscription fees from each Zone representative to cover the costs of the Zone (eg. catering, IT subscriptions, stationery). This is based on the Zone expenses incurred last year.

It also includes further contribution towards the Northern Country Zone Conference planned for March 2027. At this stage the cost of the conference is largely unknown, however based on the Conference in the Great Easter Country Zone last year and early conversations with a potential MC/event planner it is likely to be in the vicinity of \$20,000.

The \$2,000 per annum subscription fees is a similar to the fees paid by other Zones.

Items requiring further discussion have been highlighted in yellow.

Any agreed changes arising from this discussion will be incorporated into the final budget.

|  | <b>FORECAST<br/>2025-26</b> | <b>BUDGET<br/>2026-27</b> | <b>Comments</b>                                       |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Income</b>                                    |                             |                           |   |
| Zone Representative Subscriptions (10 x \$2,000) | \$20,000                    | \$20,000                  | Includes collection of funds for Conference in 2027   |
|  |                             |                           |   |
| <b>Total Income</b>                              | <b>\$20,000</b>             | <b>\$20,000</b>           |   |
|  |                             |                           |   |
| <b>Expenses</b>                                  |                             |                           |   |
| Meeting Costs                                    | \$2,700                     | \$3,200                   | Catering, Stationery                                  |
| Software subscription                            | \$72                        | \$76                      | 5% increase in Microsoft Exchange online subscription |
| Zone Conference                                  | \$0                         | \$20,000                  | Unlikely to all be expended in 2025-26 year.          |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                            | <b>\$2,772</b>              | <b>\$23,276</b>           |   |
|  |                             |                           |   |
| <b>Profit / Loss</b>                             | <b>\$17,228</b>             | <b>(\$3,276)</b>          |   |
|  |                             |                           |   |
| <b>Cash Reserves</b>                             |                             |                           |   |
| Opening Balance                                  | \$9,981                     | \$27,209                  |   |
| Movement   | \$17,228                    | (\$3,276)                 |   |
| <b>Closing Balance</b>                           | <b>\$27,209</b>             | <b>\$23,933</b>           |   |

## RESOLUTION

**That the 2026-2027 Budget, including \$2,000 annual subscription fees per Zone Member, be received.**

Moved: President Cr Jude Sutherland

Seconded: President Cr Nadine Eva

**CARRIED**

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## 8.3 REQUEST FOR AN INLAND, CENTRALLY LOCATED, WIND-RATED EVACUATION CENTRE FOR MIDWEST RESIDENTS

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*By Shire of Coorow*

### BACKGROUND

Events with the recent Severe Tropical Cyclone Narelle raised several concerns with the quality of suitable evacuation centres, suitable for cyclonic weather, anywhere south of Geraldton with the next closest centre being in the metropolitan area.

Forecasts indicated the potential for impacts extending across a very large portion of the Western Australian coastline due to the cyclone's unusual size, longevity, and southward track.

As TC Narelle redeveloped northwest of Broome on 25 March 2026, forecasting models showed the system strengthening rapidly while remaining offshore and tracking parallel to the Pilbara coast. This raised concern because the cyclone's circulation expanded significantly, meaning damaging weather extended far from the cyclone centre.

Forecast modelling for Severe Tropical Cyclone Narelle raised significant concerns regarding the potential need for widespread evacuations along the Midwest coastline from Geraldton to Jurien Bay including several inland towns. With predictions indicating damaging winds, storm surge, coastal inundation and prolonged hazardous conditions extending unusually far south, emergency management agencies faced the possibility of relocating large numbers of residents and visitors from vulnerable inland and coastal communities. A major concern identified during planning was the lack of suitably rated evacuation centres capable of safely accommodating large populations during a severe tropical cyclone event. Many existing community facilities within the region are not designed to withstand category-rated cyclone conditions, creating challenges for emergency sheltering, logistics, and the protection of displaced residents should a large-scale evacuation have been required.

This has identified the need for the planning, funding, and development of a **centrally located, inland, wind-rated evacuation centre** to support communities across the Midwest region in response to the **increasing frequency and intensity of cyclone-related weather events driven by climate change**. Recent climate modelling and on-ground experience have shown that Midwest residents are facing heightened vulnerability due to:

- **Escalating cyclone activity** moving further south and inland
- **Inadequate existing evacuation centre infrastructure**, much of which is not wind rated to contemporary standards
- **Geographic dispersion of small communities**, many of which lack accessible, safe evacuation options
- **Increased population exposure** due to regional growth and essential industries operating in high-risk zones
- **Vulnerability** of residential building design that is insufficiently engineered to withstand damaging or destructive winds

Given these emerging risks, an inland evacuation centre would provide a **critical resilience asset** for the region. The proposed facility should include:

- **Cyclone/wind-rated structural design** meeting or exceeding current wind-loading standards
- **Capacity for multi-community evacuation**, including accommodation, medical space, and essential services
- **Backup power generation**, water storage, and communication systems
- **Accessibility for vulnerable populations**, including the elderly, people with disabilities, and families with young children
- **Functionality as a community hub** during non-emergency periods, supporting training, education, and resilience programs

This centre would significantly enhance regional disaster preparedness, reduce pressure on emergency services, and provide a safe, reliable refuge during extreme weather events. It would also align with broader climate adaptation strategies and long-term regional planning objectives.

I respectfully request that the relevant authorities undertake:

1. A **feasibility assessment** for site selection and design
2. **Community consultation** across affected Midwest towns
3. **Budget allocation** for planning and construction
4. Integration of the centre into the region's **disaster resilience and climate adaptation framework**

Thank you for considering this proposal. I look forward to further discussion on how we can work together to safeguard Midwest communities in the face of a changing climate.

#### SECRETARIAT COMMENT

The secretariat acknowledges the issue raised by Coorow regarding the need for a centrally located, wind-rated evacuation centre to support Midwest residents during severe weather events, and the critical important of increased investment in Local Government disaster risk reduction and resilience.

The Commonwealth Government's Disaster Ready Fund is currently open, **closing on 1 July**. This is currently the only grant funding program that WALGA is aware of that may provide investment in a wind rated evacuation centre to support Midwest residents during severe weather. Information is available at [Disaster Resilience Grants - Department of Fire and Emergency Services](#). The Department of Communities may be able to assist with a Disaster Ready Fund applications and can be contacted via [ersregions@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:ersregions@communities.wa.gov.au)

WALGA does not currently have an advocacy position related to evacuation centres, however [Position 8.3 Sustainable Grant Funding Model for Emergency Management](#) advocates for a sustainable grant funding model for emergency management and WALGA's [2026-27 State Budget submission](#) specifically advocated for \$9 million per annum to establish a State Government Local Government Disaster Risk Reduction Fund to support infrastructure and community resilience initiative. Currently, the All Western Australians Reducing Emergencies (AWARE) program is the only dedicated State funding source for Local Government emergency management, with just \$238,000 annually shared across 137 councils This level of funding is far too low given the scale and complexity of responsibilities, and the increased disaster risk due to climate change.

Potential advocacy avenues for the Zone include engaging with the local Member of Parliament, the Minister for Emergency Services, and the Mid West Development Commission.

#### RESOLUTION

That WALGA advocate and requests that the relevant authorities undertake:

1. A **feasibility assessment** for site selection and design
2. **Community consultation** across affected Midwest towns
3. **Budget allocation** for planning and construction
4. Integration of the centre into the region's **disaster resilience and climate adaptation framework**

Moved: President Cr Guy Sims  
Seconded: President Cr Hellene McTaggart

CARRIED

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## 8.4 TRAIN AND PASSIVE RAIL CROSSING LIGHTING

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*Shire of Coorow*

### BACKGROUND

This report provides a brief overview of the triple fatality that occurred near Jennacubbine, Western Australia, on 8 July 2000, when a four-wheel drive was struck by a loaded grain train at the Yarramony Road level crossing. The incident has continued to be referenced in public discussion about rail safety, particularly the visibility of trains and the adequacy of safety controls at passive regional level crossings.

A coronial report following the tragedy confirmed the crossing was unlit and protected only by roadside signage at the time of the collision. Subsequent reporting and parliamentary discussion have pointed to findings that train visibility, limited crossing protection and the surrounding conditions were key safety issues. The coronial report confirmed the train involved in the triple fatality was not fitted with flashing warning lights and was not sufficiently visible to the deceased, nor did it provide an effective warning to them.

State Coroner Alastair Hope who presided over the inquest into the deaths at the Yarramony Crossing near Jennacubbine concluded that the train 'constituted a very serious hazard indeed' and determined additional warning infrastructure could have reduced the likelihood of the collision. Coroner Hope recommended that all locomotives be fitted with external auxiliary lighting to effectively warn motorists of oncoming trains. Alarming, these recommendations remain unactioned by our state and federal government almost a quarter of a century later.

Since the fatality, family members and advocates have undertaken sustained lobbying for stronger train lighting standards, including auxiliary lighting, flashing beacon lights and improved visibility measures on locomotives and rolling stock. Public parliamentary debate and media reporting have continued to link the Jennacubbine tragedy to calls for reform in regional level crossing safety and train conspicuity.

There is an urgent and unquestionable need for legislative reform to compel rail operators to install adequate lighting across all train carriages, not just locomotives. The current regulatory gap allows long sections of freight rolling stock to remain effectively invisible in low-light conditions, creating an unacceptable and avoidable hazard for motorists at passive crossings. Voluntary compliance and piecemeal improvements have demonstrably failed to deliver consistent safety outcomes, and it is no longer tenable to leave such a critical risk factor to operator discretion. Mandatory, enforceable standards must be introduced to require continuous, high-visibility lighting along the full length of trains, ensuring they can be clearly detected in all conditions. Without decisive legislative intervention, the industry will continue to fall short of basic community safety expectations, and preventable incidents will remain an ongoing and foreseeable consequence.

Compliance with inadequate safety standards does not make any rail operation safe.

The identification of approximately 491 crossings still requiring attention is not simply indicative of a challenge—it represents a clear and ongoing failure to address known and preventable safety risks across Western Australia's rail network. The continued reliance on passive crossings without adequate lighting or active warning systems is unacceptable, particularly given the well-documented dangers in low-light regional environments. A decisive, prioritised, and adequately funded program of upgrades is urgently required, including the installation of active warning systems, improved signage, vegetation management, and the mandatory introduction of crossing illumination. Without immediate and sustained action, these deficiencies will continue to expose motorists to avoidable

harm and increase the likelihood of further serious incidents or fatalities at passive regional crossings.

This avoidable tragedy remains a significant case study in discussions about level crossing risk management in regional Western Australia.

## **SECRETARIAT COMMENT**

WALGA wrote to and met with the Director General Transport to advocate for improving lighting on trains in 2022 and 2023, and a motion in support of changing national rail safety regulations to require effective train lighting was carried at the 2022 ALGA National General Assembly. The focus of this advocacy was to require a review of AS7531, Rolling Stock Lighting and Visibility, which sets out the minimal requirement for train conspicuity and to have these requirements prescribed under the *Rail Safety National Law (South Australia) Act 2012* and *Rail Safety National Law Application Act 2024 (Western Australia)* rather than the current approach set by the Rail Industry Safety and Standards Board (RISSB) where the onus is on the rail transport operator to eliminate a safety risk “so far as is reasonably practicable”. WALGA provided a submission to the review of [AS7531](#). However, adoption of this standard is not regulated. WALGA promoted the petition to the Australian Government calling for legislation to mandate beacon and side lighting on rolling stock..

The Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator has developed a [Train Visibility Code of Practice](#). The Code is voluntary. It is argued by the Federal Government that a voluntary code will result in more rapid implementation and it can be used in evidence in proceedings by rail operators and managers to discharge their safety obligations under the Rail Safety National Law. This is yet to be demonstrated by uptake of the Code by the rail industry, although Aurizon and Pacific National committed to the Federal Minister in March 2024 that they have adopted the Code and CBH has conducted some pilots and trials.

The State Government is continuing to invest in improved safety at prioritised crossings through a five-year program to convert 13 crossings to active control by 2029. However, this will leave nearly half of all crossings (478) on active rail lines with passive controls only (Stop Signs). Consequently improvements to train visibility remain the most effective option currently identified to reduce the risk at level crossings.

## **RESOLUTION**

**That WALGA through the State Council;**

- 1. Call on the State Government to urgently amend the WA Rail Safety National Law Application Act 2024 to mandate that all rail operators install and maintain high-visibility flashing beacon lighting and continuous illumination along the full length of trains, including all rolling stock.**
- 2. Call on the State Government to commit to a time-bound, fully funded program to address the estimated 491 passive rail crossings that remain without adequate safety controls. The continued existence of such crossings—many lacking both active warning systems and basic lighting—represents an unacceptable and avoidable public safety risk.**

Moved: President Cr Guy Sims

Seconded: President Cr Isabelle Scott

**CARRIED**

## 9 ZONE BUSINESS FOR NOTING/DISCUSSION

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### 9.1 CORRESPONDENCE

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#### 9.1.1 Correspondence Out

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**No correspondence out since the February meeting.**

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#### 9.1.2 Correspondence In

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#### **Noted**

20.05.26 – Letter from Great Southern Country Zone – Cost Shifting to Local Government

The attached letter was noted, with Zone members agreeing to write to the Chair of the Great Southern Country Zone.

## 10 GENERAL BUSINESS

*As per Item 35 of the Zone Standing Orders, a Delegate may under General Business introduce a motion relating to any item of interest to Local Government, but not otherwise.*

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### 10.1 CALL TO GUESTS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

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#### **Hon Sandra Carr MLC**

Sandra Carr MLC provided an update and overview regarding GROH Housing, the Seven Cities initiative, and the issue of cost shifting.

#### **Mid West Development Commission, Mr Nils Hay**

Mr Nils Hay provided an updated to the zone on MWDC activities, including progress on Regional Drought Resilience Projects and the launch of the Digital Economy Strategy. The State Government announced a \$50m increase to the Regional Housing Support Fund, bringing total funding to \$75m. Announcements relating to the applications as part of the Regional Housing Support fund are expected in coming weeks, but no firm date is known.

The MWDC's 2026-2030 Strategic Plan is nearing completion, and the Invest MidWest website has been launched.

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### 10.2 REGIONAL ISSUES

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*As per the resolution at Item 9.1 of the February 2018 meeting, Regional Issues are open for discussion.*

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### 10.3 OTHER GENERAL BUSINESS

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The President calls for Other General Business

The Shire of Mingenew provided an update on the Secondary Grain Freight Network business case, with a first draft likely to be ready next week.

Zone members agreed to send invitations to Hon Kristy McBain MP and Mr Chris Berry as guest speakers at the Northern Country Zone Conference in March 2027.

Zone members also agreed to send a letter to Minister Dawson and Minister Jarvis acknowledging their assistance with the increase to double strength mice bait.

## **11 NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Northern Country Zone will be held Monday, 24 August at the City of Geraldton Multipurpose Centre, commencing at 1pm.

## **12 CLOSURE**

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 12:08pm.