

Northern Country Zone Minutes

20 April 2026

**Hosted at City of Greater
Geraldton**

Multipurpose Centre

**Commencing at 1:00pm
(lunch served from 12:15pm)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| 1 | OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES | 4 |
| 1.1 | Opening | 4 |
| 1.2 | Attendance | 4 |
| 1.3 | Apologies | 5 |
| 2 | ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY | 6 |
| 3 | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST | 6 |
| 4 | DEPUTATIONS | 7 |
| 4.1 | Water Corporation - Midwest Region | 7 |
| 4.2 | Australian Bureau of Statistics | 7 |
| 5 | CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES | 7 |
| 5.1 | Business Arising From Previous Minutes..... | 7 |
| 6 | WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA | 7 |
| 6.1 | Protecting Council Member and Employee Privacy Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda item 8.1)..... | 7 |
| 6.2 | Water Management Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda item 8.2) | 8 |
| 6.3 | Off Roads Vehicles Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda item 8.3) | 10 |
| 6.4 | Homelessness Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda item 8.4) | 10 |
| 7 | EXECUTIVE REPORTS | 11 |
| 7.1 | Zone President's Report..... | 11 |
| 7.2 | WALGA State Councillor Report..... | 11 |
| 7.3 | WALGA President's Report | 12 |
| 7.4 | Status Report..... | 12 |
| 7.5 | Regional Development Australia – MID West..... | 12 |
| 7.6 | Department of Local Government Industry Regulation and Safety | 13 |
| 8 | ZONE BUSINESS FOR DECISION | 13 |
| 8.1 | Detailed Income and Expenditure Statement for the period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026..... | 13 |
| 8.2 | Zone Conference Planning..... | 14 |
| 8.3 | Request to Present - Local government Inspector | 16 |
| 8.4 | Walga Bulk Procurement – Low Earth Orbit (Leo) Satellite Connectivity For Volunteer Bush Fire Vehicles | 16 |
| 9 | ZONE BUSINESS FOR NOTING/DISCUSSION | 18 |
| 9.1 | CORRESPONDENCE..... | 18 |
| 9.1.1 | Correspondence Out..... | 18 |
| 9.1.2 | Correspondence In | 18 |
| 9.2 | Consultation on Draft Climate Change Advocacy Position..... | 18 |
| 10 | GENERAL BUSINESS | 20 |
| 10.1 | Call to Guests to Address the Meeting | 20 |
| 10.2 | Regional issues..... | 20 |
| 10.3 | Other General Business..... | 20 |
| 11 | NEXT MEETING | 20 |
| 12 | CLOSURE | 20 |

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.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Zone Delegates 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. President's Report
3. RDA Mid West-Gascoyne Report 2026
4. February 2026 Update – Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

Due to the absence of a Zone Chair and Deputy Zone Chair, WALGA Executive Manager, Member Services Kirsty Martin opened the meeting at 12:55pm and welcomed members and guests.

Nominations were called from the floor for a Member to Chair the meeting. One nomination was received from President Cr Jude Sutherland.

DECLARATION

That President Cr Jude Sutherland, Shire of Perenjori, is to Chair the April 20th Northern Country Zone Meeting.

Moved: President Cr Jude Sutherland

Seconded: President Cr Nicole Cr Batten

CARRIED

President Cr Jude Sutherland presumed role as Zone Chair from 12:58pm.

1.2 ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS

1 Voting Delegates from each Member Council

Shire of Carnamah

President Cr Merle Isbister (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)
Cr Giulia Censi, deputy delegate

| | | | |
|---|----------------|--|---|
| | | | Ms Mia Maxfield, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate |
| City of Greater Geraldton | | | Cr Jenna Denton, deputy 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 | | | Cr Naomi Obst (voting delegate) Mr Matt Fanning, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate |
| Shire of Northampton | | | Mr Andrew Campbell, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate |
| Shire of Perenjori | | | President Cr Jude Sutherland (voting delegate) Mr Clinton Strugnell, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate) |
| Shire of Three Springs | | | Cr Jenny Mutter (Deputy Delegate) Mr Mark Dacombe, non-voting delegate |
| WA Local Government Association Secretariat | | | Mark Irwin, WALGA President Ms Kirsty Martin, Executive Manager Member Services Ms Kelsey Nicholson, Executive Assistant |
| Invited Guests | | | |
| Main Roads | | | Ms Janet Hartley-West - Regional Director Mid West-Gascoyne Louise Adamson |
| Department of Fire and Emergency Services | | | Mr Mark Bowen, Superintendent Midwest Gascoyne Region Hon Sandra Carr MLC |
| Guest Speakers | | | |
| Water Corporation | Midwest Region | | Mr Mike Pickering, Regional Manager (acting) Mr John D'Arcy, Principal Stakeholder Manager |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics | | | Ms Chantelle Rosenthal, Census Engagement Manager – Inclusive Strategies and Engagement Ms Gaile Mallard, Census Engagement Manager – Remote Operations Management |

1.3 APOLOGIES

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Shire of Carnamah | Cr Dwayne Wooltorton, deputy delegate |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|

| | |
|--|---|
| | Mr Stuart Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate |
| Shire of Chapman Valley | Cr Trevor Royce, deputy delegate |
| Shire of Irwin | Cr Andrew Gillam, deputy delegate |
| City of Greater Geraldton | Mayor Jerry Clune (voting delegate) |
| Shire of Mingenew | President Cr Hellene McTaggart (voting delegate) Cr Jonathan Holmes, deputy delegate |
| Shire of Morawa | President Cr Karen Chappel (Chair) Cr Ken Stokes, deputy delegate Mr Marty Symmons, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate |
| Shire of Northampton | President Cr Elizabeth (Liz) Sudlow (voting delegate) Cr Tim Hay, deputy delegate |
| Shire of Perenjori | Cr Daniel Bradford, deputy delegate |
| Shire of Three Springs | Cr Nadine Eva (voting delegate) Ms Krys East, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, non-voting delegate |
| Regional Development Mid West Gascoyne | Mark Holdsworth, Executive Officer |
| Member for Geraldton | Ms Kirrilee Warr MLA, Shadow Minister for Local Government, Fisheries |
| Federal Member for Durack | Melissa Price MP |
| Member for Mid-West | Shane Love MLA |
| Minister for Agriculture and Food; Fisheries; Forestry; Small Business; Mid West | Hon Jackie Jarvis MLC |
| CBH | Kellie Todman, Manager Govt & Industry Relations |
| Mid West Development Commission | Mr Nils Hay - Chief Executive Officer |

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We, the Northern Country Zone of WALGA, acknowledge the Yamatji people, the Traditional Custodians of this land that 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.

4.1 WATER CORPORATION - MIDWEST REGION

Mr Mike Pickering, Regional Manager (Acting) and John D'Arcy, Principal Stakeholder Manager, Midwest Region Water Corporation attended and provided an update on water infrastructure, hydrant pressure and service delivery matters.

4.2 AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

Ms Chantelle Rosenthal, Census Engagement Manager – Inclusive Strategies attended and provided a presentation to the zone on engaging their communities in the 2026 Census.

5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Minutes of the Northern Country Zone meeting held on **23 February 2026** have previously been circulated to Member Councils and are provided as an attachment to the Agenda. **(Attachment 1)**

RESOLUTION

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Northern Country Zone held on 23 February 2026 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Moved: President Cr Guy Sims

Seconded: President Cr Merle Isbister

CARRIED

5.1 BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

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.

6.1 PROTECTING COUNCIL MEMBER AND EMPLOYEE PRIVACY ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.1)

By Meghan Dwyer, Governance Specialist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The South East Metropolitan Zone resolved to request WALGA advocate to amend s.5.95(1) of the *Local Government Act 1995* to specify that the right to inspect Primary and Annual Returns (Returns) contained in the Register of Financial Interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the residential address of the relevant person.
- Returns may include residential addresses, which are then made publicly accessible, creating privacy and safety risks.
- Council Members and employees are increasingly reluctant to disclose residential addresses due to safety and security risks, demonstrating that current legislation no longer aligns with contemporary expectations of privacy.
- Recent parliamentary scrutiny of similar requirements for Members of Parliament led to recommendations to remove full residential address disclosures, which the Government supported.
- In addition to Returns, Council Members must also provide a residential address when making their declaration of office.
- It would be appropriate for a review of all public disclosure requirements under the *Local Government Act 1995* to occur to ensure that they remain contemporary, effective, and aligned with modern standards of accountability and personal security.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the proposed advocacy position at its meeting on 23 March 2026.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the following new Advocacy Position:

Protecting Council Member and Employee Privacy

That WALGA advocates to the State Government to:

1. *Undertake a review of disclosure requirements for Local Government Council Members and employees under the Local Government Act 1995,*
2. *Undertake the necessary legislative amendments to strike an appropriate balance between transparency, personal safety, and contemporary community expectations of privacy, including:*
 - a. *Amend section 5.95(1) to prescribe that the right to inspect primary and annual returns contained in the register of financial interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the full residential address of the relevant person, and is instead limited to the suburb or locality.*
 - b. *Amend Form 7 of the Local Government (Constitutional) Regulations 1998 to remove the requirement to disclose a full residential address when making the declaration of office.*

6.2 WATER MANAGEMENT ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.2)

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A new Water Management Advocacy Position and the retirement of position 6.14 Planning for Water is proposed.
- The new Position has been developed following consultation and feedback on WALGA's *Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper*.

- 28 Local Governments provided more than 200 comments on the paper, with the main issues being:
 - equitable access to consistent and reliable water;
 - water licensing and allocation;
 - integrated regional and catchment-scale water planning;
 - water for Public Open Space (POS);
 - funding
 - for critical infrastructure - drainage and irrigation, alternative water sources and sewerage infill and headworks.
 - for water efficiency and water sensitive urban design initiatives.
 - expanding and improving the Waterwise Council Program;
 - access to data and information to inform decision making; and
 - addressing the impacts of stormwater runoff.
- The outcomes sought in 6.14 Planning for Water have been realised in the recently released State Planning Policy 2.9.
- The Environment Policy Team endorsed retiring the position and the new position at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council:

1. Endorse the following new Advocacy Position:

Water Management

1. *Access to consistent, reliable and adequate water supplies is critical for Local Government operations, community health, amenity, environmental sustainability and economic activity.*
2. *WALGA is calling on the State Government to:*
 - a. *Modernise water management legislation and regulation, including:*
 - i. *undertaking a review of the water licensing and allocation system to ensure equitable access and prioritise high value community use including for public open space*
 - ii. *developing a state-wide framework for integrated regional and catchment-scale water planning.*
 - b. *Adequately, sustainably and equitably fund critical water infrastructure programs for Local Government, including:*
 - i. *drainage and irrigation upgrades*
 - ii. *alternative water sources (recycled water, stormwater harvesting, desalination and groundwater replenishment) and disused water asset transfer*
 - iii. *small-scale sewerage infrastructure headworks and infill sewerage.*
 - c. *Expand the Waterwise Council Program statewide and provide:*
 - i. *increased support and resources to assist Local Government in delivering water efficiency measures*
 - ii. *incentives for Local Governments to undertake water efficiency initiatives.*
 - d. *Improve water data access and capability for Local Governments to ensure evidence-based decision making.*
 - e. *Provide effective leadership, guidance, education and enforcement to address the impacts of stormwater runoff.*

2. Retires Advocacy Position *6.14 Planning for Water.*

6.3 OFF ROADS VEHICLES ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.3)

By Rebecca Hicks, Policy Advisor Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that Advocacy Position 3.12 Off Road Vehicles (ORV) be retired.
- The *Control of Vehicles (Off-road Vehicles) Act 1978* (the ORV Act) provides the legislative framework for the use of off-road vehicles within permitted areas in WA.
- Nine Local Governments own and maintain Off Road Vehicle (ORV) areas.
- Advocacy Position 3.12 Off Road Vehicles was adopted by State Council in 2018 in response to concerns from Members about the use of permitted ORV areas.
- Amendments to the ORV Act in 2025 address the core objectives of the ORV Advocacy Position, particularly as it relates to registration and enforcement.
- The retirement of the ORV Advocacy Position was endorsed by the People and Place Policy Team at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council retire Advocacy Position 3.12 *Off Road Vehicles*.

6.4 HOMELESSNESS ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.4)

By Hannah Godsave, Manager Community Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that the 2019 Advocacy Position 3.11 Homelessness be updated.
- While responding to homelessness is a State and Australian Government responsibility, the impacts of homelessness intersect with multiple areas of Local Government service delivery and requires them to manage community expectations.
- Western Australian Local Governments are reporting increased numbers of people experiencing homelessness, including Local Governments that have historically experienced minimal impact.
- WALGA undertook a survey of Members in early 2026 to better understand the impact on the sector and inform a review of the current Advocacy Position.
- The updated Position reflects the sector's view that the Australian and Western Australian Government should provide leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular specialist services, social and affordable housing and wraparound services.
- The People and Place Policy Team endorsed the revised position at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council replace Advocacy Position 3.11 Homelessness with the following:

WALGA calls on the Western Australian and Australian Governments to provide leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular:

1. *Ensuring specialist homelessness services are responsive to need, place-based and people-centred.*
2. *Investing in social and affordable housing and wraparound services.*

RESOLUTION

That the Zone supports the WALGA recommendations for State Council Agenda items 8.1-8.6 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above and they are to be moved en bloc.

Moved: President Cr Nicole Batten

Seconded: President Cr Isabelle Scott

CARRIED

7 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

7.1 ZONE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Due to apologies, no President's report was provided.

Noted

7.2 WALGA STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

The following outlines the activity of State Council in the period since our last NCZ meeting on 23rd Feb 2026

1. WALGA State Council Meeting: 4th March 2025.

<https://walga.asn.au/awcontent/Web/Documents/Association%20Governance/State-Council-Summary-Minutes-4-March.pdf>

Mark Irwin was elected President of WALGA and Chris Antonio Deputy President for a two (2) year period from 4 March 2026 and expires at the first ordinary meeting of State Council in 2028.

The National General Assembly of ALGA will be held 22nd-25th June 2026 in Canberra.

2. State Councillors met with Fuel Security State Controller, Rob Cossart: Fri 27th March

The State Controller advised that there was clear evidence that additional fuel supplies are being distributed to the regions. However, he reported there were distribution backlogs that will take up to two weeks to work through.

Fuel suppliers remain confident that the inflow of fuel into Western Australia in April will be at normal levels. Mr Cossart will work to improve communication of this type of information, particularly to the agricultural sector.

The Department of Transport also confirmed that lime and lime-sand will be treated the same as fertiliser and additional volumes will be able to be carried by road trains on approved routes.

The State Government will now issue a weekly fuel update <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/wa-government-weekly-fuel-update> and WALGA will continue to share these via the weekly news on a Tuesday in LG Direct.

3. State Hazard Plan Energy Supply Disruption:

The State Hazard Plan sets out Western Australia's arrangements for managing significant disruptions to gas, liquid fuel and electricity supplies, across prevention, preparedness, response and initial recovery.

The Coordinator of Energy is the Hazard Management Agency, with the Plan operating within the broader State Emergency Management Framework.

While Local Government is not responsible for managing energy supply systems or infrastructure, the Plan identifies councils as contributors to managing the local impacts of an energy supply disruption. This role aligns with existing responsibilities under the State Emergency Management Plan and Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA), and includes:

- Preparedness: supporting local emergency management planning and community awareness relevant to energy supply disruptions;
- Response: participating in local coordination arrangements where disruptions have community level impacts;
- Community information: assisting with the dissemination of public information and warnings at the local level; and
- Recovery: supporting emergency relief and recovery coordination for affected communities once immediate impacts are stabilised.

The Plan reinforces that Local Government's role is focused on community coordination, information and recovery, working alongside State agencies and industry rather than managing the technical or commercial aspects of energy supply.

<https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2026>

[01/state_hazard_plan_energy_supply_disruption_2.05.pdf](https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2026/01/state_hazard_plan_energy_supply_disruption_2.05.pdf)

4. The next WALGA State Council meeting will be a regional visit to Pingelly on 6th and 7th May.

Cr Liz Sudlow
NCZ State Councillor
10th April 2026

Noted

7.3 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

WALGA President, Mark Irwin provided a verbal update to the Zone in addition to the written report. (**Attachment 2**).

Noted

7.4 STATUS REPORT

By Chantelle O'Brien, Zone Governance Officer

The Northern Country Zone currently has no outstanding items.

Noted

7.5 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA – MID WEST

Mark Holdsworth, Director, Regional Development provided a verbal update to the zone in addition to the report attached with the Agenda.

Noted

7.6 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INDUSTRY REGULATION AND SAFETY

The March 2026 DLGIRS update is attached to the Agenda (**Attachment 4**).

Noted

8 ZONE BUSINESS FOR DECISION

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

Summary

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

| NORTHERN COUNTRY ZONE OF WALGA INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT For the period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026 | | | |
|---|-----------|---------------------------|---|
| | Date | Amount | Description |
| Statement Balance B/F | 1/07/2025 | \$9,980.95 | |
| | 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 |
| | 09/12/25 | \$2,000.00 | Shire of Carnamah Annual Subscription 2025/26 |
| Total Receipts | | <u>\$20,000.00</u> | |
| Payments Made | 02/10/25 | -\$72.00 | Microsoft Exchange online subscription annual 010825-310726 |
| | 02/10/25 | -\$75.00 | Northern Country Zone EO Mailbox Fees |
| | 03/10/25 | -\$31.55 | Officeworks -Zone meeting Snacks |
| | 03/10/25 | -\$78.07 | Officeworks- Name Plates for Zone Meeting |
| | 27/10/25 | -\$818.18 | Timeless Zone Meeting morning tea |
| | 16/12/25 | -\$545.45 | November NCZ Meeting - Morning Tea & Lunch catering |
| Total Payments Made | | <u>-\$1,620.25</u> | |
| Closing Cash Balance | 31/03/26 | \$28,360.70 | |

Amount held in trust by
WALGA

\$28,360.70

Annual subscriptions totalling \$20,000 were invoiced in accordance with the November Zone Meeting Minutes. Payments have been received from 9 of the 10 local governments. Expenditure incurred between 1 July 2025 and 31 December 2025 amounted to \$1,620.25, resulting in a closing account balance of \$28,360.70.

RESOLUTION

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

Moved: President Cr Merle Isbister

Seconded: Cr Jenna Denton

CARRIED

8.2 ZONE CONFERENCE PLANNING

By Kirsty Martin, Zone Executive Officer, WALGA

At the Zone meeting held on 24 November 2025, the Zone resolved that the Executive will further develop the planning of a future Zone Conference, with preference to be held on a Friday in March 2027.

To assist with the planning for the 2027 Conference, it is requested that the Zone discuss the following items to provide further guidance to WALGA and the Zone Executive.

Host Local Government

All Zone Local Governments are invited to consider expressing their interest to host the 2027 Conference.

Any interested Local Governments must have access to a venue suitable to accommodate 60-80 guests indoors in March 2027. Attendance numbers will also depend on whether other Zones will be invited to attend the event.

Ideally, the host Local Government will also be able to nominate a venue for a welcome event for delegates wishing to arrive the prior afternoon or stay the following evening.

If the Zone is seeking speakers from the metropolitan area, accessibility and availability of accommodation should also be considered.

Expressions of interest are requested by email to Kelsey Nicholson knicholson@walga.asn.au by Friday 15 May 2026.

Potential Dates

The Great Eastern Country Zone will be holding their Zone Conference on Thursday 11 March 2027. To allow enough time between Conferences and noting that Easter weekend is 26 to 29 March 2027, dates in March are limited. It is therefore proposed the following dates are considered for the Northern Country Zone Conference:

- Friday 19 March 2027
- Monday 22 March 2027
- Friday 2 April 2027

If mid-week dates are suitable these too could also be considered by the Zone.

Murchison Zone Collaboration

It has been raised that the Murchison Zone is interested in collaborating with this event. If this is of interest to this Zone, WALGA can also extend the Expression of Interest to host to these Local Governments and request them to nominate Members to assist the Northern Country Zone Executive with the planning.

Theme

Below is a working list of potential themes for the 2027 Conference to assist WALGA and the Executive in recruiting speakers.

- “The Midwest in a Changing World” (agronomic/economic/impact of global politics)
- “Growing the Mid West” (economic development, particularly ag-related, maintaining and supporting population centres)
- “Regional Resilience” (emergency/social connectedness/community governance)
- “Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide” (rural community development/knowledge and resource sharing between Local Governments)
- “Wellness in the Regions” (focus on regional health, especially comparing to other case studies in similar countries)
- “Regional Community Leadership and Influence” (focus on State and Federal engagement, leadership, advocacy)

It is worth noting that the Great Eastern Country Zone is also planning a Conference in 2027 and considering similar themes. There is an opportunity to engage similar speakers and replicate some of the planning for organisational efficiency.

Zone delegates are invited to provide any comments on the potential themes to inform planning and programming.

RESOLUTION

That the Northern Country Zone Notes:

- 1. The invitation of Expressions of Interest for Local Governments to host the 2027 Zone Conference; and**
- 2. That general comment is invited on potential 2027 Zone Conference themes, topics, and speakers.**

That the Northern Country Zone resolves to:

- 1. Host the Conference in the City of Greater Geraldton**
- 2. Invite the Murchison Zone to collaborate with the event.**
- 3. Host the Northern Country Zone Conference on 19 March**

Moved: President Cr Nicole Batten

Seconded: President Cr Isabelle Scott

CARRIED

8.3 REQUEST TO PRESENT - LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR

BACKGROUND

WALGA has been approached by the Office of the Local Government Inspector, requesting support for a deputation to be provided by the Local Government Inspector, Mr Tony Brown at the June meeting of the Northern Country Zone.

Mr Brown will provide a brief presentation on the Local Government Inspector, including priorities and expectations.

RESOLUTION

That the Northern Country Zone supports a deputation from the Local Government Inspector at the June 2026 zone meeting.

Moved: President Cr Isabelle Scott

Seconded: President Cr Merle Isbister

CARRIED

8.4 WALGA BULK PROCUREMENT – LOW EARTH ORBIT (LEO) SATELLITE CONNECTIVITY FOR VOLUNTEER BUSH FIRE VEHICLES

By Shire of Chapman Valley

BACKGROUND

Many volunteer bush fire brigades in Western Australia operate in areas with poor or no mobile phone coverage, particularly during bush fire incidents in remote locations. This limits access to real time mapping, weather information, DFES systems and online reporting tools, and can make it harder to coordinate with incident control and other agencies.

Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite services such as Starlink are now widely available in Western Australia and can provide high speed internet connectivity almost anywhere there is a view of the sky. Other jurisdictions, including the NSW Government, are deploying LEO satellite connectivity to thousands of Rural Fire Service vehicles to support “vehicle as a node” communications on the fireground.

Local Governments and DFES are starting to trial LEO satellite systems on appliances using two main approaches:

- A basic Starlink Mini installation, where the satellite dish is mounted on the vehicle and connected to a separate router and power system.
- An integrated “vehicle as a node” solution such as HyphaONE Mini, which combines an embedded Starlink Mini panel, 4G/5G modem, Wi Fi and optional mesh radio into a single IP69 rated unit designed for emergency vehicles.

Early trials indicate that these solutions can significantly improve connectivity for incident management, crew safety and community information, but hardware and ongoing service fees are substantial. Individual Local Governments procuring small numbers of units are unlikely to obtain best value pricing or standardised terms for hardware, installation and ongoing data plans.

During the 2025 Western Australia State Election campaign, the Labor Party announced an election commitment program of one off grants of \$20,000 per Brigade/Group/Unit (BGU) to support small asset replacement. Several Local Governments have identified LEO satellite connectivity for Volunteer Bush Fire Vehicles as a potential use of this funding, noting that the cost of a single system is broadly comparable with the available grant allocation. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) will be responsible for

administering these grants and ensuring that appropriate financial governance and accountability measures are maintained throughout the process.

WALGA's Preferred Supplier Program is specifically designed to aggregate Local Government demand and negotiate better pricing, contract terms and support arrangements on sector wide issues such as telecommunications and fleet equipment. A coordinated WALGA approach to LEO satellite services could:

- Secure bulk hardware discounts for Starlink Mini and integrated platforms such as HyphaONE Mini.
- Negotiate consistent, fit for purpose business/government service plans (e.g. Starlink Local Priority data plans) with clear pricing for 50–200 GB and higher usage tiers suitable for emergency operations.
- Provide standardised installation, configuration and support options that align with DFES communications and cyber security requirements.

Given that volunteer bush fire brigades across Western Australia face similar connectivity challenges, this issue is sector wide, has a direct impact on community safety, and is well suited to WALGA led investigation and procurement through the Preferred Supplier Program. The election commitment funding administered by DFES provides a timely opportunity for Local Governments to consider LEO satellite connectivity as a small asset upgrade if suitable procurement arrangements are in place.

RESOLUTION

That the Zone:

- 1. REQUEST WALGA to investigate and scope a sector wide procurement solution, through the Preferred Supplier Program, for Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite connectivity for Volunteer Bush Fire Vehicles, including but not limited to:**
 - **Starlink Mini hardware and associated business/government grade data plans (e.g. Local Priority plans); and**
 - **Integrated “vehicle as a node” platforms such as HyphaONE Mini that combine LEO satellite, 4G/5G, Wi Fi and mesh networking in a single emergency services ready unit.**
- 2. REQUEST WALGA to consult with DFES, Local Governments and relevant emergency services stakeholders to:**
 - **Define standard technical, installation and cyber security requirements for LEO satellite equipment on volunteer bush fire appliances; and**
 - **Identify preferred commercial models for ongoing user fees (for example, pooled data plans, fleet wide contracts or regional cost sharing arrangements).**
- 3. REQUEST WALGA to report back to Zones and State Council with options and recommendations, including indicative pricing, contract structures and implementation pathways, to enable interested Local Governments to access LEO satellite solutions for their Volunteer Bush Fire Vehicles via the Preferred Supplier Program and, where appropriate, to utilise the \$20,000 BGU one off grant funding being administered by DFES.**
- 4. Request WALGA to advocate to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) for the provision of Starlink services and ongoing operational costs to be funded on a continuing basis through the Emergency Services Levy (ESL).**

Moved: President Cr Nicole Batten
Seconded: President Cr Merle Isbister

9 ZONE BUSINESS FOR NOTING/DISCUSSION

9.1 CORRESPONDENCE

9.1.1 Correspondence Out

No correspondence out since the February meeting.

9.1.2 Correspondence In

No correspondence in since the February meeting.

9.2 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ADVOCACY POSITION

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA is undertaking sector consultation on a revised draft Climate Change Advocacy Position.
- This draft position was developed following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team of State Council.
- WALGA is seeking **Council endorsed feedback by 1 May 2026.**

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's 2018 Climate Change [Policy Statement](#) and Advocacy Position state:

Local Government acknowledges:

- 1. The science is clear: Climate change is occurring and greenhouse gas emissions from human activities are the dominant cause.*
- 2. Climate change threatens human societies and the Earth's ecosystems.*
- 3. Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, and to adapt to the impacts from climate change that are now unavoidable.*
- 4. A failure to adequately address this climate change emergency places an unacceptable burden on future generations.*

Local Government is committed to addressing climate change.

Local Government is calling for:

- 1. Strong climate change action, leadership and coordination at all levels of government.*
- 2. Effective and adequately funded Commonwealth and State Government climate change policies and programs.*

July 2018 – 72.5/2018

The draft Advocacy Position in the Consultation Paper is:

- 1. Local Government acknowledges the risks associated with, and is committed to, addressing climate change.*
- 2. WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to provide:*

- a. *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. *dedicated funding, guidance and practical support to assist Local Governments to undertake emissions reduction and adaptation actions.*

ATTACHMENT

The WALGA Climate Change Advocacy Position Consultation Paper is available [online](#).

BACKGROUND

Climate change, and related legislation, policy and action, have implications for many aspects of Local Governments' operations and services. More frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves, bushfires, extreme rainfall events and warming, rising sea levels are increasing the costs and complexity of delivering critical services, infrastructure and ensuring community wellbeing.

In 2018, State Council endorsed a [Climate Change Policy Statement](#) and advocacy position, following extensive sector consultation. Since this Advocacy Position was adopted there have been significant legislative, policy, technological and scientific changes, including:

- The national *Climate Change Act 2022* and the Western Australian Climate Change Bill 2023.
- The *Local Government Amendment Act 2023*, which expanded Western Australian Local Governments' general function under Part 3 s3.1(1A) of the *Local Government Act 1995* to:
 - a. to promote the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the district; and
 - b. **to plan for, and to plan for mitigating, risks associated with climate change;** and
 - c. in making decisions, to consider potential long-term consequences and impacts on future generations.
- The release of the Australian Government's [National Climate Risk Assessment](#) and [National Adaptation Plan](#) in 2025.
- Escalation of the transition to renewable energy, uptake of electric vehicles and energy efficiency standards under the National Construction Code.
- Climate science and projections ([international](#), [national](#) and [WA specific](#)) have also become clearer regarding the risks posed by climate change and the need for action to address the consequential impacts.

COMMENT

Following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team, WALGA has developed a revised, draft Climate Change Advocacy Position for Local Government feedback which is currently out for consultation with feedback due by 1 May 2026. WALGA has received feedback from some Councils and understands a number of Councils will be considering this matter in April. Zone delegates are encouraged to take this item to their Councils.

The Central Country Zone passed a motion at its February 2026 meeting which included writing to all other zones highlighting its alternative Advocacy Position (proposed in March 2025). WALGA worked to incorporate the Central Country Zone feedback prior to the release of the Consultation Paper.

WALGA is seeking **Council endorsed feedback** on the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position by **COB Friday, 1 May 2026**. Feedback should be provided to environment@walga.asn.au.

Following consideration of this feedback a final draft Advocacy Position will be developed and provided to zones and State Council for consideration.

Noted

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.

10.1 CALL TO GUESTS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

MainRoads WA

Provided an update on the 2025/26 works program and outlined the significant infrastructure damage sustained in the Gascoyne region as a result of Cyclone Narelle.

Hon Sandra Carr MLC

The Honourable Sandra Carr MLC provided an update on train lighting matters. She also reminded Zone Members to engage with community incorporated associations within their local government areas that may be at risk of deregistration due to non-compliance with statutory reporting requirements.

10.2 REGIONAL ISSUES

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

Local Government Diesel Rebate

The zone discussed funding assistance in relation to increasing diesel costs, including consideration of an exemption for local governments from the diesel rebate.

10.3 OTHER GENERAL BUSINESS

The President calls for Other General Business

Train Lighting

The Zone discussed including an agenda item for consideration at the June meeting relating to train lighting. It was proposed that a representative from the Department of Transport, with familiarity with the Lara Jensen train lighting matter, be invited to attend to outline current safety measures and provide context regarding lighting on train carriages.

11 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Northern Country Zone will be held Monday, 15 June 2026 at the City of Geraldton Multipurpose Centre, commencing at 1pm.

12 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 2:35pm.