

Great Southern Country Zone Minutes

Friday, 20 June 2025

Hosted by the City of Albany, Civic
Rooms, 102 North Road, Yakamia

Contact WALGA Zone Secretariat:

Lyn Fogg

Zone Executive Officer

WALGA Governance Specialist

lfogg@walga.asn.au

08 9213 2042

Chantelle O'Brien

Zones Governance Officer

cobrien@walga.asn.au

08 9213 2013

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	5
3	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.....	6
4	DEPUTATIONS / GUEST SPEAKERS	6
4.1	Members of Parliament	6
5	AGENCY REPORTS	6
5.1	Great Southern Development Commission (gsdc).....	6
5.2	Regional Development Australia Great Southern WA Inc (RDA-GS).....	6
5.3	Great Southern Regional Roads Group	7
5.4	Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC)	7
5.5	WALGA Roadwise	7
6	CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES	8
6.1	Business Arising from the Minutes	8
6.2	Zone ResolutionS and Action Items Status Reports	8
6.2.1	Zone Status Report and Zone Action Items Report	8
7	ZONE BUSINESS	8
7.1	Zone Reports	8
7.1.1	Zone Financial Report.....	8
7.1.2	Zone Chairperson's Report	10
7.2	Zone Strategic Priorities.....	10
7.2.1	Zone Strategic Priorities.....	10
7.3	Matters for Zone Noting and Decision	10
7.3.1	Invitations to Members of Parliament to Attend Zone Meetings	10
7.3.2	Jacqui Dodd Scholarship	11
7.3.3	Western Roads Federation – Industry Night – Albany 26 June 2025.....	11
8	WALGA STATE COUNCIL BUSINESS	13
8.1	Zone State Council Member Report.....	13
9	WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA	13
9.1	Suspension and Disqualification for Offences Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda Item 8.1)	13
9.2	State Development Applications and Decision Making Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda Item 8.2).....	18
9.3	Public Library Agreement (State Council Agenda Item 8.3)	23
9.4	Other State Council Agenda items.....	25
9.4.1	WALGA State President's Report	25
10	EMERGING ISSUES/COLLABORATION.....	25
11	OTHER BUSINESS.....	27
11.1	Minister for Great Southern Region, Hon. Reece Whitby MLA.....	27
12	NEXT ZONE MEETING	27
13	CLOSURE	27
<u>ATTACHMENTS</u>		
Department of Local Government Sport and Cultural Industries - June 2024		28
Zone Status Report - June 2025		33
Zone Action Items – June 2025		34
WALGA President's Report – July 2025.....		35

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)

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

The Chair, Cr Scott Crosby opened the meeting at 9:00am.

1.2 ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS

2 Voting Delegates from each Member Council

City of Albany

Mayor Greg Stocks **Zone Deputy Chair**

Deputy Delegate/s

Deputy Mayor Cr Paul Terry
Cr Lynn MacLaren (observer)
CEO Andrew Sharpe (non-voting)

Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup

Deputy President Cr Doug Barritt
CEO Karen Callaghan (non-voting)

Shire of Cranbrook

President Cr George Pollard
CEO Linda Gray (non-voting)

Shire of Denmark

Cr Jackie Ormsby
CEO David King (non-voting)

Shire of Gnowangerup

President Cr Kate O'Keeffe
Deputy President Cr Rebecca O'Meehan

Shire of Jerramungup

President Cr Joanne Iffla
Deputy President Cr Julie Leenhouders

Shire of Katanning

Deputy Delegate/s

President Cr Kristy D'Aprile
Cr John Goodheart
Deputy President Cr Liz Guidera (observer – also representing RDA-GS)
CEO Peter Klein (non-voting)

Shire of Kent

President Cr Kate Johnston
Cr Scott Crosby, **Zone Chair**
CEO Christie Smith (non-voting)

Shire of Kojonup

President Cr Roger Bilney
Deputy President Cr Cynthia Wieringa
CEO Grant Thompson (non-voting)

Shire of Plantagenet

President, Cr Len Handasyde
Deputy President, Cr Ken Clements
Cr Josh Liebeck (observer)
A/CEO Anthony Middleton (non-voting)

Shire of Ravensthorpe

President, Cr Tom Major
Deputy President, Cr Mark Mudie
CEO Matthew Bird (non-voting)

Shire of Woodanilling	President Cr Dale Douglas Deputy President Cr Russel Thomson
GUESTS	
Agencies	
Great Southern Development Commission	Natasha Monks, Chief Executive Officer Jarrad Garner, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Regional Development Australia – Great Southern	Liz Guidera, Chair (also representing Shire of Katanning)
Department of Local Government, Sport, and Cultural Industries	Mel Eastough, Regional Manager
Members of Parliament	Hon Reece Whitby MLA, Great Southern Regional Minister (arrived 9.45am) Mr Scott Leary MLA, Member for Albany
WALGA	Lyn Fogg, Zone Executive Officer Meghan Dwyer, State Council Governance Officer
Guest Speaker/s	Nil

1.3 APOLOGIES

Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup	President Cr Michael White
Shire of Denmark	Cr Dominic Youel Cr Donna Carman Cr Janine Phillips
Shire of Gnowangerup	CEO David Nicholson (non-voting)
Shire of Jerramungup	CEO Martin Cuthbert (non-voting)
Shire of Plantagenet	CEO Julian Murphy (non-voting)
Shire of Woodanilling	CEO Anika Serer (non-voting)
Roadwise	Ms Michelle Blackhurst, Regional Road Safety Adviser
CBH Group	Ms Kellie Todman, Manager – Government & Industry Relations
Regional Development Australia – Great Southern WA Inc	Simon Lyas, Director, Regional Development

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We, the Great Southern Country Zone of WALGA acknowledge the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to Country, culture, and community. We embrace the vast cultural diversity throughout Western Australia, including the Noongar People as the Traditional

Custodians of this land, and pay our respects to Elders past and present. WALGA is committed to supporting the efforts of WA Local Governments to foster respectful partnerships and strengthen relationships with local Aboriginal communities.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil.

4 DEPUTATIONS / GUEST SPEAKERS

Approved Future Guest Speakers:

Zone Meeting	Presenter	Topic
August 2025 TBC	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage	Aboriginal Heritage Survey Program
August 2025	Lotterywest	Community Investment Framework.
November 2025 TBC	ERA	TBA
November 2025	Department of Fire and Emergency Services	DFES Update

NOTED.

4.1 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Members of Federal and State Government, representing the Zone Member Local Government Districts, are invited to provide a brief update on matters relevant to Zone Members.

State Members:

- Mr Scott Leary MLA, Member for Albany – addressed the meeting and requested members to provide feedback he may address on their behalf during Parliamentary question time.
- Hon Reece Whitby MLA, Minister for Police; Road Safety; Tourism; Great Southern (Note: Minister Whitby arrived at 9.45am and spoke later in the meeting. Please refer to notes at item 11.1)

5 AGENCY REPORTS

5.1 GREAT SOUTHERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (GSDC)

Nil.

5.2 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA GREAT SOUTHERN WA INC (RDA-GS)

Report by Cr Liz Guidera, Chair

Cr Guidera provided a verbal update.

5.3 GREAT SOUTHERN REGIONAL ROADS GROUP

Report by Cr Len Handasyde, Shire of Plantagenet – RRG Chair

There have been many road projects undertaken and completed this financial year with the total funds allocated for all projects totalling some \$17,853,854.

As of yesterday MRWA staff advise that the Australian Back Spot funds were fully recouped, the Commodity Route Funding had \$352,572 to be claimed from \$661,072, Direct Grants were fully recouped, Secondary Freight Network had \$924,000 to be claimed from a \$4,510,000 grant with \$870,000 scheduled for delivery in 25/26 (Bordern Bremer Rd), Road Project Grants with \$3,240,000 to be claimed from \$10,670,000 and the State Black Spot Fund essentially fully recouped. A note of caution in that it is unclear how much of this will be accrued for a month or two and how much goes beyond that as a full carry over. The figures will be clear after July once MRWA have clarity around it. However, the amount will be substantial and this is consistent with previous years.

This will be a point for discussion at the next RRG meeting in November. Prior to the RRG meeting there will be a couple of meetings held involving the Sub-Group Chairs, the RRG Chair and Deputy along with MRWA staff. The resolution that emerges from these initial meetings will require reasonable debate and careful consideration at that November RRG meeting.

While there is undoubtedly allowable events that can and do contribute to the carryovers, it is reasonable to expect that a good agreement can be reached to allow for better utilisation of these funds each year. This will then become a part of the policy and procedure manual and lead to a better process to manage the out years as we deal with the road maintenance issues in the region.

There remains much to be done. With the increasing freight task annually and concessional loading mixed in, it will take good concerted effort in the next few years to arrest the decline in the condition of our Local Government Roads particularly those roads carrying the freight to the first drop.

There are great tools to consider as we look at the increasing road wear with the work that WALGA has done as it compares road wear from heavy concessional loaded vehicles compared to other vehicles. This inevitably leads us to consider the efficiencies and road safety issues around all of those figures.

Noted.

5.4 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SPORT AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES (DLGSC)

Report by Mel Eastough, Regional Manager

Attachment No. 1 [DLGSC Update - June 2025](#)

Noted.

5.5 WALGA ROADWISE

Report by Michelle Blackhurst, RoadWise Road Safety Advisor

Michelle Blackhurst was an apology for this meeting.

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLUTION

Moved: President, Cr Len Handasyde
Seconded: President, Cr Kate Johnston

That the Minutes of the Great Southern Country Zone meeting held on 11 April 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

CARRIED

6.1 Business Arising from the Minutes

Nil

6.2 ZONE RESOLUTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS STATUS REPORTS

6.2.1 Zone Status Report and Zone Action Items Report

By Lyn Fogg, Zone Executive Officer

Attachment No. 2 [Zone Status Report - June 2025](#)

Attachment No. 3 [Zone Action Items Report - June 2025](#)

The Status Report provides an update on Zone resolutions referred to WALGA State Council. Status Items identified as 'Completed' will be removed following this meeting. Zone Members are asked to review responses.

The Action Items Report provides an update on Zone resolution for action by Zone members or the Zone Executive Officer. Action Items identified as 'Completed' in this Report will be removed following this meeting. Zone members are asked to review responses.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Mayor Greg Stocks
Seconded: Deputy President Cr Julie Leenhouders

That the Great Southern Country Zone NOTES the:

1. Status Report for June 2025, as detailed in Attachment No.2, and
2. Action Items Report for June 2025, as detailed in Attachment No.3.

CARRIED

7 ZONE BUSINESS

7.1 ZONE REPORTS

7.1.1 Zone Financial Report

By Mr Richard May, WALGA Finance Manager

Zone Financial Report for 31 May 2025 *(All amounts exclude GST unless otherwise stated)*

Financial statements for the zone have been prepared on an accrual basis and show the financial performance and financial position for the period ended 31 May 2025.

Table 1: Statement of Income and Expenditure – period ended 31 May:			
Great Southern Country Zone			
Statement of Income and Expenditure as at 31 May 2025			
	Note	Actual \$	Budget \$
Income			
Subscriptions	1	7,080	6,600
Other		-	
Total Income		7,080	6,600
Expenses			
Bank Fees		110	120
Meeting Costs (Catering)	2	3,067	5,000
Total Expenses		3,177	5,120
Surplus/(Deficit)		\$3,903	\$1,480
Notes			
1. Subscriptions excl GST 11@ \$600 each, 1 @ 480. - Invoiced by WALGA on behalf of GSCZ - All fully paid.			
2. Catering expense for zone meetings held throughout the year (Jerramungup -Aug '24, Katanning – Nov '24, Kent -Feb '25, Kojonup -Apr '25)			

Table 2: Balance Sheet presenting the Zone's financial position as at 31 May 2025	
Great Southern Country Zone	
Balance Sheet as at 31 May 2025	\$
Assets	
Bank	8,335
Debtors	
Total Assets	8,335
Liabilities	
Creditors	-
GST Payable	-
Unused Project Funds	-
Total Liabilities	-
Net Assets	8,335
Equity	

Members Funds B/F	4,432
Current year earnings	3,903
	\$
Total Equity	8,335
Note 1: Creditors	
Unused Project Funds of \$11,290 was refunded to Member LGs, GSDC and RDA-GS.	

RESOLUTION

Moved: President, Cr Len Handasyde
 Seconded: President Cr Dale Douglas

That the Great Southern Country Zone receives the Zone Financial Report for May 2025
CARRIED

7.1.2 Zone Chairperson's Report

Cr Scott Crosby, Zone Chairperson

Cr Crosby provided a verbal update to the Zone.

7.2 ZONE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

7.2.1 Zone Strategic Priorities

No update for this meeting.

7.3 MATTERS FOR ZONE NOTING AND DECISION

7.3.1 Invitations to Members of Parliament to Attend Zone Meetings

By Kathy Robertson, Manager Association and Corporate Governance

BACKGROUND

The recent State election has brought with it two significant changes which may impact how Zones invite members of Parliament to attend Zone meetings:

1. The electoral regions for the Legislative Council were abolished under the *Constitutional and Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Equality) Act 2021* and replaced with a single "whole of state" electorate. As a result, the members of the Legislative Council are drawn from across the whole of the State and no longer represent a particular region or area.
2. Premier Roger Cook has appointed nine cabinet members with region-specific portfolios. These Regional Ministers cover the areas of the Kimberley, Pilbara, South West, Mid West, Goldfields-Esperance, Gascoyne, Peel, Great Southern and Wheatbelt.

A full list of MLCs can be found here: [Legislative Council of Western Australia, Forty Second Parliament, List Of Members](#)

A full list of WA Ministers, including Regional Ministers can be found here: [Western Australian Government Cabinet Ministers](#)

COMMENT

Zones can choose to invite members of Parliament (State or Federal) to meetings at their discretion. Some Zones have standing invitations for all MPs relevant to that region (including MLAs, MLCs and Federal members) whilst others choose to invite MPs on a meeting-by-meeting basis to speak on a particular topic or issue.

Those Zones that have a standing invite for MPs generally allow time on the Agenda for each politician in attendance to address the meeting (as a standing item).

The Great Southern Country Zone currently have a standing invitation for all Regional MPs to meetings on a regular basis.

NOTED.

7.3.2 Jacqui Dodd Scholarship

By WALGA Training Team

BACKGROUND

The LGA50220 Diploma of Local Government – Elected Member Scholarship, named in honour of the late Jacqui Dodd, former long-serving WALGA Training Services Manager, has been awarded since 2021. This program is the highest qualification an Elected Member can achieve through WALGA Training and enables participants to increase their skills and knowledge in order to confidently provide leadership to their community.

The scholarship covers 50% of training and assessment fees and provides additional travel expense compensation for regional applicants upon completion of the program. WALGA Training awards this scholarship to two Metropolitan and two Regional Elected Members.

To qualify, applicants must be current Elected Members, have completed all Council Member Essentials training, and must not have previously received the scholarship.

This year's nominations will open on Tuesday, 1 July and close on Friday, 15 August 2025 at 12 noon. The scholarship winners will be announced at the Local Government Convention in September.

For more information and details on how to apply please visit the WALGA Training [website](#), contact the team via email training@walga.asn.au, or call us on (08) 9213 2088.

NOTED.

7.3.3 Western Roads Federation – Industry Night – Albany 26 June 2025

By WALGA Secretariat

BACKGROUND

The Western Roads Federation has advised they are hosting an Industry Night in Albany to celebrate the Heavy Vehicle Driver Program, provided by Southern Regional TAFE.

The event provides opportunity to network with local industry and potential employees and will be attended by representatives from various transport companies, current and former TAFE students and an invitation has been extended to Local Government representatives.

Date: Thursday, 26 June
Time: 5.00pm to 7.00pm
Venue: Retravision Stadium, 156 Lockyer Avenue, Albany
Drinks and nibbles provided
Contact: Neil Savage, Western Roads Federation – 0424 452 599 or
neil.savage@westernroads.com.au

NOTED.

7.3.4 LATE ITEM – Draft Guideline on Community Benefits from Renewable Energy Projects

By WALGA Secretariat

BACKGROUND

This item refers to State Council Agenda Item for noting - 10.2 Renewable Energy Community Benefits and Engagement Guide, which includes links to the following WALGA Resources:

- Renewable Energy in WA – WALGA Research paper
- Empowering Local Governments – Planning for Renewable Energy

As part of WALGA's continued advocacy regarding the requirement for guidelines on Renewable Energy implementation, a Renewable Energy Ministerial Forum was held on Thursday 12 June, as the State Government and Local Government work together to navigate the challenges of renewable energy transition now and into the future. State Government Ministers, Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA, and Hon John Carey MLA, addressed Local Governments on their plans for the renewable energy transition and the State Government's priorities.

As Minister for Energy and Decarbonisation, Minister Sanderson announced the release of the Draft Guideline on Community Benefits for Renewable Energy Projects. The Minister also engaged in a roundtable discussion with Local Governments, alongside a workshop session conducted by PoweringWA, focussing on community benefits.

Public consultation on the Guideline is now open and runs to 4 August 2025. WALGA will prepare a submission on behalf of the sector, and we encourage all interested Local Governments to provide their own submissions. You can find the Draft Guideline here: <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/energy-policy-wa/community-benefits-guideline-communities-hosting-renewable-energy-projects>

WALGA has requested an extension to the deadline to enable Local Governments sufficient time to consider and provide feedback.

On receipt of this advice, WALGA will invite Local Government feedback to enable WALGA to coordinate a sector-wide submission, noting this will likely still be a short timeframe for feedback to be provided.

COMMENT

The Zone may wish to develop a submission on behalf of the Great Southern Country Zone, as renewable energy transition community benefit arising is identified as a Zone strategic priority.

The Zone determined to form a working group to prepare a submission on behalf of the Zone. Zone Delegates self-nominated, as follows:

- President Cr Kate O'Keeffe
- Deputy President Cr Doug Barritt
- Karen Callaghan
- President Cr Kristy D'Aprile
- Deputy Mayor Cr Paul Terry
- President Cr Roger Bilney
- Grant Thompson
- President, Cr Len Handasyde
- Cr Scott Crosby

Zone Secretariat to develop draft submission and facilitate working group meeting to finalise the submission.

8 WALGA STATE COUNCIL BUSINESS

8.1 ZONE STATE COUNCIL MEMBER REPORT

Cr Scott Crosby, Zone State Councillor

Cr Crosby provided a verbal update.

9 WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA

Zone Delegates are invited to read and consider the WALGA State Council Agenda, which has been provided as an attachment with this Agenda and can be found via the link [here](#).

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

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

9.1 SUSPENSION AND DISQUALIFICATION FOR OFFENCES ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.1)

By Jason Russell, Senior Governance Specialist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The South East Metropolitan Zone (SEMZ) passed a motion requesting that WALGA advocate for additional powers for the Minister to suspend Council Members charged with criminal offences likely to damage the reputation of the Local Government, and disqualify if convicted.
- Suspension, dismissal and disqualification must balance the public interest in elected representatives of good character, with protections for the individual and respect for democratic processes.
- While the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) includes a range of suspension, dismissal and disqualification mechanisms, their operation also depends on how the relevant decision-makers choose to use their powers.

- This report recommends that the dismissal mechanisms under the Act are sufficient to address the Zone's concern, but that WALGA's advocacy position be amended to include an additional suspension power for the Minister of Local Government.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the advocacy position at its meeting on 19 May.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Influence:

- Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.

Support:

- Provide practical sector-wide solutions based on research and evidence.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The current Advocacy Position 2.5.5 Disqualification Due to Conviction position provides as follows:

Position Statement: A new disqualification criterion should be added to the *Local Government Act 1995* that disqualifies a person from serving as an Elected Member if they have been convicted of an offence against the *Planning and Development Act*, or the *Building Act* in the preceding five years.

Background: A planning or building system conviction is potentially more serious than a *Local Government Act* conviction because of Local Government's prominent role in planning and building control and the significant personal benefits which can be illegally gained through these systems.

This report recommends that this position is renamed and amended to include an additional point 2, as follows:

Suspension and Disqualification for Offences

The WA Local Government sector advocates that:

1. *A new disqualification criterion should be added to the Local Government Act 1995 that disqualifies a person from serving as an Elected Member if they have been convicted of an offence against the Planning and Development Act, or the Building Act in the preceding five years.*
2. *A new suspension criterion should be added to the Local Government Act 1995 allowing the Minister of Local Government to suspend a Council Member charged with an offence, where the Minister is satisfied this would be in the best interests of the Local Government, based on advice of the Director General.*

BACKGROUND

At its November 2024 meeting, the SEMZ asked WALGA to advocate:

That the Local Government Act 1995 be amended to give the Minister for Local Government the power to:

1. *Disqualify a person from membership of a council if the person has been convicted of a criminal offence that, in the opinion of the Minister for Local Government, under the advice of the State Solicitor's Office, has the potential to damage the reputation of the local government or the local government sector more broadly.*

2. *Suspend the council member who is charged with a criminal offence that has the potential to damage the reputation of the local government or the local government sector more broadly, until the charges are dealt with; and*
3. *Require a person to be paid fees and allowances until they are disqualified.*

COMMENT

The *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) automatically disqualifies someone from membership of a Council if convicted of certain types of offences. The Act also includes mechanisms for suspending and dismissing Council Members. Each mechanism differs in terms of the parties, processes, powers, and preconditions involved.

While suspended, a Council Member cannot perform any of the powers and duties of their role. Suspension does not affect the duration of a Council Member's term or their eligibility to be a candidate for election to Council. If a Council Member is dismissed, the office of the member becomes vacant from the time when the order dismissing the member takes effect. A Council Member that is dismissed is not prevented from standing in future elections. In contrast, persons disqualified are ineligible to hold or be elected to office as a Council Member.

It is necessary for these mechanisms to balance the public interest in ensuring that elected representatives are of good character, with protections for due process, the presumption of innocence and resumption of rights following completion of a sentence. There must also be an appropriate level of respect for the democratic process and the rights of communities to choose their representatives.

Whether the suspension, dismissal and disqualification framework is fit-for-purpose depends on the legislative framework (e.g. legislative settings for disqualification, powers and constraints on powers to suspend and dismiss) and its implementation (e.g. how decision-makers exercise their discretion to intervene).

Existing Disqualification Provisions

A person may be disqualified from membership of a Council based on the following provisions of the Act:

Provision	A person is disqualified –
2.20	If they are a member of a parliament
2.21	If they are a bankrupt or their affairs are under insolvency laws
2.22	Because of conviction
2.23	If they are a member of another Council
2.24	Because of misapplication of local government funds or property
5.117	If SAT orders disqualification (for not more than 5 years) for serious or recurrent breach, or failure to comply with order

Section 2.22 of the Act provides that a person is disqualified if:

- they have been convicted of a crime and are in prison serving a sentence for that crime,
- have been convicted of a serious local government offence in the previous 5 years, or
- have been convicted of an offence carrying an indictable penalty of imprisonment for more than 5 years.

Clearly, the threshold for disqualification is high, excluding all lower-level offences and even indictable offences with a penalty of 5 years or less. As an example, high-level indecent assault will be dealt with as an indictable offense, with the offender liable for up to 5 years imprisonment. Serious local government offences are offences against the Act for which a

person may be sentenced to imprisonment or a fine of over \$10,000. A court sentencing a person for a serious local government offence may make an order waiving the disqualification or reducing the period for which it applies.

There is currently no ability for the Minister to disqualify a person from Council membership. SAT has discretion to order disqualification in some circumstances, while a court has the authority to order that disqualification not apply. In the context of these judicial or quasi-judicial processes, there are strong protections for the rights of the affected person. This reflects the seriousness of this penalty. While the SEMZ motion calls for disqualification, dismissal may be a more appropriate penalty if the exercise of Ministerial discretion is required.

Current Dismissal Provisions

Under sections 8.15K and 8.15L of the Act, the Minister may recommend that the Governor dismiss a Council Member, if the Minister is satisfied that it is appropriate to intervene. The Minister must be satisfied based on the Director General's written advice that:

- the member is impeding the Local Government's ability to perform its functions and duties under the Act, and/or
- it is in the best interest of the Local Government that the member be dismissed.

The Minister must also be satisfied that the seriousness of the situation for the Local Government requires intervention. The Minister must give the member:

- a report that includes their proposed recommendation and grounds for the recommendation;
- a show cause notice;
- 21 days to respond.

The Minister must consider the member's response prior to making a recommendation to the Governor that the member be dismissed.

Best interest is not defined and allows for a broad range of factors to form the grounds for dismissal. This could include where a Council Member has been charged with or convicted of an offence, and the charges or conviction are adversely affecting the Local Government.

It appears that the existing framework for dismissal has the capacity to respond to circumstances referenced in the SEMZ's motion and rationale. WALGA considers it is reasonable to expect that the Local Government Inspector may have greater capacity to provide targeted and timely investigation and advice to support this mechanism.

Current Suspension Provisions

Section 8.15E of the Act enables the Minister to suspend a Council Member or order them to undertake remedial action.

The Minister can only act where they are satisfied that it is appropriate to intervene, based on one or more of the following:

- The member has been charged with a disqualification offence.
- The Director General has made an allegation to SAT against the member, of a serious or recurrent breach.
- The Director General has written to the Minister advising that they suspect on reasonable grounds that one or more of the following applies:
 - The member has failed to perform their role, functions or duties;
 - The member's conduct has adversely affected the ability of another person to perform their role, functions or duties;

- The member's conduct has adversely affected the ability of the Local Government to comply with the principles that apply under section 5.40 of the Act (principles affecting employment by Local Government, including the responsibility to provide safe and healthy working conditions in accordance with WHS legislation).

The Minister must give:

- The member a written notice of the proposed order that provides the allegations and particulars supporting the proposed order is based on.
- The member a show cause notice, allowing 21 days for the member's response
- Any submissions made by the member consideration prior to making the order.

While suspended, a Council Member is not entitled to be paid any fee or allowance to which they would otherwise be entitled. A Council Member is liable to repay annual allowances and fees paid in advance, as if the member had, for the period of their suspension, ceased to hold the office.

Options for reform of suspension

The current system shares some common elements with the Zone's proposal, however, some changes could be made to bring them into closer alignment. Under the current framework, the Director General and Minister would need to be satisfied that any reputational damage resulting from charges was impeding the workings of the Local Government before they could move to suspend a Council Member.

Charges resulting in reputational damage could be included in the legislation as an explicit ground for which the Director General can recommend suspension to the Minister. However, reputational damage may be somewhat narrow or subjective.

A 'best interests' test, consistent with that provided in the dismissal mechanism (discussed above), could allow the consideration of a broad range of factors, including reputational damage. A mechanism could be introduced allowing the Minister to suspend a Council Member who is charged with an offence that, despite not being a disqualification offence, satisfies the Minister that it is in the best interests of the Local Government to suspend the member. Consistent with the other grounds for suspension, this could be on the advice of the Director General, as the State Solicitor's Office will be primarily concerned with avoiding prejudice to any matter currently before the courts.

Local Government Reform Amendments

The *Local Government (Amendment) Act 2024* will transfer the powers of the Director General under these provisions to the soon-to-be-established Local Government Inspector. The Inspector/Inspectorate model has been introduced to provide improved oversight and early interventions capability into the Local Government sector.

The Inspector will be able initiate inquiries into the affairs of a local government and recommend suspension and dismissal of Council Members. It is expected that this newly created office may have greater independence, timeliness, focus and flexibility in addressing conduct issues.

The Governance Policy Team considered and endorsed the proposed advocacy position at its meeting on 19 May.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

1. That WALGA amend and rename advocacy position 2.5.5 *Disqualification Due to Conviction* to read as follows:

Suspension and Disqualification for Offences

The WA Local Government sector advocates that:

1. *A new disqualification criterion should be added to the Local Government Act 1995 that disqualifies a person from serving as an Elected Member if they have been convicted of an offence against the Planning and Development Act, or the Building Act in the preceding five years.*
 2. *A new suspension criterion should be added to the Local Government Act 1995 allowing the Minister of Local Government to suspend a Council Member charged with an offence, where the Minister is satisfied this would be in the best interests of the Local Government, based on advice of the Director General.*
2. That WALGA incorporate advocacy on this issue into its ongoing legislative reform engagement.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Deputy President, Cr Julie Leenhouders

Seconded: President, Cr Kate Johnston

That the Great Southern Country Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.1 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

9.2 STATE DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS AND DECISION MAKING ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.2)

By Coralie Claudio, Senior Policy Advisor Planning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that Advocacy Position 6.4 Development Assessment Panels be replaced with a new, expanded position that includes all forms of State Government development assessment and decision making.
- The updated position incorporates principles for state decision making, a refined list of recommended reforms to the Development Assessment Panels (DAPs) system and recommends that the significant development pathway be abolished but includes a list of recommended reforms if the pathway is retained.
- The draft position was informed by WALGA's review of the operation of the DAPs and the state significant development pathways, input from Local Government officers, and previous WALGA submissions.
- The draft position and accompanying review reports were provided to Local Governments for Council endorsed or CEO approved preferred feedback by 23 May.
- The Environment Policy team endorsed the position at their meeting on 29 May.

ATTACHMENT

- [Rationale for draft advocacy position](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed State Council replace the **current** Advocacy Position **6.4 Development Assessment Panels**:

The Association does not support Development Assessment Panels (DAPs), in their current structure.

Necessary changes to the structure of the DAPs system include:

- 1. The abolishment of the current 'mandatory' mechanism where a proposal has a value of \$10 million or greater, and its replacement with an 'opt in' mechanism for all proposals.*
- 2. Raising the DAP threshold from the current \$2 million to \$5 million,*
- 3. The composition of DAPs should be modified to provide equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members.*
- 4. The creation of a distinct Special Matters DAP (SMDAP) is not supported, given there are already multiple avenues for determination on the basis of zoning and monetary value of applications. Should the State Government progress with the implementation of a SMDAP, the following changes are proposed to the model released in March 2022:*
 - allow proponents with proposals that meet the threshold or criteria being able to opt-out of the SMDAP pathway and allow assessment and determination by Local Government*
 - mandate consultation with the relevant Local Governments prior to the issuing of a Ministerial Order in relation to SMDAP Precinct Criteria, and ensure SMDAP Precincts be identified through regulations, rather than by the Minister,*
 - include greater professional planning expertise, and knowledge of local context through the Local Government members of the District DAP, by including majority professional town planner panel members, with two Local Government*
 - representatives*
 - expand the role of Local Governments in SMDAP processes and appropriate remuneration for involvement of Local Governments be included to support the SMDAP decision-making process.*
- 5. In principle, the further reduction in the number of panels from five to three is supported, to the extent that this reduces the administrative burden on local governments and enhances consistency of decision making.*
- 6. In principle, the permanent appointment of panel members where this results in consistent decision-making is supported as this reduces the potential for conflicts of interest and ensures sound knowledge of DAP processes and procedures.*
- 7. WALGA supports greater transparency around DAP processes and decisions, as community distrust of DAP decision-making is a key area of concern for many local governments.*

with a **new** advocacy position **6.4 State Development Applications and Decision Making Advocacy Position**:

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

- 1. Ensure that decision making on development applications (DAs) is:*
 - a. consistent and accountable*
 - b. accessible to local communities*

- c. *respectful of, and appropriately applies, local planning frameworks in line with their statutory weight.*
- 2. *Reform the Development Assessment Panel (DAP) system to:*
 - a. *raise the DAP threshold from the current \$2 million to \$5 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. *modify the composition of DAPs to provide equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members*
 - c. *review DAP processes to ensure proponents provide necessary information in a timely manner*
 - d. *provide clear procedural guidance on the roles and functions of Local Government officers and Council*
 - e. *allow access to the State Referral Coordination Unit for DAP applications to ensure timely and adequate referral responses from State Government agencies are provided to Local Governments.*
- 3. *Abolish the state significant development assessment pathway (Part 11B of the Planning and Development Act 2005).*
- 4. *If the significant development assessment pathway is retained, implement the following reforms:*
 - a. *raise the cost threshold to \$50 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. *align statutory timeframes with DAP and Local Government determined DAs*
 - c. *ensure all developments are consistent with applicable local planning instruments and provide comprehensive guidelines for discretionary decision making, including applying extraordinary discretion*
 - d. *delete references to 'mandatory significant development' to ensure the pathway remains entirely opt-in*
 - e. *undertake periodic reviews of its operation and effectiveness.*

BACKGROUND

There are a range of development application (DAs) decision makers in the Western Australian Planning system. While Local Governments process and determine the vast majority of DAs, other State Government boards or agencies are also decision makers, particularly for complex proposals and public works. This includes DAPs, the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) and other State Government agencies (i.e. DevelopmentWA) that determine DAs such as DAPs, significant development applications (Part 17 and Part 11B of the *Planning Development Act 2005*) and developments under region schemes, redevelopment schemes and improvement schemes and public works.

WALGA has historically opposed DAPs and the significant development pathway as they erode the role of Local Government in providing a valuable community perspective on planning proposals.

WALGA has undertaken two reviews of the performance of the DAP system in [2016](#) and [2020](#). Those reviews informed WALGA's current advocacy position, endorsed in May 2022, that recommends changes to the DAP system to ensure it operates in an efficient, effective, and transparent way, and appropriately considers matters of local planning context in decision-making.

The current position is being reviewed as part of WALGA's regular position review process and in recognition of significant planning reforms in 2024, specifically the replacement of the proposed special matters DAP with the permanent significant development pathway (Part 11B).

To inform the review of the DAP position and its ongoing advocacy, WALGA collated and reviewed data on the operation of the DAPs and the significant development pathway.

The [DAP Report](#) examines DAP data from its inception in 2011 to the end of the 2023-24 financial year, with a focus on observable trends since the previous report in 2020. The report indicates minor improvements in the DAP system, particularly in reliability and consistent decision making. Despite this, the DAP system continues to determine many low-value applications that lack strategic importance and should be redirected to the Local Government pathway.

The [Significant Development Pathway Report](#) examines data from the pathway's commencement in 2020 until 1 April 2025. The report finds that this pathway is used infrequently and does not process applications efficiently, contrary to its intended purpose and that the pathway's other goals, driving economic recovery (Part 17) and aiding housing supply (Part 11B), have also not been met.

The collated data will be uploaded to the [DAP Dashboard](#) on WALGA's website.

WALGA has drafted a revised advocacy position that will sit within the context of the Planning Principles and Reform advocacy position and will expand on the DAP position to:

1. Be applicable to all State Government DAs and approvals (e.g. significant development pathway, DAPs, Public Works, region scheme approvals, Development WA).
2. Establish principles to guide transparent and accountable decision-making on development applications, ensuring that local planning frameworks are appropriately considered, and communities, particularly in regional areas, are granted equitable access to the decision-making process.
3. Include a refined list of reforms to the DAP system, while retaining the position to increase the DAP threshold and for equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members.
4. Include a recommendation that the significant development pathway be abolished based on the findings of the significant development pathway report, and includes a list of reforms if the pathway is to be retained to ensure it operates more efficiently and only processes genuine state significant projects.

The draft position and accompanying review reports were provided to Local Governments for Council endorsed or CEO preferred feedback by 23 May.

COMMENT

The current DAP advocacy position is outdated and does not reflect the current planning framework, specifically the introduction of the permanent significant development pathway (Part 11B of the *Planning and Development Act 2005*).

The proposed new advocacy position will complement WALGA's planning advocacy position, 6.1 Planning Principles and Reform, that notes decisions should be made by the level of government closest to and most impacted by a planning proposal and should appropriately reflect local environment, context, communities and character.

The proposed advocacy position has been informed by feedback from CEO approved and Council endorsed submissions, Local Government officer input and WALGA's previous submissions, specifically on DAP reforms and amendments to the *Planning and Development Act 2005* that introduced the significant development pathway.

Some minor amendments were made to the draft position in response to members' feedback, particularly regarding the recommendations for the state significant development pathway.

Local Government feedback was that the pathway was not functioning effectively in its current form. While some Local Governments advocated for its abolition, others considered that there may be benefits if the pathway was limited to genuine state-significant projects only and operated more efficiently. The draft position calls for the reforms to the pathway and for it to be subject to periodic review if retained.

Further information on the rationale for the position and feedback provided is attached.

The Environment Policy agreed to recommend that State Council endorse the new expanded position at their meeting on 29 May.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA:

1. Replace Advocacy Position 6.4 Development Assessment Panels with the following:

6.4 State Development Applications and Decision Making

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

1. *Ensure that decision making on development applications (DAs) is:*
 - a. *consistent and accountable*
 - b. *accessible to local communities*
 - c. *respectful of, and appropriately applies, local planning frameworks in line with their statutory weight.*
2. *Reform the Development Assessment Panel (DAP) system to:*
 - a. *raise the DAP threshold from the current \$2 million to \$5 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. *modify the composition of DAPs to provide equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members*
 - c. *review DAP processes to ensure proponents provide necessary information in a timely manner*
 - d. *provide clear procedural guidance on the roles and functions of Local Government officers and Council*
 - e. *allow access to the State Referral Coordination Unit for DAP applications to ensure timely and adequate referral responses from State Government agencies are provided to Local Governments.*
3. *Abolish the state significant development assessment pathway (Part 11B of the Planning and Development Act 2005).*
4. *If the significant development assessment pathway is retained, implement the following reforms:*
 - a. *raise the cost threshold to \$50 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. *align statutory timeframes with DAP and Local Government determined DAs*
 - c. *ensure all developments are consistent with applicable local planning instruments and provide comprehensive guidelines for discretionary decision making, including applying extraordinary discretion*

- | |
|---|
| <p>d. <i>delete references to 'mandatory significant development' to ensure the pathway remains entirely opt-in</i></p> <p>e. <i>undertake periodic reviews of its operation and effectiveness.</i></p> |
|---|
2. Notes the Development Assessment Panel 2011 – 2024 Review and State Development Pathway 2020 – 2025 Review reports.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President, Cr Dale Douglas

Seconded: Deputy President, Cr Rebecca O'Meehan

That the Great Southern Country Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.2 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

9.3 PUBLIC LIBRARY AGREEMENT (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.3)

By Rebecca Hicks, Policy Officer Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA is a signatory to the *State and Local Government Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia* (the Agreement).
- The five-year Agreement defines roles and responsibilities in the delivery of public libraries and provides the structure and framework for the delivery of the WA Public Libraries Strategy and future vision for public library services.
- The current Agreement, endorsed by State Council in July 2020, is due for renewal in September 2025.
- WALGA has participated in the review of the Agreement, which has recommended minor amendments.
- Following the signing of a new Agreement, a sector consultation process will be undertaken for the associated Local Level Agreements between the State Library and Local Governments.
- The Agreement does not include funding arrangements for public libraries. WALGA continues to advocate for increased public library funding.

ATTACHMENT

- [State and Local Level Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia 2025 – 2030](#)

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Endorsing the Agreement aligns with WALGA's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, particularly:

- Influence – Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government and empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support – Grow opportunities for Local Governments' sharing of services and resources.
- Expertise – Optimise organisational capability to service members' needs and foster relationships between our subject matter experts and stakeholders.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Endorsement of the new Agreement aligns with WALGA's current [Advocacy Position 3.8 Public Libraries](#), which states:

1. *Western Australian Local Government public libraries provide valuable local cultural infrastructure, creating social and community hubs for community capacity building, recreation, education and literacy, digital inclusion, and social connection, cohesion and inclusion.*
2. *WALGA supports the provision of Public Library services in Western Australia through a formal partnership between Local Government and the State Government of Western Australia, governed by the Library Board Act 1951, namely the State and Local Government Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia (2020).*
3. *The WA Public Libraries Strategy 2022-2026 provides a framework for a shared vision, strategic direction and collaborative action in the provision of a vibrant and sustainable 21st century public library network.*
4. *It is essential that a sustainable funding model enables Local Governments to continue to deliver library services to support continued growth and adaptation to changing community needs.*

BACKGROUND

WALGA is a signatory to the *State and Local Government Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia* (the Agreement), which is due for renewal in September 2025. The Agreement defines the roles and responsibilities for each tier of government in the delivery of public libraries and provides the structure and framework for the delivery of the [WA Public Libraries Strategy 2022-2026](#) and the future vision for public library services.

Following internal endorsement from signatories, the current Agreement received final endorsement in September 2020 by the Public Library Working Group (PLWG), which includes: WALGA, the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA), the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), Public Libraries WA Inc. and Local Government Professionals Australia WA. The same process will be undertaken for this renewal.

Connected to the Agreement are Local Level Agreements between the SLWA and individual Local Governments that provide public library services. Local Level Agreements set out more detailed public library service delivery requirements and will be reviewed in early 2026, including sector consultation.

COMMENT

WALGA has worked with SLWA to review the Agreement to meet the September 2025 renewal date. Amendments are minor and do not raise any issues for WALGA Members.

The scope of the Agreement does not extend to public library funding. SLWA is currently reviewing the Public Library Material Funding Allocation Model. WALGA and Local Governments will be consulted as part of the review.

State Government funding has failed to keep pace with the needs of public libraries, population growth or inflation. WALGA continues to [advocate](#) for increased overall funding for public libraries to maintain and enhance service levels that meet the diverse needs of communities across WA and support the implementation of the WA Public Library Strategy.

Following the renewal of the Agreement, WALGA will work with SLWA to develop a sector-wide consultation plan for the review of Local Level Agreements.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the *State and Local Level Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia*.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President, Cr Kate Johnston

Seconded: President, Cr Len Handasyde

That the Great Southern Country Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.3 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

9.4 OTHER STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS

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

9.4.1 WALGA State President's Report

Attachment No. 4 [WALGA State President's Report](#)

NOTED.

10 EMERGING ISSUES/COLLABORATION

City of Albany

- The construction of the Southern Ocean Surf Reef is due to be complete today. The Reef will bring people into the region and assist address coastal erosion.
- Budgeting funds to further improve Albany Airport.
- New developments to increase housing lots e.g. McKail North (2,500 lots), Albany North.

****9.45am Minister Whitby arrived** and spoke to the meeting – refer item 11.1.

Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup

- Tambellup Caravan Park improvements progressing. Delay to the installation of cabins due to headworks delays (Western Power), initially 18 months, now further 6 month delay.

Shire of Cranbrook

- Planning and Building approvals have spiked.
- Approaching the State Government for the release of more land.
- CBH rapid loading facility complete and subdivision approval for new workers' camp.

- Bridge replacement / refurbishment funding obtained – closed to heavy vehicles during construction.

Shire of Denmark

- Significant growth in Planning and Building approvals. Increase in permanent population.
- Managing tourism is challenging and ratepayers are expected to carry the burden.
- New supermarket development application advertised for submissions, with 180 responses to date.

Shire of Gnowangerup

- The IGA supermarket rebuild has commenced.
- Six light industrial and six residential blocks released.
- ALGA Motion – Provision of Rural GP Services.
- Renewable Leaders Summit to be held in Newcastle in August – encourage members to attend.

Shire of Jerramungup

- Increase in developments, mainly coastal.

Shire of Katanning

- Hosted discussions with the Transition Advocate for the phasing out of live sheep exports.
- E-TAG installed at Katanning Regional Saleyards.
- Outstanding rates is a challenge for the Shire.
- Issue with pests – cats and pigeons.

Shire of Kent

- Electric vehicle charging stations installed – Nyabing and Pingrup.
- Road projects complete / funding acquitted.

Shire of Kojonup

- Section of Albany highway closed due to a burst water main near a decommissioned fuel tank, contaminated liquid spill. Reopened and repair and cleaning works underway.

Shire of Plantagenet

- Project to determine cost estimate for pool project in progress.
- Interest from developer for 60 lots in town.
- Have a proponent for a small kill abattoir.
- Concern with possible polyphagous shot hole borer impact on plantations.

Shire of Ravensthorpe

- Good start to the agricultural season.
- Pressure on the road network due to sheep destocking / transition to crops = increased grain transport.
- Mining operation – currently in routine care and maintenance.
- Airport revenue decrease impacts budgeting.
- Ravensthorpe Tourism Advisory Group formed, suggested a coastal walking trail.
- Considering level of Local Government involvement in provision of a shopping centre.

Shire of Woodanilling

- \$100,000 grant received for park project.
- Considering return of roads to Main Roads WA due to costs – limited local use.

11 OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 MINISTER FOR GREAT SOUTHERN REGION, HON. REECE WHITBY MLA

The Minister for Great Southern Region attended the Zone meeting and was available for dialogue with the Zone Membership.

The following subjects were covered:

- Made in WA plan – economy diversification, manufacturing
- Tourism
- Regional health care – primary healthcare, mental health services
- Regional housing - Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH), eligibility threshold changes for Keystart in regional areas, headworks (power, water etc), Native Title Settlement
- Renewable energy – community benefits, planning framework, strategic connectivity map to the South West Interconnected System (SWIS)
- Road safety – South Coast Highway, investment in roads, roadside rest areas
- Freight rail
- Albany airport
- End of live sheep exports, subsequent change to farming (sheep to wheat) and broader implications due to differing requirements
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions mitigation and prescribed burning
- New firearms legislation.

12 NEXT ZONE MEETING

The next meeting of the Great Southern Country Zone will be held Friday, 22 August at the Shire of Ravensthorpe commencing at 10:00am.

Noted: Appreciation to City of Albany and Shire of Plantagenet for arranging for this meeting to be held in Albany enabling Minister Whitby's attendance.

Shire of Plantagenet will therefore host the next meeting that would usually be hosted by City of Albany.

13 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 11:31am.



Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries



Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

Local Government Division Report

June 2025

Local Government Act Reform

Tranche 1

- Consultation closed on 8 May 2025 on proposed regulations for the implementation of reforms to CEO KPIs, CEO employment standards and public registers.
- A total of 48 submissions were received.
- DLGSC is currently in the process of evaluating the submissions received.

Tranche 2

- The *Local Government Amendment Act 2024* (2024 Amendment Act) passed Parliament and received royal assent on 6 December 2024.
- Tranche two reforms include:
 - the new Local Government Inspector
 - introduction of monitors for early intervention
 - council member superannuation
 - increasing penalties
 - enabling resource sharing
 - streamlining processes for model local laws
 - greater role clarity for council members and CEOs
 - introduction of a rates and revenue policy for local governments
 - changes to audit committees
 - providing greater flexibility for regional subsidiaries
 - building upgrade finance.
- Various provisions of the 2024 Amendment Act have now taken effect with information available on the DLGSC website regarding these changes, including the new roles and responsibilities.
- Further amendments commenced on 1 February 2025 to enable council members to be paid superannuation more easily.
- DLGSC provides regular updates to the local government sector on the progress of reforms via DLGSC's Reform webinar series, revisions to the DLGSC website and LG alerts.

- Further progress of the reforms in the 2024 Amendment Act is advancing with announcements expected throughout the year as amendments are implemented.

Model Financial Statements (MFS)

- Updates to the Model Financial Statements for the 2024-25 annual financial statements is planned to be published in the second quarter of 2025.
- Non-financial asset valuation guidelines are currently being prepared. A draft was presented to a sector body workshop held on 22 March 2024, plus inter-jurisdictional consultation has been undertaken, and feedback is being addressed with a view to finalise and publish later in 2025.

Differential rates and Budget/Audit Extensions

- DLGSC is preparing for the 2025/26 budget season.
- Local governments who require ministerial approval for their differential rates should ensure that they submit their applications promptly and well in advance of the council meeting in which they intend to set their budget.
- Applications for ministerial approval should be sent to legislation@dlgsc.wa.gov.au.
- To avoid delays during the application process, please ensure the data is complete and sufficient evidence is provided. If you require further information, please contact the Legislation email address above.

Local Government Grants Commission

- Formal processes are being initiated to address vacancies on the Commission for:
 - The Metropolitan member and its Deputy
 - The Country Urban member
 - The Deputy to the Deputy Chair.
- In May 2025, the Commission conducted public hearings with the Midwest region including at the Shire's of Irwin, Chapman Valley, Carnarvon, Northampton, Shark Bay and the City of Greater Geraldton.
- The Commission's focus is now on the calculation of the 2025-26 FA Grants, before restarting its visiting program in the second half of 2025.

Financial Assistance Grants funding

- Local governments should have received their final payment of their 2024-25 Financial Assistance (FA) Grants on 16 May 2025.
- On 25 March 2025, the Australian Treasurer, the Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP, delivered the 2025-26 Federal Budget.
- \$423.6 million was allocated to Western Australian local governments through the FA Grant program. This will consist of:
 - \$261.3 million to general purpose grant funding; and
 - \$162.3 million to local road funding.
- Due to the early delivery of the 2025-26 Federal Budget prior to the announcement of the 2025 Federal election, the current FA Grant estimates are from the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook and use population data from June 2024. As a result, the difference between the

ATTACHMENT 1

Budget figure and final figure advised to WA in July 2025 is likely to have a larger difference (either increase or decrease) than normal.

- At the time of preparing this report, DLGSC has not been advised if there will be an advance payment of funds.

MyCouncil

- The new Local Government Financial Indicator (LGFI) was published on MyCouncil alongside updated financial and demographic data for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 financial years on 14 May 2025:
 - <https://www.mycouncil.wa.gov.au/>
- The new LGFI is the result of several years of work and is a replacement to the previously reported Financial Health Indicator (FHI).
- The need for a review was determined based on sector feedback and changes to local government accounting requirements.
- The LGFI utilises the current ratio, debt service coverage ratio, operating surplus ratio and net financial liabilities ratio using data from local governments annual reports.
- The LGFI has been designed to provide community members, stakeholders and DLGSC with at-a-glance insights to local government financial performance.
- It will allow local governments and community members to have greater insights into local government performance against the four key financial ratios, allow for interpretation of results, the ability to track change over time, solicit and gain feedback from local government on ratio/financial performance and compare local government results against each other.
- The new LGFI was developed by the Western Australian Treasury Corporation (WATC) on behalf of DLGSC, with the design led by a steering panel consisting of DLGSC, WATC, WALGA, LG Professionals WA and a representative cohort of local governments.
- If you have any queries or feedback; these can be directed to the lghotline@dlgsc.wa.gov.au.

Stop Puppy Farming

- Regulations were published on 27 November 2024 to affect the pet shop and dog supply approval reforms.
- From 26 May 2025, only pet shops that hold a pet shop approval can sell dogs and puppies that are sourced from holders of a dog supply approval.
- Only refuge operations and dog management facilities may apply for dog supply approval.
- Applications for pet shop approval are to be made to local governments, and applications for dog supply approvals to DLGSC. No applications for pet shop or dog supply approvals have been received.
- An interim system was created to affect this regulatory change.
- Please contact stoppuppyfarming@dlgsc.wa.gov.au if you have any questions or to request access to the interim centralised registration system.
- Further regulation changes are currently under development in relation to approval to breed and mandatory sterilisation.

PetsWA

- Following extensive consideration, the WA Government and Seisma have mutually agreed to end this contract.
- To help clarify the way forward, the project is now being actively reviewed, and DLGSC is evaluating what has been delivered to date.
- DLGSC values the sector's contribution to date and would appreciate the opportunity to engage further as we chart our path forward.
- As the centralised registration system will not be delivered as originally planned, local governments will need to continue existing pet registration programs and engagement with pet owners for annual registration and renewal processes.

Off Road Vehicles

- The Off-Road Vehicle Bill (ORV Bill) seeks to update existing legislation to simplify the process for riders to register their off-road vehicles (ORV) and increase penalties for offences, such as riding in prohibited areas or riding an unregistered ORV.
- The ORV Bill was passed by the Legislative Council on 28 May 2025.
- The ORV Bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly on 29 May 2025.
- Further updates on the status of the Bill can be found on the Parliament of Western Australia website:
 - <https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/parliament/bills.nsf/BillProgressPopup?openForm&ParentUNID=014CA9EC436B5DD448258C6700322C56>
- The ORV committee (ORVC) continues to meet regularly and has recently convened to advise on the ORVA Grants Program applications.

Local Government Placemaking training initiative

- Placemaking helps build community connections by bringing together planners, community members, architects, local government, business and other groups, working collaboratively to activate local spaces.
- Over 500 local government staff or elected members from councils across WA accessed the DLGSC-funded training in its first year.
- Due to strong interest from the sector, DLGSC extended the placemaking training partnership with Town Team Movement until 1 July 2025.
- To register for the free online training, please visit:
 - <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/local-government/local-governments/placemaking-training>

ATTACHMENT 1

DLGSC Contacts

LG Support and Engagement Includes MyCouncil queries	lghotline@dlgsc.wa.gov.au
LG Policy and Legislation Includes Statutory Approvals (Differential rates, budget and audit extensions)	legislation@dlgsc.wa.gov.au
CRS – Stop Puppy Farming	stoppuppyfarming@dlgsc.wa.gov.au Petswa@dlgsc.wa.gov.au
Grants Commission – Financial Assistance Grants	Grants.commission@dlgsc.wa.gov.au
LG accounting or financial enquiries	LG.accounting@dlgsc.wa.gov.au
LG Act Reform	actreview@dlgsc.wa.gov.au
LG Advisory Board	advisoryboard@dlgsc.wa.gov.au
Off-Road Vehicles	orv@dlgsc.wa.gov.au

Zone Status Report - June 2025

[Back to Item 6.2.1](#)

Agenda Item	Zone Resolution	WALGA Response	Update	WALGA Contact
5 March 2025 State Council Agenda Item 8.1 Climate Change Advocacy Position	<p>The Zone's motion to support the recommendation was defeated and the following comment was noted:</p> <p><i>The majority of Zone Delegates noted their Local Governments did not have adopted positions on climate change and those delegates considered they did not have a basis by which they could support the proposed WALGA advocacy position.</i></p>	<p>At the March State Council meeting it was resolved:</p> <p><i>That State Council refer this advocacy item back to the Environment Policy Team for further development.</i></p> <p>RESOLUTION 003.1/2025 CARRIED</p> <p>At the 24 March 2025 Environment Policy Team meeting, it was agreed that WALGA would develop a consultation approach for consideration by the Policy Team.</p> <p>At the 29 May 2025 meeting, the Policy Team agreed to the proposed consultation approach, which involves providing the composite Advocacy Position to all Local Governments for a 10-week consultation period, with Council endorsed or CEO approved feedback preferred. An additional Policy Team meeting will be held to consider comments and a composite resolution.</p>	June 2025	<p>Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039</p>

Zone Action Items – June 2025

[Back to Item 6.2.1](#)

Great Southern Country Zone – ACTION ITEMS				
ZONE MEETING DATE / ITEM	ZONE RESOLUTION	ZONE RESPONSE	STATUS	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
2024, 22 November Item 7.3.10 Request to Present – DPLH	That the Great Southern Country Zone supports a representative from the Department of Planning, Lands and Cultural Heritage to attend the April 2025 Zone meeting to discuss the Aboriginal Heritage Survey Program.	Since the initial request from DPLH, follow up communications has been sent regarding the attendance to provide a presentation on the Heritage Survey Program, however, to date there has been no further response. This action will be removed from this list going forward and when DPLH progress with the program, we will advise the Zone accordingly.	No further action	Chantelle O'Brien Governance Support Officer
2025, 11 April Item 7.2.1 Zone Strategic Priorities	The Great Southern Country Zone: 1. Advocates for the Minister for Great Southern to attend meetings of the Zone and if the Minister agrees to attend, then at the first meeting attended the Zone Secretariat is to coordinate with Zone members a presentation at that meeting on the Zone's Strategic Priorities for discussion with the Minister. 2. Writes to responsible Ministers advocating for the Zone's Strategic Priorities. NOTE: Secretariate to send GSCZ's Regional Education submission to the Minister for Education.	Action deferred until after Minister attends June Zone meeting.		Lyn Fogg, Zone Executive Officer
2025, 11 April Item 7.3.4 Request to Present - Lotterywest	The Great Southern Country Zone AGREES to a presentation from Lotterywest at the June Zone meeting.	Presentation is postponed for the June 2025 Zone meeting. Lotterywest have confirmed attendance for the August 2025 Zone meeting.	Complete	Chantelle O'Brien Governance Support Officer

President's Report

July 2025

Introduction

As always, I am proud to highlight our continual efforts, to influence Government and support our Members through advocacy, expertise, and opportunities for connection.

This is a really busy time for Local Governments, leading into the annual budget period and planning for Local Government elections in October. There has also been some significant media on a range of matters including Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer, Renewable Energy proposals, pets registration system and credit card control, that I have represented the Local Government sector on recently.

Auditor General's Report on Local Government Management of Purchasing Cards - Response to media commentary

The Auditor General tabled a performance audit into Local Government management of purchasing Cards on 28 May.

The audit reviewed six metropolitan Local Governments. The report found no evidence of cards being misused. However as in all performance audit reports there were recommendations for some process improvements.

Subsequent to the report being tabled, there has been some media commentary around some case study items in the report. I have responded strongly to the implication that the report was indicative of a wider culture of entitlement in the Local Government sector.

Generalised interpretation, or application to the sector, is not reflective of the overall findings of the Auditor General Report or the extraordinary work that Local Governments perform across the State.

Local Governments understand that the community expects transparency and value for money. As a sector we are committed to upholding the highest level of integrity and maintaining public trust.

Dog and Cat Registration system - Pets WA

The Minister for Local Government, Hon Hannah Beazley MLA recently announced that the State Government has agreed to end the contract for development and implementation of the Centralised Registration System. The Minister advised that the Local Government sector had raised the need for more time to develop the system.

WALGA will continue to support the introduction of a centralised cat and dog registration database and I have requested the State Government to consult with Local Governments, following its termination of the contract to deliver PetsWA.

Local Governments have been concerned that fees collected through PetsWA will not achieve full cost recovery for their regulatory responsibilities under the *Dog Act 1976* and *Cat Act 2011*.

A well-designed central registration system, with proper engagement with the Local Government sector, has the potential to deliver key benefits for both pet owners and Local Governments.

Renewable Energy Transition

Community Benefits and Engagement Guide

Work on WALGA's Community Benefits and Engagement Guide is now complete. An information session on the draft Guide was held in May, and all Local Governments were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft over a two-week period. We thank you all for your input over the last few months on this important piece of work.

Ministerial Forum

The Renewable Energy Ministerial Forum will be held on Thursday, 12 June, with the Minister for Energy and Decarbonisation, Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson BA MLA and the Minister for Planning and Lands, Hon John Carey MLA to address Local Governments on the State Government's plans for the renewable energy transition. This will be followed by a roundtable discussion with Minister Sanderson and a workshop session conducted by PoweringWA, focussing on community benefits. I have met separately with both Ministers to further discuss the Sector's key challenges and priorities in the transition to renewable energy.

Rating

WALGA is also undertaking work on the rating of renewable energy facilities, focusing on the WA legislative framework, how other Australian jurisdictions are managing the rating of renewable energy facilities and providing a summary of options and recommendations for the rating of renewable energy facilities by Local Governments going forward.

2025 Local Government Emergency Management Forum

I am excited to announce that WALGA will hold its first Local Government Emergency Management Forum on Tuesday, 17 June at the City of Stirling Reception Hall. The theme for the Forum is Local Government Future Proof: Preparing today for tomorrow's challenges. This forum will provide delegates with an opportunity to enhance their emergency management capabilities, gain valuable insights and strategies from shared lessons, and build and strengthen relationships within the sector. Hon Paul Papalia, CSC MLA, Minister for Emergency Services, will provide the opening address, with presentations from Dr Jill Charker, the National Emergency Management Agency Deputy Coordinator General, James Ashley, WA Manager, Bureau of Meteorology and panel sessions featuring Local Governments from around the State.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Emergency Management Roundtable

The second WALGA Bushfire Management Roundtable was held on Wednesday, 26 March, bringing together executive and subject matter experts from WALGA, LGIS, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), and Chief Executive Officers of Dandaragan, Albany, Manjimup, Corrigin, Kwinana, and Waroona Local Governments. Participants discussed a number of complex issues facing Local Governments in emergency management and identified priority actions for DFES and WALGA, focusing on further strengthening support to Local Government CEOs in Bush Fire Brigade (BFB) management, and strategic reform of the Local Government Grants Scheme (LGGS).

2025-26 State Budget

The State Budget will be handed down on Thursday, 19 June. WALGA staff will be in the Budget lock-up and will provide budget information and analysis directly to Mayors, Presidents and CEOs via the WALGA website.

President Cr Karen Chappel AM JP
WALGA President

President's Contacts

The President's contacts since 7 May and scheduled before 2 July are as follows:

State and Commonwealth Government Relations

- Hon Jessica Stojkovski MLA, Minister for Child Protection; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport; Peel
- Hon John Carey MLA, Minister for Planning and Lands; Housing and Works; Health Infrastructure
- Mr Lachlan Hunter MP, Shadow Minister for Agriculture and Food; Racing and Gaming
- Hon Simone McGurk MLA, Minister for Creative Industries; Heritage; Industrial Relations; Aged Care and Seniors; Women
- National Cultural Ministers Meeting
- Hon Hannah Beazley MLA, Minister for Local Government; Disability Services; Volunteering; Youth; Gascoyne
- Hon Tjorn Sibma MLA, Shadow Minister for Finance; Training and Workforce Development; Major Infrastructure

Zone Meetings

- Kimberley Zone Meeting
- Northern Country Zone Meeting

Local Government Relations

- **State Council Meetings**
 - Finance and Services Committee Budget Workshop
 - Local Government House Trust Meeting
 - Information Forum, 4 June 2025
 - Finance and Services Committee, 18 June 2025
- **ALGA**
 - Board Meeting, 9 May 2025
 - General Meeting, 9 May 2025
 - NGA Briefing
 - National General Assembly
- **LGIS**
 - Board Meeting, 23 May 2025
- WALGA Mayors and Presidents Forum
- WALGA Alumni Sundowner
- WALGA Renewable Energy Forum
- Bus Stop Infrastructure Agreement signing with Public Transport Authority
- Emergency Management Forum

Conferences, Workshops, Public Relations

- 500 Club Sundowner
- Reconciliation WA, National Reconciliation Week Breakfast
- WA Women's Hall of Fame 15th Anniversary Alumni and Supporters Evening
- Telstra Infracore, WA Regional Connectivity Policy Workshop
- Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Board Meeting