

# Great Southern Country Zone Minutes

Friday, 20 February 2026

Hosted by the Shire of Plantagenet  
Plantagenet District Hall, Memorial  
Road, Mount Barker

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## PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

How to use the Framework:

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

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

## 1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

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### 1.1 OPENING

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*The Chair opened the meeting at 10:02am.*

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### 1.2 ATTENDANCE

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#### MEMBERS

#### City of Albany

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

#### Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup

Cr Sara Robinson  
Cr Connie Witham (observer)  
CEO Karen Callaghan (non-voting)

#### Shire of Cranbrook

President Cr Perin Mulcahy  
CEO Linda Gray (non-voting)

#### Shire of Denmark

President Cr Aaron Wiggins  
Cr Janine Phillips

#### Shire of Gnowangerup

Deputy President Cr Rebecca O'Meehan  
Cr Peter Callaghan (Deputy Delegate)  
CEO David Nicholson (non-voting)

#### Shire of Jerramungup

President Cr Nathan Brown

#### Shire of Katanning

President Cr Kristy D'Aprile  
Cr Ian Hanna  
CEO Peter Klein (non-voting)

#### Shire of Kent

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

#### Shire of Kojonup

Cr Michael Mathwin  
CEO Grant Thompson (non-voting)

#### Shire of Plantagenet

#### Deputy Delegate/s

President, Cr Len Handasyde (**Deputy Chair**)  
Cr Joshua Leibeck  
Cr Ken Clements (observer)  
Cr Marie O'Dea (observer)  
CEO Julian Murphy (non-voting)

#### Shire of Ravensthorpe

President, Cr Rachel Gibson

#### Shire of Woodanilling

CEO Anika Serer (non-voting)

#### AGENCIES

#### Members of Parliament

Mr Rick Wilson MP, Federal Member for O'Connor  
Mr Scott Leary MLA, Member for Albany

**WALGA**

Ms Lyn Fogg, Zone Executive Officer  
Mr Max Bushell, Senior Policy Advisor, Road  
Safety and Infrastructure

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### **1.3 APOLOGIES**

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City of Albany	Cr Craig McKinley Mayor Greg Stocks Cr Thomas Brough
Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup	President Cr Doug Barritt
Shire of Cranbrook	Cr Daisy Egerton-Warburton
Shire of Denmark	CEO David King (non-voting)
Shire of Gnowangerup	President Cr Kate O’Keeffe
Shire of Jerramungup	Cr Paul Barrett CEO Martin Cuthbert (non-voting)
Shire of Katanning	Cr John Goodheart
Shire of Kojonup	President, Cr Roger Bilney
Shire of Ravensthorpe	Cr Bill Auburn Interim CEO Paul Anderson (non-voting)
Shire of Woodanilling	President Cr Russel Thomson Cr Sally Vermeulen
Members of Parliament	Hon Reece Whitby MLA; Minister for Police; Road Safety; Tourism; Great Southern Mr Bevan Eatts, MLA Member for Warren- Blackwood
Great Southern Development Commission	Natasha Monks, Chief Executive Officer
Regional Development Australia – Great Southern WA Inc	Mr Simon Lyas, Director, Regional Development
Roadwise	Ms Michelle Blackhurst, Regional Road Safety Adviser

## **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

Zone Delegates must declare to the Chair any potential conflict of interest they have in a matter before the Zone as soon as they become aware of it. Zone Delegates 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.

Nil.

### 4 DEPUTATIONS / GUEST SPEAKERS

President Cr Handasyde welcomed the delegates to the Shire of Plantagenet.

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#### 4.1 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

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*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.*

**Mr Rick Wilson MP, Federal Member for O'Connor**, spoke on the following:

- Representing 49 Local Governments in the seat of O'Connor, appreciates the opportunity to speak with 12 Local Governments in this Zone.
- GP Services – Local Government advocacy
- Medicare underspend in regional locations / comparison with metropolitan spend
- Telecommunications tower infrastructure – Telstra will not be investing further. Pivoting to low orbit satellite technology.
- LGs may contact Rick's office to organise meetings during ALGA

**Mr Scott Leary MLA, Member for Albany**

- Appreciated opportunities to attend the Zone.
- Asked Local Governments to contact his office with any concerns – information necessary to assist Opposition in advocating for better outcomes.

### 5 AGENCY REPORTS

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#### 5.1 GREAT SOUTHERN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (GSDC)

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Nil.

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

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Nil.

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### 5.3 GREAT SOUTHERN REGIONAL ROADS GROUP

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*Report by Cr Len Handasyde, Shire of Plantagenet*

Main Roads WA has requested information of all Local Governments in the Great Southern to ascertain the level of work being undertaken on the projects in the various sections of the funding models. They indicate that so far there are no red flags for all funds to be acquitted on time and we will see how that goes. It has never been achieved in all the years I have been on Council.

There is really only one message. If a project is in trouble for whatever reason, speak up early and those funds might be able to be used elsewhere in the region. This might be in the form of extending a project or bringing a project forward.

I look forward to the April meeting of the GSRRG to see how it has all gone this year.

Hopefully we will begin to see an improvement. We should also remember that next year the new rules passed at the November meeting kick-in and those February assessments will be crucial to the outcome later in the year.

**Noted**

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### 5.4 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY REGULATION AND SAFETY (DLGIRS)

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Attachment No. 1 [DLGSC Update – February 2026](#)

**Noted**

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### 5.5 WALGA ROADWISE

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*Report by Michelle Blackhurst, RoadWise Road Safety Advisor*

**Nil**

## 6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

### RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Len Handasyde  
Seconded: President Cr Kate Johnston

That the Minutes of the Great Southern Country Zone meeting held on 21 November 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

**CARRIED**

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### 6.1 Business Arising from the Minutes

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**Nil**

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## 6.2 ZONE RESOLUTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS STATUS REPORTS

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### 6.2.1 Zone Status Report

*By Lyn Fogg, Zone Executive Officer*

**Attachment No. 2**     [Zone Status Report February 2026](#)

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.

### 6.2.2 Zone Action Items Report

*By Lyn Fogg, Zone Executive Officer*

**Attachment No. 3**     [Zone Action Items Report February 2026](#)

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.

**Moved:**            **Deputy President Cr Rebecca O'Meehan**

**Seconded:**       **President Cr Kristy D'Aprile**

**RESOLUTION (Items 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 combined)**

That the Great Southern Country Zone NOTES the:

1. Status Report for February 2026, as detailed in Attachment No.3, and
2. Action Items Report for February 2026, as detailed in Attachment No.4.

**CARRIED**

## 7 ZONE BUSINESS

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### 7.1 ZONE REPORTS

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#### 7.1.1 Zone Financial Report

*By Mr Richard May, WALGA Finance Manager*

**Table 1: Statement of Income and Expenditure – period ended 31 December 2025**

<b>Great Southern Country Zone</b>			
<b>Statement of Income and Expenditure as at Dec 2025</b>			
	<b>Note</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>
		<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Subscriptions	1	6000	6000
Other			
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>6000</b>	<b>6000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			

Bank Fees		60	150
Meeting Costs (Catering)	2	1823	4000
Historic ATO Payment			
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>1883</b>	<b>4150</b>
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>		4118	1850

**Notes**

1. Subscription fee of \$500 per Zone Member excluding GST, invoices have been sent to members in September and all received and transferred to GSCZ Bank Account
2. Aug 2025 Zone meeting catering (\$1,331.81), Nov 2025 Zone meeting catering (\$572.73) and adjustment on GST on purchase to be recovered from ATO (\$82.00)

**Table 2: Balance Sheet presenting the Zone's financial position as at 30 December 2025**

<b>Great Southern Country Zone Balance Sheet as at 31 Dec 2025</b>		
<b>Account</b>	<b>Note</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Assets</b>		
Bank		11,637
Debtors		
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>\$ 11,637</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Creditors		-
GST Payable	-	190
Unused Project Funds		-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>- 190</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>\$ 11,828</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Members Funds B/F		7,710
Current year earnings		4,118
<b>Total Equity</b>		<b>\$ 11,828</b>

**RESOLUTION**

Moved: Cr Len Handasyde  
 Seconded: Cr Kate Johnston

That the Great Southern Country Zone receives the Zone Financial Report for February 2026.

**CARRIED**

## 7.1.2 Zone Chairperson's Report

*Cr Scott Crosby, Zone Chairperson*

Cr Crosby encouraged Zone Members to attend ALGA as it provides a lobby opportunity direct to Government.

### Noted

## 7.2 ZONE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### 7.2.1 Zone 2026/27 Strategic Priorities – Workshop\*

\*This item was reordered in the agenda and undertaken as a workshop following Item 11 Other Business.

#### BACKGROUND

At the November Zone meeting, the Secretariat requested Zone members to identify their Local Government's top 3 strategic priorities to inform the Zone's planning for the next 2-year period, which may include:

- Topics on which the Zone wishes to invite presentations from State Government agencies or other entities; and
- Topics on which the Zone wishes to prioritise advocacy on behalf of the Great Southern Country Zone members.

#### Zone Member Priorities

City of Albany	
<b>Housing and critical Infrastructure (Sewer)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Construction of Range Road to provide road access to expanding areas</li><li>• Mercer Road Realignment to reduce residential access congestion</li><li>• Utility Trunk connections to increase affordability of development</li><li>• Strategic planning - preparation of the North Albany District structure plan and north McKail structure plan</li><li>• Delivery of affordable lots for development at McAlpine Rise</li></ul>
<b>Transport &amp; Road Network</b>	<p>Development of a long-term dedicated capital works program. Key Priorities for the Program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pavement Renewal: Replace aging surfaces to meet modern load and durability standards.</li><li>• Capacity Upgrades: Widen and strengthen corridors to accommodate increased freight, larger vehicles, and passenger volumes.</li><li>• Safety Enhancements: Improve intersections, shoulders, and roadside infrastructure to reduce crash risk.</li></ul> <p>Priority Sections/Projects Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improvements to Albany Highway including a commitment for an annual program of passing lanes</li><li>• South Coast Highway – Wellstead to Esperance</li><li>• Albany Ring Road – Chester Pass/Menang intersection flyover</li></ul>
<b>Sustainable Waste Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Investment into Innovative Solutions to be able to deal with waste streams locally either at a regional or local level</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Diverting Waste from Landfill</u>: Maximise resource recovery by increasing green waste, FOGO, and recycling diversion rates, reducing pressure on landfill sites.</li> <li>• <u>Developing Regional Processing Solutions</u>: Establish shared processing infrastructure for green waste, FOGO, and recyclables, ensuring local solutions for local waste streams.</li> <li>• <u>Reducing Environmental Impacts</u>: Cut greenhouse gas emissions and protect soil and water quality through better waste handling and resource recovery.</li> <li>• <u>Building Community Capacity</u>: Invest in education, innovation, and outreach to empower residents and businesses to participate actively in waste reduction.</li> <li>• <u>Enhancing Economic Opportunities</u>: Support the creation of regional jobs and new markets for recycled materials, mulch, and compost products.</li> <li>• <u>Future-Proofing Waste Infrastructure</u>: Plan and invest for long-term growth and technological change, ensuring that waste solutions remain resilient, adaptable, and compliant with regulatory requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup</b>	
<p><b>Compliance burden and leadership sustainability in small rural LGs</b></p>	<p>Small local governments are required to meet almost identical legislative, governance, audit, planning, financial management and work health and safety obligations as large metropolitan authorities, despite having a substantially smaller workforce and revenue base. Rather than reducing red tape, the cumulative compliance burden continues to grow and consumes a disproportionate share of executive and staff capacity.</p> <p>In small organisations, this diverts limited resources away from project delivery, community outcomes, and strategic leadership. It is also increasingly undermining the sector's ability to attract and retain capable senior staff and CEOs. High personal and organisational risk, constrained remuneration settings, and limited internal support create a role that is increasingly unattractive and unsustainable. This is a structural issue that requires reform at a system level, not incremental adjustments.</p> <p>Small rural local governments also face ongoing difficulty in maintaining a full complement of capable staff across the organisation. Limited local labour markets, housing availability, remuneration constraints and workload intensity often result in prolonged vacancies and reduced organisational resilience.</p>
<p><b>Cost shifting and responsibility transfer without funding or policy frameworks</b></p>	<p>Local governments are increasingly expected to absorb responsibilities that sit more appropriately with the state or federal government, often without clear legislative frameworks or adequate funding.</p> <p>This includes growing expectations around housing supply for state government workers, emergency management responsibilities, social and community pressures, and the local impacts of the energy transition. In particular, the state government's net-zero emission by 2050 commitment has not been matched with a clear and legislated planning framework for</p>

	<p>renewable energy, leaving local governments to manage land use conflict, community concern, and assessment risk without policy certainty.</p> <p>There is a clear need for earlier, coordinated, and genuine partnership between all tiers of government before priorities are implemented at the local level.</p>
<b>Unsustainable funding model and growing grant dependency</b>	<p>Local government has the smallest and least flexible revenue base of any tier of government, yet community expectations and service demands continue to increase. Rate growth is constrained, Financial Assistance Grants have not kept pace with cost growth, and councils are increasingly reliant on complex and resource-intensive grant programs to deliver essential infrastructure and services.</p> <p>For small shires, the administrative burden associated with grants is significant and often disproportionate to the funding received. This model increases financial risk, delays delivery, and in some cases, entrenches inequity between metropolitan and regional communities.</p>
<b>Shire of Cranbrook</b>	
<b>Renewables</b>	<p>Can be so divisive to a community.</p> <p>Land use - relates to plantations and the impact on the Shire's rate base and delivery of services (FPC)</p>
<b>Local essential services</b>	<p>Relates to liveability and the attraction and retention of population in our Shire. Example - lack of accountability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Western Power changing farms to the "modular grid" with little or no consultation</li> <li>• Medical / health care services</li> </ul>
<b>Roads</b>	<p>Important for economic development and support of current businesses.</p> <p>Future development - improved accessibility will stabilise our rate base and grow industries like tourism.</p>
<b>Shire of Denmark</b>	
<b>Funding for Infrastructure Growth</b>	<p>Denmark anticipates rapid growth over the coming decade, which presents a significant challenge for infrastructure delivery in the current construction climate. While larger developing metro suburbs can effectively implement Developer Contribution Plans to assist, these plans are impractical and ineffective for small regional local governments like ours. As a result, we require additional external funding to meet the community's needs and support sustainable growth.</p>
<b>Sustainable Tourism Management</b>	<p>Tourism is a cornerstone of the South Coast's economy. Managing tourism sustainably ensures the region's unique natural and cultural assets are preserved while local communities benefit equitably. Sustainable tourism management involves balancing visitor growth with environmental stewardship, infrastructure investment, and authentic local experiences. The Western Australian (WA) Government's tourism strategy, "Waves</p>

	2033,” aims to increase visitor spending in WA by 60%. This target will be achieved by increasing the average spend per visitor and boosting the number of domestic, intrastate, and international visitors. The Great Southern, a key tourism destination within WA, is already struggling with high visitor numbers, reaching the carrying capacity at several popular sites. The current mechanisms for generating revenue from tourism for Local Government are limited and ineffective. To support sustainable tourism growth, investment by the State or the development of new revenue models is essential.
<b>Affordable Housing</b>	The ongoing and much-discussed issue of housing affordability and availability remains a priority. This issue continues to be a significant challenge for our community, and addressing it is crucial for ensuring the well-being of our residents.
<b>Shire of Gnowangerup</b>	
<b>Road Maintenance / Safety</b>	Council is concerned about the poor condition of the Shire’s roads and feel in part this is due to the State prioritising metropolitan road work to the detriment of the regions. This is another example of cost shifting, where local government is having to bear costs that should be met by the State and is resulting in regional roads that are unsafe and causing damage to vehicles.
<b>Waste Management – recycling / rehabilitation</b>	The Shire has three waste facilities that have finite lives. The liability to rehabilitate each will be well beyond the financial capacity of a small local government. In addition, Council recognises the importance of recycling especially in relation to lithium batteries and see this as an opportunity to collaborate with the State and neighbouring Shires.
<b>Releasing Land – Residential and Industrial</b>	To help regional towns grow and alleviate the shortage of houses, Council believes the State needs to release more residential and industrial land. This will allow developers and / or future homeowners to build their own home, and businesses to be established. This will also help take some pressure off Perth metropolitan area and reduce urban sprawl.
<b>Shire of Jerramungup</b>	
<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient, safe and sustainable transport systems are crucial for connecting communities, facilitating growth, and supporting economic activity.</li> <li>• Focusing on safe state road networks, it is important to note that the Great Southern region has the oldest pavement in Western Australia, far exceeding its useful life. This aging infrastructure is unable to cope with the demands of freight tasks, which is a major concern. The mixing of freight with tourist traffic further exacerbates the issue, creating safety hazards and inefficiencies.</li> <li>• South Coast Highway, from Wellstead to Esperance, is a priority section for the Shire of Jerramungup, requiring pavement renewal, capacity upgrades and safety enhancements.</li> <li>• By addressing these challenges, the South Coast region can develop a transport system that not only connects communities but also supports economic growth and sustainability.</li> </ul>

<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National data shows that people in rural and remote areas have poorer health outcomes than those in major cities.</li> <li>• Access to primary care, and particularly GPs, is central to this disadvantage. Across Australia, people now see a GP about 6.2 times per year on average, but the number of GPs per head of population falls as remoteness increases.</li> <li>• For some Shires, the GP subsidy funding commitments equate to up to 16% of their total rates revenue, making it one of the largest non-core expenditure items in their budget.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The South Coast region is experiencing renewed interest as a desirable place to live, work and invest.</li> <li>• This presents both opportunities and challenges: servicing population growth requires careful planning for affordable, diverse and sustainable housing, while protecting community character and natural beauty.</li> <li>• Collaboration is central to attracting investment, unlocking land, and building liveable communities for all.</li> <li>• The Shire of Jerramungup views increasing housing availability as a significant priority requiring partnerships with private and public sectors.</li> <li>• Advocating with essential service providers to improve priority utility services in line with housing growth is also important.</li> </ul>
<b>Shire of Katanning</b>	
<b>Expanding power &amp; water supply capability</b> , especially to service industrial opportunities	
<b>Development of industrial &amp; residential land</b>	
<b>Delivery of worker housing and short stay accommodation</b>	
<b>Shire of Kent</b>	
<b>Firefighting and WHS Obligations</b>	<p>Local governments are increasingly exposed to inappropriate WHS obligations in the bushfire space. Treating volunteer firefighters as “workers” under the WHS Act 2020 places an unreasonable duty of care on local government CEOs, many of whom are not trained emergency management professionals.</p> <p>This responsibility represents a significant and unpriced risk, particularly for small local governments (such as Band 4 authorities). These local governments are constrained by the salary caps determined by the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal and are therefore unable to remunerate CEOs at a level that reflects the scale of legal, personal, and operational risk being imposed.</p> <p>The result is a role where risk is materially disproportionate to remuneration and organisational capacity, creating a strong disincentive to CEO recruitment and retention in rural and regional local governments. This also diverts limited executive capacity away from core community service delivery.</p>

	<p>There is an urgent need to reconsider the current classification of volunteer firefighters under the WHS framework and to provide clearer, practical support for CEOs and councils tasked with managing emergency response responsibilities.</p>
<p><b>Growing Pressures on LG – without the funding model to match</b></p>	<p>Local governments are at the frontline of escalating pressures including housing shortages, workforce gaps, energy transition conflicts, disaster response and growing social issues. Despite having the smallest revenue base of any tier of government, local governments are increasingly expected to lead and absorb these challenges without additional funding or resources.</p> <p>The loss of flexible funding programs has left a major gap, and without appropriate funding pathways, rural communities are being left behind. Small towns are the backbone of regional Australia – once they decline, they do not return. Rural communities matter, and urgent action is needed.</p>
<p><b>Red Tape, Governance Burden and the Future of LG Leadership</b></p>	<p>Despite claims of reduced red tape, regulatory and compliance requirements on local governments continue to increase. At the same time, councils have been required to reduce the number of elected members, resulting in fewer councillors carrying greater workloads and responsibilities.</p> <p>This growing burden risks making elected office unattractive, particularly in small rural communities. Without reform, the sector will struggle to attract and retain capable candidates. Consideration must be given to reducing compliance duplication and exploring appropriate incentives or remuneration flexibility beyond current Salaries Tribunal constraints.</p>
<p><b>Shire of Kojonup</b></p>	
<p><b>State &amp; Federal Government cost shifting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary Medical Care costs; costs of compliance of new regulations and so-called reform.</li> <li>• Increases workload and local government/community cost so as to be compliant and provide basic services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Funding of Infrastructure for growth</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headworks</li> <li>• Major community assets such as pools etc),</li> <li>• Need more untied Grants for large foundational capital infrastructure projects (similar to the LCRIP program).</li> </ul>
<p><b>DFES / Emergency Services Acts consolidation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bushfire Act is outdated and needs an update to be relevant in contemporary environment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shire of Plantagenet</b></p>	
<p><b>Housing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding availability to progress large scale projects</li> <li>• Headworks costs impeding private development</li> <li>• Time taken for Western Power to cost and design any upgrade works</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economic / Industry Development</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headworks costs barrier to Industry development</li> <li>• Time taken for Western Power to cost and design any upgrade works</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Asset Renewal</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid increasing cost of construction has created a large funding gap.</li> </ul>

<b>Shire of Ravensthorpe</b>	
Acting CEO transition – unable to provide in time for the agenda.	
<b>Shire of Woodanilling</b>	
<b>Funding: fire and emergency management</b>	Increased funding for fire and emergency management and resilience activities to reflect increasing cost
<b>Mobile phone / communication blackspots</b>	Mobile phone/communication since removal of 3G with significant blackspots throughout region
<b>State/Federal funding of LG - insufficient</b>	The increasing gap between State/Federal funding (e.g. FAGs) and the real cost of local government operations and business -seek reform of indexation method. FAGs are getting lower each year in real value whilst cost of maintenance, maintaining service levels are getting higher.
<b>Bush Fire Brigades / WHS Act risks</b>	The risk to CEOs being the PCBU for volunteer bush fire brigades and its consequences under the current WHS Act.

## COMMENT

The Secretariat facilitated a workshop with Zone Members considering the range of priorities submitted. Workshop outcomes will be presented to the next GSCZ meeting.

## Noted

## 7.3 MATTERS FOR ZONE NOTING AND DECISION

### 7.3.1 Emergency Management Act Consolidation

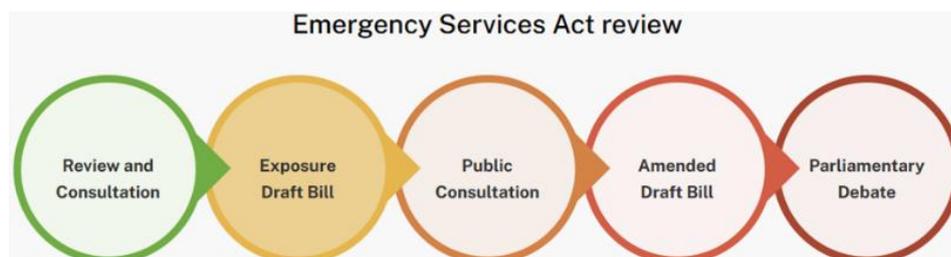
*Shire of Katanning*

#### BACKGROUND

In 2019, State Cabinet approved and issued instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel's Office, to draft an exposure bill to consolidate the following three emergency management acts;

- i) *Fire & Emergency Services Act 1998,*
- ii) *Fire Brigades Act 1942,* and
- iii) *Bush Fires Act 1954*

The following process was endorsed to deliver this outcome;



DFES was subsequently allocated the responsibility to manage & drive this process.

In August 2023, in response to a question from the Hon. Martin Aldridge, the Minister for Emergency Services Stephen Dawson replied that the exposure draft bill will be released for stakeholder consideration in early 2024. The exposure draft bill is now two years late.

DFES has provided the following recent update on their progress;

- Work on the development of an Emergency Services Exposure Draft Bill is ongoing.
- A dedicated team of six DFES officers are reviewing and refining the legislative proposal to consolidate the emergency management arrangements.
- The drafting process is legally technical, time-intensive and the practical considerations are complex. DFES is investing time and effort to produce new legislation that is fit-for-purpose for the many stakeholders involved in emergency management.
- Once finalised, the Exposure Draft Bill will be released for public comment. Until then, targeted consultation may be undertaken by DFES on discrete matters.

**The item was presented and endorsed at the February 2026 Great Southern VROC Executive meeting.**

### **COMMENT**

The State Government has failed to adequately consider the consequential responsibilities of local government CEOs and officers for bush fire brigade volunteers during both the design and implementation of the existing emergency management acts and the *WHS Act 2020*.

Western Australian is the only jurisdiction in Australia where local governments hold responsibility for bush fire response, brigade administration, training and compliance. We are the only jurisdiction where the CEO and Officers are the PCBU for registered BFB and spontaneous volunteers and nowhere else in Australia are local government CEO's and Officers liable for industrial manslaughter in respect to the performance of this cohort of "workers".

The ability of local government CEOs and Officers to meet their duties of care to these workers is compromised by emergency realities and operational complexity, insufficient resourcing, lack of state guidance on how local governments should meet their PCBU responsibilities and the fact that bush fire response is inherently hazardous.

Other challenges identified by local governments in respect to existing arrangements include;

- The failure of the Local Government Grant Scheme (LGGs) contributions to local governments to keep pace with increased compliance cost.
- Insufficient transparency associated with the distribution by DFES of Emergency Service Levies collected and remitted by local governments.
- Under resourcing of bush fire and emergency management preparations.
- The challenge of full compliance with *WHS Act* obligations and the management of spontaneous volunteers.
- Inability to transfer WHS duties to volunteers when DFES assumes operational control.

WALGA has established advocacy position "8.10 Management of Bush Fire Brigades" and this position states, amongst other things, as follows;

The State Government, through the Consolidated *Emergency Services Act* and/or other mechanism's must:

- a) Establish a clear framework to enable the transfer of Bush Fire Brigades to the State Government if a Local Government decides to do so; and
- b) Consult on the process, timeline, and implications for transfer of responsibility for Bush Fire Brigades through the establishment of a working group comprising representatives of Local Government, Bush Fire Brigades, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES).

## **WALGA SECRETARIAT COMMENT**

The matters raised in this item are broadly consistent with WALGA's advocacy positions, including: 8.4 Consolidated Emergency Services Act; and 8.10 Management of Bush Fire Brigades. Together, these advocacy positions call for a contemporary consolidated legislative framework, clear definition of stakeholder roles and responsibilities, ongoing sector engagement in the co-design of the Act and Regulations, and funding support for any new responsibilities imposed on Local Governments.

The issues highlighted about the work health and safety obligations placed on Local Government CEOs and officers, the lack of a modern legislative framework, and the operational risks created by the current system also reflect the concerns raised in WALGA's recent submission to the Statutory Review of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*. These issues further reinforce how urgent and important it is to replace the outdated *Bush Fires Act 1954*, which no longer reflects contemporary emergency management requirements or the realities faced by Local Governments.

## **RESOLUTION**

**Moved: President Cr Kristy D'Aprile**

**Seconded: President Cr Kate Johnston**

**That the Great Southern Country Zone requests WALGA, as a matter of urgency request that:**

- 1. the State Government reprioritise and expedite the consolidation of the State's emergency management legislation to address the escalating operational and risk issues arising from the current outdated framework;**
- 2. the consolidated acts establish a clear framework to enable the transfer of Bush Fire Brigades to the State Government if a Local Government decides to do so; and**
- 3. Local Governments at the WALGA zone level be consulted prior to release of the exposure draft bill.**

**CARRIED**

## **ZONE COMMENTS**

- Zone members noted high level of concern that CEO's can be personally responsible for liabilities arising from Bush Fire Brigade operations.
- Zone members noted concerns that if DFES is responsible for Bush Fire Brigade management, compliance requirements will escalate and may impair volunteer member attraction and retention.
- Variable views expressed regarding future legislative arrangements and whether all Brigades should be under DFES or there should be flexibility to enable each LG to choose if Brigades are handed over to DFES.
- Restrictions on who can be a spontaneous volunteer and how Brigades are activated may be beneficial.

**Zone Members AGREED it would be beneficial to invite the WALGA Emergency Management Policy Team to present at a future Zone meeting.**

## 7.3.2 Call for OAG Performance Audit of Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements WA

### *Murchison Country Zone*

#### **BACKGROUND**

In follow up to previous items and sector dissatisfaction with the arrangements the Shire of Yalgoo is calling for the Office of the Auditor General to conduct a Performance Audit of the management of DRFAWA by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

The Office of the Auditor General provides the following with respect to Performance Audits: *"Performance audits assess the efficiency and effectiveness of entity activities, services and programs. These audits can also identify instances of waste, legislative non-compliance, examples of good practice and make practical recommendations for improvement. Topics are selected by the Auditor General following an exhaustive process which may also include requests for audits from Parliament, the government or the broader community."*

The Independent Review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding (also known as the Colvin Review) provides some 47 recommendations for top down improvements of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. What these Federal reviews do not do is benchmark Western Australia's management of this process against other states or ensure that the State is acting in the best interests of both the Commonwealth and the people they serve.

An individual only has to look to media coverage and community sentiment in the aftermath of tropical cyclones, storms and bushfires to understand that this process could better serve all communities. Available information regarding Cyclone Seroja is that only 10-25% of a committed total of over \$100m made it out of government to support regional WA. This large promise and limited expenditure in the affected communities coincided with the Recovery and Resilience Department increase in staff size by approximately 1000%. Residents in the Pilbara are still uncertain about the recovery of their roads some 8 months after Cyclone Zelia and land managers have made it onto the ABC describing how difficult applications for assistance are at a time when it is easily apparent that they have been adversely affected.

It is for this reason that the Shire proposes to seek sector support calling for a performance audit of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services Recovery and Resilience management of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

#### **COMMENT**

A performance audit will often result in more red tape and more defined rules for any process. With respect to DRFWA this can only be seen as a positive for the primary reasons that there is no legislation to refer to and an asymmetrical imbalance exists between what DFES Officers expect and what local governments or other agencies understand they must provide.

For a process that has been described as complex by the two previous Emergency Services Ministers it is astounding that only a handful of A4 fact sheets exist for applicants.

An example of this is funding claims being rejected due to post disaster evidence i.e. photos being taken too long after repair work has been completed. Nowhere on any published document is an arbitrary 2 year timeframe described yet according to DFES that is the window in which they class that evidence as admissible, notwithstanding the fact that the evidence clearly shows that the work has been completed which is the concern and purpose of the evidence.

Financial audits look at the responsible and compliant use of taxpayer money. It is however the opinion of the Shire of Yalgoo that a performance audit could answer just as important questions such as:

- Are the communities of Western Australia being supported in a timely manner after they have been impacted by a natural disaster?
- Is agreed funding, that is the responsibility of the State Government, reaching affected communities?
- With respect to the scale of different types disasters and different sized communities are the processes of Recovery and Resilience efficient and fit for purpose?

The Auditor General has been quoted as asking whether some government policies or procedures pass the “pub test” and once someone examines the “complexity” of the DRFAWA process they will potentially be making the same assertion.

Murchison Country Zone Resolved:

*That the Murchison Country Zone request WALGA and other WALGA Zones to call upon the Office of the Auditor General to conduct a performance audit of Recovery and Resilience management of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia.*

### **WALGA SECRETARIAT COMMENT**

This Item was included on the State Council November 2025 Revised Agenda (Agenda Item 12 Additional Zone Resolutions) for State Council's consideration, where it was referred to the Policy Portfolio for consideration and appropriate action.

The WALGA Infrastructure Policy Team considered the matter and has resolved:

*WALGA advocate to the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) to conduct a Performance Audit of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia (DRFA WA)*

The WALGA Infrastructure team is actioning this resolution, with an item to be provided to a future State Council Agenda, enabling the Zone's further consideration at that time.

**Noted**

### **7.3.3 Request to Present at Zone Meeting**

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#### **HC Construction Services**

WALGA was approached by HC Construction Services Pty Ltd requesting an opportunity to attend various Country Zone meetings to provide a deputation on how to navigate through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement (DRFA).

HC Construction Services is a WA based company specialising in project management, consultancy and construction delivery. HC is a WALGA Preferred Supplier and has worked with several Local Governments to manage disaster relief funding claims. This includes by way of road condition video using their internally developed RF Vid Assist system.

The proposed presentation would include some tips, dos and don'ts, advice on pre disaster evidence requirements, and lessons learnt on three or four case studies where applicants have encountered problems. The presentation would also include information on how Local Governments can prepare a funding application, so they receive the maximum funding available in the event of a natural disaster.

#### **Kolbany Yanginy – Local Government Reconciliation Resource.**

WALGA and Reconciliation WA are offering a presentations to Zones on the new [Kolbang Yanginy website](#), a collaborative project between Reconciliation WA, WALGA, at State Agencies with support from Lotterywest.

The online platform is designed to support Local Governments across Western Australia to build strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Focusing on key themes like reconciliation, partnerships and placemaking, Kolbang Yanginy provides advice, resources, case studies and an interactive map to build capability across Local Governments.

The website also provides information about legislative, regulatory and policy requirements with respect to Aboriginal heritage and native title, with links to further information from State Agencies.

## RESOLUTION

**Moved:** President Cr Kate Johnston

**Seconded:** Deputy Mayor Cr Paul Terry

**That the Great Southern Country Zone:**

1. **does not support a deputation from HC Construction Services Pty Ltd at a future Zone meeting in 2026.**
2. **does not support a deputation from Reconciliation WA/WALGA at a future Zone meeting in 2026.**

**CARRIED**

### 7.3.4 2026 Local Government Honours Awards

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*By Kathy Robertson, WALGA Manager Association and Corporate Governance*

The Honours Program recognises and celebrates the outstanding achievements and lasting contributions made by Elected Members and officers to their respective Local Government, the Local Government sector, WALGA and the wider community.

There are five awards in the 2026 Program:

1. Local Government Medal
2. Life Membership
3. Eminent Service Award
4. Merit Award
5. Young Achievers Award

All Local Government Elected Members and officers are eligible for nomination for each award.

Nominations are open now and will close at **5:00pm on Thursday, 2 April 2026.**

Further information about the 2026 Honours Program, including the nomination form and guidelines for preparing nominations, are available on the [WALGA website](#).

All awards will be presented later this year at the WALGA Local Government Awards event. More details about the event will be announced shortly.

For more information contact Habiba Farrag, State Council Governance Officer, on 9213 2050 or via email [honours@walga.asn.au](mailto:honours@walga.asn.au).

**Noted**

### 7.3.5 Disaster Ready Fund: Round 4 Anticipated to Open in March 2026

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*By Rachel Armstrong, Policy Manager Emergency Management*

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) is the Australian Government's key funding program to support projects that reduce disaster risk and strengthen community resilience.

Round Four of the DRF is expected to open in March 2026 with approximately \$200 million available nationally. A strong focus on *construction-ready*, infrastructure-based mitigation projects with clear risk reduction benefits is expected. This is similar to Round 3 which prioritised infrastructure-based projects such as flood levees, cyclone shelters, warning systems. A list of Round 3 projects funded is available at [Disaster Ready Fund | NEMA](#)).

WALGA is providing early notice to Zones and member Local Governments to consideration of both individual and collaborative project opportunities, and pre-planning ahead of the formal announcement.

The DRF is administered by DFES, in Western Australia. Further information is available at [Disaster Resilience Grants - Department of Fire and Emergency Services](#) and by emailing [DisasterResilienceGrants@dfes.wa.gov.au](mailto:DisasterResilienceGrants@dfes.wa.gov.au).

DRF Round 4 is likely to be released in March 2026, and encourage Local Governments to consider shared or individual disaster risk reduction projects

WALGA will advise the Sector when the DRF is formally announced.

#### **Noted**

### 7.3.6 Water Management Discussion Paper update

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

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- WALGA has developed a Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper exploring issues for Local Governments in managing water resources.
- To inform the Discussion Paper, WALGA undertook research and direct engagement with the sector and reviewed existing Water Advocacy Positions and feedback from WALGA Zones.
- Based on this consultation, the Discussion Paper identifies water security and water efficiency as key themes.
- Feedback on the Discussion Paper will inform the development of a new water management advocacy position.
- Zones and Local Governments are encouraged to provide comments to WALGA by 12 March 2026.

#### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This item relates to [WALGA Advocacy Positions](#) 3.1.1 Service Delivery to Aboriginal Communities, 4.3 Clearing Permits and Water Licenses and Permits, 6.10 Public Open Space (POS) and 6.14 Planning for Water.

#### **ATTACHMENT**

- [Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper](#)

## **BACKGROUND**

Local Governments contribute to the management of water through strategic planning, land management, development approvals, community behaviour change and, in some cases, direct water service provision. Local Governments' role in water service provision includes drainage, water use and re-use and aspects of wastewater and sewerage services. The challenges for future water management are escalating across Western Australia due to population growth, climate change and increased competition for limited water resources.

To inform the Discussion Paper WALGA reviewed its existing Water Advocacy Positions and motions, feedback from WALGA Zones and undertook research and direct consultation with the sector. Consultation included workshops with both metropolitan and non-metropolitan Local Governments, an online session with 40 officers focused on water security and efficiency and a regionally focused session with 30 Local Government representatives exploring the barriers to being waterwise in a regional setting. In addition, WALGA conducted 14 one-on-one interviews with officers from 22 metropolitan, regional and remote Local Governments to better understand key issues. Further insights were gained through meetings with officers from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Water Corporation, as well as internal discussions with WALGA.

## **COMMENT**

From consultation and research WALGA has undertaken with Local Government, two key themes consistently emerged - water security and water efficiency.

Water security relates to the reliable availability, adequate quantity and acceptable quality of water needed to support human health, economic development and environmental amenity. Issues identified include:

- **Infrastructure:** Funding to repair and upgrade aging Local Government water infrastructure including irrigation, drainage and stormwater systems and to improve reliability of State-managed assets.
- **Alternative Sources:** Diversifying water supply through non-traditional sources such as recycled water, stormwater harvesting, or desalination to support community assets.
- **Licensing:** Reforming the current water licensing system, including equity, access and regulatory enforcement.
- **Access:** Addressing barriers to equitable water access, particularly for regional and remote communities.
- **Use:** Planning for water allocation and consumption across sectors.

Water efficiency is focused on reducing unnecessary water loss through better practices, technologies and infrastructure. Issues identified include:

- **Technology:** Adopting waterwise technologies to enhance water efficiency.
- **Water Literacy and behaviour change:** Increasing water literacy within Local Government and the community to support change management and adaptation within communities.
- **Water Sensitive Urban Design:** Improving understanding to encourage the adoption of efficient technologies and design standards to reduce water consumption across public and private infrastructure.

Local Governments across Western Australia are addressing water security and efficiency through various actions across strategic infrastructure planning, innovative water management practices and community awareness. A new Water Management Advocacy Position will ensure WALGA can effectively advocate on behalf of the sector in relation to this issue. The Discussion Paper includes options to address these issues and questions for the sector relating to each of the key areas.

Feedback on the Discussion Paper will inform the development of a new water management advocacy position. All Zones and Local Governments are encouraged to provide comments to WALGA by 12 March 2026.

## Noted

### 7.3.7 Consultation on Draft Climate Change Advocacy Position

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

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA is undertaking consultation on a revised Climate Change Advocacy Position.
- This Draft was developed following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team of State Council.
- Since WALGA's current Advocacy Position and Policy Statement were endorsed in 2018, there have been significant legislative, policy, technological and scientific changes.
- An updated climate change advocacy position, which complements other WALGA advocacy positions, will provide a sound basis for WALGA's advocacy.
- WALGA is seeking Council endorsed feedback by 1 May 2026.

#### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This item is intended to replace WALGA's 2018 Climate Change [Advocacy Position](#) and [Policy Statement](#).

#### ATTACHMENT

The 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 to include planning for, and mitigating, the risks associated with climate change.
- 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

It is important that the WALGA climate change advocacy position is updated to reflect these changes and the consequent needs and priorities of Local Governments. An updated climate

change advocacy position, which complements other WALGA advocacy positions, will provide a sound basis for WALGA's advocacy.

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.

WALGA Environment and Waste Team members will be attending Zone meetings in April 2026 to support zone discussions on the draft Advocacy Position.

WALGA is seeking Council endorsed feedback on the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position by **COB Friday, 1 May 2026**. Feedback can be provided to [environment@walga.asn.au](mailto: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, expected to be in July 2026.

## Noted

### 7.3.8 Draft Renewable Energy Planning Code

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*By Kieran McGovern, WALGA Senior Policy Advisor, Planning*

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA Advocacy Position 6.17 Renewable Energy Facilities calls for changes to the renewable energy State planning framework to ensure it is fit for purpose to guide the ongoing development of the sector.
- The State Government has released a draft Renewable Energy Planning Code and Guidelines with the aim of establishing a consistent assessment framework, clear development standards, and improved certainty around impacts such as noise, landscape, environmental considerations, and safety.
- The Code initially focuses on wind farms but is designed to expand to other renewable technologies, requiring detailed technical reporting and encouraging (but not regulating) community benefit-sharing agreements.
- Proposed regulatory amendments would align local planning schemes with the Code and classify renewable energy projects valued at \$20 million or more as mandatory significant development, shifting decision-making authority to the WAPC.
- WALGA strongly encourages consideration of the draft Code by Zones. Local Governments should make their own submissions on the draft Code by 10 April 2026 and provide feedback to WALGA to inform our submission on behalf of the sector by 27 February 2026. Council endorsed submissions are preferred.

#### ATTACHMENT

- [Draft Renewable Energy Planning Code and Guidelines](#)
- [Information Sheet – Proposed Amendments to Local Planning Scheme Regulations](#)
- [Information Sheet – Proposed Amendments to Significant Development Regulations](#)
- [WALGA summary of the draft Renewable Energy Planning Code](#)

#### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's proposed advocacy approach is consistent with WALGA [Advocacy Positions](#):

- 6.1 Planning Principles and Reform
- 6.4 State Development Applications and Decision Making
- 6.16 Energy Transition Engagement and Community Benefit Framework
- 6.17 Renewable Energy Facilities
- 6.18 Priority Agriculture.

## BACKGROUND

The growth in the number, size, and complexity of renewable energy facilities across Western Australia is expected to continue as energy generation and other traditional industries decarbonise their facilities and operations. As a result, the placement and management of renewable energy facilities have become contentious issues in local communities across Western Australia.

In September 2024, WALGA's State Council endorsed three advocacy positions to address concerns related to renewable energy. Advocacy Position 6.17 Renewable Energy Facilities noted that the existing Western Australian Planning Commission's (WAPC) Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities was inadequate to address these concerns, leading to inconsistent application and approvals of renewable energy facilities across the State.

The advocacy position calls for the existing Position Statement: Renewable Energy Facilities to be elevated to a State planning policy, to provide the highest level of planning policy control and ensure the state planning framework is fit for purpose to guide the ongoing development of the sector.

On 12 December 2025, the State Government released a draft Renewable Energy Planning Code (the Code) and associated Guidelines for public consultation. The Code has been prepared to provide guidance to industry, Local Government and communities by:

- introducing a consistent development assessment framework for renewable energy infrastructure across Western Australia.
- establishing clear development standards and application requirements.
- addresses potential land use and environmental impacts, such as noise and landscape considerations.

The initial focus of the Code is on wind farms, with flexibility to expand to other renewable energy developments, including solar farms and battery energy storage systems.

The draft Code covers key planning issues such as safety, noise, shadow flicker, landscape and visual impact, natural environment, natural hazards, aviation safety, electromagnetic interference, transport, construction, and decommissioning.

Under the proposed Code, development applications must include detailed technical reports, whilst community benefit-sharing agreements are encouraged, these agreements sit outside of the planning system.

To enable implementation of the Code, regulatory amendments are proposed to the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015* to support incorporation of the Code into local planning schemes through Model Provisions, introduce standard land-use definitions that will apply to all local planning schemes and guide assessment of new noise-sensitive development near existing or approved wind farms.

There are also proposed reforms to the *Planning and Development (Significant Development) Regulations 2024*, which will classify renewable energy development applications valued at \$20 million or more as mandatory significant development. These projects will be assessed and determined by the WAPC under the State Significant Development Pathway (under Part 11B of the *Planning and Development Act 2005*), and Local Governments role will be to provide commentary to the development application, but final decision-making authority will rest with the WAPC.

**Consultation on the draft Code and Guidelines closes 10 April 2026.**

## COMMENT

WALGA's has advocated for changes to the renewable energy State planning framework to ensure orderly and proper planning of renewable energy facilities and therefore welcomes the release of the draft Renewable Energy Planning Code and Guidelines by the State Government for public comment. This draft Code represents a significant step toward establishing a consistent planning framework to guide the ongoing development of renewable energy facilities across WA – providing important clarity and guidance to WA Local Governments.

The proposed amendments to classify renewable energy projects over \$20 million as 'mandatory significant development' that must be determined by WAPC does not align with WALGA's Advocacy Position 6.4 State Development Applications and Decision Making, as it has the potential to erode Local Government decision making powers and community input. WALGA's position is that Part 11B should be abolished, or, if it is retained, the cost threshold should be raised to \$50 million.

WALGA considers it is essential that the requirement for community benefits be mandated. There are several options that should be examined as potential mechanisms to mandate community benefit-sharing agreements, including (but not limited to) amendments to existing planning or energy legislation or new, standalone legislation.

There is also a lack of guidance regarding appropriate land uses in particular zones, specifically protecting rural land for agricultural purposes, instead stating that wind farms are generally compatible with agricultural land uses. WALGA's position is that regulatory amendments are required to create a model zone through the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015* for land identified as high quality agricultural land (noting most of this land is located in the South West region) known as the 'Priority Agriculture'.

WALGA held two online information sessions on the Code alongside the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage on 5 and 9 February 2026 for Local Government officers and Elected Members respectively.

WALGA will prepare a submission to the State on behalf of the sector to ensure the draft Code delivers positive outcomes for Member Local Governments, communities and industry.

WALGA strongly encourages consideration of the draft Code by Zones. Local Governments should make their own submissions on the draft Code by 10 April 2026 and **provide feedback to WALGA to inform our submission on behalf of the sector by 27 February 2026**. Council endorsed submissions are preferred.

Submissions to WALGA via – [planning@walga.asn.au](mailto:planning@walga.asn.au)

WALGA's submission will be provided to State Council by flying agenda to meet the submission deadline.

## Noted

### 7.3.9 Elections Reform – WALGA Discussion Paper

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*By Lyn Fogg, Zone Executive Officer*

The meeting was advised, WALGA had distributed to Mayors / Presidents and CEOs a Discussion Paper on the State Government's proposed Electoral Reform proposals:

- Four-year election cycle, full spill of all Council Member offices
- Compulsory voting.

Local Governments are encouraged to provide Council endorsed feedback to WALGA by 27 March 2026.

Feedback will inform a proposed sector wide advocacy position that will be provided for Zone review via the April State Council Agenda.

**Noted**

## 8 WALGA STATE COUNCIL BUSINESS

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### 8.1 ZONE STATE COUNCIL MEMBER REPORT

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*Cr Scott Crosby, Zone State Councillor*

**Nil**

### 8.2 STATE COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA – MATTERS FOR DECISION

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## 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.

### 9.1.1 Aviation Advocacy Positions

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*By Negar Nili, Policy Officer Transport and Roads*

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Two new Advocacy Positions are proposed to strengthen WALGA's aviation advocacy framework and to inform WALGA's response to future inquiries and/or consultation relating to aviation.
- The aim of the new positions is to provide clearer and more contemporary guidance on:
  - the sustainability and ongoing viability of Local Government-owned regional airports; and
  - the affordability, reliability and accessibility of regional and remote air services for Western Australian communities.
- The proposed positions will assist WALGA to advocate more effectively on behalf of its Members by:

- clearly articulating the essential service role of aviation in regional, rural and remote Western Australia;
- strengthening WALGA's capacity to engage with State and Commonwealth governments on aviation policy and funding; and
- supporting Local Governments facing regulatory, financial and service-delivery challenges associated with regional aviation.
- The development of the proposed Advocacy Positions has been informed by engagement with a sample of Local Governments, which highlighted shared concerns regarding high regional airfares, service reliability, capacity constraints and the role of aviation in supporting health access, emergency response and regional economic development.
- WALGA currently has two existing aviation Advocacy Positions; however, feedback from Local Governments clarified that the inclusion of additional, targeted policy positions is essential to better reflect contemporary challenges and to strengthen support for Councils.
- The proposed positions build on existing WALGA policy and provide a stronger basis for:
  - sector advocacy;
  - engagement with State Council and Zones to seek feedback; and
  - informing WALGA's potential submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Regional Airfares.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The current [WALGA Advocacy Positions](#) relating to Aviation are positions 5.9 Aviation and 5.9.1 Airfare Pricing in Regional Western Australia. The proposed new positions would be in addition to these existing positions.

### **5.9 Aviation**

**Position Statement** *The Local Government sector supports the Department of Transport's State Aviation Strategy 2020, with more focus required on non-RPT airports to ensure it is representative of all of WA, more focus on general aviation development across WA and noting that the preferred ownership and governance of Local Governments is Council Controlled Organisations. The Local Government sector advocates for a clear position on the economic benefit of airports in regional areas to be included in the future state wide Airports State Planning Policy.*

#### **5.9.1. Airfare Pricing in Regional Western Australia**

**Position Statement** *The Local Government sector supports:*

1. *An evidence-based assessment commissioned by the State Government to determine the degree to which market structure and other factors influence the cost of providing air services on each route, the pricing structure offered and the actual prices paid.*
2. *The State Government providing oversight of airfares ensuring transparency, encouraging partnerships between Local Governments and airline carriers to grow the market and the provision of subsidies in some situations.*

## **BACKGROUND**

Aviation plays a critical role in Western Australia, particularly for regional, rural, and remote communities, by providing essential connectivity for access to healthcare, education, employment, and social engagement. Reliable and affordable air services are also vital to regional economic development, workforce mobility, and community resilience, especially where alternative transport options are limited.

WALGA's advocacy on aviation is underpinned by its existing policy framework, which emphasises the need for safe, reliable, and cost-effective air services across regional and remote Western Australia. These policies highlight the critical role of aviation in enabling regional connectivity, supporting service delivery, and contributing to economic development, while recognising the operational and regulatory responsibilities faced by Local Government-managed airports.

WALGA has also contributed to State-level policy development including the State Aviation Strategy 2020. This strategy supports key initiatives including regulating certain routes to support a sustainable service, the Regional Airfare Zone Cap, Regional Airports Development Scheme and regulation of closed charters in some situations. It is anticipated that the Department of Transport and Major Infrastructure will review and refresh the State Aviation Strategy in 2026-27.

At the national level, WALGA engaged in consultation processes leading to the Green and White Papers on Regional Transport and Aviation, representing Local Government perspectives and regional needs.

Two recently initiated inquiries – the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the determinants of regional airfares and the Senate (Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee) Inquiry into the State of Australia's Aviation Sector and its ability to deliver reliable and affordable services to rural, regional and remote communities – provide important opportunities to review and improve policies supporting regional aviation. Both inquiries have overlapping focus areas, including affordability, government intervention, and impacts on regional communities.

To inform its responses to both inquiries, WALGA has engaged with a sample of Local Governments to understand their experiences, challenges, and priorities for regional air services. This engagement has clarified the needs of Local Governments and communities, forming the basis for developing two proposed new Advocacy Positions to support Members and advocate for improved connectivity, affordability, and service sustainability across regional Western Australia.

## **NEW ADVOCACY POSITIONS**

### **Regional Airports**

**Position Statement**     *WALGA supports the sustainable operation of Local Government owned regional airports and advocates for proportionate regulatory frameworks, targeted funding, and operational guidance to ensure safe, efficient, and resilient airport infrastructure and services.*

**Background**             Regional airports are vital for connectivity, economic development, tourism, health access, and emergency response in Western Australia. Local Governments operating regional airports face increasing regulatory and operational pressures, including aviation security requirements, compliance obligations, ageing infrastructure, and limited staffing capacity. Many Council-owned airports cover day-to-day operating costs but lack sufficient capital to fund major infrastructure renewal or security upgrades. Airports that support both community access and FIFO activity can face additional funding constraints despite their ongoing role in servicing regional communities. These challenges highlight the need for regulatory settings and funding arrangements that

reflect airport scale, risk profile, and regional operating conditions.

### **Regional and Remote Air Services**

**Position Statement** *WALGA advocates for reliable, affordable, and equitable regional air services, calling for greater oversight of airline pricing practices, including transparent fare structures and equitable access to discounted and lower-cost fares, to mitigate the impacts of limited competition and dynamic pricing on regional residents, businesses, and essential travel. WALGA also promotes the continued viability of essential routes and recognises regional aviation as an essential service supporting community access, workforce mobility, and regional economic development.*

**Background** Regional communities rely on air services for essential travel, including access to health care, employment, education, and family connections, particularly where alternative transport options are limited. High airfares, limited availability of lower-cost seats, and opaque pricing structures reduce affordability for residents and businesses, even in markets with more than one airline. Regional air services are also vulnerable to sudden service reductions or route withdrawals, which can isolate communities and disrupt economic and social activity. These challenges underscore the importance of policy settings that support affordability, service continuity, and equitable access.

### **COMMENT**

Engagement with a sample of Local Governments operating airports with Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) services highlighted operational, financial, and service delivery issues affecting both Council-owned airports and regional air services.

Key matters raised by Councils include:

- Airline pricing and equitable access: Complex, opaque, and highly variable fare structures; limited availability of lower-cost seats; competition does not always deliver affordable or equitable outcomes.
- Aviation security requirements: Standards designed for larger airports impose significant operational and financial burdens, with outdated equipment, regulatory ambiguities, and high upgrade costs creating compliance challenges.
- Funding and resource constraints: Many Councils operate airports with limited staff and capital; while day-to-day operating costs may be covered, major infrastructure renewal or expansion and security upgrades are often unfunded.
- Service continuity and reliability: Regional air services are fragile, with sudden route reductions or withdrawals impacting essential travel, community connectivity, and local economies.
- Coordination across governments and industry: Fragmented policy, regulatory, and funding arrangements limit Local Governments' ability to respond quickly to changes, highlighting the need for improved collaboration.
- Regional aviation as an essential service: Airports and air services underpin health access, emergency response, tourism, economic development, and social cohesion, demonstrating their broader value beyond transport alone.

Based on these issues and priorities identified through Local Government engagement, WALGA has developed the two proposed Advocacy Positions above on aviation – one focusing on regional airports and the other on regional and remote air services – to address the challenges of affordability, accessibility, operational sustainability, and service continuity for regional communities.

#### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse two new Advocacy Positions on Aviation as follows:

1. Regional Airports  
*WALGA supports the sustainable operation of Local Government owned regional airports and advocates for proportionate regulatory frameworks, targeted funding, and operational guidance to ensure safe, efficient, and resilient airport infrastructure and services.*
2. Regional and Remote Air Services  
*WALGA advocates for reliable, affordable, and equitable regional air services, calling for greater oversight of airline pricing practices, including transparent fare structures and equitable access to discounted and lower-cost fares, to mitigate the impacts of limited competition and dynamic pricing on regional residents, businesses, and essential travel. WALGA also promotes the continued viability of essential routes and recognises regional aviation as an essential service supporting community access, workforce mobility, and regional economic development.*

#### RESOLUTION

**Moved: President Cr Len Handasyde**

**Seconded: Deputy Mayor Cr Paul Terry**

**That the Great Southern Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 9.1 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.**

**CARRIED**

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#### 9.2 OTHER STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS

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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.

##### 9.2.1 WALGA State President's Report

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

Noted

## 10 EMERGING ISSUES/COLLABORATION

Nil

## 11 OTHER BUSINESS

### **Shire of Plantagenet**

Standalone module grid power stations – According to the EPA, Western Power will be installing upwards of 1,000 modular grid units around the State. The Shire of Plantagenet has up to 12 units installed and raised significant concerns about bush fire risk mitigation and safety measures - Western Power not sufficiently resourcing adequate maintenance / mitigation works. The Shire noted there had been insufficient community engagement by Western Power. The Shire will bring an item to the next Zone meeting on this topic.

The Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup noted similar concerns with Western Power inspections, namely flagging overgrown vegetation.

### **Shire of Cranbrook**

Forest Product Commission (FPC) rate exemption – The Shire of Cranbrook advised a significant change to the operations of the FPC through expansion of land holdings and claiming rate exemption status that FPC has not previously claimed, impacting rate revenue.

The Warren Blackwood Alliance of Councils met with the Minister on this issue, highlighting the following points.

- The cessation of rates was from this Financial Year; this money has been diverted to the WA Treasury, not to Local Governments. The Alliance is seeking \$350,000 in reimbursements.
- This coming budget will be affected by this rate gap. Medical and community services are likely the first things to be cut.
- Noted FPC has expended 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of its budget for acquisition of additional land for FPC purposes, which will escalate rate revenue loss to LGs and loss of prime agricultural land.
- A request has been sent to the FPC to better understand their long-term strategy, as the strategy to purchase land may be adversely affecting the ability of farmers to compete with the State Government to purchase land.

The Shire of Cranbrook will provide an item to the next Zone meeting, to seek a resolution for WALGA advocacy on this matter.

## 12 NEXT ZONE MEETING

The next meeting of the Great Southern Country Zone will be held on Friday, 24 April 2026 at the Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup commencing at 10:00am.

## 13 CLOSURE

*There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 11:55am.*

# Attachment 1: Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (DLGIRS) – February 2026

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Department of Local Government,  
Industry Regulation and Safety

## Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety

### Local Government Division Report

February 2026

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#### Local Government Reforms

##### Local Government Inspector

- The Office of the Local Government Inspector (the Inspector) formally commenced operations from 1 January 2026.
- The Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) has made regulations to support the functions and role of the Inspector.
- Parts 8A and 8B introduced by the *Local Government Amendment Act 2024* have been proclaimed to enable these regulations to take effect from 1 January 2026.
- The Local Government Inspector (Mr Tony Brown) has new powers to investigate and intervene to ensure compliance, focussing on early intervention so issues are identified and resolved before they escalate.
- The Inspector regulations deal with:
  - new requirements for complaints handling;
  - the appointment of monitors;
  - powers of authorised officers of the Inspector; and
  - offences under the *Local Government Act 1995* that may be infringeable.
- A number of consequential amendments have also been made to other regulations as a result of these changes.
- The Regulations Working Group (RWG) provided valuable feedback in the development of these regulations that support the operational requirements of the Inspector.
- LGIRS is developing a guide to assist local governments with understanding these changes and their compliance obligations.
- For further information visit the Department's website – [Inspector Regulations](#).

##### Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees (ARIC)

- LGIRS has made regulations to support the implementation of new requirements for Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees (ARICs).
- The RWG provided valuable feedback on draft consultation regulations.
- Section 87 of the *Local Government Amendment Act 2024 (WA)* has been commenced; local governments are now required to establish a committee of council to be the ARIC.
- The ARIC must have an independent chair and a deputy to the chair, to ensure a level of independence and provide impartial oversight.
- The functions of an ARIC include:
  - the review of reports related to compliance audits and systems reviews;
  - making recommendations to council on improvements where applicable;

- the review of actions a local government has taken to improve the effectiveness of its operations in accordance with its compliance obligations.

For further information, visit the Department's website – [Audit, Risk and Improvement Committees](#).

### **Other Reforms**

- LGIRS will continue to work on developing regulations to implement other reform projects over the course of 2026, including regulations dealing with:
  - Communications Agreements;
  - Online Registers;
  - Standardised Meeting Procedures
  - Council Plans (IPR); and
  - Rates and Revenue Policy.

### **Reform updates**

- LGIRS conducted a webinar on 17 December 2025 to explain the changes related to the commencement of the Inspector and the new requirements for ARICs.
- The webinar is available on the LGIRs website and contains an update on the status of other local government reforms – [Webinar 15:17 December 2025](#).
- The Regulations Working Group (RWG) will continue to assist with providing feedback on the various regulations reform projects.
- The IPR Working Group will continue to assist with developing regulations and supporting materials for council plans.
- Further updates on the status of local government reforms will be made ahead of implementation.
- The LG Act Reform team can be emailed directly at [actreview@lgirs.wa.gov.au](mailto:actreview@lgirs.wa.gov.au).

### **Model Financial Statements (MFS)**

- The sector was invited to provide feedback on the 2024-25 model financial statements and guidance materials by Friday, 6 February 2026.
- Any feedback received will be considered for the 2025-26 revisions, due for release in April 2026.

### **Non-Financial Asset Valuation Guidelines**

- The Non-Financial Asset Valuation Guidelines have been developed and are expected to be published imminently.
- Broad communication is planned to notify the sector of their availability, including directly with WALGA.

### **Local Government Grants Commission**

#### **Financial Assistance Grants funding**

- The total funding allocation to WA local governments for 2025-26 is \$423,375,700 (consisting of \$261,451,711 in general purpose funding and \$161,923,989 in local road funding and special projects) compared to \$400,140,692 in 2024-25. This total includes

the advance payment provided in June 2025 to local governments.

- Local governments received their first and second quarterly payments of remaining 2025-26 funds in August and November 2025. Further payments will be made in mid-February and mid-May. The grant schedule is available on the Grants Commission website.
- The Grants Commission Information Return to collect 2024-25 financial data was sent to all local governments in November 2025 and made available on the Grants Commission website. Local governments were asked to complete the document and return it by email before 31 January 2025. If your local government is yet to submit its return, please contact the Grants Commission staff to arrange an extension.
- If local governments have any other questions regarding their grant allocation, the methodology or wish to make a submission regarding the process of allocation finds, they can be directed to [grants.commission@lgirs.wa.gov.au](mailto:grants.commission@lgirs.wa.gov.au)

### Local Government Advisory Board

- While it is still some time away, local governments are reminded that ward and representation changes and district boundary adjustments, must be received by 31 January 2027 if they want to ensure changes are in place for 2027 local government elections.
- It is important local governments factor in if there is a need for public consultation (which needs to occur prior to submission) when considering a proposal to the Board.
- The Board kindly requests that local governments provide proposals as early as possible to allow sufficient time for implementation.
- Documents outlining the requirements and processes are available on the Advisory Board's website, or alternatively you can email [advisoryboard@lgirs.wa.gov.au](mailto:advisoryboard@lgirs.wa.gov.au) for guidance.

### Stop Puppy Farming

- Regulations were published on 27 November 2024 for the pet shop and dog supply approval reforms.
- On 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.
- Further regulation changes are being developed in relation to implementing the Stop Puppy Farming reforms.
- Queries can be directed to the team at [stoppuppyfarming@lgirs.wa.gov.au](mailto:stoppuppyfarming@lgirs.wa.gov.au).

### PetsWA

- The PetsWA project is in a reset phase and LGIRS is evaluating what has been delivered to date.
- LGIRS values the sector's contribution and would appreciate the opportunity to engage further as we chart our path forward.
- Local governments will need to continue existing pet registration programs and engagement with pet owners for annual registration and renewal processes.

## Cat Containment

- Work is underway to progress the necessary cat containment amendments, with a Bill anticipated to be introduced into Parliament in 2026.
- Consultation on a draft Cat Containment Bill was undertaken in January 2026 with key stakeholders.
- LGIRS is scoping the cat act review, which will commence soon.

## 2025 Local Government Election Commitments

- The State Government has invested \$17 million in the local government portfolio across 135 community and infrastructure projects and programs through the 2025 election commitment program.
- Over 70 of these are for local governments. LGIRS is continuing to work with local governments on the drafting and execution of the financial assistance agreements, with over \$1 million in funds disbursed to date.

## LGIRS Contacts

LG Support and Engagement Includes MyCouncil queries	<a href="mailto:lghotline@lgirs.wa.gov.au">lghotline@lgirs.wa.gov.au</a>
Statutory Approvals (Differential rates, budget and audit extensions)	<a href="mailto:legislation@lgirs.wa.gov.au">legislation@lgirs.wa.gov.au</a>
LG Policy and Legislation	<a href="mailto:LGpolicy@lgirs.wa.gov.au">LGpolicy@lgirs.wa.gov.au</a>
Stop Puppy Farming	<a href="mailto:stoppuppyfarming@lgirs.wa.gov.au">stoppuppyfarming@lgirs.wa.gov.au</a>
Grants Commission – Financial Assistance Grants	<a href="mailto:Grants.commission@lgirs.wa.gov.au">Grants.commission@lgirs.wa.gov.au</a>
LG accounting or financial enquiries	<a href="mailto:LG.accounting@lgirs.wa.gov.au">LG.accounting@lgirs.wa.gov.au</a>
LG Act Reform	<a href="mailto:actreview@lgirs.wa.gov.au">actreview@lgirs.wa.gov.au</a>
LG Advisory Board	<a href="mailto:advisoryboard@lgirs.wa.gov.au">advisoryboard@lgirs.wa.gov.au</a>
Off-Road Vehicles	<a href="mailto:orv@lgirs.wa.gov.au">orv@lgirs.wa.gov.au</a>

Attachment 2: Zone Status Report – February 2026

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Agenda Item	Zone Resolution	WALGA Response	Update	WALGA Contact
<p>21 November 2025 Zone Agenda Item <b>8.3.3 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1960 – Review</b></p>	<p>That the WALGA State Council advocate for the State Government to comprehensively review the <i>Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1960</i> to achieve at least, the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. broaden the Act’s scope and establish contemporary provisions addressing all modern interfaces between landowners, local governments and the public,</li> <li>2. establish penalties to create a meaningful disincentive for landowner non-compliance with provisions of the Act, and</li> <li>3. enable a local government to impose penalties against livestock owners who consistently allow their livestock to stray and create a nuisance, without the need to first create a local law or initiate a prosecution.</li> </ol>	<p>This item will be referred to the Governance Policy Team for consideration.</p> <p>The Zone will be informed of the outcome.</p>	<p><b>February 2026</b></p>	<p><b>Kirsty Martin,</b> Executive Manager Member Services <a href="mailto:kmartin@walga.asn.au">kmartin@walga.asn.au</a> 9213 2051</p>
<p>21 November 2025 Zone Agenda Item <b>8.3.4 Work Health and Safety Act 2020 – Statutory Review</b></p>	<p>That WALGA State Council advocate for the introduction of relevant amendments to the <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2020</i> so that Bush Fire Brigade volunteers are not deemed as a Local Government “Worker” (as defined in the WHS Act).</p>	<p>The WALGA submission to the Statutory Review of the <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2020</i> was submitted to WorkSafe on 12 December 2025.</p> <p>The draft submission was endorsed by the Governance and People and Place Policy Teams at a joint meeting on 1 December 2025.</p> <p>The draft submission was endorsed by State Council by Flying Minute on 10 December 2025, RESOLUTION 256.FM/2025.</p> <p>The submission was submitted to WorkSafe on 12 December 2025.</p> <p>The comments provided by Great Southern VROC were considered in the final submission, however, as the majority of members endorsed the Submission, the recommendation proposed to remove bush fire brigade volunteers from the definition of “worker” under the Act was not adopted.</p> <p>WALGA does not have an advocacy position on amending the WHS Act 2020 to exclude Bush Fire Brigade volunteers from being considered Local Government “workers” under the Act. This would have implications for bushfire protections provided through LGIS and for the over 18,000 Local Government BFB volunteers across the State.</p>	<p><b>February 2026</b></p>	<p><b>Nicole Matthews</b> Executive Manager Policy <a href="mailto:nmatthews@walga.asn.au">nmatthews@walga.asn.au</a> 9213 2039</p>



Attachment 3: Zone Action Items – February 2026

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Great Southern Country Zone – ACTION ITEMS				
ZONE MEETING DATE / ITEM	ZONE RESOLUTION	ZONE RESPONSE	STATUS	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
2025, 11 April Item 7.2.1 Zone Strategic Priorities	<p>The Great Southern Country Zone:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Writes to responsible Ministers advocating for the Zone's Strategic Priorities.</li> </ol> <p>NOTE: Secretariate to send GSCZ's Regional Education submission to the Minister for Education.</p>	<p>Action deferred until after Minister attends June Zone meeting.</p> <p><b>August 2025:</b> Minister's office has remained in contact with the WALGA Secretariat and has been advised of the Zone's 2025 meeting schedule. The Secretariat will advise the Minister's office of the 2026 meeting schedule, once determined by the Zone.</p> <p><b>November 2026:</b> Minister Whitby's office has advised that he will attend the June, August and November Zone meetings for 2026.</p>	<b>Ongoing</b>	Lyn Fogg, Zone Executive Officer

# President's Report

## March 2026

### Introduction

As I put pen to paper for my last report as WALGA President, I pause and reflect on what has been an exhaustive but incredibly rewarding four years in the role. It is an extraordinary privilege to represent the State's 139 Local Governments and one that I have never taken for granted. In preparing these reports, I have often reflected that they never adequately capture the scope and relentless nature of the role. However, the work has never bothered me given the opportunity to leverage outcomes that benefit our entire State – something that I have relished so much.

I'd like to thank every one of the Elected Members and Officers that I have engaged with – not just as your President but as WALGA Deputy President and State Councillor. You do amazing work, often under trying conditions and with very little recognition of your efforts. Know that I see this and appreciate everything you do. I will continue to champion Local Government and the importance of what you do well after I step away from this role. Local Government is often derided and the target of critics. For those of us who live and love the institution of Local Government, we know the importance of what we do, as do our communities. I look forward to seeing the sector continue to thrive as we face new and exciting challenges together.

### Political Engagement

WALGA's political engagement activities have moderated in the past two months as Parliament rose for the year, with efforts focused on reviewing and refining the Association's strategic approach for 2026.

Since the last State Council meeting, WALGA has met with Hon Julie Freeman MLC to discuss key sector issues relevant to her portfolios of Road Safety and Arts and Culture.

Further meetings have been held with Hon Merredith Hammat MLA, Minister for Health and Mental Health, and Hon John Carey MLA, Minister for Planning; Lands; Housing and Works; and Health Infrastructure.

In response to the current political environment, WALGA has refreshed its political engagement strategies for 2026, prioritising the maintenance of strong relationships with key Ministers while also strengthening engagement with influential backbenchers and Opposition spokespeople.

A key priority for the first quarter of 2026 is to brief decision-makers on WALGA's State Budget Submission.

**Federal Budget Submission**

The Federal Assistant Treasurer has recently invited submissions for the 2026–27 Budget. Each year, ALGA prepares a national submission on behalf of the Local Government sector. WALGA has provided a complementary submission seeking commitments to address several priority issues of particular importance to Western Australian Local Governments, including:

- Additional ongoing, formula-based targeted funding streams for Local Governments to provide certainty and enable effective planning for community needs
- A Commonwealth funding contribution to match the Western Australian Government commitment to apply proven road safety countermeasures on 1,474km of regional roads, representing the prioritised sections of the proposed Regional Road Safety Program.
- A dedicated Coastal Hazard Adaptation program to support Local Governments in managing coastal risks.
- Funding support to address the gaps in the Long-Term Cycle Network
- Dedicated mitigation and resilience funding for councils across Australia build their capacity and capability to respond to emergencies in our communities.
- Support for rural and remote Local Governments in Western Australia to offset the costs of providing essential primary healthcare services until long-term funding and workforce solutions are established.

WALGA's submission has been provided to all WA Members of Federal Parliament to highlight these priority initiatives.

**Media Engagement**

As the authoritative voice for Western Australian Local Government, WALGA continues to engage proactively with the media to advocate on behalf of our Members to drive better outcomes for Local Governments and their communities.

Since the last report, I have undertaken a number of media interviews to promote WALGA's 2026-27 State Budget Submission. This has included an interview with ABC Radio's Geraldine Mellet on the Mornings Program highlighting WALGA's Emergency Management funding requests and 6PR's Russell Collett about important measures to boost and protect WA's tree canopy.

WALGA commentary has been featured in The Sunday Times on several occasions including calls for funding to grow WA's tree canopy and stop the spread of the Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer, calls for an independent organisation to undertake a broad review of rating exemptions, and the important measures required to assist Local Governments deliver more active transport infrastructure, interventions, and supporting initiatives around schools.

**Urban Greening Strategy**

Following sustained WALGA advocacy it was pleasing that the State Government has finally released the long awaited Urban Greening Strategy for Perth and Peel. While the Strategy does not deliver on all of WALGA's priorities – notably effective measures to reduce tree loss on private land – it does align with WALGA's 30% by 2040 target. Much more will be required to reach this target and WALGA has been clear on the sector's continued commitment to increasing tree canopy in urban areas across the State.

**WALGA Training**

The 2026 WALGA Training Calendar is now available on the WALGA website, offering a comprehensive range of professional development opportunities for Elected Members and officers across the sector.

I particularly encourage Members to engage with the Council Member Essentials (CME) program, which all newly elected members are required to undertake in the first 12 months of being elected. For the first time since the training was introduced, those who were re-elected last year may also be required to complete the CME unless one of the exemptions in the Regulations applies.

The legislative amendments that came into effect on 1 January 2026 introduced a new requirement for Elected Members to provide a declaration to the CEO that they have either passed the CME assessments or were exempt from the requirement to do so within one month of the completion deadline. The CEO must now also notify the Local Government Inspector if an Elected Member fails to do so.

**In closing**

It is with both a sense of pride and a tinge of sadness that I sign off this report as my final one as your President. I am proud that I leave WALGA in a position where it is respected and valued by its members and stakeholders. This has been achieved by the outstanding leadership of our CEO, Nick Sloan, and the commitment of every single member of the WALGA team who endeavour at all times to support our members. The WALGA team truly is amazing.

I will never forget what a privilege it has been to serve you, and I will treasure the memories.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Deputy President, Paul Kelly for his unwavering support and to Nick Sloan for not only supporting me, but for his friendship.

For every kind word, smile and handshake offered to me during my tenure, I thank you, it has been welcomed and very much appreciated.



**President Cr Karen Chappel AM JP  
WALGA President**

## President's Contacts

The President's contacts since 3 December 2025 and scheduled before 4 March 2026 are as follows:

### State and Commonwealth Government Relations

- National Emergency Management Ministers Meeting
- Hon Paul Papalia MLA, Minister for Emergency Services; Corrective Services'; Defence Industries; Veterans; Racing and Gaming
- Australian Government Black Spot – WA Consultative Panel Meeting
- Hon Meredith Hammat MLA, Minister for Health, Mental Health

### Zone Meetings

- Northern Country Zone
- Kimberley Zone
- North Metropolitan Zone
- East Metropolitan Zone
- South West Country Zone

### Local Government Relations

- **State Council Meetings**
  - State Council Meeting, 3 December
  - Strategic Forum, 3 December
  - Corporate Governance Charter Workshop
  - State Council Information Forum, 4 February
  - Local Government House Trust
  - Finance and Services Committee
- **ALGA**
  - Board meeting, 11 September
  - Board Strategic Planning Sessions, 11-12 February
- **LGIS**
  - Internal Audit Workshop
  - JLT Management Committee Meeting
  - Risk and Compliance Meeting
  - Board Meeting, 30 January
- The Role of Mayors and Presidents
- WALGA Wrap 2025
- Shire of Augusta Margaret River, President Julia Jean Rice and CEO, Andrea Selvey
- Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund Board Meeting and Annual General Meeting
- City of Joondalup Mayor Daniel Kingston and CEO, James Pearson
- A WALGA Cheers
- WALGA Certificate 3 Virtual Graduation