

Central Country Zone Minutes

20 June, 2025

Hosted by the Shire of Williams

Commenced at 10.06am

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Policy and Advocacy Prioritisation Framework

The Central Country Zone adopted the Framework on 12 April 2024.

How to use the Framework:

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

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

ATTACHMENTS

The following are provided as attachments to the Minutes;

1. Item 3 Host council Presentation
2. Item 10.4 WALGA Roadwise Report

The full 2 July 2025 State Council Agenda [can be found here](#).

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

The Chair declared the meeting open at 10.06am.

1.2 HOUSEKEEPING – ZONE CHAIR

1. Welcome:

The Zone Chair, President Cr Des Hickey, will welcome Zone members and provide OSH/bathroom/exit information to those in attendance.

2. Share your name and Local Government:

Delegates are reminded to ensure that they call their name and Local Government when taking the floor to allow for accurate Minutes to be recorded.

1.3 ATTENDANCE

Shire of Beverley	President Cr David White Mr Stephen Gollan Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Brookton	President Cr Katrina Crute Cr Tamara de Lange Mr Gary Sherry Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Corrigin	President Cr Des Hickey (Chair) Deputy President Cr Sharon Jacobs
Shire of Cuballing	Deputy President Cr Rob Harris Mr Chris Paget Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Dumbleyung	Mr Gavin Treasure Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Kulin	Cr Robbie Bowey
Shire of Lake Grace	President Cr Len Armstrong Deputy President Stephen Hunt Mr Alan George Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Narrogin	President Leigh Ballard Mr Dale Stewart Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Pingelly	Deputy President Cr Peter Wood Cr Bryan Hotham Mr Andrew Dover Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Quairading	President Cr Trevor Stacey Deputy President Cr Jonathan Hippisley
Shire of Wagin	President Cr Phillip Blight Deputy President Bryan Kilpatrick Dr. Kenneth Parker, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Wandering	President Cr Sheryl Little Deputy President Cr Alan Price Dr. Alistair Pinto, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of West Arthur	Deputy President Cr Karen Harrington Mr Vin Fordham Lamont, Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Wickepin	President Cr Julie Russell Mr David Burton, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting

Shire of Williams

Cr Tracey Price
Peter Stubbs, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting

Guests

Minister for the Wheatbelt	Hon Sabine Winton BA BPS MLA
Minister for the Wheatbelt	Sarah Rowan, Policy Advisor
Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage	Damian Katich, Principal Policy Officer Heritage and Property Services.
Wheatbelt Development Commission	Rob Cossart, Chief Executive Officer

Members of Parliament

Hon Steve Martin MLC, Member for the Agricultural Region
Peter Rundle MLA, Member for Roe

WALGA

Nick Sloan, Chief Executive Officer
Nicole Matthews, Executive Manager Policy
Naomh Donaghy, Governance and Organisational Officer
Rodney Thornton, Regional Road Safety Advisor

1.4 APOLOGIES

MEMBERS

Shire of Beverley
Shire of Corrigin

Shire of Cuballing
Shire of Dumbleyung
Shire of Dumbleyung
Shire of Kulin
Shire of Kulin
Shire of Narrogin
Shire of Pingelly
Shire of West Arthur
Shire of Wickpin
Shire of Williams
Shire of Quairading

Deputy President Cr Dee Ridgway
Ms Natalie Manton Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
President Cr Eliza Dowling
President Cr Amy Knight
Deputy President Cr Grant Lukins
President Cr Grant Robins
Mr Alan Alan Leeson, Chief Executive Officer
Cr Clive Bartron
President Cr Jackie McBurney
President Cr Neil Morrell
Deputy President Cr Wes Astbury
President Cr Jarrad Logie
Ms Natalie Ness, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting

GUESTS

Regional Development Australia WA
CBH Group

Main Roads WA
Water Corporation

Department of Local Government,
Sport, & Cultural Industries

Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development
Kellie Todman, Manager Government and Industry
Relations
Yogesh Shinde, Operations Manager Narrogin
Michael Roberts, Regional Manager Goldfields &
Agricultural Region
Samantha Cornthwaite, Regional Manager Wheatbelt

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Lachlan Hunter, Member for the Central Wheatbelt
Rick Wilson MP, Federal Member for O'Connor

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

NIL

3 HOST COUNCIL PRESENTATION

President Cr Tracey Price, Shire of Williams, extended a welcome to delegates and guests and provided a presentation on projects and issues facing the Shire of Williams (**Attachment 1**).

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

NIL

5 GUEST SPEAKERS / DEPUTATIONS

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

5.1 DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, LANDS AND HERITAGE

Damian Katich, Principal Policy Officer / Heritage and Property Services.

Damian joined the Central Country Zone meeting to provide a standard Aboriginal Heritage presentation, as well as to discuss queries previously raised at a Zone meeting. The Shire of Dumbleyung brought an item forward regarding the Aboriginal Heritage Act and the State Government's input. During his presentation, Damian spoke to:

1. Whether State Government instructions or guidance has been given to lead agencies to take a more proactive approach to managing Aboriginal cultural and heritage matters in their dealings with proponents, and if yes, what is the approach.
2. Seek Minister's support for a new instruction to be issued to lead agencies using a site by site risk based approach for assessment of Aboriginal cultural and heritage impacts on specific projects.
3. Seek Minister's support for the provision of State Government funding for those LGAs seeking to undertake whole of Registered Site Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage survey assessments to secure (once off) clearance of those sites.

NOTED

5.2 MINISTER FOR THE WHEATBELT; HON SABINE WINTON BA BPS MLA

Minister Winton attended the Budget event in Narrogin, following which the Minister joined the Zone meeting at the Shire of Williams and presented to the Zone.

NOTED

6 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Any Members of Federal and State Government in attendance are invited to provide a brief update on matters relevant to the Zone.

The Zone was joined by;

- Peter Rundle MLA, Member for Roe
- Hon Steve Martin MLC, Member for the Agricultural Region

NOTED

7 AGENCY REPORTS

7.1 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SPORT AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries was an apology for this meeting.

NOTED

7.2 WHEATBELT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Rob Cossart, Chief Executive Officer

There was no report for this meeting.

NOTED

7.3 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA WHEATBELT

Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development

Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt was an apology for this meeting.

NOTED

7.4 MAIN ROADS WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Yogesh Shinde, Operations Manager Narrogin

Main Roads Western Australia was an apology for this meeting.

NOTED

7.5 CBH GROUP

Kellie Todman, Manager - Government & Industry Relations

Kellie Todman was an apology for this meeting.

NOTED

8 MINUTES

8.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 11 APRIL 2025

The Minutes of the Central Country Zone meeting held on 11 April 2025 have previously been circulated to Member Councils.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Karen Harrington

Seconded: President Cr Julie Russell

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

CARRIED

8.2 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 11 APRIL 2025

8.2.1 (Item 8.2.1) Telstra Closure of 3G Services

Shire of Dumbleyung

BACKGROUND:

At the February meeting, the Zone Resolved;

Moved: President Cr Amy Knight

Seconded: Deputy President Stephen Hunt

That WALGA Central Country Zone instigates a region wide survey on the impacts of Telstra's 3G network closure on its residents and report back on the results of the survey at its next April 2025 meeting.

Since the February meeting, a region wide survey was distributed to the Zone. At the time of writing this Agenda, there were nearly 300 responses.

At the April meeting, the Zone Resolved;

Moved: President Cr Amy Knight

Seconded: President Cr Phil Blight

That the Central Country Zone write to Telstra's Regional General Manager, Boyd Brown, sharing the full findings of this survey, and requesting a response on how Telstra will actively address the issues within the report.

This information was shared with Telstra's Boyd Brown. Boyd is unfortunately attending the Northern Country Zone meeting in Geraldton which is on the same day as the Central Country Zone meeting. Boyd is confirmed to attend the August meeting.

NOTED

8.2.2 (Item 8.2.2) Letter to the Minister for Regional Development

BACKGROUND

At the February meeting:

The Shire of Dumbleyung suggested that the Zone write the letter of thanks and acknowledgment to the Minister for Regional Development on Wheatbelt Development Commission efforts to coordinate and submit a successful \$32.8M Wheatbelt Regional Housing Initiative proposal through the Federal Government Housing Support Program (Stream 2).

The Executive Officer wrote to the Minister and received a positive response.

NOTED

8.2.3 (Item 9.6) Audit Fee 2025 - Change in Charging Practice of Office of Auditor General

By Tony Brown, Zone Executive Officer

BACKGROUND

At the April meeting of the Zone, it was Resolved;

That the Central Country Zone of WALGA writes to the Auditor General and WA Parliament Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations (cc the Minister for Local Government)

to express concern that;

- 1. the Office of the Auditor General has increased the cost of audits by amounts greater than annual inflation again; and*
- 2. has, without consultation with local government, modified their invoicing practices and now require local government to pay 50% of their 2024/25 audit in this financial year*
- 3. that the Office of the Auditor General's commitment to greater transparency and cost control made to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations has not been achieved*

The Executive Officer wrote to the Auditor General. We are awaiting a reply.

Zone Comment

Shire of Brookton also wrote to the Auditor General.

NOTED

8.3 MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 JUNE 2025

8.3.1 Item For Decision - Central Country Zone 25/26 Budget

The following Budget for 2025-2026 was submitted to the Executive Committee. The Committee recommended this budget to the Zone;

		Budget 2024-25	Actual YTD 30/3/2025	Forecast YTD 30/6/2025	Budget 2025-26	Comments
Income						
						<i>Propose to leave annual subscriptions same as prior year at \$1,000 each</i>
501	General Subscriptions	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	
575	Interest Earned	\$500	\$271	\$361	\$400	
	Total Income	\$15,500	\$15,271	\$15,361	\$15,400	
Expenditure						
1535	Zone Expenses - Audit Costs	\$1,248	\$1,025	\$1,200	\$1,285	<i>Assume 3% increase</i>
1546	Zone Expenses - In-Person Meetings	\$9,152	\$1,114	\$1,485	\$7,000	<i>Assume 3% increase. Can this budget be reduced?</i>
1555	Zone Expenses - Agricultural Freight Group	\$0			\$0	<i>Not applicable for FY26</i>
						<i>This assumes using external accountants and systems , zone could save costs and use WALGA's financial systems & services.</i>
1558	Zone Expenses - Financial Management	\$2,892	\$1,639	\$2,185	\$3,008	
1572	Zone Expenses - Other	\$500			\$0	
1580	Zone Representative - Honoraria	\$2,704		\$2,704	\$2,785	<i>2026 rates assume a 3% increase</i>
1605	Zone Representative - Meeting Fees	\$500		\$0	\$0	
New account	Consulting / Projects	\$30,000		\$15,000	\$20,000	<i>Zone has discussed spending some</i>

						of the surplus funds on projects where a consultant could be contracted Allow for some travel
1610	Zone Representative - Travel Costs	\$1,000		\$0	\$1,000	
	Total Expenditure	\$47,996	\$3,778	\$22,575	\$35,078	
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$32,496)	\$11,493	(\$7,213)	(\$19,678)	
	Estimated brought forward Balance 1 July	\$76,512	\$76,512	\$76,512	\$69,298	
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$32,496)	\$11,493	(\$7,213)	(\$19,678)	
	Estimated Balance 30 June	\$44,015	\$88,005	\$69,298	\$49,620	
		Budget 2024-25	Actual YTD 30/3/2025	Forecast YTD 30/6/2025	Budget 2025-26	Comments
Income						Propose to leave annual subscriptions same as prior year at \$1,000 each
501	General Subscriptions	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	
575	Interest Earned	\$500	\$271	\$361	\$400	
	Total Income	\$15,500	\$15,271	\$15,361	\$15,400	
Expenditure						
1535	Zone Expenses - Audit Costs	\$1,248	\$1,025	\$1,200	\$1,285	Assume 3% increase Assume 3% increase. Can this budget be reduced?
1546	Zone Expenses - In-Person Meetings	\$9,152	\$1,114	\$1,485	\$7,000	
1555	Zone Expenses - Agricultural Freight Group	\$0			\$0	Not applicable for FY26 This assumes using external accountants and systems , zone could save costs and use WALGA's financial systems & services.
1558	Zone Expenses - Financial Management	\$2,892	\$1,639	\$2,185	\$3,008	
1572	Zone Expenses - Other	\$500			\$0	
1580	Zone Representative - Honoraria	\$2,704		\$2,704	\$2,785	2026 rates assume a 3% increase
1605	Zone Representative - Meeting Fees	\$500		\$0	\$0	

New account	Consulting / Projects	\$30,000		\$15,000	\$20,000	Zone has discussed spending some of the surplus funds on projects where a consultant could be contracted
1610	Zone Representative - Travel Costs	\$1,000		\$0	\$1,000	Allow for some travel
	Total Expenditure	\$47,996	\$3,778	\$22,575	\$35,078	
	Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$32,496)	\$11,493	(\$7,213)	(\$19,678)	

Estimated brought forward					
Balance 1 July	\$76,512	\$76,512	\$76,512	\$69,298	
Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$32,496)	\$11,493	(\$7,213)	(\$19,678)	
Estimated Balance 30 June	\$44,015	\$88,005	\$69,298	\$49,620	

Honoraria

The Committee will receive a verbal briefing on honoraria, for which approximately \$2,700 has been budgeted in previous years.

Role	Period From	Period to	Months	Annual Rate	Amount	FY26
Zone President	1/07/2024	30/06/2025	12.00	1,081.60	\$1,081.60	\$1,114.05
Deputy Zone President	1/07/2024	30/06/2025	12.00	270.40	\$ 270.40	\$ 278.51
Zone State Council Delegate	1/07/2024	30/06/2025	12.00	540.80	\$ 540.80	\$ 557.02
Other Zone Exec Committee Members x 3	1/07/2024	30/06/2025	12.00	270.40pp	\$ 270.40pp	\$ 278.51pp
	Total Payable				\$ 2,704.00	\$ 2,785.12

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Katrina Crute

Seconded: President Cr David White

That the Central Country Zone endorse the 2025/2026 budget.

CARRIED

8.3.2 Confirmation of Minutes, Executive Committee, 10 June 2025

The Minutes of the Central Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 10 June 2025 were provided as an attachment.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: Cr Karen Harrington

That the Minutes of the Central Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 10 June 2025 be endorsed.

CARRIED

9 ZONE BUSINESS

9.1 COST SHIFT AND COMPLIANCE PROJECT UPDATE

BACKGROUND

At the April meeting of the Zone, Caroline Robinson, consultant with 150SQUARE, presented their draft report on the Cost Shift and Compliance Project they have been carrying out on behalf of the Zone.

The Zone Resolved;

This item, and the recommendations within the report will be included in the June Agenda, for Discussion.

A report will be circulated on Monday 16 June 2025 which will include the following:

- Executive Summary including recommendations
- Case Studies (4)
- Revised full report

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Katrina Crute

Seconded: President Cr Phillip Blight

That the Central Country Zone;

- 1. Thanks 150Square for its work to date and acknowledges the presentation of the Cost Shifting and Compliance Report.**
- 2. Does not accept the report in its current form.**
- 3. Establishes a small working group, to update the Zone at the August Zone meeting, to:**
 - a. Work with 150Square to refine and strengthen the report.**
 - b. Develop clear recommendations for the August CCZ meeting that positions the report as an effective advocacy tool against Federal and State cost shifting impacting WA Local Governments.**
- 4. Appoints the following Central Country Zone members to the working group (to work with 150 Square and the Zone Executive Officer)**
 - a. President Cr Katrina Crute**
 - b. President Cr Phillip Blight**
 - c. President Cr Des Hickey**

CARRIED

9.2 LIVING WELL IN THE WHEATBELT STRATEGY

By the Shire of Narrogin

The Wheatbelt District Leadership Group (DLG) endorsed the Living Well in the Wheatbelt Strategy in April and this is now available to share with stakeholders. A copy of the Strategy and a one-page summary of the actions in the Strategy that are relevant to Local Governments for their public planning, aligned with the 4 pillars of the WA State Public Health Plan, were attached.

Implementation is occurring via the Wheatbelt Human Services Managers Forum and its Working Groups. The Wheatbelt DLG hopes the Strategy will usefully guide and inform Local Government in their current Local Public Health (Health & Wellbeing) Plans (LPHPs) under the Public Health Act as a number of actions align with the State Government's PHP priorities and fit well with LPHPs and current activities (e.g. aged friendly communities, maintaining safe green public spaces for walking, playgrounds and social connectedness activities, supporting child care and playgroup activities or seniors activities).

Also attached was a Table showing actions from the Living Well in the Wheatbelt Strategy that LGAs can incorporate and action in their local Public Health Plans.

The WACHS-Wheatbelt Health Promotion Network has provided an overview of the support that the WACHS Health Promotion Network can provide to Local Governments public health planning

The team can be contacted to guide and support Wheatbelt Local Governments in their LPHP planning (contact Chantelle.Jeffery@health.wa.gov.au Wheatbelt Health Promotion Coordinator). The above information will be included in the Zone Agenda for the information on all Local Governments.

Secretariat Comment

The Living Well in the Wheatbelt Strategy will help Local Government's prepare their Local Public Health Plans, which are due by 4 June 2026. WALGA will conduct a Local Public Health Planning masterclass series for delivery in the second half of 2025.

Local Governments are advised to keep an eye out for further information.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Katrina Crute

Seconded: Deputy President Jonathan Hippisley

That the Central Country Zone receive the report.

CARRIED

9.3 JACQUI DODD SCHOLARSHIP

By WALGA Training Team

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

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

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

This year's nominations will open on Tuesday, 1 July and close on Friday, 15 August 2025 at 12 noon. The scholarship winners will be announced at the Local Government Convention in September. For more information and details on how to apply please visit the WALGA Training [website](#), contact the team via email training@walga.asn.au, or call us on (08) 9213 2088.

Zone Comment:

President Cr Katrina Crute shared her positive experience of this scholarship, and encouraged Local Governments to partake.

NOTED

9.4 Concerns Regarding the Delays in Electrical Connections by Western Power – Impact on Regional Development in Brookton

By the Shire of Brookton

The Shire of Brookton wishes to raise serious concerns regarding the significant delays currently being experienced in securing electrical connections to new developments within our community. These delays, attributed to Western Power's current service delivery timeframes, are having a detrimental impact on both the economic viability and social wellbeing of our region.

While we appreciate the challenges involved in managing infrastructure across a large state, the level of delay we are experiencing is becoming increasingly untenable, particularly for regional communities seeking to grow and attract investment.

1. Brookton East Fire Station

The Shire commenced the process for an electrical connection for the new Brookton East Fire Station in October 2023. This is a critical community safety facility, located immediately adjacent to the transformer servicing the Aldersyde CBH facility. Despite its proximity to existing infrastructure, the site did not receive an electrical connection until May 2025 – more than 18 months after the initial request.

Such an extended delay for a vital emergency services facility is unacceptable and places unnecessary strain on community preparedness and response capacity.

2. Boekemans Machinery Staff Housing

Boekemans Machinery, a major agricultural machinery dealership, has recently expanded its operations in Brookton through the purchase of an existing retail business. To support their growth and retain qualified staff, the company has invested in local residential property and initiated the construction of two new housing units in a developed residential area of the town.

Applying for an electrical connection in February 2025, Boekemans has been advised that connection works may not be completed for up to 18 months. The transportable housing units — built and delivered on-site well ahead of schedule by the builder — now sit idle, awaiting connection. The inability to accommodate staff is impacting business operations, staff retention, and ultimately, local employment opportunities.

Broader Implications

The Shire of Brookton is concerned that these examples are indicative of a broader systemic issue that is hindering the economic development and liveability of regional communities like Brookton. Reliable and timely access to electricity is a fundamental enabler of community growth, housing development, and business investment.

The Shire is deeply concerned that ongoing delays in electrical connections are actively discouraging investment in regional Western Australia. Moreover, they are placing unnecessary burdens on local governments and private investors who are working hard to build the accommodation to grow regional towns and strengthen our local economies.

The Shire of Brookton would welcome opportunities to discuss this issue further and work collaboratively toward solutions that support the growth and sustainability of regional communities across Western Australia.

The Shire of Brookton respectfully requests the Zone to consider the following Recommendation:

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: Cr Karen Harrington

That the Central Country Zone request State Council to;

- 1. Engage with Western Power to review and improve timelines for electrical connections, particularly in regional areas;**
- 2. Prioritise connections for essential infrastructure, residential housing, and commercial investment projects; and**
- 3. Consider additional resourcing or regional service delivery strategies to ensure timely support for regional development.**

CARRIED

10 ZONE REPORTS

10.1 CHAIR REPORT

President Cr Des Hickey

President Cr Des Hickey attended the recent Powering WA event. He strongly encourages all Local Governments to provide a submission in response to Powering WA's current *Draft Community Benefits Guideline for Renewable Energy Projects*. Submissions close at 5pm on Monday 4 August, 2025

Resolved

10.2 GREAT SOUTHERN DISTRICT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (DEMC)

President Jackie McBurney

President Jackie McBurney was an apology for this meeting.

NOTED

10.3 WHEATBELT INTERAGENCY HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN ADVISORY GROUP

President Jackie McBurney

President Jackie McBurney was an apology for this meeting.

NOTED

10.4 WALGA ROADWISE

Rodney Thornton, Regional Road Safety Advisor provided a report (**Attachment 2**)

NOTED

11 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

11.1 STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

Cr Phillip Blight

The following comments/notes are provided on the WALGA State Council Meeting held on Wednesday 7 May.

The Minister for Local Government, Hannah Beasley, addressed the meeting and spoke of priorities for this term of government focusing on Local Government Reform (implementation of the Local Government amendment Acts 2023 and 2024).

The Minister took questions from Delegates, including requests for State direction on Renewable Energy rollout.

WALGA CEO Nick Sloan gave a briefing on WALGA's advocacy post the recent elections and Tony Brown and Sam McLeod provided a presentation on cyber security issues for Local Government.

Item 8.2 Dog and Cat Advocacy Position

The position of the Central Country Zone to achieve full cost recovery was absorbed into the composite recommendation and passed by majority.

Item 8.3 Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Advocacy Position

In discussion with the Zone Chair Des Hickey prior to the meeting, I was able to move an amendment to the composite recommendation to include the clause "including allowing Local Governments to clear for safety reasons" This had also been proposed by the South West Country Zone but not taken up by the secretariat. Some debate ensued and a division was called when the vote was put on the amendment. Fortunately it was carried.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Leigh Ballard

Seconded: President Cr Katrina Crute

That the State Councillor Report be received.

CARRIED

11.2 WALGA STATUS REPORT

By Tony Brown, Executive Officer

COMPLETE ZONE STATUS REPORT June 2025

Zone	Agenda Item	Zone Resolution	WALGA Response	Update	WALGA Contact
Central C	14 February 2025 Zone Agenda Item 9.1.3 Support for Public Ownership of WA Freight Rail Network	That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to: 1. Supports State Government efforts to ensure the on-going sustainability and growth of freight rail in Western Australia; 2. Seeks a commitment from the in-coming State Government to: a. focus on ensuring a competitive freight rail network and services reduce freight on roads; providing road safety, environmental benefits; and b. work with Local Governments and other stakeholders to maximise the local economic growth opportunities provided through effective management of the rail network and corridors.	The Infrastructure Policy Team supported including the proposed advocacy position in a new or consolidated policy statement in relation to freight rail following consultation with Local Governments and other stakeholders to better define the social, economic and environmental benefits sought from a publicly controlled freight rail network.	April 2025	Ian Duncan Executive Manager Infrastructure iduncan@walga.asn.au 9213 2031
Central C	7 May State Council Agenda Item 8.3 Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Advocacy Position	That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.3, with amendments to 1a, and the deletion of 2c. 1. <i>Amending the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and associated regulations to remove unnecessary process, complexity and improve timeframes, including:</i> a. <i>introducing statutory timeframes for the determination of referrals, permit applications and appeals <u>investigations and prosecutions</u>.</i> 2. <i>Ensuring the regulatory system is adequately resourced to:</i> ... c. enable timely investigation and enforcement action for illegal clearing	SECRETARIAT COMMENT The issue of ensuring that investigations and prosecutions are undertaken in a timely manner is included in point 2c. Therefore, no change has been made to the Draft Advocacy Position. STATE COUNCIL RESOLUTION That WALGA replace the following Advocacy Positions: 5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act 5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves with an updated Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Advocacy Position as follows: WALGA calls on the Western Australian Government, in consultation with Local Government, to undertake legislative and policy reform to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the regulatory system for clearing native vegetation in Western Australia, including:	June 2025	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039

			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amending the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and associated regulations to remove unnecessary process, complexity and improve timeframes, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. introducing statutory timeframes for the determination of referrals, permit applications and appeals b. increasing the default duration of Area and Purpose Permits to 10 years c. providing a permanent exemption for clearing of previously legally cleared transport corridors, <u>including allowing Local Governments to clear for safety reasons.</u> d. strengthening environmental data sharing requirements to ensure proponents cannot opt-out of sharing data collected for environmental assessment and monitoring purposes. 2. Ensuring the regulatory system is adequately resourced to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. implement an expedited process for clearing permits for projects that prevent death and serious injury (road safety), and state and federally funded or co-funded projects b. establish a dedicated Local Government Unit within the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. case manage Local Government referrals and clearing permit applications ii. provide guidance and training for Local Governments, particularly in relation to roadside vegetation management iii. support partnerships with Local Governments in strategic environmental offsets c. enable timely investigation and enforcement action for illegal clearing d. increase investment in the collection and provision of statewide biodiversity data, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. funding and coordinating a state-wide biodiversity survey program to standardise habitat and vegetation mapping ii. making biodiversity data more discoverable, accessible and useable iii. <u>ensuring survey data relied upon for decision making is contemporary and accurate, particularly if there has been a change in environmental condition.</u> 3. Undertaking bioregional planning for native vegetation management, with a focus on highly cleared areas and implementing strategic solutions for environmental offsets that can be utilised by Local Government. 4. <u>Ensuring that environmental offsets are relevant and proportionate, including:</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <u>proximity to the area impacted</u> b. <u>the environmental value being impacted.</u> 		
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			<p>5. <i>Working with the Australian Government to reduce duplication between the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.</i></p> <p>RESOLUTION 029.2/2025</p> <p>CARRIED</p>		
Central C	Advocacy for Statewide Community Enhancements Fund (CEF) Framework & Renewable Energy Guidelines	<p>That the Central Country Zone of WALGA:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports the Shire of Narrogin's Community Enhancements Fund (CEF) Policy as a best-practice model for equitable benefit-sharing from large-scale renewable energy projects; 2. Requests WALGA State Council to advocate to the State Government for the development of a Statewide Community Enhancements Fund Framework, consistent with the key principles of the Shire of Narrogin's CEF Policy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A minimum indexed contribution from renewable energy proponents based on installed capacity; ○ Local Government management of restricted cash reserves for community benefit; ○ A dedicated component for Indigenous Nations Funds (recommended 10%); ○ Alignment with Local Government strategic planning; ○ Transparent governance, community engagement, and annual reporting. 3. Further requests WALGA to advocate for the adoption of a broader Renewable Industry Framework for WA as outlined in the Shire of Narrogin's Advocacy Position, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consistent planning standards for renewable energy development (e.g., setbacks, zoning); ○ A State-mandated community engagement framework; ○ Legacy workforce housing solutions in lieu of short-term TWAs; ○ A uniform Payment in Lieu of Rates (PiLoR) model for wind, solar and BESS facilities; ○ Empowerment of Local Governments to manage benefit-sharing and rating mechanisms. 	<p>WALGA acknowledges the work of the Shire of Narrogin. In response to the Central Country Zone resolution:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports the Shire of Narrogin's Community Enhancements Fund (CEF) Policy as a best-practice model for equitable benefit-sharing from large-scale renewable energy projects; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Shire of Narrogin is used as a case study within the WALGA Community Benefits and Engagement Guide. This Policy is also referenced in the Guide. 2. Requests WALGA State Council to advocate to the State Government for the development of a Statewide Community Enhancements Fund Framework, consistent with the key principles of the Shire of Narrogin's CEF Policy, including: <p>A minimum indexed contribution from renewable energy proponents based on installed capacity;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An indexed contribution is recommended within the WALGA Community Benefits and Engagement Guide and conversations with State Government have also highlighted the importance of this. <p>Local Government management of restricted cash reserves for community benefit;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government management of cash reserves is one of the governance mechanisms within the WALGA Community Benefits and Engagement Guide. The right governance mechanism will be different for each Local Government. <p>A dedicated component for Indigenous Nations Funds (recommended 10%);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with First Nations people is recommended as part of the WALGA Community Benefits and Engagement Guide. First Nations involvement in, and compensation for, should be looked at on a project by project basis. <p>Alignment with Local Government strategic planning;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment with Local Government strategic planning is recommended within the WALGA Community Benefits and Engagement Guide, which will be presented to State Government upon completion. <p>Transparent governance, community engagement, and annual reporting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are recommended within the WALGA Community Benefits and Engagement Guide, which will be presented to State Government upon completion. 	June 2025	<p>Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039</p>

			<p>3. Further requests WALGA to advocate for the adoption of a broader Renewable Industry Framework for WA as outlined in the Shire of Narrogin's Advocacy Position, including:</p> <p>Consistent planning standards for renewable energy development (e.g., setbacks, zoning);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WALGA continues to advocate to State Government through its advocacy position, 6.17 - Renewable Energy Facilities. <p>A State-mandated community engagement framework;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WALGA continues to advocate to State Government through its advocacy position, 6.16 - Energy Transition Engagement and Community Benefit Framework. <p>Legacy workforce housing solutions in lieu of short-term TWAs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing solutions are referenced within the WALGA Community Benefits and Engagement Guide, which will be presented to State Government upon completion. Discussions are ongoing with State Government regarding addressing housing issues. <p>A uniform Payment in Lieu of Rates (PILoR) model for wind, solar and BESS facilities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WALGA has just engaged a consultant to explore different rating mechanisms for large scale renewable energy projects within WA. <p>Empowerment of Local Governments to manage benefit-sharing and rating mechanisms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment of Local Governments to manage benefit sharing is references within the WALGA Community Benefits and Engagement Guide, which will be presented to State Government upon completion. WALGA's rating mechanism work will provide recommendations for the best approach when it comes to rating large scale renewable energy projects. 		
Central C	5 March 2025 State Council Agenda Item 8.1 Climate Change Advocacy Position	<p>That State Council replace the 2018 Climate Change Policy Statement Advocacy Position 4.1 Climate Change with the following advocacy position:</p> <p>WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> provide the necessary climate leadership, coordination, and action to deliver a climate change response that improves and maintains the quality of life for all Western Australians for generations to come. provides funding and resources and support to Local Government to enable local communities to respond to the effects of climate change 	<p>At the March State Council meeting it was agreed:</p> <p>That State Council refer this advocacy item back to the Environment Policy Team for further development.</p> <p>RESOLUTION 003.1/2025 CARRIED</p> <p>At the 24 March 2025 Environment Policy Team meeting, it was agreed that WALGA would develop a consultation approach for consideration by the Policy Team.</p> <p>At the 29 May 2025 meeting, the Policy Team agreed to the proposed consultation approach, which involves providing the composite Advocacy Position to all Local Governments for a 10-week consultation period, with Council endorsed or CEO approved feedback preferred. An additional Policy Team meeting will be held to consider comments and a composite resolution.</p>	June 2025	<p>Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039</p>

Central C	26 August 2023 Zone Agenda Item 9.2 Water Corporation – Non-Standard Water Services	That the Central Country Zone: 1. Rejects Water Corporation attempts to classify regional sites as a 'Non-Standard Water Service' (unless specific agreement is reached with a Local Government Authority); 2. Formally writes to Water Corporation and the Minister for Water confirming this position; 3. Requests that WALGA supports the position of the Central Country Zone and rejects the Water Corporation's attempts to classify regional sites as a 'Non-Standard Water Service'; and 4. Requests WALGA to engage with the Minister for Water to retain the current services, unless specific agreement is reached with a Local Government Authority.	WALGA is developing a Background Paper for whole of sector consultation and reviewing its Water Advocacy Position/s, and has included the need for equitable access to drinking water as a key pillar. Some of the themes that have emerged from the consultation focus on water quality and security. In developing this paper, WALGA has undertaken significant targeted consultation with Local Government CEOs and officers across the State. WALGA has also raised this issue with Water Corporation representatives.	June 2025	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039
Central C	7 May State Council Agenda Item 8.1 Regulations for CEO KPI's and Online Registers – Walga Submission	That the Central Country Zone opposes the draft regulations which are contrary to theme 2 of the reforms being 'reducing red tape, increasing consistency and simplicity'.	SECRETARIAT COMMENT The State Government have introduced the legislation that requires the publication of CEO KPI's and the publication of on-line registers. Regulations will be introduced, and the WALGA submission is advocating for some of the regulations to be re-considered and suggests alternate information to be included in the regulations. STATE COUNCIL RESOLUTION That WALGA endorse the recommendations contained in the attached ' <i>Regulations for CEO KPIs and public registers submission</i> ', <u>subject to strengthening recommendation 1c to highlight the additional software and resource implications to the sector due to the introduction of public registers.</u> RESOLUTION 026.2/2025 CARRIED	June 2025	Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au
Central C	7 May State Council Agenda Item 8.2 Dog and Cat Management Advocacy Position	That WALGA replace Advocacy Position 2.12 Puppy Farming with a revised Dog and Cat Management advocacy position, as follows: <i>In regard to the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the PetsWA Centralised Database, the WA Local Government sector advocates:</i> a) <u>that all Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011 through a combination of appropriate fees and State Government funding that encourages compliance and serves the interests of all Western Australians regardless of where they live.</u>	SECRETARIAT COMMENT The Zone's suggestion expands on the WALGA recommendation of advocating for Local Governments to achieve full cost recovery and is included in the composite recommendation. STATE COUNCIL RESOLUTION That WALGA replace Advocacy Position 2.12 <i>Puppy Farming</i> with a revised <i>Dog and Cat Management</i> advocacy position, as follows:	June 2025	Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au

		<p>b) <i>that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.</i></p> <p>c) <i>that the PetsWA centralised registration database is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government registration fee revenue.</i></p> <p>d) <i>that the function of PetsWA be restricted to the registration of dogs and cats, exclude ancillary functions such as animal related complaints and infringement notices, and integrate with existing Local Government corporate systems.</i></p> <p>e) <i>for the continued legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.</i></p> <p>f) <i>for a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from approved breeders.</i></p>	<p><i>In regard to the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the PetsWA Centralised Database, the WA Local Government sector advocates:</i></p> <p>a) <u><i>that all Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011 through a combination of appropriate fees and State Government funding that encourages compliance and serves the interests of all Western Australians regardless of where they live.</i></u></p> <p>b) <i>that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.</i></p> <p>c) <i>that the PetsWA centralised registration database is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government registration fee revenue.</i></p> <p>d) <i>that the function of PetsWA be restricted to the registration of dogs and cats, exclude ancillary functions such as animal related complaints and infringement notices, and integrate with existing Local Government corporate systems.</i></p> <p>e) <i>for the continued legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.</i></p> <p>f) <i>for a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from approved breeders.</i></p> <p>RESOLUTION 027.2/2025</p> <p>CARRIED</p>		
Central C	19 November 2021 Zone Agenda Item 12.1 Sector ICT solution	That the Zone request WALGA to research providers and the viability of an in-house IT system.	<p>Work continues to be undertaken to support Members seeking ICT solutions.</p> <p>WALGA has commenced work with an IT Consultant experienced in the development and assessment of ERP systems for Local Government. The engagement includes the development of Template Documents for an ERP Scope and an Evaluation Guide, these resources will be distributed to Members once finalised.</p> <p>An ERP Vendor scan through the PSP panel has also been initiated, with up-to-date ERP information to be collated and provided as a Member resource once completed.</p> <p>This work is ongoing and being led by WALGA's Commercial Development Team. Any queries can be directed to Brian Ging.</p>	June 2025	<p>Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au</p>

Zone Comment

This is an opportunity for Member Councils to consider the response from WALGA in respect to the matters that were submitted at the previous Zone Meeting.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: Cr Karen Harrington

That the Central Country Zone, WALGA Status Report for June 2025 be noted.

CARRIED

11.3 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The WALGA President's Report was attached to the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Bryan Kilpatrick

Seconded: Cr Julie Russell

That the Central Country Zone notes the WALGA President's Report.

CARRIED

12 WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA – 2 July 2025

Zone Delegates are invited to read and consider the WALGA State Council Agenda, which was 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.

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

By Jason Russell, Senior Governance Specialist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The South East Metropolitan Zone (SEMZ) passed a motion requesting that WALGA advocate for additional powers for the Minister to suspend Council Members charged with criminal offences likely to damage the reputation of the Local Government, and disqualify if convicted.
- Suspension, dismissal and disqualification must balance the public interest in elected representatives of good character, with protections for the individual and respect for democratic processes.
- While the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) includes a range of suspension, dismissal and disqualification mechanisms, their operation also depends on how the relevant decision-makers choose to use their powers.
- This report recommends that the dismissal mechanisms under the Act are sufficient to address the Zone's concern, but that WALGA's advocacy position be amended to include an additional suspension power for the Minister of Local Government.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the advocacy position at its meeting on 19 May.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Influence:

- Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.

Support:

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

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

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

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

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

Suspension and Disqualification for Offences

The WA Local Government sector advocates that:

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

BACKGROUND

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

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

1. *Disqualify a person from membership of a council if the person has been convicted of a criminal offence that, in the opinion of the Minister for Local Government, under the advice of the State Solicitor's Office, has the potential to damage the reputation of the local government or the local government sector more broadly.*
2. *Suspend the council member who is charged with a criminal offence that has the potential to damage the reputation of the local government or the local government sector more broadly, until the charges are dealt with; and*
3. *Require a person to be paid fees and allowances until they are disqualified.*

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

Existing Disqualification Provisions

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

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

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

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

Clearly, the threshold for disqualification is high, excluding all lower-level offences and even indictable offences with a penalty of 5 years or less. As an example, high-level indecent assault will be dealt with as an indictable offense, with the offender liable for up to 5 years imprisonment. Serious local government offences are offences against the Act for which a person may be sentenced to imprisonment or a fine of over \$10,000. A court sentencing a person for a serious local government offence may make an order waiving the disqualification, or reducing the period for which it applies.

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

Current Dismissal Provisions

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

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

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

The Minister must give the member:

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

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

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

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

Current Suspension Provisions

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

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

- The member has been charged with a disqualification offence.
- The Director General has made an allegation to SAT against the member, of a serious or recurrent breach.
- The Director General has written to the Minister advising that they suspect on reasonable grounds that one or more of the following applies:
 - The member has failed to perform their role, functions or duties;
 - The member's conduct has adversely affected the ability of another person to perform their role, functions or duties;
 - The member's conduct has adversely affected the ability of the Local Government to comply with the principles that apply under section 5.40 of the Act (principles affecting employment by Local Government, including the responsibility to provide safe and healthy working conditions in accordance with WHS legislation).

The Minister must give:

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

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

Options for reform of suspension

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

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

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

Local Government Reform Amendments

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

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

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

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

Suspension and Disqualification for Offences

The WA Local Government sector advocates that:

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

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: President Cr Julie Russell

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

CARRIED

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

By Coralie Claudio, Senior Policy Advisor Planning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

ATTACHMENT

- [Rationale for draft advocacy position](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

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

Necessary changes to the structure of the DAPs system include:

- 1. The abolishment of the current 'mandatory' mechanism where a proposal has a value of \$10 million or greater, and its replacement with an 'opt in' mechanism for all proposals.*
- 2. Raising the DAP threshold from the current \$2 million to \$5 million,*
- 3. The composition of DAPs should be modified to provide equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members.*
- 4. The creation of a distinct Special Matters DAP (SMDAP) is not supported, given there are already multiple avenues for determination on the basis of zoning and monetary value of applications. Should the State Government progress with the implementation of a SMDAP, the following changes are proposed to the model released in March 2022:*
 - *allow proponents with proposals that meet the threshold or criteria being able to opt-out of the SMDAP pathway and allow assessment and determination by Local Government*
 - *mandate consultation with the relevant Local Governments prior to the issuing of a Ministerial Order in relation to SMDAP Precinct Criteria, and ensure SMDAP Precincts be identified through regulations, rather than by the Minister,*

- *include greater professional planning expertise, and knowledge of local context through the Local Government members of the District DAP, by including majority professional town planner panel members, with two Local Government representatives*
 - *expand the role of Local Governments in SMDAP processes and appropriate remuneration for involvement of Local Governments be included to support the SMDAP decision-making process.*
5. *In principle, the further reduction in the number of panels from five to three is supported, to the extent that this reduces the administrative burden on local governments and enhances consistency of decision making.*
 6. *In principle, the permanent appointment of panel members where this results in consistent decision-making is supported as this reduces the potential for conflicts of interest and ensures sound knowledge of DAP processes and procedures.*
 7. *WALGA supports greater transparency around DAP processes and decisions, as community distrust of DAP decision-making is a key area of concern for many local governments.*

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

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

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

- d. delete references to 'mandatory significant development' to ensure the pathway remains entirely opt-in*
- e. undertake periodic reviews of its operation and effectiveness.*

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Be applicable to all State Government DAs and approvals (e.g. significant development pathway, DAPs, Public Works, region scheme approvals, Development WA).

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

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA:

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

6.4 State Development Applications and Decision Making

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

1. *Ensure that decision making on development applications (DAs) is:*
 - a. *consistent and accountable*
 - b. *accessible to local communities*
 - c. *respectful of, and appropriately applies, local planning frameworks in line with their statutory weight.*
 2. *Reform the Development Assessment Panel (DAP) system to:*
 - a. *raise the DAP threshold from the current \$2 million to \$5 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. *modify the composition of DAPs to provide equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members*
 - c. *review DAP processes to ensure proponents provide necessary information in a timely manner*
 - d. *provide clear procedural guidance on the roles and functions of Local Government officers and Council*
 - e. *allow access to the State Referral Coordination Unit for DAP applications to ensure timely and adequate referral responses from State Government agencies are provided to Local Governments.*
 3. *Abolish the state significant development assessment pathway (Part 11B of the Planning and Development Act 2005).*
 4. *If the significant development assessment pathway is retained, implement the following reforms:*
 - a. *raise the cost threshold to \$50 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. *align statutory timeframes with DAP and Local Government determined DAs*
 - c. *ensure all developments are consistent with applicable local planning instruments and provide comprehensive guidelines for discretionary decision making, including applying extraordinary discretion*
 - d. *delete references to 'mandatory significant development' to ensure the pathway remains entirely opt-in*
 - e. *undertake periodic reviews of its operation and effectiveness.*
2. Notes the Development Assessment Panel 2011 – 2024 Review and State Development Pathway 2020 – 2025 Review reports.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Katrina Crute

Seconded: Cr Bryan Kilpatrick

That the Central Country Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.2 with the addition of:

- 5. Reinstate the capacity for the CEO to engage with the Council about the Responsible Authority Report (RAR)**

CARRIED

12.3 PUBLIC LIBRARY AGREEMENT (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.3)

By Rebecca Hicks, Policy Officer Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

ATTACHMENT

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

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

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

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

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

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

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: Deputy President Tamara de Lange

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

CARRIED

12.4 OTHER STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS

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

NIL

13 EMERGING ISSUES

13.1 POLYPHAGOUS SHOT-HOLE BORER

Shire of Wagin

The Shire of Wagin request the Zone to consider funding in relation to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Summary: Government Investment Trend Analysis (2023–24 to 2028–29)

An analysis of the department's financial data over the six-year period reveals a mixed investment trend with a short-term increase followed by a longer-term decline.

1. Total Appropriations

1. Initial Growth: Appropriations rose from \$314.8 million in 2023–24 to a peak of \$462.7 million in 2025–26.
2. Subsequent Decline: After 2025–26, appropriations dropped to \$296.3 million in 2026–27, with a modest recovery in the following years.

2. Expenses

1. Total Cost of Services increased steadily until 2025–26, reaching \$750.6 million, then declined significantly to \$472.2 million by 2028–29.
2. Net Cost of Services followed a similar pattern, peaking at \$607.5 million in 2025–26, then falling to \$370.1 million by 2028–29.

Conclusion

While the government made a short-term investment in the Department 2025–26, the overall trend from 2026–27 onward shows a decline in appropriations, service costs, and cash assets. This suggests a reduction in long-term financial commitment, supporting the case that government investment in this department is declining in the outyears.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Phil Blight

Seconded: President Cr Katrina Crute

That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to;

- 1. Call on the State Government to appropriately fund the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development given that the 2025-26 State Budget shows that investment in the Department will drop by \$166m in 2026-27 (35%) and be lower than the investment in 2023-24 which was insufficient to respond to the Polyphagous Shot-hole Borer.**
- 2. Noting; The 2025-26 budget provides just \$50,000 for 'Biosecurity Incident and Emergency Management Response' grants in 2026-27 and no funding in the further out-years.**

CARRIED

13.2 THANKS TO PRESIDENT CR KATRINA CRUTE

Prior to closing the meeting, Zone Chair, President Cr Des Hickey, took a moment to thank President Cr Katrina Crute, Shire of Brookton, for her monumental contribution to the Zone and to Local Government in general. The June meeting of the Zone was Cr Crute's last meeting, with her upcoming retirement later this year following close to 17 years as an Elected Member, including her time served as a Delegate for the Central Country Zone.

Cr Hickey highlighted Cr Crute's initiative of establishing the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network and all the work the group achieved. Cr Crute's ability to decipher and explain issues brought to the Zone will be missed.

The Zone wished Katrina well and congratulated her on her Local Government contribution.

NOTED

14 NEXT MEETINGS

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held on 12 August 2025 commencing at 7.30am, via MSTeams.

The next Central Country Zone meeting will be held on 22 August 2025 commencing at 9.30am. This meeting will be hosted by the Shire of Beverley.

15 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 1.32pm.