

# **Gascoyne Country Zone Minutes**

## **24 April 2026**

**Held via MS Teams**

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## PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

How to use the Framework:

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

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

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

Confirmation of Attendance The attendance was confirmed prior to the commencement of the meeting.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. LGIRS Local Government Division Report
2. Minutes of previous meeting
3. Zone Status Report
4. President's Report

## 1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

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### 1.1 OPENING

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*Zone Chair, Cr Paul Kelly opened the meeting at 10:01am.*

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### 1.2 ATTENDANCE

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| <b>MEMBERS</b>                                     | <b>1 Voting Delegates from each Member Local Government</b>  |
|--|--|
| Shire of Carnarvon                                 | Cr Paul Kelly ( <b>Chair</b> )<br>Ms Amanda Dexter, Chief Executive Officer – non-voting                                     |
| Shire of Exmouth                                   | Mr Ben Lewis, Chief Executive Officer – non-voting   |
| Shire of Upper Gascoyne                            | President Cr Jimmy Caunt<br>Mr John McCleary, Chief Executive Officer – non-voting   |
| Shire of Shark Bay                                 | President Cr Pietr Stubberfield<br>Mr Dale Chapman, Chief Executive Officer – non-voting<br>Ms Michelle Fanalli – non-voting |
| <b>WALGA Secretariat</b>                           | Ms Rachel Armstrong, Policy Manager Emergency Management<br>Ms Lauren McDonnell, Administration Assistant Policy             |
| <b>GUESTS</b>                                      |  |
| Gascoyne Development Commission                    | Mr Tim Bray, Chief Executive Officer   |
| Regional Development Australia – Mid West Gascoyne | Mr Mark Holdsworth, Executive Officer  |
| LGIRS Local Government Division                    | Mr Cameron Taylor, General Manager, Local Government Reform  |

## **GUEST SPEAKER**

Telstra

Ms Eva Colic, Regional Engagement Manager

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### **1.3 APOLOGIES**

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Shire of Exmouth

President Cr Matthew Nikkula

Gascoyne Development Commission

Ms Amanda Willmott, A/Director

Main Roads

Ms Andrea Pitcher, A/Asset Management Officer  
Mr Gaff Murray, Operations Manager – Carnarvon

## **2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We, the delegates of the Gascoyne Country Zone acknowledge the traditional owners of this land that we are meeting on today and pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

## **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil.

## **4 DEPUTATIONS**

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### **4.1 TELSTRA UPDATE**

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Ms Eva Colic, Regional Engagement Manager, provided an update to the Zone on:

- Mobile Network upgrades
- Co-investment programs
- Satellite to mobile
- Network resilience

**Noted**

## **5 AGENCY REPORTS**

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### **5.1 LGIRS LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIVISION REPORT**

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The April 2026 report from LGIRS Local Government Division was enclosed as an attachment within the Agenda.

Mr Cameron Taylor, General Manager Local Government Reform, provided a short presentation on Regulatory Reform.

**Noted**

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## 5.2 GASCOYNE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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Gascoyne Development Commission Chief Executive Officer, Mr Tim Bray, provided an update to the Zone.

**Noted**

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## 5.3 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA

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Executive Officer, RDA Mid-West Gascoyne, Mr Mark Holdsworth, provided an update on Regional Roads.

**Noted**

## 6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The previous meeting Minutes of the Gascoyne Country Zone have been circulated to Zone Delegates and was provided as an attachment to the Agenda.

### RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Paul Kelly  
Seconded: President Cr Jimmy Caunt

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

**CARRIED**

*Amanda Dexter joined the meeting at 10:40am.*

## 7 BUSINESS ARISING

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### 7.1 STATUS REPORT

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A Status Report outlining any recent updates and/or actions taken on the Zone's previous meetings resolutions for both State Council and Zone items was enclosed as an attachment. These item updates will remain on the Status Report until completed or no further action is required by WALGA.

**Noted**

## 8 ZONE BUSINESS

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### 8.1 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ADVOCACY POSITION

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

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

#### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

*Local Government acknowledges:*

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

*Local Government is committed to addressing climate change.*

*Local Government is calling for:*

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

The draft Advocacy Position in the Consultation Paper is:

1. *Local Government acknowledges the risks associated with, and is committed to, addressing climate change.*
2. *WALGA calls on the Australian and Western Australian Governments to provide:*
  - a. *the necessary climate leadership, coordination and action to ensure an orderly transition to achieve emission reduction targets and address the impacts of climate change*
  - b. *dedicated funding, guidance and practical support to assist Local Governments to undertake emissions reduction and adaptation actions.*

#### ATTACHMENT

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

#### BACKGROUND

Climate change, and related legislation, policy and action, have implications for many aspects of Local Governments' operations and services. More frequent and severe droughts, heatwaves, bushfires, extreme rainfall events and warming, rising sea levels are

increasing the costs and complexity of delivering critical services, infrastructure and ensuring community wellbeing.

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

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

## COMMENT

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

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

WALGA is seeking **Council endorsed feedback** on the draft Climate Change Advocacy Position by **COB Friday, 1 May 2026** 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.

## Noted

## 9 WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA

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

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

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

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### 9.1 PROTECTING COUNCIL MEMBER AND EMPLOYEE PRIVACY ADVOCACY POSITION

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*By Meghan Dwyer, Governance Specialist*

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

#### ATTACHMENT

- Jurisdictional Comparison – Address Information in Council Member Returns and Declarations of Office (included below).

#### STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The proposed advocacy position aligns to the WALGA 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, in particular:

- Influence – Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
- Support – Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The recommendation is for State Council to endorse a new [Advocacy Position](#).

### ***Protecting Council Member and Employee Privacy***

*That WALGA advocates to the State Government to:*

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

## **BACKGROUND**

At the 3 December 2025 meeting, State Council adopted new Advocacy Position 2.5.20 Electoral Material - Authorisation Statement Address Requirements in response to significant privacy and safety concerns arising from the obligation to publish a candidate's physical address on electoral materials.

When considering this item at the preceding round of Zone meetings, the South East Metropolitan Zone (SEMZ) resolved to request WALGA advocate to amend s.5.95(1) of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) to specify that the right to inspect Primary and Annual Returns (Returns) contained in the Register of Financial Interests under s.5.94(b) does not extend to the residential address of the relevant person.

State Council resolved to refer the SEMZ comments to the Governance Policy Team.

The Governance Policy Team endorsed the proposed advocacy position at its meeting on 23 March 2026.

## **COMMENT**

Public disclosure regimes must strike an appropriate balance between public transparency and personal safety. The inclusion of personal identifying information in publicly accessible documents has become increasingly problematic. As digital publication and internet search capabilities have expanded, material that once had limited circulation can be copied and distributed with ease. This environment has reinforced the need to carefully consider how much personal information is necessary to make publicly available, and the risks that may arise when doing so.

### **Local Government Act**

The Act establishes a range of public disclosure obligations designed to promote transparency and accountability. However, digital publication, increased data availability, and heightened personal safety concerns have created new risks that were not contemplated when these provisions were first drafted.

Returns require relevant persons to disclose personal financial information. Information disclosed includes the address of each parcel of real property, located in the district or in an adjoining district, in which the person had an interest and the nature of the interest in each parcel of real property (s.5.79). In practice, this often results in the disclosure of a Council Member or employee's residential address.

Returns are required to be included in the register of financial interests. Section 5.94(b) of the Act requires any register of financial interest to be made available to the public, and s.5.96 requires the Local Government to provide copies upon request.

Although s.5.93 of the Act establishes penalties for the improper use of information, information can now be copied and distributed almost instantly. In many cases, the harm may occur well before any investigation or action can be commenced.

In addition to the requirement for Council Members to disclose interests in real property as part of their returns, s.2.29 of the Act, together with Form 7 of the *Local Government (Constitution) Regulations 1998*, requires each Council Member to provide their full residential address when making their statutory declaration of office. Although this declaration is not required to be made publicly available under s. 5.94(b) of the Act, some Local Governments livestream or publish recordings of the proceedings. As a result, full residential address details become publicly accessible.

### **Emerging risks and issues**

Local Governments have observed increasing reluctance from Council Members and employees to provide their residential address. Reasons include:

- being registered as a silent elector under the *Electoral Act 1907*,
- experiences or risks of family or domestic violence,
- concerns that leave of absence approvals may signal when a residence may be unoccupied,
- role-related risks, such as potential targeted harassment by dissatisfied community members.

Disclosure of personal residential addresses can also expose individuals to cybersecurity and identity-theft risks, as this information can be combined with other data to build detailed personal profiles. Publicly accessible addresses may make individuals more vulnerable to targeted scams, social engineering, and unwanted contact, increasing both digital and physical security risks.

### **Parliamentary disclosure obligations**

The disclosure of the residential addresses of Members of Parliament in their Primary and Annual Returns has recently been considered by the [Legislative Assembly Procedures and Privileges Committee in Report No.1: Protecting privacy and other reasons to update the Members of Parliament \(Financial Interests\) Act 1992](#).

The Committee recommended that the Government review the relevant legislation, "with a view to addressing the requirement for the disclosure of full residential addresses and to consider broader legislative updates necessary to ensure the Act remains contemporary, effective, and aligned with modern standards of accountability and personal security."

The [Government response](#) supported this recommendation.

## **Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing**

The objectives of the new *Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024* (PRIS Act) include promoting responsible and transparent practices in the handling of personal information and balancing the public interests of protecting the privacy of personal information with the free flow of information by agencies.

Most privacy provisions in the PRIS Act come into effect on 1 July 2026.

The following sections of the PRIS Act intersect with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*:

- The information privacy principles do not apply to information that is already publicly accessible. This includes information in documents that are either generally available to the public or made available for public inspection under another written law (s.22).
- An individual may request a public entity to remove their personal information from a public register if making the information publicly available would substantially affect any individual's safety or wellbeing. If the public entity is satisfied that the grounds exist, the public entity must comply with the request unless the public entity is satisfied that the public interest in maintaining public access to the information outweighs any individual interest in the information not being made publicly available (s.77).

While this appears to provide a mechanism for individuals to address specific safety and privacy concerns, it would be preferable to ensure that the legislative requirements avoid unnecessary risks to all Council Members and employees.

WALGA will seek to engage with the Information Commissioner and Deputy Privacy Commissioner to clarify the way in which these and other PRIS Act provisions will apply to Council Members.

## **Review and amendments to the Local Government Act**

As Local Government Council Members and employees share the same safety concerns as Members of Parliament it would be appropriate to echo the Procedures and Privilege Committee and advocate for a broad review of all public disclosure requirements under the *Local Government Act 1995* to ensure that they remain contemporary, effective, and aligned with modern standards of accountability and personal security. A review would allow a clearer, risk-aware framework to be established that protects individuals while preserving appropriate transparency.

Within this broader reform, several targeted amendments are necessary. It is proposed that s. 5.95(1) be amended so that the right to inspect information in the register of financial interests under s. 5.94(b) is limited to the suburb or locality of each property, rather than the full residential address of the relevant person. Additionally, the requirement for Council Members to provide their full residential address in the statutory declaration of office should be removed. These amendments are consistent with practices adopted in other Australian jurisdictions and reflect the approach now being reconsidered for Members of Parliament.

Importantly, these changes would not weaken transparency or accountability. Council Members and employees would still be required to disclose their full residential address in Returns, and would continue to declare direct financial, indirect financial, proximity, and impartiality interests when they arise in decision-making processes. This ensures that

relevant interests remain publicly recorded when they matter, without unnecessarily exposing personal residential details. By limiting public access to only what is necessary, the legislative framework can better protect individual safety while preserving the integrity of the disclosure regime.

**ATTACHMENT: JURISDICTIONAL COMPARISON – ADDRESS INFORMATION IN COUNCIL MEMBER RETURNS AND DECLARATIONS OF OFFICE**

| <b>DISCLOSURES IN RETURNS</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Victoria</b><br/> <a href="#">Local Government Act 2020</a><br/> <a href="#">Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020</a></p> | <p>CEO must prepare <b>summary</b> of personal interests information disclosed in the last personal interest return.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes the town or suburb, <b>but not the street address or number</b> of the land that is the place of residence</li> </ul> <p>Other matters to be included or excluded are prescribed.</p> <p>Includes that a specified person may request in writing information not be included if the CEO consider including the information would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>be reasonably likely to place the personal safety of any person at risk, or</li> <li>unreasonably expose a business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage</li> </ul> <p>Summary of personal interest returns available to members of the public.</p> <p>Detailed personal interests returns are only available to certain persons.</p>  |
| <p><b>New South Wales</b><br/> <a href="#">Governance Information (Public Access) Act 2009</a></p>  | <p>From the <i>Information Access Guideline 1 - For Local Councils on the disclosure of information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Returns should be made <b>publicly available</b> on the council's website <b>unless there is an overriding public interest against release</b> or to do so would impose unreasonable additional costs on council.</li> <li>A consideration against disclosure is where release of the information may expose a person to a risk of harm or of serious harassment or serious intimidation.</li> <li>In the circumstances where council decides that there is an overriding public interest against disclosure, consideration should then be given to whether it is practicable to release an <b>edited copy of the record</b> (for example redacting the individual's signature or residential address)</li> <li>If it is practicable to do so, then the information should be deleted from a copy of the record and the remainder of the return made available on the council's website.</li> <li>Where information is deleted from a return, council should keep a record indicating, in general terms, the nature of the information redacted.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Queensland</b></p>  | <p><b>Suburb or locality</b> of the land is required (<b>not full address</b>).</p>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <a href="#">Local Government Regulation 2021</a>                    |   |
| <b>South Australia</b><br><a href="#">Local Government Act 1999</a> | <b>Personal addresses are not to be published</b> nor are any addresses where the CEO is satisfied that the inclusion in the Register of the address of a person would place <b>at risk the personal safety of that person, a member of that person's family or any other person.</b> |
| <b>Tasmania</b>   | Currently does not require councillors to lodge a personal interests return. The Tasmanian government is implementing a new framework to strengthen the management of local government councillor conflicts of interest, with reforms expected before the 2026 elections.             |

| <b>INFORMATION IN COUNCIL MEMBER DECLARATIONS OF OFFICE</b>  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| <b>Victoria</b><br><a href="#">Local Government Act 2020</a><br><a href="#">Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Regulations 2020</a> | Address not required. |
| <b>New South Wales</b><br><a href="#">Local Government Act 1993</a>  | Address not required. |
| <b>Queensland</b><br><a href="#">Local Government Regulation 2021</a>  | Address not required. |
| <b>South Australia</b><br><a href="#">Local Government (General) Regulations 2013</a>  | Address not required. |
| <b>Tasmania</b><br><a href="#">Local Government (General) Regulations 2025</a>   | Address not required. |

#### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the following new Advocacy Position:

*Protecting Council Member and Employee Privacy*

*That WALGA advocates to the State Government to:*

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

## RESOLUTION

**Moved:** President Cr Pietr Stubberfield  
**Seconded:** President Cr Jimmy Caunt

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

**CARRIED**

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## 9.2 WATER MANAGEMENT ADVOCACY POSITION

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

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

### ATTACHMENT

- [Water Management Discussion Paper](#)
- [Water Management Consultation Summary Report](#)

### STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

This item relates to the following WALGA Strategic Pillars:

- Influence
  - Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
  - Empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support - Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed that the following new [Advocacy Position](#) be **endorsed**:

### **Water Management**

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

It is proposed that the following Advocacy Position be **retired**:

#### **6.14 Planning for Water**

*As part of the Water Management Report endorsement process, formal support from the relevant Local Government should be required where:*

1. *It is intended that the Local Government will become the infrastructure asset manager; or*
2. *The proposed location of water infrastructure assets will impact Local Government assets or facilities.*

The outcomes sought in Position 6.14 have been realised in the recently released [State Planning Policy 2.9](#).

### **BACKGROUND**

WALGA identified the need to consolidate and expand on current Water related [Advocacy Positions](#) and has undertaken initial consultation, through targeted engagement and consideration of issues raised by the sector previously. To inform the development of a new Advocacy Position, WALGA developed a Discussion Paper to gain feedback from the sector on their current challenges and needs in relation to water management across the state.

WALGA released the Discussion Paper for comment in late November 2025, with an initial deadline of 15 January 2026 for comment, however based on feedback from the sector this deadline was extended to Thursday, 12 March.

28 Local Governments have provided feedback, 14 of those Council/CEO level feedback. The feedback provided by Local Governments was comprehensive, with over 200 individual comments received across the submissions. WALGA acknowledges the significant time and consideration given by Members in providing that level of feedback.

The main themes of the feedback reflect those explored in the Discussion Paper and are consistent across Local Government:

- Legislation which is inequitable and outdated, particularly for licensing and allocation.
- State legislation should align with the National Water Agreement, particularly strategic, long term integrated planning and equitable access to drinking water.
- Aging and insufficient water infrastructure.
- Support and resourcing needed to explore and mainstream alternative water sources.
- Reactive approaches to headworks and sewerage servicing constraining development, particularly in regional and high-growth areas.
- Public Open Space (POS) in relation to planning decisions not accounting for the water needed to sustain these areas.
- Statewide expansion of the Waterwise Council program and improvement in program support and design.
- High interest in improving and supporting water efficiency and water sensitive urban design outcomes.
- Water data gaps and poor data sharing limits sound decision making.
- Water quality as an emerging and under-recognised issue.

WALGA has consolidated the feedback into a Consultation Report which summarises the main themes and issues raised by the sector and how it has been addressed in the draft Advocacy Position.

#### **COMMENT**

The new Position has been informed by the information, issues and priorities identified in feedback received from Local Governments on the WALGA Discussion Paper.

A new Advocacy Position is timely given the release of [Made Possible by Water](#) by the State Government on 21 March 2026, a document outlining WA's water future. A comprehensive Advocacy Position on this issue will be essential to assist WALGA's advocacy and influence how the Government delivers the priorities identified. Some of the matters identified in the draft Advocacy Position are reflected in Made Possible by Water, including expansion of the WaterWise Program and delivery of new water sources.

The Environment Policy Team endorsed the new Advocacy Position and the retirement of Position 6.14 at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

#### **WALGA RECOMMENDATION**

That State Council:

1. Endorse the following new Advocacy Position:

*Water Management*

1. *Access to consistent, reliable and adequate water supplies is critical for Local Government operations, community health, amenity, environmental sustainability and economic activity.*
2. *WALGA is calling on the State Government to:*
  - a. *Modernise water management legislation and regulation, including:*
    - i. *undertaking a review of the water licensing and allocation system to ensure equitable access and prioritise high value community use including for public open space*
    - ii. *developing a state-wide framework for integrated regional and catchment-scale water planning.*
  - b. *Adequately, sustainably and equitably fund critical water infrastructure programs for Local Government, including:*
    - i. *drainage and irrigation upgrades*
    - ii. *alternative water sources (recycled water, stormwater harvesting, desalination and groundwater replenishment) and disused water asset transfer*
    - iii. *small-scale sewerage infrastructure headworks and infill sewerage.*
  - c. *Expand the Waterwise Council Program statewide and provide:*
    - i. *increased support and resources to assist Local Government in delivering water efficiency measures*
    - ii. *incentives for Local Governments to undertake water efficiency initiatives.*
  - d. *Improve water data access and capability for Local Governments to ensure evidence-based decision making.*
  - e. *Provide effective leadership, guidance, education and enforcement to address the impacts of stormwater runoff.*
2. *Retires Advocacy Position 6.14 Planning for Water.*

## **RESOLUTION**

**Moved:** President Cr Pietr Stubberfield  
**Seconded:** President Cr Jimmy Caunt

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

**CARRIED**

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## 9.3 OFF ROADS VEHICLES ADVOCACY POSITION

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*By Rebecca Hicks, Policy Advisor Community*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

### ATTACHMENT

- [Control of Vehicles \(Off-road Areas\) Amendment Act 2025](#)

### STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Retiring this Advocacy Position aligns with the following WALGA Strategic Pillars:

- Influence
  - Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
  - Empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support
  - Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed that Advocacy Position [3.12 Off Road Vehicles](#) be **retired**.

*Legislation relating to off road vehicles should be reviewed to align registration and licensing of off-road vehicles with other vehicle types are users. In addition, educational resources should be developed in consultation with users, regulators, and vendors relating to safety, regulatory compliance and other associated matters.*

### BACKGROUND

The *Control of Vehicles (Off-road Vehicles) Act 1978* (the ORV Act) prohibits the use of Off Road Vehicles (ORVs) in areas outside of permitted areas and makes provisions for the use of ORVs in permitted areas. The Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) is responsible for administering the legislation and providing [information and support](#) to users and Local Governments. The legislation defines ORVs as including, but not limited to, trail bikes, quad bikes, beach buggies and road licensed vehicles such as four-wheel drives when used in off-road locations.

The use of ORVs outside of permitted areas can have impacts on Local Governments and communities including community safety in public spaces, road safety and environmental impacts. These issues fall under the scope of other legislation.

Nine Local Governments currently maintain and operate permitted areas: the Cities of Greater Geraldton, Karratha, Kwinana and Swan and the Shires of Carnarvon, Dandaragan, Gingin, Port Hedland and York.

WALGA's Advocacy Position was adopted by State Council in 2018, in response to Member concerns regarding the use of permitted ORV areas.

The ORV Act was amended in 2025 to align penalties and enforcement expectations with other WA transport legislation. The *Amendment Act* includes provisions to introduce online and label registrations and increase penalties for existing offences. The majority of the ORV Amendment Act commenced with immediate effect in August 2025. Sections of the legislation relating to registration labels are dependent on system design changes to the online registration platform. The legislation regulations and commencement date are expected by the end of 2026.

In 2024, the [State Government announced \\$4.8 million](#) in grant funding for Local Governments to develop new and upgrade existing ORV areas. This funding recognises the key role Local Government plays in the upkeep and management of ORV areas.

### COMMENT

The ORV Amendment Act addresses the core objectives of the WALGA ORV advocacy position, particularly as it relates to registration and enforcement. As the intended outcomes of the advocacy position have been achieved, it is proposed that Advocacy Position 3.12 Off Road Vehicles be retired. WALGA will work with LGIRS to provide advice and support on the commencement of the Act regulations for Members managing permitted areas.

WALGA has engaged with Members that currently manage ORV permitted areas. Six Local Governments have responded and provided their support for the retirement of the advocacy position.

WALGA will continue to monitor emerging issues associated with ORVs, with a particular focus on usage outside of permitted areas.

The proposed retirement of the ORV advocacy position was endorsed by the People and Place Policy Team at its meeting on 19 March 2026.

### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

### RESOLUTION

**Moved:** Cr Paul Kelly

**Seconded:** President Cr Pietr Stubberfield

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

**CARRIED**

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## 9.4 HOMELESSNESS ADVOCACY POSITION

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*By Hannah Godsave, Manager Community Policy*

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

### STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

This item relates to the following WALGA Strategic Pillars:

- Influence
  - Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.
  - Empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support
  - Anticipate, understand and respond to Member needs.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed that the **existing** Advocacy Position [3.11 Homelessness](#):

*WALGA recognises that Local Government through its planning, health, community development and regulatory powers can facilitate positive local and regional responses to end homelessness, however does not see that it has a lead role. Rather, Local Government's role is one of a stakeholder that requires early engagement in the understanding of collaborative approaches that improve the quality of life for people experiencing homelessness in all of its manifestations.*

be **replaced** with a new Advocacy Position as follows:

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

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

### BACKGROUND

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines homelessness as when a person does not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or tenure is short and not extendable; or

- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations.

The ABS Census of Population and Housing provides the authoritative data source on people experiencing homelessness. The 2021 Census reported 9,729 people experiencing homelessness in WA. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare provides more contemporary data based on interactions with specialist homelessness services. In 2024-25, almost 289,000 (1 in 115) people engaged with specialist homelessness services in WA, of which 47% were accessing homelessness support for the first time.

While responding to homelessness is a State and Australian Government responsibility, the impacts of homelessness intersect with multiple areas of Local Government service delivery, including the maintenance of public spaces, planning and zoning for appropriate services and revenue-related functions such as rates and grants administration. Local Governments must also manage community expectations about how they will respond to homelessness.

WALGA's current advocacy position was adopted by State Council in 2019 in the lead up to the release of [All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030](#) (the Strategy) released by the State Government. The Strategy sets out a vision for a whole of community response, led by the Department of Communities, working towards ending homelessness in Western Australia. The Strategy identifies a predominantly supportive role for the Local Government sector in addressing homelessness, while also acknowledging that some Local Governments directly provide homelessness and accommodation services. Suggested sector contributions in the Strategy include facilitating local partnerships, identifying rough sleepers, sharing local area knowledge to inform State Government resourcing decisions, and connecting people to specialist services. This supportive role for the Local Government sector is reflected in the current Advocacy Position.

At the National level, the [National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness](#) provides a five-year funding and accountability framework between the Australian and State/Territory Governments to support social housing and homelessness services until June 2029. The bilateral schedule for Western Australia sets out a \$165.9 million homelessness funding contribution from both parties.

## **COMMENT**

Local Governments have been reporting increased numbers of people experiencing homelessness, including Local Governments that have historically experienced minimal impact. Local Governments have shared that they are facing growing pressure to meet both their defined obligations and community expectations for comprehensive responses, including specialist homelessness services triage, investment in housing and support service provision.

To better understand the issues being raised by Members, WALGA conducted a sector survey on homelessness in early 2026. 68 responses (49%) were received, 26 metropolitan and 42 regional, with representation from all WALGA Zones. Key findings from the survey include:

- 74% of respondents report an increase in the significance of homelessness in their Local Government area in the last two years.
- 60% of respondents report an increase in enquires from community members regarding homelessness in the last two years.

- Key issues raised in community enquiries are rough sleeping and persons living in vehicles.
- 23% of respondents consider there is no role beyond defined responsibilities for Local Government in response to homelessness.
- 61% of respondents consider preventative measures to reduce homelessness and facilitating connections to specialist service providers as an appropriate role for Local Government in response to homelessness.
- 83% of respondents rank State and Federal Government funding as the highest or second highest priority enabler to respond to homelessness.
- 51% of respondents report that current specialist homelessness services are not adequate within their Local Government area.
- Respondents rank affordable housing as the top priority for support/services to address homelessness, followed by wraparound services and specialist support services.

Informed by survey responses and acknowledging the support role of Local Government identified in the State Strategy, the updated position calls on the Australian and Western Australian Government to provide the necessary leadership, support and funding to prevent and respond to homelessness, in particular specialist services, social and affordable housing and wraparound services.

The People and Place Policy Team endorsed the revised position at its meeting on 19 March 2026 meeting.

#### WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

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

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

#### AMENDED RESOLUTION

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

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

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

## RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Pietr Stubberfield  
Seconded: President Cr Jimmy Caunt

That the Gascoyne Country Zone supports the recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.4 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above subject to the addition of point 3 below:

3. Recognising that Local Governments, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas, are not in a position to absorb or assume additional funding responsibilities for homelessness prevention, response or management, and that sustainable funding must be led by the Western Australian and Australian Governments.

CARRIED

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## 9.5 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.

## 10 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

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### 10.1 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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The President's Report was enclosed as an attachment within the Agenda.

Noted

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### 10.2 STATE COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO THE ZONE

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Gascoyne Country Zone State Councillor, President Cr Matthew Niikkula, was an apology for this meeting.

Noted

## 11 OTHER BUSINESS

Nil.

## 12 NEXT MEETING

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### 12.1 NEXT MEETING

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The next meeting of the Gascoyne Country Zone will be held on Friday, 19 June at the Shire of Exmouth commencing at 10:00am.

***The Zone requested that the Secretariat liaise with Ben Lewis at Shire of Exmouth regarding accommodation for the Exmouth meeting in June.***

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### 12.2 REMAINING ZONE MEETING DATES - 2026

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| Zone Meeting                   | Type         | Location  |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Friday, 19 June at 10:00am     | In-Person    | Exmouth   |
| Friday, 21 August at 10:00am   | <i>Teams</i> |           |
| Friday, 20 November at 10:00am | In-Person    | Carnarvon |

## 13 CLOSURE

*There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 11:38am.*