

MINUTES OF THE ZONE MEETING

held at the Moora Bowling Club, 101 Gardiner Street, Moora
Friday 20 February 2026 commencing at 10:00 am

1 OPENING, WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 Opening

The Zone President and Chair of the meeting, Cr Chris Antonio, opened the meeting and welcomed delegates and introduced Cr Ken Seymour, President Shire of Moora.

1.2 Welcome

Cr Ken Seymour welcomed everyone to Moora Bindoon and commented on –

1.3 Announcements

There were no announcements.

2 ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

2.1 Attendance

Delegates -

Cr Chris Antonio	Shire of Northam (Zone President)
Cr Lincoln Stewart	Shire of Gingin (Zone Deputy President)
Cr Mark Campbell	Shire of Chittering
Cr Graham Lethlean	Shire of Dandaragan
Cr Julie Chester	Shire of Goomalling
Cr Ken Seymour	Shire of Moora
Cr Michael McKeown	Shire of Toodyay
Cr Neil Smith	Shire of Victoria Plains
Cr Stuart Boekeman	Shire of Wongan-Ballidu
Cr Denise Smythe	Shire of York

Observers –

Cr David Dewar	Shire of Chittering
Ms Melinda Prinsloo	CEO, Shire of Chittering
Cr Linda Balcombe	Shire of Gingin
Cr Karen McGill	Shire of Goomalling
Cr Lyn Hamilton	Shire of Moora
Cr Attila Mencshelyi	Shire of Northam
Cr Julie Williams	Shire of Northam
Ms Debbie Terelinck	Shire of Northam
Mr Sean Fletcher	CEO, Shire of Victoria Plains
Ms Alina Behan	Temporary CEO, Shire of York
Ms Rebecca Brown	Policy Manager Environment and Waste, WALGA
Mr Kieran McGovern	A/Senior Policy Advisor Planning, WALGA
Ms Jess Varady	Policy Advisor Environment, WALGA
Mr Mohammad Siddqui	Regional Director, Main Roads Wheatbelt (from 10:23 am)
Mr Sanjeev Gupta	Project Development & Delivery Manager, Main Roads Wheatbelt
Ms Vicky Eckersley	A/Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Main Roads Wheatbelt
Mr Grant Arthur	Director Regional Development, Wheatbelt Development Commission
Ms Kellie Todman	Manager Government & Industry Relations, CBH Group
Robert Dew	Zone Executive Officer

2.2 Apologies

Cr Keith Carter	Shire of Dalwallinu
Cr Tony O’Gorman	Shire of Dandaragan
Cr John Gibbons	Shire of Goomalling
Mr Aaron Bowman	CEO, Shire of Toodyay
Cr Suzanne Woods	Shire of Victoria Plains
Cr Chris Gibbs	Shire of York
Mr Nick Sloan	CEO, WA Local Government Association
Ms Shelby Robinson	District Emergency Management Advisor, Wheatbelt & Goldfields-Esperance Regions
Mr Josh Pomykala	Director Regional Development, RDA Wheatbelt
Ms Tracey Peacock	Road Safety Advisor, WALGA RoadWise
Hon Rob Horstmann MLC	Member for Western Australia
Mr Lachlan Hunter MLA	Member for Central Wheatbelt
Mr Shane Love MLA	Member for Mid-West
Water Corporation,	Goldfields and Agricultural Region

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

There were no declarations of interest.

4 MINUTES

4.1 Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the Zone Meeting held 21 November 2025 at Wongan Hills. Copies of these Minutes have been circulated to all member Councils.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minutes of the Zone Meeting held on 21 November 2025, as printed and circulated, be confirmed.

RESOLUTION

Cr S Boekeman moved and Cr M McKeown seconded –

That the Minutes of the Zone Meeting held on 21 November 2025, as printed and circulated, be confirmed. CARRIED

4.2 Business Arising from the Minutes

(a) Wheatbelt Regional Crematorium (Item 9.2(a) 21/11/2025)

The June 2025 meeting considered a proposal by the Shire of Northam for advocacy to the State and Federal governments for a regional crematorium and chapel to be built in Northam to service the Central Wheatbelt region.

The Zone resolved

1. *That the Avon-Midland Zone undertakes advocacy with the State and Federal Governments for the investigation, planning and establishment of a Regional Crematorium and Chapel to be located preferably at the Northam Cemetery.*
2. *That the Avon-Midland Zone approaches the Central and Great Eastern Country Zones for support for this initiative.*

The Central Country Zone and the Great Eastern Country Zone considered our request at their November 2025 meetings.

The Central Country Zone resolved –

That the Central Country Zone:

- 1. supports the Avon-Midland Country Zone's proposal in relation to the establishment of a regional Crematorium and Chapel; and*
- 2. joins the Avon-Midland Country Zone in its advocacy efforts with State and Federal Governments for the investigation, planning and establishment of a regional Crematorium and Chapel.*

The Great Eastern Country Zone resolved –

That the Great Eastern Country Zone support the Avon-Midland Country Zone in undertaking advocacy with the State and Federal Governments for the investigation, planning and establishment of a Regional Crematorium and Chapel to be located, preferably, at the Northam Cemetery.

RECOMMENDATION

For Noting

NOTED

Ms D Terrelink advised that the Shire of Northam will now start advocacy to the State Government for the establishment of A Wheatbelt Crematorium.

(b) Other

No other matters were brought forward.

5 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

5.1 WALGA State Council Agenda

Review of the Agenda for the State Council meeting to be held Wednesday 4 March 2026. The Zone can provide comment or submit alternate recommendations to State Council for consideration.

(a) Matters for Decision

9.1 Aviation Advocacy Positions (Page 8)

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

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

WALGA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Two new Advocacy Positions are proposed to strengthen WALGA's aviation advocacy framework and to inform WALGA's response to future inquiries and/or consultation relating to aviation.
- The aim of the new positions is to provide clearer and more contemporary guidance on:
 - the sustainability and ongoing viability of Local Government-owned regional airports; and

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

RECOMMENDATION

That the above recommendations and comments be endorsed.

RESOLUTION

Cr J Chester moved and Cr D Smythe seconded –

That the Zone supports the WALGA recommendations for State Council Agenda item 9.1 contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above. **CARRIED**

(b) Other State Council Agenda Items

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

Policy Team & Committee Reports

- 10.1 Infrastructure Policy Team Report (Page 14)
- 10.2 People and Place Policy Team Report (Page 15)
- 10.3 Governance Policy Team Report (Page 16)
- 10.4 Environment Policy Team Report (Page 17)
- 10.5 Municipal Waste Advisory Council Report (Page 19)

Matters for Noting/Information

- 11.1 2026-27 Federal Budget Submission (Page 21)
- 11.2 Submission on the Terms of Reference for Inquiry into the Current State of the Australian Tyre Industry and Challenges and Opportunities within the Context of a Circular Economy (Page 23)
- 11.3 Submission on the State Hazard Plan HAZMAT Annex B Space Re-Entry Debris (SPRED) (Page 26)
- 11.4 Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund and Community Night Lights Program Funding Pause (Page 28)
- 11.5 Flying Minutes Endorsed by State Council (Page 31)

Ms S Fletcher referred to the Community Sporting and Recreation Facilities Fund being put on hold and commented that this was of concern as the fund provides major financial assistance for the development of sport and recreation infrastructure and a number of local governments will have applications current.

Mr R Brown commented the local governments with applications in development are requested to contact the WA Local Government Association with details.

Key Activity Reports

- 12.1.1 Report on Key Activities, Advocacy Portfolio (Page 32)
- 12.1.2 Report on Key Activities, Infrastructure Portfolio (Page 37)
- 12.1.3 Report on Key Activities, Member Services Portfolio (Page 41)
- 12.1.4 Report on Key Activities, Policy Portfolio (Page 45)

RECOMMENDATION

That the Policy Team and Committee Reports, Matters for Noting/Information and Key Activity Reports be noted.

Ms R Brown commented on -f

- Funding for waste projects was now available to regional local governments but the timeframe was challenging and funding limited.
- Legislation being introduced into Parliament to allow local governments to make cat containment local laws.

RESOLUTION

**Cr J Chester moved and Cr D Smythe seconded –
That the Policy Team and Committee Reports, Matters for Noting/Information and Key Activity Reports be noted** **CARRIED**

Mr Mohammad Siddiqui entered the meeting at 10:23 am.

5.2 WALGA President's Report

Presentation of the WALGA President's Report. (Attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the WALGA President's Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr D Smythe moved and Cr M Campbell seconded –
That the WALGA President's Report be received.** **CARRIED**

5.3 Zone State Councillor's Report

Report by Cr C Antonio. (Attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the State Councillor's Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr D Smythe moved and Cr S Boekeman seconded –
That the combine State Councillor's and Zone President's Report be received.** **CARRIED**

5.4 Zone Status Report

Report by WA Local Government Association on status of Zone resolutions for action by the Association – February 2026. (Attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the February 2026 Status Report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr K Seymour moved and Cr M McKeown seconded –
That the February 2026 Status Report be received.** **CARRIED**

6 ZONE REPORTS

6.1 Zone President

Combined with Zone State Council Member Report (see Item 5.3).

NOTED

6.2 Wheatbelt District Leadership Group

Report by Cr Antonio on the Wheatbelt District Leadership Group.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Report on the Wheatbelt District Leadership Group be received.

Cr C Antonio reported –

- Leadership Group has only met once since the last Zone meeting.
- Struggling as State Government funding has been withdrawn.
- Living Well in the Wheatbelt a major project undertaken by the Group.

RESOLUTION

Cr M McKeown moved and Cr S Boekeman seconded –

That the Report on the Wheatbelt District Leadership Group be received.

CARRIED

6.3 Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee

Report by Shelby Robinson, District Emergency Management Advisor, Wheatbelt & Goldfields-Esperance Regions. (Attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Report on the Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee be received.

Cr L Balcombe reported that the Committee had not met since the last Zone meeting. The Next meeting was scheduled for 25 February 2026.

RESOLUTION

Cr J Chester moved and Cr N Smith seconded –

That the Report on the Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee be received.

CARRIED

6.4 Wheatbelt Forum 2026

The Organising Committee for the Wheatbelt Forum 2026 has not met since the last Zone meeting. A meeting is scheduled following today's Zone meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

For Noting

NOTED

6.5 Other

There were no other reports.

7 AGENCY REPORTS

7.1 Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety

(a) Presentation of the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulations and Safety, Local Government Division's report. No Report.

(b) Consideration of any topics or presentations the Zone would like the Department to give to the next Zone meeting.

Last meeting requested presentations on –

- Grant and funding opportunities; and
- Local government legislative reform, in particular timeframes and clarity on the exact role of the Local Government Inspector.

RECOMMENDATION

For Noting

NOTED

7.2 RDA Wheatbelt

Presentation of the RDA Wheatbelt report. (Attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the RDA Wheatbelt report be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr J Chester moved and Cr N Smith seconded –
That the RDA Wheatbelt report be received.**

CARRIED

Mr S Fletcher advised hat he was a member of the RDA Wheatbelt Board.

7.3 Transport Portfolio (Main Roads, Department of Transport, Public Transport Authority)

Presentation of the Main Roads (Wheatbelt Region) Report. (Attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Transport Portfolio report be received.

Mr S Gupta presented the Main Road (Wheatbelt Region) report.

7.4 RoadWise (Wheatbelt North)

Presentation of RoadWise report. (Attached to Agenda).

RECOMMENDATION

That the RoadWise report be received.

7.5 CBH Group

Update by Ms Kellie Todman, Manager Government & Industry Relations.

7.6 Wheatbelt Development Commission

Presentation of Wheatbelt Development Commission report.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Wheatbelt Development Commission report be received.

Mr G Arthur commented on –

RESOLUTION

**Cr D Smythe moved and Cr S Boekeman seconded –
That Agency Reports 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 be received.**

CARRIED

8 FINANCE

8.1 Financial Reports

Balance Sheet and Profit and Loss Report for the period ending 31 January 2026 are attached to the agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

That the financial reports for the period ending 31 January 2026, as attached, be received.

RESOLUTION

**Cr D Smythe moved and Cr M McKeown seconded –
That the financial reports for the period ending 31 January 2026, as attached, be received.**

CARRIED

8.2 Accounts for Payment

The following accounts are submitted for payment –

<u>Payee</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Amount</u>
R W & S Dew	Secretarial Services to Zone – March 2026 Quarter	<u>4,502.50</u>
	TOTAL	<u><u>\$4,502.50</u></u>

RECOMMENDATION

That the accounts as listed totalling \$4,502.50 be approved for payment.

RESOLUTION

**Cr D Smythe moved and Cr N Smith seconded –
That the accounts as listed totalling \$4,502.50 be approved for payment.**

CARRIED

9 ZONE BUSINESS

9.1 Western Power Response and Mitigation Measures for Pole Top Fires in Rural Communities

By Shire of Gingin

BACKGROUND

The Shire of Gingin, together with other rural local governments within the Avon-Midland Zone, has experienced an increasing number of pole top fires occurring during summer conditions. These incidents typically arise following extended periods of hot, dry weather when dust, organic debris and contaminants accumulate on power infrastructure. When summer rainfall or moisture events occur, electrical tracking and arcing ignite material at pole tops, resulting in sustained fires.

These fires present a recurring and predictable risk across high bushfire-prone rural areas.

Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades, largely comprised of farmers, small business operators, and residents with external employment commitments, are regularly dispatched by DFES as first responders. Current operational practice frequently requires volunteer crews to remain on scene for extended periods, often between 2 and 10 hours, maintaining safety perimeters while waiting for Western Power personnel or contractors to attend and isolate the electrical infrastructure before suppression activities can safely commence.

COMMENT

Operational Impacts on Volunteer Brigades and Communities

This response model is placing a disproportionate burden on volunteer emergency services and rural communities:

- Volunteers are prevented from responding to concurrent incidents while committed to static pole top fire standby duties.
- Brigade members experience direct financial and operational impacts, including loss of income and the need to arrange labour to maintain farms and livestock.
- Delays in electrical isolation prolong fire duration and increase bushfire risk.
- Volunteers may be unable to defend their own properties during simultaneous fire events.
- The presence of live, unisolated electrical infrastructure for extended periods presents a significant safety hazard. It is only a matter of time before an inexperienced, fatigued, or overworked volunteer mistakenly applies water to an energised pole, creating a serious and foreseeable risk of severe injury or loss of life.

A recent incident within the Shire of Gingin highlighted this risk, where a volunteer remained committed to monitoring a pole top fire for several hours while another fire ignited on his own property nearby, leaving him unable to respond.

Western Power relies on professional staff and contractors for isolation, yet response times in rural areas are frequently insufficient to support effective emergency management outcomes.

Position of the Shire of Gingin

The Shire of Gingin seeks Avon-Midland Zone support to advocate collectively to Western Power and the State Government for improved prevention, preparedness and response arrangements relating to pole top fires.

Advocacy Requests

1. Infrastructure Prevention Measures

Western Power to investigate and implement improved engineering and maintenance practices to reduce pole top ignition risk in rural and high bushfire hazard areas, including enhanced insulation and mitigation measures at known ignition points.

2. Improved Isolation Response Times

Western Power to establish service benchmarks and operational improvements ensuring timely attendance by authorised personnel to isolate infrastructure, minimising extended volunteer standby periods.

3. Pre-deployment Planning During Forecast Risk Conditions

Where summer rainfall or storm activity is forecast following prolonged heat events, Western Power should pre-position contractors and isolation crews in recognised high-risk regions, including the Avon-Midland Zone, to enable immediate response.

4. Dedicated Rural Pole Top Fire Isolation Capability

Establishment of a specialised emergency response power-isolation team focused on rural pole top fires in areas with demonstrated incident history. These teams should be deployable in advance of forecast weather events.

5. Transparency and Data Sharing

Western Power to provide statistical reporting to local governments and WALGA Zones including:

- Number and geographic distribution of pole top fires
- Contractor response times
- Weather and seasonal correlations
- Incident duration and resource impacts

6. Emergency Management Strategy Reform

Western Power to develop and implement an emergency management strategy that reduces reliance on volunteer brigades for prolonged supervision of electrical infrastructure fires, ensuring professional electrical response resources assume primary responsibility once scene safety is established.

Outcome Sought

The Shire of Gingin requests the Avon-Midland Zone endorse this advocacy position and progress coordinated representation to Western Power and relevant State agencies to ensure:

- Reduced occurrence of pole top fires;
- Faster infrastructure isolation;
- Improved protection of rural communities;
- Appropriate use of volunteer emergency services; and
- A more balanced allocation of responsibility between utilities and volunteer responders.

This matter represents a regional emergency management issue affecting multiple rural local governments and requires coordinated action to protect volunteers, farming operations, and bushfire-prone communities across the Avon-Midland Zone.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone endorse the Shire of Gingin's advocacy request and progress representation to the WA Local Government Association, Western Power, Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

RESOLUTION

Cr L Stewart moved and Cr D Smythe seconded –

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone endorse the Shire of Gingin's advocacy request and progress representation to the WA Local Government Association, Western Power, Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

CARRIED

Cr A Mencshelyi left the meeting at 11:24 am.

9.2 Central Country Zone - Cost Shift Compliance Project

BACKGROUND

At its April 2024 meeting the Central Country Zone requested its Executive Officer to gather data via survey to all Central Country Zone Local Governments relating to:

- a) Examples of cost shifting where State and Commonwealth services are now being provided by Local Governments and the cost of providing these services.
- b) Examples of current compliance requirements that are not required.

In August 2024 the Central Country Zone noted that the responses to the survey looked inconsistent and the Zone resolved to engage an independent consultant to review the figures from the survey relating to the top four Cost Shift Items and top four Compliance Costs.

At its June 2025 meeting the Central Country Zone established a small working group to refine and strengthen the Consultant's report and to develop clear recommendations that positions the report as an effective advocacy tool against Federal and State cost shifting impacting WA Local Governments

The Central Country Zone's August 2025 meeting resolved to -

1. endorse the Cost Shifting and Compliance report, including the Zone position statements,
2. invite the Auditor General to an upcoming Zone meeting, and
3. organise a delegation to appropriate Ministers to present the report.

The Report presented at the Central Country Zone's August meeting stated the following three Zone Positions:

ZONE POSITION: Reinstate the requirement for a Regulatory Impact Assessment for all amendments to legislation and regulation. There should be transparency and a statement of benefits in State Agreements to reduce risk and financial costs on Local and State Governments.

ZONE POSITION: That the Office of Auditor General review their costing formulae for Local Government audits and show constraint in audit costs, reflective of the Local Government Band. That the Office of Auditor General provide a breakdown on the cost of the audit and justification for any variance to the estimate to the Local Government as part of the final billing process.

ZONE POSITION: The Australian Government increase the Financial Assistance Grants to Local Governments in remote and very remote locations that are providing funding, sourced through their rates, to attract and retain general practitioners. The Medical Facilities Cost Adjustor in the Financial Assistance Grants provided to Local Governments, administered by the WA Grants Commission, be increased to \$200,000.

At its November 2025 meeting the Central Country Zone considered recommendations from its Executive Committee and resolved -

That the Central Country Zone:

1) *resolve to action each Position as follows:*

- a) *Position 1 be referred to State Council for consideration as a WALGA Advocacy Position.*
- b) *A letter be sent to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum in relation to Position 2.*
- c) *Position 3 to be dealt with as a separate issue given recent communications with the Office of the Auditor General.*
- d) *Position 4 be amended to remove the reference to the Financial Assistance Grants, to read: "The Australian Government increase the support to Local Governments in rural, remote and very remote locations that are providing funding, sourced through their rates, to attract and retain general practitioners."*

2) *supports sharing a copy of the report with the other Wheatbelt Zones (Avon-Midland and Great Eastern Country Zones), seeking their support for the four Positions.*

3) *Supports sharing a copy of the report with the Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport's new Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Fiscal Sustainability.*

COMMENT

Copy of the Central Country Zone's Report Cost Shifting and Compliance is attached to the Agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone support / not support the positions set out in the Central Country Zone's Cost Shifting and Compliance report.

RESOLUTION

Cr D Smythe moved and Cr K Seymour seconded –

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone support the positions set out in the Central Country Zone's Cost Shifting and Compliance report.

CARRIED

RESOLUTION

Cr D Smythe moved and Cr L Stewart seconded –

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone survey its member local governments requesting examples of cost shifting with particular focus on issues over and above those set out in the Central Country Zone's Cost Shifting and Compliance Report.

CARRIED

9.3 Call for the Office of the Auditor General to Conduct a Performance Audit of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia (DRFAWA)

The Murchison Country Zone has requested support from Zones relating to disaster recovery funding arrangements for flooding and has provided the following background and comment.

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

Are the communities of Western Australia being supported in a timely manner after they have been impacted by a natural disaster?

Is agreed funding, that is the responsibility of the State Government, reaching affected communities?

With respect to the scale of different types of disasters and different sized communities are the processes of Recovery and Resilience efficient and fit for purpose?

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

The Murchison Country Zone resolved –

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

ZONE COMMENT

At State Council’s November 2025 meeting the item from the Murchison Country Zone was referred to WALGA’s Policy Portfolio for consideration and appropriate action. The Policy Team supported advocating for the Auditor General to undertake a performance audit of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia (DRFAWA) as an action (see December 2025 State Council Agenda Item 10.1).

RECOMMENDATION

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone -

- (1) Support the Murchison Country Zone’s call for the Auditor General to undertake a performance audit of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia; and
- (2) Note WALGA’s Policy Team’s support for advocating for this matter as an action.

RESOLUTION

Cr D Smythe moved and Cr M Campbell seconded –

That That the Avon-Midland Country Zone -

- (1) Support the Murchison Country Zone’s call for the Auditor General to undertake a performance audit of the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements Western Australia; and**
- (2) Note WALGA’s Policy Team’s support for advocating for this matter as an action.**

CARRIED

9.4 Consultation on Draft Climate Change Advocacy Position

By Rebecca Brown, WALGA Policy Manager Environment and Waste

WALGA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This item is intended to replace WALGA’s 2018 Climate Change Advocacy Position and Policy Statement.

ATTACHMENT

The Consultation Paper is available online.

BACKGROUND

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

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

- The national *Climate Change Act 2022* and the Western Australian Climate Change Bill 2023.
- The *Local Government Amendment Act 2023*, which expanded Western Australian Local Governments' general function to include planning for, and mitigating, the risks associated with climate change.
- The release of the Australian Government's National Climate Risk Assessment and National Adaptation Plan in 2025.
- Escalation of the transition to renewable energy, uptake of electric vehicles and energy efficiency standards under the National Construction Code.
- Climate science and projections (international, national and WA specific) have also become clearer regarding the risks posed by climate change and the need for action to address the consequential impacts.

COMMENT

It is important that the WALGA climate change advocacy position is updated to reflect these changes and the consequent needs and priorities of Local Governments. An updated climate change advocacy position, which complements other WALGA advocacy positions, will provide a sound basis for WALGA's advocacy.

Following initial consultation, consideration by State Council in March 2025 and feedback from the Environment Policy Team, WALGA has developed a revised, draft Climate Change Advocacy Position for Local Government feedback.

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

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

Following consideration of this feedback a final draft advocacy position will be developed and provided to Zones and State Council for consideration, expected to be in July 2026.

RECOMMENDATION

For noting

NOTED

The meeting expressed concern at the large number of Flying Agendas being circulated by the WA Local Government Association for comment by delegates. Whilst acknowledging the short timeframes set by Government Departments, delegates commented that they had little time to obtain feedback from their Councils and that staff had insufficient time to provide information. As such they frequently were unable to provide a response.

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

By Rachel Armstrong, Policy Manager Emergency Management

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

RECOMMENDATION

For Noting

NOTED

9.6 Draft Renewable Energy Planning Code

By Kieran McGovern, Senior Policy Advisor, Planning

WALGA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

ATTACHMENTS

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

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

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

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

There is also a lack of guidance regarding appropriate land uses in particular zones, specifically protecting rural land for agricultural purposes, instead stating that wind farms are generally compatible with agricultural land uses. WALGA's position is that regulatory amendments are required to create a model zone through the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015* for land

identified as high quality agricultural land (noting most of this land is located in the Southwest region) known as the 'Priority Agriculture'.

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

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

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

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

RECOMMENDATION

For Noting

NOTED

The meeting noted community benefit issues around renewable energy projects.

9.7 Local Government Honours Awards 2026

BACKGROUND

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

There are five awards in the 2026 Program:

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

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

For more information contact Habiba Farrag, State Council Governance Officer, on 9213 2050 or via email honours@walga.asn.au.

RECOMMENDATION

For noting

NOTED

9.8 Water Management Discussion Paper Update

By Rebecca Brown, WALGA Policy Manager Environment and Waste

WALGA EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA has developed a Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper exploring issues for Local Governments in managing water resources.
- To inform the Discussion Paper, WALGA undertook research and direct engagement with the sector and reviewed existing Water Advocacy Positions and feedback from WALGA Zones.

- Based on this consultation, the Discussion Paper identifies water security and water efficiency as key themes.
- Feedback on the Discussion Paper will inform the development of a new water management advocacy position.
- Zones and Local Governments are encouraged to provide comments to WALGA by 12 March 2026.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

ATTACHMENT

- Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper

BACKGROUND

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

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

Local Governments across Western Australia are addressing water security and efficiency through various actions across strategic infrastructure planning, innovative water management practices and community awareness. A new Water Management Advocacy Position will ensure WALGA can effectively advocate on

behalf of the sector in relation to this issue. The Discussion Paper includes options to address these issues and questions for the sector relating to each of the key areas.

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

RECOMMENDATION
For discussion

NOTED

9.9 Request to Present – Australian Bureau Of Statistics (ABS)

BACKGROUND

WALGA has been approached by a representative from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) requesting support for a deputation to be provided at Zones meetings to facilitate a targeted, Elected Member/CEO-focused discussion on the Australian Census.

COMMENT

The ABS is seeking insight on local community considerations, participation challenges, and how Census engagement can be strengthened across Western Australia.

This proposal recognises that councillors have distinct responsibilities, insights, and perspectives that extend beyond operational Census delivery.

CEOs and Elected members will also have the opportunity to explore how Census data supports council planning, advocacy, and service delivery, while helping shape future engagement approaches.

The session is designed to be practical, collaborative, and responsive to the priorities and experiences of local governments.

The session would be framed as:
“We are here to listen — what would you like to ask, know, or see changed?”

Focus points:

- Elected-member perspectives
- Local challenges and insights
- Improvement and change
- Value for Local Governments
- Strengthened collaboration

RECOMMENDATION

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone supports / does not support a deputation from the Australian Bureau of Statistics on the 2026 Census at a future meeting.

RESOLUTION

Cr D Smythe moved and Cr M Campbell seconded –

That the Avon-Midland Country Zone invites a deputation from the Australian Bureau of Statistics to attend the Zone’s next meeting.

CARRIED

10 URGENT BUSINESS (as permitted by the Presiding Member)

10.1 National General Assembly 2026

The Executive Officer drew attention to the National General Assembly of Local Government to be held in Canberra 23-25 June 2026 and decision by the Zone as to whether it will send delegate(s).

RESOLUTION

By Consensus –

That the matter of Zone delegates to the National General Assembly 2026 be listed for consideration at the Zone’s next meeting.

CARRIED

10.2 Attendnace by Main Roads

Mr M Siddiqui asked if it would be acceptable to the Zone for Main Roads to only give a presentation at the April and August meetings rather than at each meeting.

The meeting agreed that this would be acceptable.

11 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Brief comments by Members of Parliament. There were no Members of Parliament present.

12 DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

Future meetings of the Zone are scheduled for –

24 April 2026	Shire of Goomalling
19 June 2026	Shire of Gingin
20 August 2026	Video Conference
21 August 2026	Shire of Chittering (Wheatbelt Forum)
20 November 2026	Shire of Toodyay

The Executive Officer will be on leave from 15 April to 6 May 2026. Consideration will need to be given as to whether video conference facilities will be available for the Zone’s April 2026 meeting. At the last meeting Ms Rebecca Brown advised that she was able to take and prepare the Minutes for this meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That the next ordinary meeting of the Zone be held Friday 24 April 2026 and be hosted by the Shire of Goomalling.
- (2) That video conference facilities not be available for the Zone meeting to be held 24 April 2026.

RESOLUTION

Cr D Smythe moved and Cr S Boekeman seconded –

- (1) **That the next ordinary meeting of the Zone be held Friday 24 April 2026 and be hosted by the Shire of Goomalling.**
- (2) **That video conference facilities not be available for the Zone meeting to be held 24 April 2026.**

CARRIED

13 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair thanked attendees for their participation, the Shire of Moora for hosting the meeting and declared the meeting closed at 11:58 am.

CERTIFICATION

These Minutes were confirmed by the meeting held on

Signed:
(Chairman of meeting at which the Minutes were confirmed)