

Central Country Zone Minutes

15 November, 2024

Hosted by the Shire of Wandering

Commenced at 9.30am

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Policy and Advocacy Prioritisation Framework

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

How to use the Framework:

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

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

ATTACHMENTS

The following are provided as attachments to the Minutes

1. Item 3 Shire of Wandering Welcome
2. Item 5.1.1 Powering WA Presentation
3. Item 5.1.3 ERA Presentation
4. Item 5.1.3 ERA; first annual progress report
5. Item 5.1.4 Western Power Presentation
6. Item 10.4 WALGA Roadwise Report
7. Item 11.3 WALGA President's Report
8. Item 13.1 Confidential Item

The full 6 December State Council Agenda [can be found here](#) as well as attached.

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

The Chair declared the meeting open at 9.30am

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1.2 HOUSEKEEPING – ZONE CHAIR

1. **Welcome:**
The Zone Chair, President Cr Des Hickey, will welcome Zone members and provide OSH/bathroom/exit information to those in attendance.
2. **Share your name and Local Government:**
Delegates are reminded to ensure that they call their name and Local Government when taking the floor to allow for accurate Minutes to be recorded.

1.3 ATTENDANCE

Shire of Beverley	President Cr David White Mr Steve Gollan Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Brookton	President Cr Katrina Crute
Shire of Corrigin	President Cr Des Hickey (Chair) Deputy President Cr Sharon Jacobs
Shire of Cuballing	Cr Adrian Kowald Mr Chris Paget Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Dumbleyung	President Cr Amy Knight Mr Gavin Treasure Chief Executive Officer, non-voting

Shire of Kulin	Cr Robbie Bowey Mr Alan Leeson Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Lake Grace	President Cr Len Armstrong Deputy President Steve Hunt Mr Alan George Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Narrogin	Cr Clive Bartron Mr Dale Stewart Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Pingelly	President Cr Jackie McBurney Deputy President Cr Peter Wood Mr Andrew Dover Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Quairading	President Cr Jo Haythornthwaite Cr Jonathan Hippisley Ms Natalie Ness, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Wandering	President Cr Ian Turton Deputy President Cr Sheryl Little Cr Dennis Jennings Mr Alan Hart Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of West Arthur	Deputy President Cr Karen Harrington Cr Duncan South Mr Vin Fordham Lamont, Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Williams	Cr Tracey Price Mr Peter Stubbs, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
GUESTS	
Representative for the Minister for Energy; Environment; Climate Action Powering WA	Hon Darren West MLC Jai Thomas, Deputy Director General - Coordinator of Energy
Economic Regulatory Authority Western Power	Steve Edwell, Chairperson Andrew Cook, General Counsel Archana Viswanathan, Head of Asset Performance Rasha Murad, Community & Stakeholder Relationship Manager
Wheatbelt Development Commission Main Roads WA	Rob Cossart, Chief Executive Officer Mohammad Siddiqui, Director Wheatbelt Region
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT	Hon Steve Martin MLC, Member for the Agricultural Region Rick Wilson MP, Federal Member for O'Connor Hon Sandra Carr MLC, Member for Agricultural Region

WALGA

Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services
Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager Environment and Waste
Jason Russell, Senior Governance Specialist
Naomih Donaghy, Governance and Organisational Services Officer
Rodney Thornton, Regional Road Safety Advisor

1.4 APOLOGIES

MEMBERS

Shire of Beverley	Deputy President Cr Dee Ridgway
Shire of Brookton	Cr Tamara de Lange
	Mr Gary Sherry Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Corrigin	Ms Natalie Manton Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Cuballing	President Cr Eliza Dowling
	Deputy President Cr Rob Harris
	Cr Scott Ballantyne
Shire of Dumbleyung	Deputy President Cr Grant Lukins
Shire of Kulin	President Cr Grant Robins
Shire of Narrogin	President Leigh Ballard
Shire of Quairading	Deputy President Cr Trevor Stacey
Shire of West Arthur	President Cr Neil Morrell
Shire of Wagin	President Cr Phillip Blight
	Deputy President Bryan Kilpatrick
Shire of Wickepin	Mr Kenneth Parker, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
	Ms Kellie Bartley, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
	Deputy President Cr Wes Astbury
	President Cr Julie Russell
	President Cr Julie Russell
Shire of Williams	Cr Jarrad Logie

GUESTS

CBH Group	Ms Kellie Todman, Manager Governance and Industry Relations
Regional Development Australia WA	Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development
Department of Local Government, Sport, & Cultural Industries	Samantha Cornthwaite, Regional Manager Wheatbelt
Water Corporation	Michael Roberts, Regional Manager Goldfields & Agricultural Region

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Hon Martin Aldridge MLC, Member for Agricultural Region
Hon Peter Rundle MLA, Member for Roe
Hon Colin de Grussa MLC, Member for Agricultural Region
Hon Shelley Payne MLC, Member for Agricultural Region
Hon Mia Davies MLA, Member for Central Wheatbelt

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3 HOST COUNCIL PRESENTATION

President Cr Ian Turton, Shire of Wandering, extended a welcome to delegates and guests and provided a presentation on projects and issues facing the Shire of Wandering.

President Cr Ian Turton speech is attached (**Attachment 1**)

NOTED

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS

NIL

5 GUEST SPEAKERS / DEPUTATIONS

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

5.1 SPEAKERS FOR THE AUGUST ZONE MEETING

5.1.1 Energy Update

- Powering WA, Jai Thomas, Deputy Director General - Coordinator of Energy

Jai presented on the "Powering WA" program, what it aims to achieve and how the program will impact on regional communities such as those within the Central Country Zone.

Jai's presentation is attached to the Minutes (**Attachment 2**)

NOTED

- Hon Darren West MLC, Representing the Minister for Energy; Environment; Climate Action
Hon Reece Whitby MLA

Presented on the Minister for Energy's portfolio impact with reference to the proposed transition of energy sources.

Hon Darren West spoke in line with Powering WA and took questions from the floor, In consultation with Jai Thomas.

NOTED

5.1.2 Members of Parliament

Hon Steve Martin MLC, Member for the Agricultural Region spoke to the Zone, with special mention to Hon Darren West MLC. Darren is not re-electing at the 2025 election.

NOTED

5.1.3 Economic Regulatory Authority

Steve Edwell, Chairperson.

This presentation focused on how Western Power is tracking against the commitments it made in regard to its current Access Arrangement and the ERA's first monitoring report.

Steve's presentation is attached to the Minutes (**Attachment 3**) as well as the *first annual progress report* (**Attachment 4**) he referred to during his presentation.

NOTED

5.1.4 Western Power

Andrew Cook - General Counsel, Archana Viswanathan, Head of Asset Performance and Rasha Murad - Community & Stakeholder Relationship Manager

Western Power presented on their network initiatives and investment undertaken to minimise bushfire risk ahead of summer

Andrew's presentation is attached to the Minutes (**Attachment 5**)

NOTED

6 MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

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

No other Members attended the November Central Country Zone meeting.

NOTED

7 AGENCY REPORTS

7.1 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SPORT AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Samanta Cornthwaite, Regional Director Wheatbelt

The DLGSC report was submitted for the Zone.

NOTED

7.2 WHEATBELT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Rob Cossart, Chief Executive Officer

Rob Cossart presented to the Zone.

NOTED

7.3 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA WHEATBELT

Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development

Josh Pomykala was an apology for this meeting. A report was provided with the Agenda.

NOTED

7.4 MAIN ROADS WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Mohammad Siddiqui, Regional Manager Wheatbelt

MainRoads provided a report which was attached to the Agenda.

NOTED

7.5 CBH GROUP

Kellie Todman, Manager - Government & Industry Relations

Kellie Todman was an apology.

NOTED

8 MINUTES

8.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 16 AUGUST 2024

The Minutes of the Central Country Zone meeting held on 16 August 2024 were previously been circulated to Member Councils.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Deputy President Karen Harrington

Seconded: President Cr Katrina Crute

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Central Country Zone held on 16 August 2024 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

CARRIED

8.2 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES FROM THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 16 AUGUST 2024

8.2.1 (Item 8.4.2) Enhanced Alternative Education Opportunities for Regional WA

Tony Brown, WALGA

BACKGROUND:

At the August meeting, the Zone Resolved;

Moved: Deputy President Karen Harrington

Seconded: Deputy President Cr Graham Broad

That the Zone prepare a submission to the Draft Regional Education Strategy on the following issues:

- 60% of students in remote schools are not meeting NAPLAN proficiency benchmarks*
- Lack of quality education is a major impediment to attracting and retaining skilled and unskilled labour in Western Australia's regions and accordingly a major impediment to economic growth and standards of living*
- Lack of quality education in regional areas is a significant source of social stratification and exacerbates socio-economic inequality in regional areas*
- The interests of schools as organisations and educators are not necessarily aligned with the best interests of students or regional communities*
- Housing and staff issues*
- Subsidising teaching degrees to encourage teachers to move to regional and rural areas.*
- Overall costs of operating schools (Operating costs of school ovals - subsidy needed) and (Funding for regional students for excursions).*

On behalf of the Zone, a submission was presented to the Minister for Education.

NOTED

8.2.2 Audit Fees update

Tony Brown, WALGA

BACKGROUND:

The WALGA State Council resolved as follows (at the August meeting):

That State Council:

- 1. Objects to the Office of the Auditor General's audit fees increases for the 2023-24 audits of accounts and annual financial report of Local Governments; and*
- 2. Requests the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations to conduct an Inquiry into the OAG's performance of audits and increased audit fees to Local Governments.*

Correspondence has been sent to the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations.

UPDATE

The Estimates and Financial Operations Committee held a hearing with the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) on 11 September. The video of the hearing is available on the [Parliamentary Committee's website](#).

A summary of comments from the OAG:

- Admission that the timing of audit fees was “terrible” and acknowledgement of impact on Local Governments. However, the increase is beyond the OAG’s control.
- There was some communication with some Local Governments regarding increased fees. However, there was no structured communication process.
- Future plans include:
 - bringing forward the process and advising earlier
 - better communication of the process and causes behind cost increases
 - better data analytics to improve efficiency
 - target of 80% of audits being conducted by the OAG (currently 8%)
 - more education on the value and benefits of the OAG audit process
- The Auditor General was unable to provide a firm target date for notification for the next financial year. The earliest that has been achieved previously has been May.
- Audit fees should be recoverable rather than through appropriations. It is not sustainable for the OAG to absorb costs that have until now been absorbed.
- Contractor fees have increased due to market forces.
- Beyond the Audit Opinion received, Local Governments receive additional value e.g. entity specific findings and recommendations, comparable and consistent format, sector results reports, capability development (e.g. financial statement preparation guidance, audit readiness tools, liaison with professional and sector bodies) and advocacy on financial governance.
- Fees do not cover Performance Audits, Information Systems Audits, Better Practice Guidance or Audit Chair Forum, which are covered by appropriations.
- Recognise there is a disproportionate increase (percentage) for smaller Local Governments. Their concerns are understood.
- It is difficult to complete an audit in compliance with Standards for less than \$30,000 (unavoidable baseline cost).
- The OAG has published a guide to their tender procurement process (<https://audit.wa.gov.au/resources/audit-fees/oag-tender-process/>)
- There has been an increase in scope of audits since the OAG commenced. This is not within the OAG’s discretion, it is in response to changes to the Auditing Standards.
- In comparison to when the audit process was not conducted by the OAG:
 - There is a view that audits were previously conducted as “loss leaders” and audits fees may have been artificially low.
 - There is an extra cost to the additional value that the OAG provides. However, this is a benefit to the sector that was not previously obtained.
- The Committee also conducted a Private Hearing.

NOTED

8.3 ITEMS – FOR DECISION, CENTRAL COUNTRY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2024

8.3.1 2025 Executive and Zone meeting dates

Background:

A schedule of the proposed meeting dates for the Central Country Zone 2025, as below, was presented to the Committee for discussion.

Zones dates are scheduled to coincide with the WALGA State Council meetings. The window for Zone dates for 2025 are listed in the last column of the proposed ZONE dates.

The proposed meeting dates for the Central Country Zone for 2025 were adopted by the Committee, and are presented to the Zone for endorsement.

Zone Meeting Dates Friday	Time	Host Council	State Council meeting Dates 2024	PREFERRED DATES FOR ZONE MEETINGS
14 February	Friday 9.30 am	West Arthur	Wednesday 5 March	Friday 14 to Monday 24 February
11 April	Friday 9.30 am	Wickepin	Wednesday 7 May	Friday 11 to Monday 28 April
20 June	Friday 9.30 am	Williams	Wednesday 2 July	Friday 13 to Monday 23 June
22 August	Friday 9.30 am	Beverley	Regional Meeting 4-5 September	Friday 15 to Monday 25 August
21 November	Friday 9.30 am	Brookton	Wednesday 3 December	Friday 14 to Monday 24 November

Should the above recommendation be endorsed, Executive Committee meetings will be conducted on the following Tuesdays at 7.30am as an electronic meeting;

Executive Meeting Dates Tuesday
4 February
1 April
10 June
12 August
11 November

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Jo Haythornthwaite

Seconded: Cr Clive Bartron

That the 2025 Executive Committee and Zone meeting dates listed above be endorsed.

CARRIED

8.4 MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL COUNTRY ZONE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2024

The Minutes of the Central Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 5 November 2024 were provided as an attachment to the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Katrina Crute

Seconded: Deputy President Karen Harrington

That the Minutes of the Central Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 5 November 2024 be endorsed.

CARRIED

9 ZONE BUSINESS

9.1.1 South West Native Title Settlement – Noongar Land Estate

Shire of Dumbleyung

BACKGROUND:

The South West Native Title Settlement is a landmark native title agreement reached between the State Government and the six Noongar Agreement Groups. The six requisite Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA's) were conclusively registered leading to the Settlement commencing on 25 February 2021. The Settlement recognises the Agreement Groups as the Traditional Owners of the south west of Western Australia, while resolving native title in exchange for a negotiated package of benefits.

A key negotiated benefit is the delivery of a 320,000 hectare Noongar Land Estate, in accordance with the Noongar Land Base Strategy. The Noongar Land Estate will contain up to 300,000 hectares of land transferred in reserve or leasehold, and up to 20,000 hectares of land transferred in freehold. The Landholding Body for all land transferred is the Noongar Boodja Land Sub Pty Ltd, which will hold and manage the land in the Noongar Land Estate in consultation with the soon to be established Noongar Regional Corporations. All land will be used and managed in line with Noongar cultural, social and economic aspirations for the benefit of future generations.

The Department of Planning Lands & Heritage (DPLH) is the lead State Government agency tasked with the responsibility of identifying, negotiating and facilitating the necessary arrangements to transfer existing parcels of State owned land across to the Landholding Body. Up until now, DPLH has only engaged LGAs when specific land parcels are prioritised by the Noongar People for transfer consideration. Part of this engagement effort invites a LGA to consider each land site being proposed for transfer and provide feedback on the LGAs position usually within a relatively tight timeframe i.e. 42 calendar days. These deadlines don't allow for broader key stakeholder and community engagement to properly occur.

A Shire letter was sent to DPLH on 7th June 2024 seeking an update on the status of unallocated Crown land and unmanaged reserves within the Shire of Dumbleyung, which are under consideration for possible inclusion in the Noongar Land Estate. DPLH responded confirming that 183 land parcels, totalling 1,456 hectares are currently under consideration within the Shire's boundaries. This would appear to cover all current State Government controlled land holdings. DPLH also confirmed a process that as land progresses through the phases of a Noongar Land Base Strategy, it may be prioritised or discontinued, depending on the aspirations of the Noongar People. DPLH advise that the 101 LGAs within the boundaries of the Settlement are acknowledged as important stakeholders in the delivery of this commitment and will be consulted on an ongoing basis in accordance with section 14 of the Land Administration Act 1997. DPLH further advises that

the implementation period for proposed land transfers closes March 2025. That no further information on the future use of the transferred land will be available until after the parcels are transferred, expected to occur prior to March 2026.

Comment

DPLH has initiated formal contact with the Shire of Dumbleyung (by email) on each occasion a land holding is being earmarked for transfer. Each proposal is considered on its own merits usually taking into account current or neighbouring uses, existing access corridors & routes, strategic alignment and/or importance, potential or previous land use conflicts, applicable planning requirements, etc. Due to limited timeframes for provision of a response, there is no opportunity for a broader proper community engagement process to be initiated.

DPLH confirm that there are currently 6 land parcels (511.22 hectares) that have already been offered by the State Government for transfer in the Shire of Dumbleyung. This is despite some of these parcels having already been formally considered and rejected by the Dumbleyung Shire Council for various reasons. There are a number of Shire of Dumbleyung concerns in relation to the current State Government land consideration and transfer approach:-

1. Limited timeframe capacity for Local Government to properly engage the community.
2. No DPLH feedback given once a Local Government considers and responds to each land transfer request.
3. Clarification required on how Local Government Rating Charges will be able to be facilitated once each land is transferred, particularly land set aside for economic use.
4. Increased transparency on the overall engagement requirements (under the Land Administration Act 1997); noting it currently feels like a one sided 'tick the box' exercise.

Secretariat Comment:

WALGA supports the Zone recommendation to seek a briefing from a senior DPLH officer on the issues raised with the process of State Government land consideration and transfer to the Noongar Land Estate under the South West Native Title Settlement. A WALGA official could be available to attend the meeting, noting the information will be of interest to other members under the South West Native Title area. WALGA can provide DPLH contacts if helpful. WALGA is aware the transfer of land parcels to the Noongar Land Estate is highly likely not to be completed by March 2025 due to the delay in the establishment and capacity of the six regional Aboriginal corporations under the Settlement. The need to extend and transfer timeframes may provide the opportunity to revisit the process of land transfer and consultation.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Katrina Crute

Seconded: President Cr Amy Knight

That the Central Country Zone write to DPLH outlining the above concerns (1-4) raised in this item and seek a Zone briefing by a senior DPLH officer in relation to this matter.

CARRIED

9.1.2 Aboriginal Heritage Act – State Government Inputs

Shire of Dumbleyung

BACKGROUND:

The State Government has enacted changes to the Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972) and repealed the new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act (2021). For many proponents, the reversion to the 1972 Act and Section 18 approval process put an end to ongoing confusion regarding their obligations with respect to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The broader definition of 'Aboriginal cultural heritage' adopted under the 2021 Act, which included 'cultural landscapes' and other forms of intangible cultural heritage, have not been carried across to the 1972 Act, reducing the scope of the kinds of Aboriginal cultural heritage protected by legislation and accordingly, the scope of the offence provisions where Aboriginal sites, or an object on or under an Aboriginal site, are harmed.

The concept of 'exempt activities', for which proponents did not need any form of authorisation (unless the activities were to be conducted in a protected area) introduced under the 2021 Act has also been abandoned.

Most significantly, on repeal of the 2021 Act, proponents are no longer required to comply with the tiered assessment process, which required different authorisations for different levels of ground disturbance, or the due diligence assessment requirements, where a proponent was required to investigate the presence of Aboriginal cultural heritage prior to applying for any authorisation or conducting an activity.

However, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has stated that it is expected that landowners will continue to engage in meaningful consultation with the relevant Indigenous parties to ensure their input is considered about how Aboriginal sites will be protected or managed. It is expected that the WA Government will formalise this in a policy statement or guidelines in due course.

Under the 1972 Act, proponents generally mitigate the risk of harm to Aboriginal sites or objects by engaging with Indigenous parties to carry out heritage surveys. To support the mining industry, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced its Aboriginal Heritage Survey Assistance Program to offset the increasing costs of conducting Aboriginal Surveys.

Comment

Whilst these legislative changes are generally supported, it would appear that the State Government, through some of its lead agencies, have now introduced new pre-project review and approval practices that requires Aboriginal culture and heritage consideration being given to each site being considered for development i.e. DWER.

The imposition of these changes is now resulting in considerable project delays being experienced by the Shire of Dumbleyung in achieving State lead agency clearance for each site. These matters appear to have more relevance on sites where notional native title claims exist, even though most of the Dumbleyung townsite has previously been land cleared (noting most of Dumbleyung is under a Registered Aboriginal Site).

Whilst the notion of protecting all key Aboriginal cultural and heritage sites from harm is fully supported, there needs to be a common sense, risk based approach to assessing each site on its own merits. Sending all project proposals to a prescribed body on the basis of full transparency does nothing to protect Aboriginal heritage, rather than to delay projects to the confusion and

frustration of proponents. This delays can compound if the prescribed body then recommends that the enquiry be referred to DPLH for further advice.

The issue becomes more complex as Aboriginal heritage can be defined as visual, spiritual, historical, anthropological, ethnographical etc, something only the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Committee (or locally familiar Aboriginal people) can define (DWER advice).

An alternative approach would be for the State Government to provide resourcing support to LGAs to conduct whole of Registered Site Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage survey assessments to provide (once off) clear and unambiguous information on which sites (if any) need to be protected. This clearance process should provide for all ongoing (future) project proposals and activities.

The Shire of Dumbleyung request the Zone to consider the following recommendation:

That the WALGA CCZ write to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to seek clarification on:-

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

Secretariat Comment:

WALGA supports the Zone recommendation to write to the Minister on this matter. WALGA notes that while the legislative requirements to check for Aboriginal heritage to avoid harm has been in place since 1972, State Government Agencies approaches to incorporating this requirement into their approvals have been inconsistent. WALGA has strongly advocated for support and guidance for the Local Government sector as a major proponent of Aboriginal heritage legislation. This work has been ongoing through the development, introduction and repeal of the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021* and through the amendment and reinstatement of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*. As part of this work, WALGA has highlighted the need for streamlined approaches to State Agency approvals as they relate to the protection of Aboriginal Heritage. This point has also been raised with DWER with regards to the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* social surrounds approvals. WALGA encourages Zone members to raise these issues at the Aboriginal heritage roundtable discuss that will follow the November Zone meeting.

In April 2024, DPLH opened the [Aboriginal Heritage Survey Program](#). The 10-year program seeks to support the identification and accurate recording of Aboriginal heritage for inclusion on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Inquiry System (ACHIS) and Register. As proponents of land work projects, Local Governments are eligible to apply for State Government funding for heritage surveys. The recording of the WALGA hosted information webinar is available [here](#).

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Amy Knight

Seconded: Deputy President Karen Harrington

That the Central Country Zone:

Write to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Dr Toni Buti to seek clarification on:-

- 1. Whether State Government instructions or guidance has been given to lead agencies to take a more proactive approach to managing Aboriginal cultural and heritage matters in their dealings with proponents, and if yes, what is the approach.**

2. **Seek Minister's support for a new instruction to be issued to lead agencies using a site by site risk based approach for assessment of Aboriginal cultural and heritage impacts on specific projects.**
3. **Seek Minister's support for the provision of State Government funding for those LGAs seeking to undertake whole of Registered Site Aboriginal Cultural and Heritage survey assessments to secure (once off) clearance of those sites.**

CARRIED

9.1.3 Native Vegetation Clearing Issues Paper

By Sarah Coles, Environment Policy Officer

BACKGROUND

WALGA has developed an Issues Paper on Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations based on input from Local Government and analysis of Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), and Appeals Convenor, data. Drawing on this data and Local Government case studies, the Paper outlines challenges Local Governments have encountered in navigating the regulatory system and identifies opportunities for improvement.

WALGA's data analysis identifies that 60% of Local Government clearing permits applications relate to road construction or upgrade. Key challenges relate to the complexity of navigating the regulatory environment, costs associated with the process and the time taken (for assessment of permits and appeals). These challenges can delay road and infrastructure projects and impact on Local Government's ability to attract and retain grant funding.

Based on discussions with the sector, and recommendations of previous submissions, WALGA has identified a range of potential opportunities to improve the native vegetation process. These focus on DWER process improvements, Local Government capacity building and taking strategic approaches to data collection, clearing permits and offsets:

1. The implementation of a State Government coordinated and funded biodiversity survey program.
2. Funding for a trial using Artificial Intelligence (AI) for biodiversity mapping.
3. DWER to develop a Strategic Offsets framework for Local Government.
4. The introduction of statutory timeframes for determination of referrals, permits and appeals and timely compliance and enforcement.
5. Increased support and capacity building for Local Governments to navigate the native vegetation clearing requirements.
6. Extended default periods for purpose permits and removal of the time limit requirement for maintenance in existing transport corridors.

The Issues Paper has been updated following consideration by the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Teams and is attached for zones' consideration and feedback. In particular Zones are requested provide feedback on the following:

- a. Does the Issues Paper capture the challenges experienced by Local Government in relation to native vegetation clearing regulations?
- b. The opportunities identified for improving the native vegetation clearing process for Local Government.
- c. Any additional opportunities.

Discussion at the Zone meeting is encouraged. Any written feedback should be provided by Friday, 13 December, to environment@walga.asn.au.

The Zone can provide feedback at the meeting as well as Local Government can email WALGA direct by 13 December.

Following all Zones feedback an item will be prepared for the Zones and State Council in February/March 2025.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Deputy President Cr Sharon Jacobs

Seconded: President Cr Ian Turton

That the Central Country Zone:

- 1. Note the Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Issues Paper.**
- 2. Request Local Government's submit their written feedback directly to WALGA for consideration.**
- 3. Request further emphasis on road safety, that there is an exemption provided in the Road Safety Act.**
- 4. That WALGA Advocate for:**
 - I. Amendment of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and associated Regulations to exempt the extension, widening or realignment of an existing regional or local distributor road from requiring a clearing permit for permitted purpose of road safety. Major projects involving clearing outside the agreed clear zone such as major road corridor realignment, additional lanes or minor local road may still require clearing permit.**
 - II. The development of an approved policy as described in the Environmental Protection Act 1986 Schedule 6 2 (v) permitting clearing of all hazards in the clear zone or within 8 metres of the centre line on regional and local distributor roads based on the road safety principles and Austroads Guide to Road Design.**
 - III. The Department Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) to implement changes to the standard clearing permit conditions to remove unnecessary red tape and compliance cost burden on local government based on a perceived risk by a third party rather than evidence of actual non compliance of revegetation by the permit holder.**
 - IV. Simplification of the clearing permit process to clarifying ambiguous terms and provide clearer guidelines to enhance understanding and compliance with conditions while maintaining high environmental standards.**
 - V. A whole landscape approach to maintaining habitat for black cockatoos including management of crown reserves, bush fire prevention and salinity control.**

CARRIED

9.1.4 Advocacy Request – PetsWA Centralized Pet Registry Scheme Revenue

Shire of Narrogin

BACKGROUND

The administration of pet management, including registrations, compliance, and enforcement of the Dog Act 1976 and Cat Act 2011, is a significant responsibility for local governments. The revenue from pet registrations is a key resource enabling LGs to provide essential services, such as:

- Conducting animal control and management activities,
- Providing education and community engagement about responsible pet ownership,
- Handling complaints and managing lost or stray pets.

Currently, the registration fees paid by pet owners do not fully cover the costs incurred by LGs in managing these responsibilities. If any portion of the fees collected through the PetsWA system is retained by the State, this would further strain the financial resources of LGs, which already face challenges in cost recovery. The burden would ultimately fall on ratepayers, as local governments would need to allocate additional funds to cover the shortfall.

Concerns:

1. **Unclear Cost Recovery for PetsWA:**

As highlighted by the response from the Department of Local Government, Sport, and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), the issue of fees and cost recovery for the PetsWA system is still pending a decision from the Minister's office. However, the sector requires clarity and assurance that local governments will not lose a portion of their vital revenue from pet registrations.

2. **Local Government Responsibilities:**

The responsibility for administering pet-related activities remains with local governments. As such, the full income from registration fees should continue to flow to the LGs to ensure these obligations can be met effectively and efficiently.

Shire Comment:

The Shire of Narrogin believes that the 100% return of pet registration revenue to local governments is essential for the continued effective administration of the Dog Act 1976 and Cat Act 2011. The Shire of Narrogin recommend that WALGA advocate to the WA State Government to ensure that no commission or portion of registration fees is retained by the centralized PetsWA scheme, protecting local governments' ability to manage pet-related services sustainably.

Secretariat Comment:

WALGA responded to the issue of registration fees raised in the February 2024 Marsden Jacob 'Stop Puppy Farming – Proposed Fees and Charges' Consultation Paper in the following terms:

- *a full cost recovery model for dog registration fees be implemented to redress the disparity between State Government and Local Government being fully funded to manage their respective responsibilities under the Dog Act 1976 incorporating the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021; and*
- *the cost recovery model for dog registration fees to include biennial indexation relative to the Local Government Cost Index.*

This response reflects current WALGA advocacy that current dog and cat registration fees are not predicated on a cost recovery model and as a consequence animal management services provided by Local Governments is directly subsidised from general rate revenue.

WALGA's Advocacy position on Puppy Farming (2.12. WALGA Advocacy Positions Manual)

2. The Local Government sector advocates that:

- a) any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act be paid by the State Government; and
- b) the Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and at minimum, be adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Jonathan Hippisley

Seconded: President Cr Jackie McBurney

1. That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to;
 - a) advocate to the Government of Western Australia that 100% of the revenue derived from pet registrations (both dogs and cats) continue to be returned directly to Local Governments to effectively administer the Dog Act 1976 and Cat Act 2011.
 - b) recommend that the new centralized PetsWA Pet Registry Scheme, administered by the State Government, should not retain any commission or portion of the registration fees for its operations, as the current fee structure does not adequately cover the costs associated with pet management at the local government level.
2. That the Central Country Zone invite a representative to speak to this initiative.

CARRIED

9.1.5 Cost Shift and Compliance project update

BACKGROUND:

At the August meeting of the Zone it was resolved;

That the Executive Committee resolution be endorsed by the Central Country Zone.

"That the Zone engage an independent consultant to review the figures of the top four Cost Shift Items and top four Compliance Costs, following which the Item will be brought back to the Executive Committee for further action."

The Zone authorises the Executive Committee to engage an independent consultant within the constraints of the Central Country Zone budget.

Update:

- The Zone have engaged the services of consultants Caroline Robinson and Darren Mollenoyux of 150SQUARE.
- The consultants have met with 14 of the 15 Central Country Zone members to date.
- In the coming weeks, all Chief Executive Officers will be issued a survey to complete.

A formal report will be provided for the February 2025 Zone meeting.

NOTED

9.1.6 Band 4 - Roundtable update

Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services

BACKGROUND:

On 3 September, the Minister for Local Government, Hon Hannah Beasley, hosted a roundtable meeting of all Band 4 Local Governments in WA.

To continue the discussion, WALGA hosted a further meeting of Band 4 Local Governments. The meeting was held on 11 October at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. Chief Executive Officers and Presidents from all 60 Band 4 Local Governments in the State were invited to attend.

Ahead of the meeting, WALGA emailed all Band 4 Local Governments asking for their top three priorities. Responses were received from 33 Local Governments. The top issues (in order of priority) are listed below:

1. Housing
2. Medical services
3. Audit fees
4. Financial Assistance Grants
5. Waste management funding
6. Compliance requirements
7. Financial sustainability
8. ICT systems
9. Renewable energy

These top 9 issues were separated into operational challenges and strategic issues at the meeting and presented for further discussion and comment.

The aim of the meeting was to identify and agree on the top issues facing Band 4 Local Governments, to enable the group to consider and develop potential solutions to these issues, before presenting to the Minister.

Comment

Overall, 72 representatives from 48 Local Governments attended the meeting on 11 October.

Attached is a summary report from the meeting.

Please note that this report provides a summary of the discussion and feedback received from participants at the meeting. The comments and views are those of participants, and do not necessarily reflect the endorsed position of WALGA or its Members.

As the main outcome of the meeting, WALGA will undertake work on the top four issues identified by the group:

1. Housing;
2. Audit fees;
3. Medical services; and
4. Financial Assistance Grants

WALGA will provide a progress update to all Band 4 Local Governments early next year.

NOTED

9.1.7 Central Country Zone Shared Events Calendar

By the Shire of Pingelly

BACKGROUND

Many local governments within the zone are hosting events, sometimes at a substantial cost to the local government. At times these events clash inadvertently leading to reduced attendance and reduced value for ratepayer's money. In addition, neighbouring communities may lose out by not being aware of events being held in the region.

Comment

It is proposed to have a shared events calendar for the Central Country Zone. This will list major events held within the zone area. The schedule would contain the dates of events that have been confirmed. It is anticipated that the calendar will have the following benefits:

- Prevent inadvertent scheduling clashes.
- Reduce conflicts of equipment hire/band bookings etc.
- Assist local governments in the coordination of events – to plan activities either the day before or after major events to extend visitation within the region.
- Assist with cross promotion of events – a what's on in the region for any particular month.
- Enable rotation of school holiday events to provide a full school holiday program across the region and for busses to be laid on if needed.

It is suggested that at each zone meeting that delegates update the schedule of events for their local government area. This could be passed around the table and completed without interrupting the meeting proceedings.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Jackie McBurney

Seconded: President Cr Katrina Crute

That the Central Country Zone create an ongoing Schedule of Events for the zone area to be updated by delegates at each zone meeting and distributed to each local government within 5 working days of the meeting.

LOST

10 ZONE REPORTS

10.1 CHAIR REPORT

President Cr Des Hickey

There was no President's report.

NOTED

10.2 GREAT SOUTHERN DISTRICT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (DEMC)

President Jackie McBurney

President Jackie McBurney provided an update.

NOTED

10.3 WHEATBELT INTERAGENCY HEALTH AND WELLBEING PLAN ADVISORY GROUP

President Jackie McBurney

President Jackie McBurney provided an update.

NOTED

10.4 WALGA ROADWISE

Rodney Thornton, Regional Road Safety Advisor provided a report (**Attachment 6**)

NOTED

11 WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

11.1 STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

Cr Phillip Blight

The December 2024 State Councillor report was attached.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Jonathan Hippisley

Seconded: President Cr Jackie McBurney

That the State Councillor Report be received.

CARRIED

11.2 WALGA STATUS REPORT

By Tony Brown, Executive Officer

COMPLETE ZONE STATUS REPORT November 2024

Zone	Agenda Item	Zone Resolution	WALGA Response	Update	WALGA Contact
Central C	4 September 2024 State Council Agenda Item 8.2 Energy Transition and Community Benefit Framework Advocacy Position	That the Zone supports WALGA's recommendation for item 8.2, with the inclusion of the word "local" in the second paragraph of the advisory position.	<p>Secretariat Comment</p> <p>WALGA is supportive of the addition of the word 'local'.</p> <p>State Council Resolution</p> <p>That State Council endorse a new Energy Transition Engagement and Community Benefit Framework Advocacy Position as follows:</p> <p><i>It is essential that the energy transition currently underway delivers economic opportunities, ensures reliable and affordable electricity, and the greatest possible benefits for the community.</i></p> <p><i>WALGA calls on the State Government to develop a comprehensive framework to manage the impact of the energy transition that includes local engagement and the realisation of <u>local</u> community benefits from energy transition projects as a priority.</i></p> <p>RESOLUTION 066.4/2024 CARRIED</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>	November 2024	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039
Central C	26 August 2023 Zone Agenda Item 9.2 Water Corporation – Non-Standard Water Services	<p>That the Central Country Zone:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rejects Water Corporation attempts to classify regional sites as a 'Non-Standard Water Service' (unless specific agreement is reached with a Local Government Authority); 2. Formally writes to Water Corporation and the Minister for Water confirming this position; 3. Requests that WALGA supports the position of the Central Country Zone and rejects the Water 	<p>WALGA is continuing to advocate on this matter including raising the issues as part of the consultation on the Review of the National Water Initiatives to inform the next National Water Agreement. WALGA has also requested that ALGA raise this matter as part of the Meeting of Water Minister. WALGA is reviewing the Water Advocacy Position and will include the need for equitable access to drinking water, as a key pillar.</p>	November 2024	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039

		<p>Corporation's attempts to classify regional sites as a 'Non-Standard Water Service'; and</p> <p>4. Requests WALGA to engage with the Minister for Water to retain the current services, unless specific agreement is reached with a Local Government Authority.</p>	Ongoing		
Central C	12 April 2024 Zone Agenda Item 9.3 Wind Energy Facilities	<p>That the Central Country Zone requests WALGA to make a submission on behalf of local governments in Western Australia to the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC), urging the State Government, through its agency Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH), to develop a more comprehensive and effective approach to guide the management and placement of renewable energy facilities; including but not limited to wind, solar, battery renewable diesel and any associated infrastructure.</p>	<p>State Council Resolution</p> <p>That State Council endorse a new Renewable Energy Facilities Advocacy Position as follows:</p> <p><i>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. The renewable energy state planning framework requires changes to ensure it is fit for purpose to guide the ongoing development of this sector.</i></p> <p>WALGA calls on the State Government to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt a new State Planning Policy for renewable energy facilities, to replace the existing Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities, that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Facilitates the orderly development of renewable energy facilities across Western Australia; b. Outlines the key planning and environmental considerations, for the location, siting, design and operation of renewable energy facilities and their associated infrastructure; c. Provides a framework that clearly stipulates the minimum required documentation and technical reports that need to be submitted with proposals for renewable energy facilities; d. Supports the development of Local Planning Policies by Local Governments to further guide locally appropriate planning consideration of renewable energy facilities; 	November 2024	<p>Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039</p>

			<p>e. <i>Provides a clear relationship with:</i></p> <p>i. <i>State Planning Policy 2.5 - Rural planning and Development Control Policy 3.4 - Subdivision of rural land, to ensure planning decisions adequately balance the need to protect and preserve rural land for rural purposes;</i></p> <p>ii. <i>State Planning Policy 2.4 - Planning for Basic Raw Materials to ensure proposals for renewable energy facilities consider their impact on basic raw material supply at the earliest stage of the planning process; and</i></p> <p>iii. <i>State Planning Policy 2.9 - Planning for Water to ensure water resources impacted by renewable energy facilities are identified and adequately managed.</i></p> <p>f. <u><i>Includes policy measures to address:</i></u></p> <p>i. <u><i>possible negative impacts on or alienation of productive agricultural land;</i></u></p> <p>ii. <u><i>their proximity to lot boundaries with particular attention to potential negative, impact on town sites and sensitive land uses;</i></u></p> <p>iii. <u><i>potential negative impacts on airport operations;</i></u></p> <p>iv. <u><i>their appropriateness in the 'General Industry' zone and impacts and suitable location on heavy industry sites;</i></u></p> <p>v. <u><i>the need for local engagement and the realisation of community</i></u></p>		
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			<p><u>benefits from the development of renewable energy facilities.</u></p> <p>2. Review the definition of 'renewable energy facility' considering the increasing size and scope of facilities and consider creating definitions based on the scale of the facility (Utility-scale and other), and the form of facility (solar energy and wind energy).</p> <p>3. Provide guidance to Local Governments on the consideration of green hydrogen production facilities on rural land where it is an incidental use to a renewable energy facility.</p> <p>RESOLUTION 067.4/2024 CARRIED</p>		
Central C	12 April 2024 Zone Agenda Item 9.1 Enhanced and Alternative Education Opportunities for Regional WA	<p>That the Central Country Zone:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports the call to action to reduce regional disadvantage in educational opportunities, with a focus on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Disruption to schools arising from policies relating to permanency for teachers; b. Requesting clarity about how schools are classified as "hard to staff; and c. Improving housing for teachers in regional WA; 2. Agrees to write to the Minister for Education requesting action; and 3. Requests the WALGA Secretariat to advocate to State Government on this matter. 	<p>WALGA notes that the Central Country Zone supports the call to action raised by the Great Southern Zone to reduce regional disadvantage in educational opportunities and that the Zone will write to the Minister for Education on the matter with a focus on matters set out at 1a – 1c.</p> <p>WALGA understands that the Great Southern Zone received a response to their letter to the Minister of Education on this issue on 24 April 2024. The letter references a number of initiatives including a \$7.1 million funding boost for the School of Isolated and Distance Education, a proposed expansion of VET certificates in the coming years, Education and Training Participation Plans, the support provided by the School of Special Educational Needs: Behaviour and Engagement located in Albany, the recently announced federally funded two new Regional University Study Hubs, further financial investment in the attraction and retention payments/packages, and a developing Regional Education Strategy.</p> <p>WALGA is also aware that the Great Southern Zone has raised these issues directly with Department of Education representatives at recent Zone meetings.</p> <p>WALGA notes that 2024-25 State Budget included an additional \$10 million for the School of Isolated and Distance Education.</p>	November 2024	<p>Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039</p>

			<p>WALGA is continuing to advocate broadly on issues that intersect with regional education such as Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH). WALGA has written to the Department of Communities Deputy Director General, Housing and Assets on this matter. Department of Communities officials will present on the GROH program at the July State Council Strategic Forum.</p> <p>On the 22 July, the Department of Education released a draft Regional Education Strategy. The Strategy aims to provide a framework to guide more effective delivery of regional education, focusing on improved educational and wellbeing opportunities across four pillars: Pillar 1: Build the capability of our regional workforce Pillar 2: Expand curriculum delivery Pillar 3: Strengthen support for student wellbeing Pillar 4: Develop partnerships to create opportunity</p> <p>Country zones and Local Governments are strongly encouraged to provide feedback on the strategy, particularly given the relevance of the Strategy to matters raised by the Great Southern Zone with support from other country zones.</p> <p>The consultation period closed on Friday 20 September 2024. More information is available here.</p> <p>WALGA has partnered with the Department of Education to facilitate an information and feedback session on the Strategy priority pillars. The session will be held online on Wednesday 21 August 2:30 -3.:30pm. A registration link will be sent via LG Direct.</p> <p>WALGA provided a submission on the Draft Education Strategy on 4 October 2024.</p> <p>COMPLETE</p>		
Central C	4 September 2024 State Council Agenda Item 8.1 Local Government Elections Analysis 2015-2023	That the Zone supports WALGA's recommendation for item 8.1, with the inclusion of the term "Service Delivery" in item 1 of the recommendation.	<p>The Election Analysis report provides an insight into the level of WAEC's service delivery experienced by WA Local Governments, focusing predominantly on the 2023 Local Government Elections. Given the data and feedback points to sector wide concerns of diminishing service levels against increasing costs associated with the conduct of elections, WALGA supports the Central Country Zone amendment to include service delivery in the request for an independent Local Government election audit.</p>	November 2024	Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au

			<p>State Council Resolution</p> <p>That WALGA advocate to the State Government:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>For an independent Local Government election audit, focusing on the Western Australia Electoral Commission's (WAEC) <u>service delivery and cost allocation methods and costing applications used, to confirm that marginal cost recovery principles are applied and that the costing program is being effectively managed.</u></i> 2. <i>For the requirement for the WAEC to develop and implement Service Level Agreements with Local Governments, similar to those agreements currently used in New South Wales and Victorian Local Government elections and that includes:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>transparency of costing methodology,</i> b. <i>direct engagement with Local Governments pre and post elections, and</i> c. <i>the roles and responsibilities of the WAEC and Local Governments in the conduct of elections.</i> 3. <i><u>For a review of the legislative framework that would allow for more than one election services provider to conduct Local Government elections.</u></i> 4. <i>For a mandated WAEC Report to Parliament specific to Local Government elections post each election cycle, outlining costs, results, voter turnout and matters for improvement both in the conduct of elections and the legislation, if relevant.</i> <p>RESOLUTION 065.4/2024 CARRIED</p>		
Central C	19 November 2021 Zone Agenda Item 12.1 Sector ICT solution	That the Zone request WALGA to research providers and the viability of an in-house IT system.	<p>WALGA has been carrying out work on this project. There are a number of groups that are looking for a coordinated approach.</p> <p>WALGA is looking at a number of options via our Commercial Development team. We are looking to contract a consultant to come up with a brief on what is required for Local Governments looking for an IT system and then see if we can provide a panel of suppliers who can provide the product.</p>	November 2024	<p>Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au</p>

			<p>There are a number of meetings over the next few weeks to develop the best approach.</p> <p>The Zone will be updated as this project develops.</p>		
Central C	17 November 2023 Zone Agenda Item 11.4 2023 Resolution for changes to Electoral Process	<p>That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to advocate for a change to the current electoral system for Local Government to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. remove the compulsion of those Local Government entities within the Band 3 and 4 categories to opt out of the Optional Preferential Voting System to return to the First Past the Post voting system; and 2. remove the compulsion for internal elections to be carried out by optional preferential voting and return to First Past the Post method of voting. 	This item is considered in the December State Council agenda.	November 2024	<p>Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au</p>

Zone Comment

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

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Katrina Crute

Seconded: President Cr Jo Haythornthwaite

That the Central Country Zone, WALGA Status Report for November 2024 be noted.

CARRIED

11.3 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The WALGA President's Report was circulated prior to the meeting and is attached to the Minutes. **(Attachment 7)**

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Jackie McBurney

Seconded: President Cr Ian Turton

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

CARRIED

12 State Council Agenda Items – 5&6 December 2024

BACKGROUND:

WALGA State Council meets five times each year and as part of the consultation process with Member Councils circulates the State Council Agenda for input through the Zone structure.

Zone delegates to consider the Matters for Decision contained in the WA Local Government Association State Council Agenda and put forward resolutions to Zone Representatives on State Council

The full Agenda can be viewed [HERE](#) and was also attached to the Agenda.

12.1 MATTERS FOR DECISION

12.1.1 2024 Annual General Meeting Resolutions (State Council Agenda item 8.1)

By Meghan Dwyer, Executive Officer Governance

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. the item 7.1 Amendments to *Cat Act 2011*- Allow Local Governments to Make Local Laws to Contain Cats to the Owner's Property be endorsed.
2. the following resolutions from the 2024 WALGA Annual General be referred to the Environment Policy Team for further work to be undertaken:
 - 7.2 Advocacy for Legislative Reforms to Counter Land-Banking
 - 7.4 Action on Asbestos for Western Australia
 - 7.6 Advocacy for Accessibility.
3. the following resolutions from the 2024 WALGA Annual General be referred to the Governance Policy Team for further work to be undertaken:
 - 7.2 Advocacy for Legislative Reforms to Counter Land-Banking
 - 7.3 Advocacy for Expansion of Differential Rating to Include Long Term Unoccupied Commercial Buildings (Property Activation Levy).
4. the following resolution from the 2024 WALGA Annual General be referred to the People and Place Policy Team for further work to be undertaken:
 - 7.5 Addressing the Impracticality of Local Governments Funding Department of Communities and GROH Houses.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA's 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on 9 October.
- The meeting resolved for WALGA to act in relation to six Member Motions:
 - Amendments to the *Cat Act 2011*- Allow Local Governments to Make Local Laws to Contain Cats to the Owner's Property
 - Advocacy for Legislative Reforms to Counter Land-banking
 - Advocacy for Expansion of Differential Rating to Include Long Term Unoccupied Commercial Buildings (Property Activation Levy)
 - Action on Asbestos for Western Australia
 - Addressing the Impracticality of Local Governments Funding Department of Communities and Government Regional Officer Housing
 - Advocacy for Accessibility
- The action proposed to be taken in relation to each of the resolutions has been summarised for State Council's information.

12.1.2 Local Government Elections Advocacy Positions (State Council Agenda item 8.2)

By Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services and Jason Russell, Senior Governance Specialist

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA adopt the following Elections Advocacy Positions:

The Local Government sector supports:

1. *Voluntary participation in Local Government elections.*
2. *Councillors serve four-year terms with elections every two years and half of the Council positions spilled at each election.*
3. *First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting system for Local Government elections. If Optional Preferential Voting (OPV) remains as the primary method of voting, the sector supports the removal of the 'proportional' part of the voting method for general elections.*
2. *First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) voting system for internal Council elections.*
3. *Councils holding elections by means of in-person, postal and/or electronic voting.*
4. *Current legislative provision of Mayor/President of Class 1 and Class 2 Local Governments being directly elected by the community and Class 3 and Class 4 Local Government Councils electing the President.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report presents the findings of sector-wide consultation on WALGA's Elections Advocacy Positions.
- Consultation addressed key areas elements of the current Advocacy Positions:
 1. Voluntary participation,
 2. Terms on Council and election cycles,
 3. Voting systems for public elections,
 4. Voting systems for internal elections,
 5. Methods for holding elections,
 6. Ability to choose how Mayors/Presidents are elected.

12.1.3 Aboriginal Communities Advocacy Positions (State Council Agenda item 8.3)

By Rebecca Hicks, Policy Officer Community

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council:

1. Replace Advocacy Position 3.1.2 Reconciliation with the following:

WALGA:

1. *Acknowledges the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to Country, culture and community and embraces the vast Aboriginal cultural diversity throughout Western Australia.*
2. *Supports the efforts of Local Governments to progress reconciliation at the local level.*

2. Remove Advocacy Position 3.1.3 Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

3. Replace Advocacy Position 3.1.4 *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021* and South West Native Title Settlement with the following:

3.1.4 Aboriginal Heritage Protection

1. *WALGA supports the recognition, protection, conservation and preservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage and recognises the fundamental importance of Aboriginal cultural heritage to Aboriginal people and the State.*
2. *The State Government must:*
 - a. *Ensure that legislative requirements balance the need to protect Aboriginal heritage with the need for Local Government to undertake activities in a timely and affordable manner.*
 - b. *Provide adequate resourcing to ensure all parties have the capacity, capability and resources to discharge their statutory obligations.*
 - c. *Provide support and guidance to Local Governments to ensure that they have the resources, capacity and capability to effectively and efficiently deliver essential services to community while protecting Aboriginal heritage.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Following a review of WALGA's Aboriginal Community advocacy positions it is proposed that Advocacy Positions 3.1.2 Reconciliation and 3.1.4 *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021* and South West Native Title Settlement be updated and that Advocacy Position 3.1.3 Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People be removed.
- The intent of the proposed revisions is to reflect contemporary approaches to key issues in Aboriginal Affairs policy and legislation as they relate to Local Government.
- The People and Place Policy Team considered and endorsed the proposed advocacy position changes at its meeting on 25 October.

12.1.4 Family and Domestic Violence Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda item 8.4)

By Rebecca Hicks, Policy Officer Community

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council replace Advocacy Position 3.10.1 Family and Domestic Violence with the following:

3.10.1 Family and Domestic Violence

- 1. Family and domestic violence is unacceptable and has devastating and long-term impacts on individuals, families and communities.*
- 2. Preventing family and domestic violence requires commitment from all levels of government, different sectors, and members of the community.*
- 3. WALGA calls on the State and Australian governments to provide adequate funding and support for family and domestic violence programs and services, in particular:*
 - a. Funding for collaborative and connected family and domestic violence programs and services that are place-based and people-centred; and*
 - b. Better integration of family and domestic violence initiatives, including capacity building across all tiers of government and community services.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that Advocacy Position 3.10.1 Family and Domestic Violence be updated.
- The revised position makes a clear statement on the Local Government sector's condemnation of family and domestic violence and the collective responsibility of governments and the community in prevention.
- The revised position provides a framework for WALGA advocacy to the Australian and State Government, without impinging on individual Local Government's approach to this issue, which will be dependent on their capacity, capability, local context and strategic direction.
- The People and Place Policy Team endorsed the revised Advocacy Position at its meeting on 25 October.

12.1.5 Container Deposit System Policy Statement and Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda item 8.5)

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council replace the existing Container Deposit Systems Policy Statement and Advocacy Position 7.6 Container Deposit Systems with the following:

7.6 Container Deposit Systems

- 1. Local Government supports the WA Containers for Change Scheme and acknowledges its contribution to reducing litter, increasing material recovery and providing employment opportunities across the state.*

2. *To maximise the benefits of the WA Scheme, Local Government calls on the State Government to:*
 - a.** *Maintain a resource recovery target of 85% for eligible containers and a focus on litter reduction.*
 - b.** *Expand the range of containers accepted in the Scheme, by:*
 - i. 2027: to include wine bottles, spirit bottles and larger sizes of currently eligible containers,*
 - ii. 2030: to include plain milk and milk alternative containers and composite container types, and*
 - iii. 2035: other container types.*
 - c.** *Ensure national alignment of the materials covered by the Scheme and consistent messaging.*
 - d.** *Maintain a State-based and managed Scheme.*
 - e.** *Review the deposit amount to appropriately incentivise community engagement.*
 - f.** *Increase the number of refund and donation points to ensure community access, including in public places and at events.*
 - g.** *Ensure refund points are financially sustainable.*
 - h.** *Leverage the refund point collection network to provide drop off points for other materials covered by effective product stewardship schemes.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA's 2008 Container Deposit Systems (CDS) Policy Statement and Advocacy Position 7.6 Container Deposit Systems, formed the basis of WALGA's advocacy for the introduction and design of a WA CDS, Containers for Change, which commenced on 1 October 2020.
- The current Advocacy Position and many elements of the Policy Statement have been achieved. However, there are aspects of the Scheme that Local Government has identified as important to improve.
- The focus of the updated Advocacy Position is:
 - building on the environmental, social and economic benefits of the current Scheme;
 - expanding the range of containers covered by the Scheme;
 - increasing community access and incentives to use the Scheme; and
 - leveraging the refund point network to collect other materials covered by effective product stewardship schemes.
- The Municipal Waste Advisory Council (MWAC) endorsed the new Policy Statement and Advocacy Position at its meeting on 23 October.

12.1.6 Bus Stop Infrastructure Agreement (State Council Agenda item 8.6)

By Negar Nili, Policy Officer Transport and Roads

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the proposed Bus Stop Infrastructure Partnership Agreement between WALGA and the Public Transport Authority 2024/25 to 2028/29.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA has negotiated a new Bus Stop Infrastructure Partnership Agreement (Agreement) with the Public Transport Authority (PTA). If agreed this will be the third such Agreement, with validity through to 2028/29.
- The Agreement seeks to provide the foundation for an effective working relationship between the PTA and Local Governments.
- The purpose of the Agreement is to clarify the roles, responsibilities and discretion of PTA and Local Governments in the provision and maintenance of bus stop infrastructure in areas with regular public transport SmartRider ticketed services, including regional cities and towns.
- The Agreement defines the roles and responsibilities of the PTA and Local Governments in various scenarios including when bus routes are changed, bus stops are added or removed, and bus stop infrastructure is upgraded.
- The Agreement provides a funding contribution to Local Governments for the maintenance and installation of bus shelters.

12.1.7 2025 Salaries and Allowances Tribunal Remuneration Inquiry for Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Members (State Council Agenda item 8.7)

By Kathy Robertson, Manager Association and Corporate Governance

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the submission to the 2025 Salaries and Allowances Tribunal Remuneration Inquiry for Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Members.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal (SAT) conduct an inquiry into Local Government Chief Executive Officer and Elected Member remuneration annually.
- In preparation for the inquiry to be undertaken early next year, WALGA has prepared a draft submission to SAT that makes recommendations in relation to Elected Member fees and allowances, Chief Executive Officer remuneration, the Regional/Isolation Allowance and independent audit, risk and improvement committee member fees.
- The submission recommends:
 - an increase to Elected Member Fees and Allowances (including maximum reimbursable expenses) of 4%;
 - an increase to Chief Executive Officer remuneration bands of 4%;
 - an increase to the Regional/Isolation Allowance payable for Local Governments that are particularly isolated, long distances from population centres, and lacking in amenities;

- the publication of clear guidance to the Local Government sector outlining how the Regional/Isolation Allowance is applied in terms of methodology, criteria and weightings;
- the creation of a new fee category for independent audit, risk and improvement committee members without bands, and that the fee be set at a suitable level to recognise the skills and knowledge required for such a role; and
- that the new category provide a fee for the independent chair position as well as the independent member position.
- SAT will likely publish its determination for 2025-2026 in April 2025.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the submission at its meeting on 4 November.

12.1.8 Submission on the draft State Hazard Plan - Fire (State Council Agenda item 8.8)

By Rachel Armstrong, Policy Manager Emergency Management

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the submission on the draft State Hazard Plan - Fire.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The State Hazard Plan - Fire (SHP Fire) outlines the arrangements for the management of fire in Western Australia including fire prevention, preparedness, response and initial recovery.
- Local Governments have a critical role in bushfire management, including statutory responsibilities for mitigation, prevention and response under the *Bush Fires Act 1954* (BF Act) and responsibility for community-led recovery, as provided in the *Emergency Management Act 2005* (EM Act).
- The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) has undertaken a comprehensive review of the SHP Fire and is seeking comments on the revised draft Plan by 9 December ([Engage WA Emergency Management](#)).
- WALGA's draft submission on the draft SHP Fire incorporates feedback from 33 Local Governments and LGIS.
- The submission focusses on the key issues that underpin Local Government's capacity to implement their roles and responsibilities for the hazard of fire including:
 - Emergency Services Funding;
 - The State Emergency Management Framework and Consolidated Emergency Services Legislation; and
 - Bush Fire Brigade management and Work Health and Safety (WHS).
- A detailed list of proposed specific changes to plan is also included.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Katrina Crute

Seconded: Deputy President Cr Sharon Jacobs

That the Central Country Zone supports all WALGA recommendations in the Matters for Decision as contained in the December 2024 State Council Agenda and as listed above.

CARRIED

12.2 POLICY TEAM AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

12.2.1 Infrastructure Policy Team Report (State Council Agenda item 9.1)

By Ian Duncan, Executive Manager, Infrastructure

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council note the report from the Infrastructure Policy Team meeting for the 6 December 2024 meeting.

12.2.2 People and Place Policy Team Report (State Council Agenda item 9.2)

By Nicole Matthews, Executive Manager Policy

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council note the report from the People and Place Policy Team to the 6 December 2024 meeting.

12.2.3 Governance Policy Team Report (State Council Agenda item 9.3)

By Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council:

1. Note the report from the Governance Policy Team for the 6 December 2024 meeting.
2. Determine to:
 - a. retain the following Advocacy Positions with amendment:
 - i. Advocacy Position 2.8.1 Industry Award Coverage
 - ii. Advocacy Position 2.8.3 Registration of WALGA as an Employer Organisation
 - b. retire Advocacy Position 2.8.2 Local Government Long Service Leave Regulations.

12.2.4 Environment Policy Team Report (State Council Agenda item 9.4)

By Nicole Matthews, Executive Manager Policy

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council note the report from the Environment Policy Team to the 6 December 2024 meeting.

12.2.5 Municipal Waste Advisory Council (MWAC) Report (State Council Agenda item 9.5)

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council note the report from the Municipal Waste Advisory Council to the 6 December 2024 meeting.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Deputy President Karen Harrington

Seconded: President Cr David White

That the Central Country Zone:

- 1. notes all Policy Team and Committee Reports as contained in the December 2024 State Council Agenda; and**
- 2. supports the WALGA recommendations in the Governance Policy Team Report as contained in the December 2024 State Council Agenda and as listed above.**

CARRIED

12.3 MATTERS FOR NOTING/INFORMATION

- WALGA Strategic Planning Update (State Council Agenda item 10.1)
- Submission on Reform of Packaging Regulation (State Council Agenda item 10.2)
- Submission on The Draft State Support Plan – Animal Welfare in Emergencies (State Council Agenda item 10.3)
- Local Government Primary Healthcare Survey Report (State Council Agenda item 10.4)
- Renewable Energy Survey Highlights (State Council Agenda item 10.5)
- Flying Agenda: Submission to Main Roads WA on the Revised Western Australia Traffic Signals Approval Policy and Process (State Council Agenda item 10.6)
- Flying Minute: Submission on the Draft Objectives and Priorities for the Upcoming State Public Health Plan (State Council Agenda item 10.7)
- Flying Minute: Submission On the Draft Regional Education Strategy (State Council Agenda item 10.8)
- Flying Minute: Submission on Derbal Yiragan (Swan) Djarlgarro (Canning) Draft River Protection Strategy (State Council Agenda item 10.9)
- Flying Minute: Submission on the State Hazard Plan - Human Biosecurity (State Council Agenda item 10.10)

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Jackie McBurney

Seconded: Cr Jonathan Hippisley

That the Central Country Zone notes all Matters for Noting/Information as contained in the December 2024 State Council Agenda.

CARRIED

12.4 KEY ACTIVITY REPORTS

- Report on Key Activities, Advocacy Portfolio (State Council Agenda item 11.1.1)
- Report on Key Activities, Infrastructure Portfolio (State Council Agenda item 11.1.2)
- Report on Key Activities, Member Services Portfolio (State Council Agenda item 11.1.3)
- Report on Key Activities, Policy Portfolio (State Council Agenda item 11.1.4)

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Jo Haythornthwaite

Seconded: Cr Jonathan Hippisley

That the Central Country Zone notes all Key Activity Reports as contained in the December 2024 State Council Agenda.

CARRIED

13 EMERGING ISSUES

13.1 CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

Full item listed within confidential **Attachment 8**

14 NEXT MEETING

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held on 4 February 2025 commencing at 7.30am, via MSTeams.

The next Central Country Zone meeting will be held on 14 February 2025 commencing at 9.30am. This meeting will be hosted by the Shire of West Arthur.

15 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 1pm.