



GVROC Council Meeting to consider WALGA State Council Agenda Items

Friday 26 June 2020
Zoom Videoconference, commencing at 8.30am

Unconfirmed Minutes

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GOLDFIELDS VOLUNTARY REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS (GVROC)

Videoconference meeting of the GVROC Council to consider WALGA State Council Agenda Items was held Friday 26 June 2020 8.30am

AGENDA

1. OPENING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The purpose of the meeting is to provide advice to the WALGA State Council Representative, Cr Mal Cullen on the Agenda for the WALGA State Council Meeting to be held on 1 July 2020.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Code of Conduct, Councillors and CEOs must declare to the Chairman any potential conflict of interest they may have in a matter before the Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils as soon as they become aware of it. Councillors, CEOs and Deputies may be directly or indirectly associated with some recommendations of the Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils. If you are affected by these recommendations, please excuse yourself from the meeting and do not participate in deliberations.

Nil declaration of interests.

3. RECORD OF ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE

3.1 Attendance

Cr Mal Cullen (Chair)	President, Shire of Coolgardie
Mr James Trail	CEO, Shire of Coolgardie
Cr Tracey Rathbone	Deputy Shire President, Shire of Coolgardie
Mr John Walker	CEO, City of Kalgoorlie Boulder
Cr Laurene Bonza	President, Shire of Dundas
Mr Peter Fitchat	CEO, Shire of Dundas
Cr Sharon Warner	Councillor, Shire of Dundas
Cr Ian Mickel	President Shire of Esperance
Cr Shelley Payne	Councillor, Shire of Esperance
Mr Shane Burge	A/CEO, Shire of Esperance
Cr Patrick Hill	President, Shire of Laverton
Mr Peter Naylor	CEO, Shire of Laverton
Mr Jim Epis	CEO, Shire of Leonora
Cr Peter Craig	President, Shire of Leonora
Mr Kevin Hannagan	CEO, Shire of Ngaanyatjaraku
Cr Timothy Carmody	Councillor, Shire of Wiluna
Mr Andrew Mann	Executive Officer, GVROC

3.2 Apologies

Cr John Bowler	Mayor, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder
Cr David Grills	Councillor, City of Kalgoorlie Boulder
Cr Shaneane Weldon	Councillor, Shire of Laverton
Cr Greg Dwyer	President, Shire of Menzies
Cr Jill Dwyer	Councillor, Shire of Menzies
Mr Peter Money	CEO, Shire of Menzies

Cr Keith Dunlop	President, Shire of Ravensthorpe
Cr Ian Goldfinch	Councillor, Shire of Ravensthorpe
Mr Gavin Pollock	CEO, Shire of Ravensthorpe
Mr Warren Olsen	A/CEO, Shire of Wiluna
Cr Jim Quadrio	President, Shire of Wiluna
Cr Damian McLean	President, Shire of Ngaanyatjaraku

3.3 **Guests**

Nil

3.4 **WALGA Representatives (Via Videoconference)**

Mayor Tracey Roberts, WALGA President
Mr Tony Brown, Executive Manager Governance and Organisational Services
Ashley Robb, Project Officer – Planning
Carol-Anne Bradley, Goldfields-Esperance Road Safety Advisor

3.5 **DLGSCI Representatives (Via Videoconference)**

Erin Bond, Regional Manager Goldfields
Darrelle Merritt, Director Strategic Initiatives

4. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

4.1 **Minutes of a Meeting of GVROC to consider WALGA State Council Agenda Items held 1 May 2020**

Minutes of the GVROC Council Meeting to consider WALGA State Council held Friday 1 May 2020 are presented for adoption (**Attachment 1**).

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Unconfirmed Minutes of the GVROC Council Meeting to consider WALGA State Council held Friday 1 May 2020 be confirmed as a true and correct record of proceedings.

RESOLUTION:

Moved: Cr Tracey Rathbone-Shire of Coolgardie
Seconded: Mr Peter Fitchat - Shire of Dundas

Carried

5. EMERGING ISSUES

From: Chair GVROC

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. The Zone can provide comment or submit an alternate recommendation that is then presented to the State Council for consideration.

A full copy of the State Council Agenda for the 1 July 2020 can be found at **Attachment 2**

5.1 COVID-19 Pandemic – WALGA Response

The information contained in this report is correct and up-to-date as of 3 June 2020. Further supplementary information will be provided at Zone and State Council meetings as well as through other channels, such as the COVID-19 Daily Update from the WALGA President and CEO.

WALGA Recommendation

That the information contained in this report relating to WALGA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic be noted.

In Brief:

- The COVID-19 pandemic, declared as a State of Emergency on 16 March 2020 in Western Australia, is having a profound impact on the health, wellbeing and economy of Western Australia
- WALGA's Local Government members have been severely impacted by the pandemic and WALGA is working hard to provide advocacy, resources, communications and guidance on a range of fronts to support the Local Government sector.
- This item summarises at a high level the activities that WALGA is undertaking to provide support for members, and is correct and up-to-date as at 3 June 2020.
- Additional supplementary information will be provided at the Zone and State Council meetings.

Background

State Government COVID 19 Roadmap

Easing of restrictions

As of 3 June 2020, Western Australia remains under a state of emergency, providing extraordinary powers to the State Emergency Coordinator, Mr Chris Dawson (Commissioner of Police). The state is currently in phase two of the easing of restrictions, with phase three to commence on Saturday 6 June 2020.

Phase 3 will see an increase in the number of people at non-work gatherings and additional businesses will be permitted to reopen. The 4 square metre rule will be revised to 2 square metres per person for all WA venues. Physical distancing, good hygiene and the 2 square metre rule will apply to all activities permitted in Phase 3. For the Local Government sector, the increase in mass gathering numbers allows more community facilities and services to open, in line with the relevant guidelines.

Travel will now be permitted throughout Western Australia, including into the Kimberley region. Access into remote Aboriginal communities will remain prohibited. The COVID 19 WA Roadmap is available [here](#) with further information to support the implementation of phase three available through the DPC and DLGSC websites.

State Recovery Planning

The Premier appointed Ms Sharon O'Neil as the State Recovery Controller who has responsibility for developing, coordinating, and overseeing the recovery process for Western Australia.

Based on a partnership approach, recovery will bring together resources from across the State including business, industry, not-for-profit organisations, unions, the public sector, local governments and the community. Recovery will be organised around 5 key areas including, health, economy and infrastructure, social, industry and regions.

To inform the development of a State Recovery Plan, a range of engagement activities will take place in June. A State Recovery Advisory Group has been set up with representatives from key Western Australian stakeholders across business, industry, not-for-profit organisations, trade unions, the public sector, local government and the community. WALGA President, Tracey Roberts is the member on this group representing the sector.

A series of face-to-face and virtual Ministerial roundtables are also being convened with peak bodies and advisory groups across the State to inform recovery planning. WALGA will keep the sector abreast of these as further details are released.

Comment

Given the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, WALGA is working on multiple fronts to provide communications, support and advocacy on behalf of members. As noted above, the information contained in this report is correct as at 3 June 2020 and supplementary information will be provided at Zone and State Council meetings and through alternative communication channels.

Advocacy

Penalty and Instalment Interest Rates

The Local Government sector and WALGA achieved a significant advocacy win in relation to the maximum interest rates payable on overdue rates and rates paid by instalment. The eventual outcome, while not ideal, was superior to the original proposal for no interest to be charged on overdue rates or rates paid by instalment, which would have had a deleterious impact on Local Governments' cash flow in the 2020-21 financial year. This cash flow challenge would be in addition to the constrained revenue environment in which Local Governments are likely to be operating.

The Minister for Local Government listened to the sector's concerns and implemented a Ministerial Order with the following key components:

- Penalty interest reduced from a maximum of 11% to 8%, which is in line with ATO penalty rates.
- Instalment interest to remain at 5.5% if a Local Government has a hardship policy, and to be a maximum of 3% if a Local Government does not have a hardship policy.
- For those that are in hardship and meet the Local Government hardship policy eligibility, then no penalty interest or instalment interest rate applies. Importantly, each Local Government decides on approving the application for hardship.

WALGA appreciates the 102 Local Governments that responded in rapid time to our survey on the impacts of the proposal; the weight of responses was instrumental in the advocacy effort.

Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020

A Special State Council meeting was held on the 25 May 2020, to discuss the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020 that was submitted directly into Parliament on the 20 May 2020. Concerns were raised on the lack of consultation with the sector, the changes to the planning processes, and the new powers being given to the WAPC, Minister for Planning and the Premier.

The following resolution was endorsed:

Notwithstanding the need for Planning Reform and recognising the proposed impacts the Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2020 has on local planning, WALGA does not support the Bill in its current form and;

That WALGA;

1. *Advocate to the State Government for extensive consultation on the proposed legislation, noting:*
 - a) *Without due consideration of the full impact of the proposed 26 amendments, there is the potential for unintended consequences due to the haste in the drafting of this Bill;*
 - b) *The Bill provides unfettered powers to the WA Planning Commission, circumventing meaningful involvement of local communities in the planning process;*
2. *Writes to the Premier and Minister for Local Government to raise the sector's concerns with the Government's actions in setting aside the State and Local Government Partnership Agreement for the fast tracking of proposed legislative reforms under the cover of COVID-19 recovery.*
3. *Requests member Local Governments to inform the communities of possible impacts of the proposed legislation on local planning decisions.*
4. *Write to all non-Government Upper House members to discuss the sectors concerns.*

Legislative and Regulatory Amendments

Local Government Act Ministerial Orders

The *Local Government Amendment (COVID-19 Response) Act 2020* was passed by Parliament on 16 April 2020 and came into effect on 21 April 2020.

This Act provided a power to enable the Minister to modify or suspend provisions of the Local Government Act and regulations while a State of Emergency declaration is in force and where the Minister considers that such an order is necessary to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Minister for Local Government made the first Order under this legislation to deal with issues relating to requirements to hold public meetings, for access to information when council offices are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, budgetary and rating matters. These orders came into effect on the day of Gazettal, being 8 May 2020.

Support and Assistance

The WALGA team have been providing support and guidance across a number of teams to assist a range of Local Government functional areas. A few specific issues of support and guidance are highlighted below.

Rebooting local economies

WALGA has recently undertaken a survey of its members to obtain information that will allow it to:

- estimate the amount of economic stimulus that could be facilitated through the Local Government sector during the recovery phase of COVID-19, if additional support was provided from the State Government, and
- estimate the collective financial support and stimulus that the WA Local Government sector has already committing to providing local communities.

These two points will form the basis of WALGA's advocacy to the State Government on rebooting local economies.

COVID-19 Economic Update

To assist members in their Strategic and Operational planning for 2020-21, WALGA prepared an Economic Update in May.

This Economic Update explored the potential economic impacts of COVID-19 on the WA and Australian economies, including:

- How the WA economy was performing prior to COVID-19
- The economic support provided by all levels of Government in response to COVID-19
- The impact of COVID-19 on employment across industries
- Short and medium term forecasts for GDP, unemployment and inflation
- The likely long-lasting effects of COVID-19 on the economy
- How COVID-19 will impact on Local Government expenditure and revenue sources

Governance Support

Financial Hardship Policy Implementation Guide

WALGA recently released a template Financial Hardship Policy to help Local Governments assess the unique circumstances and challenges that ratepayers might encounter as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This template was recently updated to reflect the following requirements associated with the Local Government (COVID-19 Response) Ministerial Order 2020 that took effect from 8 May 2020.

In response to the anticipated high uptake of this Policy by Local Governments, WALGA has prepared a template Financial Hardship Policy Implementation Guide. This Guide will assist in the administration of a Local Governments Policy and lead to the establishment of a consistent approach to the assessment of financial hardship across the Local Government sector.

The template Financial Hardship Policy and template Financial Hardship Policy Implementation Guide are both available [here](#).

Electronic Meetings

To support Local Governments with the convening of electronic Council meetings, enabled by the regulatory amendment, WALGA prepared an Electronic Council Meeting (eMeeting) Guide to assist Local Governments in understanding the new Regulations and how they interact with existing meeting procedures.

In addition, WALGA's Governance staff assisted the sector with procedural and operational queries on a daily basis.

Employee Relations

The challenges evolving from the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact Local Governments and their workforces. For the month of April, the Employee Relations (ER) Service responded to 115 enquiries. The focus of enquiries has moved away from standing employees down to how Local Governments can freeze wages to sustain employment, until such time the financial impact of COVID-19 can be better understood. A webinar addressing this specific topic was conducted on 24 April 2020.

With the lifting of restrictions Local Governments are seeking advice on transitioning employees back to the workplace. In addition, we have seen an increase in enquiries about potential redundancies arising from the reduction and or closing of operations / services which have been severely impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, for example airports and tourism centres.

To assist the WALGA Employee Relations service subscribers during this time we have developed working from home template policy, procedure and agreement, guidelines for transitioning employees back to the workplace and revised and updated our redundancy information and supporting templates.

Infrastructure

The Association has been seeking to respond to the matters most frequently raised by Local Governments concerning infrastructure programs particularly:

- Concerns about potential difficulties in meeting co-contributions for grant funded road improvement projects;
- Lack of clarity and certainty regarding State Government grant funded programs from 1 July;
- Addressing barriers to accelerating road works that would help stimulate local economies; and
- Seeking assurance that contractors needing to access project sites in different regions continue to be recognised as an essential workers.

Some RoadWise program activities such as Driver Reviver events and face to face child car restraint fittings and training have changed in order to comply with COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions. Activities have been creatively adapted including live-streamed Blessing of the Roads in Mandurah and video-based advice for checking child car restraints. Planning for activities that are aimed at preventing road trauma has continued in anticipation of eased restrictions in coming months.

Commercial Development

Initiative to Support Local Suppliers

The Vendor Panel marketplace initiative for local supplier engagement has been implemented with a communications strategy which has seen approximately 7,500 local suppliers register. The platform was recently switched on for all WALGA Members and the focus will now shift to Member engagement and use of the facility. WALGA is underwriting the provision for the platform free of charge for Local Governments on a 12-month trial. After the trial each Local Government has the option to continue use of the platform on a user-pay basis.

PPE Support for Local Governments

WALGA commissioned the manufacture and supply of 55 pallets (approx. 70,000 units) of Hand Sanitiser to Members with a cost-effective price during a time of extreme supply shortage. A second-round offer is currently being formulated with cleaning supplies included. A special office furniture and Perspex screens (back to work pack) is also being developed.

Communications

Councils in the Community Campaign

Print ad placements previously used for promotion of YourEveryday content have been reassigned to promote Council initiatives that support local communities and businesses as part of their pandemic response. In addition, a section of the WALGA website has been created to showcase all of these initiatives, together with policy decisions of Council directly relating to support for business and communities as a result of COVID-19.

State Councillor Video Updates

The WALGA Content Producer has been filming State Councillor videos for distribution to Elected Members within their relevant Zones, to keep Councillors connected and share information and sector initiatives relevant to their local area, as well as work being undertaken by WALGA from a policy and services perspective.

Media Statements

The following media statements released from Tuesday, 7 April to Monday, 1 June were:

Monday, 6 April	COVID-19: JobKeeper Snub Will Hurt Communities
Thursday, 9 April	COVID-19: Regulation to Wreck Rates Freeze
Friday, 17 April	COVID-19: Mutual Scheme to Help Hold Down Rates

Monday, 20 April	COVID-19: Platform to Enhance Council Support for Local Business
Friday, 8 May	COVID19: Local Government Planning Departments Open for Business
Friday, 22 May	COVID-19: Federal Funding Boost to Support Councils
Friday, 29 May	COVID-19: Reasonable Timeframe for Planning Changes

President's Column

During the period of May, the Association published one President's Column in The West Australian newspaper on Tuesday, 12 May titled COVID-19: Councils Contribute \$300m to Support Community. The column discussed the Local Government response to the pandemic, estimated to be in excess of \$325 million, and explained how the sector was one of the first to respond to the pandemic with meaningful and practical initiatives that directly benefit the community.

COVID-19 State Briefing to Sector Webinars

As key partners in the response to COVID-19, the sector received a weekly briefing on the most recent advice from the Commonwealth and State Government. These more informal discussions, which were hosted by Mayor Tracey Roberts, provided updates on the pandemic response to the sector. Mayors, Presidents and Local Government CEOs were able to attend the weekly webinars.

9 April 2020

230 attendees from 120 Councils attended the webinar.

Speakers: Minister for Environment, the Hon Stephen Dawson MLC and Director General of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), Mike Rowe

17 April 2020

178 attendees from 116 Councils attended the webinar.

Speakers: Local Government Minister the Hon David Templeman; Chair of the WA Library Board, the Hon John Day and Deputy Chief Health Officer, Incident Controller, Dr Robyn Lawrence.

24 April 2020

143 attendees from 107 Councils attended the webinar.

Speakers: Local Government Minister the Hon David Templeman; Emergency Services Minister the Hon Francis Logan and State Recovery Controller, Sharyn O'Neill

1 May 2020

142 attendees from 101 Councils attended the webinar.

Speakers: Minister for Local Government, the Hon David Templeman MLA and Tourism and Small Business Minister the Hon Paul Papalia MLA.

8 May 2020

150 attendees from 109 Councils attended the webinar.

Speakers: Hon David Templeman MLA and Minister for Regional Development, Agriculture and Food; Ports the Hon Alannah MacTiernan MLC, accompanied by the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Ralph Addis.

15 May 2022

144 attendees from 108 Councils attended the webinar.

Speakers: The Deputy Premier and Minister for Health the Hon Roger Cook MLA, the State Emergency Coordinator, Police Commissioner Chris Dawson and Dr Michael Lindsay from the Department of Health

22 May 2020

109 attendees from 84 Councils attended the webinar.

Speakers: Local Government Minister, the Hon David Templeman MLA and Auditor General Caroline Spencer

29 May 2020

77 attendees from 60 Councils attended the webinar.

Speaker: State Recovery Controller Sharyn O'Neill

Governance & Employee Relations Webinar

24 April 2020

The webinar covered the standing-down of employees, options for managing wage increases, employee welfare and recent changes to the Local Government Regulations to assist with the performance of Governance responsibilities during this period of emergency.

185 Local Government Officers attended the webinar.

VendorPanel Marketplace Webinar

13 May 2020

Following a number of initiatives to drive supplier support including a recent supplier webinar, supplier response and registration into the platform has been very strong, with many Member Local Governments well positioned to start using these suppliers for local procurement needs.

More than 100 Local Government Officers and Preferred Suppliers registered for the webinar.

Webinar: Local Government Support for Aboriginal Language and Place Names

28 May 2020

The webinar highlighted how the use of Aboriginal language and place names assists with promoting broader community awareness of Aboriginal history and culture and look at the significant role Local Government can play in this area.

The webinar was viewed by 150 registrants.

Showcase Webinars

WALGA have been showcasing the work of the sector, through a webinar series featuring presentations from Local Governments discussing innovative approaches to managing COVID and providing ongoing services to their communities. The following webinars have been held to date:

- COVID-19 Update for Environmental Health and Emergency Management Officers (27 May)

This webinar features an update from WALGA, presentations on emergency management structures from the City of Canning and Shire of Capel, and information on the City of Perth's Relief and Rebound Program.

- Emergency Management Local Government Showcase (22 April)

The webinar includes a presentation from the Shires of Bruce Rock on how their Local Government and community overcame the challenge of losing their general store to fire at the beginning of the pandemic. The City of Joondalup and Shire of Denmark present on the changes their Local Governments have made to continue to serve their community throughout this crisis.

- Emergency Management Local Government Showcase 2 (30 April)

The City of Vincent, Shire of Augusta Margaret River and City of Albany presented on their approach and initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic, including community messaging, youth engagement, and how they have kept the community linked to services and local businesses.

- Local Government Showcase - Staff Redeployment (14 May)

The Cities of Armadale, Bayswater and Wanneroo and the Shire of Harvey shared their stories about how they have redeployed staff to other areas of their organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Local Government Showcase - Economic Stimulus (21 May)

WALGA's Policy Manager, Economics provided an economic update to assist members in their Strategic and Operational Planning for 2020-21 in the context of recovering from COVID-19. The City of Karratha and Shire of East Pilbara shared information on the economic support and stimulus their Local Governments are providing to assist their rate payers, small business and community groups.

- Showcase Webinar – Communications (Wednesday, 5 June)

The City of Gosnells presented on their Home But Not Alone campaign which allowed the City to take its biggest events to the streets without breaking isolation or social distancing restrictions.

Presenters from the Shire of Dundas shared their approach to communications with the community in a resource-restricted environment, and the City of Canning provided an overview of their response activity, in particular, their Crisis Incident Management team and crisis communications planning and delivery.

All showcase webinars can be found on the WALGA website [here](#).

RECOMMENDATION:

Motion called:

That GVROC recognise and thank WALGA for the provision of the Webinars during the Covid-19 Pandemic, which have been invaluable for Local Government Authorities in Regional WA to keep their communities informed.

RESOLUTION: **Moved: Cr Ian Mickle – Shire of Esperance**
 Seconded: Cr Tracey Rathbone-Shire of Coolgardie

Carried

That GVROC note the WALGA Response report as provided.

RESOLUTION: **Moved: Cr Tracey Rathbone-Shire of Coolgardie**
 Seconded: Cr Timothy Carmody - Shire of Wiluna

Carried

6. Review of WALGA State Council Agenda - Matters for Decision

6.1 WA Public Libraries Agreement (05-012-03-0001 KD)

WALGA Recommendation

That the draft State and Local Government Agreement for Public Libraries be endorsed.

IN BRIEF

- The first Western Australian Public Libraries Strategy Consultation Report was endorsed by WALGA State Council in July 2018.
- WALGA State Council endorsed the new Public Library Tiered Service Model in May 2019.
- At its September 2019 meeting, State Council endorsed the transfer of ownership of stock from State to Tier 1 Local Governments and that the provision of Public Library services in Western Australia be delivered through a formal agreement between State and Local Government of Western Australia and governed by the Library Board Act 1951.
- The State Library of Western Australia, the Department of Local Government Sport and Cultural Industries, Public Libraries Western Australia and WALGA have consulted on a draft Library Agreement which is attached for WALGA State Council consideration.

BACKGROUND:

In December 2017, the WA Public Libraries Strategy (Strategy) was released as a consultation tool to establish strategic priorities for public library development in Western Australia. Extensive consultation with Local Governments over a three-month period demonstrated strong support for the Strategy and the Consultation Report was endorsed by the Library Board of Western Australia (LBWA) and WALGA State Council.

In May 2018, the Public Libraries Working Group (PLWG), formed to consider the outcomes of the consultation and to provide advice to the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA) on implementation of the Strategy, resolved that this would be prioritised according to available resources and that the initial focus would be to progress work to develop a tiered model to support public library service delivery in Western Australia that includes key features to support regional and remote libraries.

A Reference Group including representatives from the DLGSC, WALGA, Public Libraries Western Australia (PLWA) and SLWA was established in October 2018 to draft the now endorsed tiered model, allocation of funds and the associated agreement as critical components to the ongoing delivery of efficient public library services in Western Australia.

COMMENT

This Public Library Services Agreement aims to formalise the way in which State and Local Government will work together to deliver improved public library services to our community providing:

- a shared vision for driving the future direction of Western Australia's public library services
- an approach for achieving real outcomes in delivering a relevant and sustainable public library service for all Western Australians
- a statement of guiding principles to support communication, consistent decision making and collaborative action, and
- a definition of the roles and responsibilities of both State and Local Government.

The Agreement is set for a term of 5 years and may be extended subject to the written consent of both parties. A review of the Public Library Services Agreement will be initiated by the PLWG three (3) years after the date of signing and will report with recommendations to the WA Library Board and WALGA State Council.

Current topics the Public Library sector would like to pursue once a formalised partnership agreement is in place include:

- protected and increased funding for public library materials and innovations

7. Review of WALGA State Council Agenda - Matters for Noting/Information

7.1 Draft Aviation Strategy 2020 (05-003-02-0005 SD)

Recommendation

That the submission to the Department of Transport in response to the Draft State Aviation Strategy 2020 be noted.

IN BRIEF:

- The State Government invited comment on a draft State Aviation Strategy 2020, and WALGA has prepared a submission.
- Western Australian aviation policy recognises that air services are critical to regional communities, industry and regional economic development.
- Most regional airports are operated by Local Governments, making the sector a key stakeholder in provision of aviation services.
- The Infrastructure Policy Team discussed the WALGA submission on 20 April and recommended that it be considered by State Council using Flying Agenda, State Council endorsed the Submission by Flying Minute. WALGA submitted the endorsed comments to the Department of Transport.

BACKGROUND:

Efficient and affordable air services are critical to regional communities, tourism and the resources sector. Aviation operates in a complex environment involving airlines, airports, industry, community and all levels of government. A draft Western Australian Aviation Strategy 2020 was released for public comment in February 2020. The draft strategy seeks to address the thirteen recommendations identified in the 2017 Parliamentary Inquiry into regional airfares, "Perceptions and Realities of Regional Airfare Prices in Western Australia." It also updates the current aviation strategy, particularly in relation to aviation infrastructure and planning frameworks.

The Association sought input from Local Governments through LG News (14 February) and through direct contact with Local Government officers responsible for managing Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) airports. Formal input was received from one Local Government. Regional airport managers have been focused on responding to the impacts of COVID-19 during March and no formal returns were received.

COMMENT:

Prices for air services within Western Australia are high relative to national and international comparisons. Increased and collaborative engagement between airlines, Local Governments, communities and State agencies has resulted in some new, innovative airfares and air-routes being introduced. For this to continue it is important to support and build on these successes.

The submission supports:

- The recently introduced requirement for airlines operating unregulated routes to provide data to Government relating to airfares and service levels and to engage with the regional communities they service;
- The intention of the State Government to take a stronger role in the market where necessary;
- On-going development and implementation in conjunction with Local Governments of a Strategic Airport Assets and Financial Management Framework for small and medium-sized regional RPT airports;
- On-going State Government investment through the Regional Airport Development scheme;
- Measures to ensure air services are provided at reasonable price; and
- A review of the tender design for fully regulated routes.

The submission recommends that the Government:

- Link more clearly with Tourism WA's Two-Year Action Plan, including attracting a low-cost carrier to fly intra-state routes;
- Monitor the impact of timing air services into and out of Perth if peak period charges at Perth airport and operational factors reduce the value of services for businesses seeking to travel in and out of Perth or a regional centre in a single day;
- Include some specific measures of success and timelines;
- Discuss costs and funding;
- Extend state planning framework guidance to include land use planning in the vicinity of regional airports; and
- Acknowledge that passenger charges and landing fees at Local Government managed airports are only a small component of airfares and need to be set at levels that will enable the airport to be operated and maintained.

The submission does not take into account the effects of COVID-19 in disrupting air travel in Western Australia and nationally. It is unclear what impacts this will have on long term air services.

State Council endorsed the submission by Flying Minute and it has been submitted to the Department of Transport.

RECOMMENDATION:

GVROC note the submission to the Department of Transport in response to the Draft State Aviation Strategy 2020

RESOLUTION:

**Moved: Cr Tracey Rathbone-Shire of Coolgardie
Seconded: Cr Laurene Bonza – Shire of Dundas**

Carried

7.2 Regional Aviation Policy Issues Paper (05-003-02-0004 SD)

Recommendation

That the submission to the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, in response to the Draft Regional Aviation Policy Issues Paper be noted.

IN BRIEF:

- The Australian Government invited input from stakeholders regarding the existing policy framework for regional aviation, using an issues paper to guide consultation.
- Federal, State and Local Governments are involved in aviation policy and programs. Most regional airports are operated by Local Governments, making the sector a key stakeholder in provision of aviation services.
- Important areas of Federal Government policy that impact directly on the cost and viability of regional air services in Western Australia include:
 - Requirements for and costs of security screening for passengers and freight;
 - Essential public service funding support for regional airports that do not have sufficient passenger numbers to be economically sustainable; and
 - Measures to encourage and facilitate competition between airlines on routes within regional Western Australia.
- The Infrastructure Policy Team discussed the WALGA submission on 20 April and recommended that it be considered by State Council using Flying Agenda. Following State Council endorsement by Flying Minute, WALGA submitted the endorsed comments to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

BACKGROUND:

The Australian Government acknowledges that the major benefits arising from the deregulation of the domestic aviation industry, such as flexible and discount fares and the wider provision of services, have not been reflected in air services to regional, rural and remote communities. The benefits of competition between airlines have not been realised in these markets. Given the importance of regional air services for economic development, service provision and connectivity this raises policy challenges. The Australian Government prepared a discussion paper as the basis for seeking input from stakeholders about changes to current policy frameworks that will result in better outcomes for all stakeholders.

COMMENT:

The submission identifies three matters within Australian Government aviation policy that have a direct impact on the cost and viability of air services in regional Western Australia.

Security Screening

The requirements for security screening passengers and freight have increased over time in response to perceived threat levels. These requirements impact costs at both capital city airports and regional airports. However, fixed costs are spread over a small number of passengers and flights at many regional airports, resulting in relatively high per passenger costs. These costs can be a significant component of total costs on short flights. The Australian Government has at times contributed to capital costs associated with security upgrades. However, the operating and renewal costs remain high. The submission encourages on-going risk-based reviews of security requirements and funding support for Local Government airport operators.

Asset Management

Airports are capital intensive, long-life assets. The need to provide for larger aircraft in order to reduce airfares results in under-utilised airport assets in many regional centres. The submission calls for a long-term commitment to support whole of life costs for critical regional airport assets.

Competition

The submission calls for developing markets and competition in regional air services including through intra-regional services, multi-stop services and generating new demand through the work of Regional Development Australia (RDA).

This submission does not take into account the effects of COVID-19 in disrupting air travel in Western Australia and nationally. It is unclear what impacts this will have on long term air services.

State Council endorsed the Flying Minute and it has been submitted accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION:

GVROC note the submission to the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, in response to the Draft Regional Aviation Policy Issues Paper

RESOLUTION:

Moved: *Mr John Walker – City Kalgoorlie Boulder*

Seconded: *Cr Ian Mickle – Shire of Esperance*

Carried

10. Review of WALGA State Council Agenda – State Council Status Report

10.1 Complete Status Report on State Council Resolutions - To the July 2020 State Council Meeting

GVROC COMMENT:

Additional to the Complete Status Report on State Council Resolutions, **Attachment 3** provides the relevant Goldfields Esperance Country Zone Status Report.

RECOMMENDATION:

GVROC notes the Complete State Council Status Report to the July 2020 State Council meeting and the Goldfields Esperance Country Zone Status Report.

RESOLUTION:

Moved: *Mr Jim Epis – Shire of Leonora*

Seconded: *Cr Tracey Rathbone-Shire of Coolgardie*

Carried

11. DLGSC Update

General Update was provided by Darrelle Merritt, Director Strategic Initiatives and Erin Bond, Regional Manager Goldfields for DLGSC activities of interest for the Region.

12. LATE ITEMS as notified, introduced by decision of the Meeting

Nil.

13. FUTURE MEETINGS

With the continuing situation of the COVID-19 “Corona Virus” the ability of holding future meetings in person is a watching brief. This will be reviewed at each meeting by GVROC and until a change in the situation that allows for in person meetings, all meetings will be conducted through Zoom video conferencing.

In noting the above, the following suggested dates in 2020 have been set for the remaining GVROC meetings.

- 24 July 2020 (Laverton in person and Zoom Teleconference)
- 11 September 2020 – (Proposed Venue Kalgoorlie – originally was scheduled 5-7 August to coincide with WALGA State Conference & Convention in Perth)
- 13 November 2020 (Coolgardie)

The following are the WALGA State Council meeting dates in 2020 with suggested GVROC Zoom video conference meeting dates prior to these to inform the GVROC’s representatives attending the meetings with relevant input for State Council Agenda Items:

- 3-4 September 2020 Regional meeting Broome - (GVROC Video conference 28 August 2020)
- 25 September 2020 WALGA Annual General Meeting
- 2 December 2020 - (GVROC Video conference 27 November 2020)

14. CLOSURE OF MEETING

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 9:35am.