

Peel Country Zone Minutes

19 February 2026

Hosted by the City of Mandurah
3 Peel Street, Mandurah

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PRIORITISATION FRAMEWORK

How to use the Framework:

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

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)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

Confirmation of Attendance An attendance sheet was circulated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety Update Report
2. Draft Minutes of previous meeting
3. Zone Status Report
4. President's Report

1 OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1 OPENING

Zone Chair, President Cr Michael Walmsley, opened the meeting at 1:16pm.

1.2 ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS

2 Voting Delegates from each Member Local Government

Shire of Boddington	President Cr Eugene Smallberger Ms Cara Ryan, Acting Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
City of Mandurah	Mayor Amber Kearns Cr Shannon Wright Ms Casey Mihovilovich, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
Shire of Murray	President Cr Douglas McLarty Cr Ange Rogers
Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale	Mr Paul Martin, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
Shire of Waroona	President Cr Michael Walmsley (Chair) Cr Brad Vitale Ms Ashleigh Nuttall, Director Corporate & Community Services - non-voting
WALGA Representatives	Cr Paul Kelly, Deputy President Ms Hannah Godsave, Policy Manager Community Ms Negar Nili, Policy Officer transport and Roads

1.3 APOLOGIES

Shire of Boddington	Cr Paul Carrots Ms Julie Burton, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
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Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale	President Cr Rob Coales Cr Courtney Mazzini Cr Reece Jarrett
Shire of Murray	Mr Dean Unsworth, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
Shire of Waroona	Mr Mark Goodlet, Chief Executive Officer - non-voting
Minister for Peel	Hon Jessica Stojkovski MLA

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Nil.

4 DEPUTATIONS

Nil.

5 AGENCY REPORTS

5.1 DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY REGULATION AND SAFETY UPDATE REPORT

The February 2026 report from the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (DLGIRS) was enclosed as an attachment within the Agenda.

Noted

6 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

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

RESOLUTION

Moved: Mayor Amber Kearns
Seconded: President Cr Eugene Smalberger

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Peel Country Zone held on 20 November 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

CARRIED

7 BUSINESS ARISING

7.1 STATUS REPORT

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

Noted

8 ZONE BUSINESS

8.1 DFES FUNDING FOR RURAL FIREFIGHTING WATER TANKS

By Shire of Murray

BACKGROUND

Bushfire risk across Western Australia continues to increase due to climate change, longer fire seasons and expanding rural-residential development. In non-reticulated areas, access to reliable water is often the single most critical factor in determining whether a fire can be contained quickly or escalates into a major incident.

Many rural areas contain extensive bushfire-prone land and numerous rural and rural-residential subdivisions without reticulated water supply. Recent bushfire events have demonstrated that inadequate access to water increases operational risk and places additional pressure on volunteer firefighters.

Local governments have statutory responsibilities to manage bushfire risk; however, current arrangements place a disproportionate financial burden on regional shires to provide critical firefighting infrastructure without corresponding State investment. While bushfire risks are clearly identified through State-led assessment processes, there is no dedicated/recurrent funding stream to deliver the water infrastructure required to treat those risks.

Attached to the Agenda was a full briefing paper.

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

WALGA acknowledges the Shire of Murray's recommendation and the significant challenges faced by rural and regional Local Governments in providing adequate firefighting water infrastructure in non-reticulated areas. Reliable access to water for suppression operations remains an ongoing concern, as demonstrated during recent bushfire events, and is consistent with broader sector advocacy for increased investment in disaster risk reduction.

Through the 2026–27 State Budget Submission, WALGA is advocating to increase the Mitigation Activity Fund Grant Program (MAFGP) to \$15 million per annum from 2026–27. Expanded funding would enable Local Governments with endorsed Bushfire Risk Management Plans to better implement strategic, locally-driven mitigation works.

Strengthening MAFGP aligns with the need to shift from reactive suppression to proactive risk reduction in the face of increasingly severe fire seasons.

Also, through the 2026–27 State Budget Submission, WALGA is advocating for a \$9 million per annum Local Government Disaster Risk Reduction Fund to support Local Government-led mitigation initiatives, including infrastructure that improves the resilience of essential public assets. Current funding through the AWARE program is insufficient, with only \$238,000 shared across 137 Local Governments.

Members are also advised that the Australian Government’s Disaster Ready Fund Round Four is expected to open in March 2026, with a strong focus on construction-ready mitigation projects. This may provide a potential pathway for Local Governments to progress eligible firefighting water infrastructure proposals. DFES will administer the State process, with further information to be provided when available.

WALGA will also be commencing a review of its emergency management advocacy positions during 2026, beginning with bushfire-related positions. This work will ensure that sector advocacy remains contemporary, evidence-based, and aligned to emerging risks and operational realities. The Shire of Murray case study will be considered in this review.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Douglas McLarty

Seconded: Cr Ange Rogers

That the Peel Country Zone requests WALGA to lobby for the State to establish a risk-based funding program to support the installation and renewal of static firefighting water infrastructure in rural and regional areas. This investment is essential to protect communities, support volunteers and ensure that bushfire risk management responsibilities are appropriately matched with funding.

CARRIED

8.2 2026 LOCAL GOVERNMENT HONOURS AWARDS

By Kathy Robertson, WALGA Manager Association and Corporate Governance

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

There are five awards in the 2026 Program:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Noted

8.3 WATER MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION PAPER UPDATE

By Rebecca Brown, WALGA Policy Manager Environment and Waste

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA has developed a Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper exploring issues for Local Governments in managing water resources.
- To inform the Discussion Paper, WALGA undertook research and direct engagement with the sector and reviewed existing Water Advocacy Positions and feedback from WALGA Zones.
- Based on this consultation, the Discussion Paper identifies water security and water efficiency as key themes.
- Feedback on the Discussion Paper will inform the development of a new water management advocacy position.
- Zones and Local Governments are encouraged to provide comments to WALGA by 12 March 2026.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

ATTACHMENT

- [Water Management in Western Australia Discussion Paper](#)

BACKGROUND

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

To inform the Discussion Paper WALGA reviewed its existing Water Advocacy Positions and motions, feedback from WALGA Zones and undertook research and direct consultation with the sector. Consultation included workshops with both metropolitan and non-metropolitan Local Governments, an online session with 40 officers focused on water security and efficiency and a regionally focused session with 30 Local Government representatives exploring the barriers to being waterwise in a regional setting. In addition, WALGA conducted 14 one-on-one interviews with officers from 22 metropolitan, regional and

remote Local Governments to better understand key issues. Further insights were gained through meetings with officers from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Water Corporation, as well as internal discussions with WALGA.

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

Local Governments across Western Australia are addressing water security and efficiency through various actions across strategic infrastructure planning, innovative water management practices and community awareness. A new Water Management Advocacy Position will ensure WALGA can effectively advocate on behalf of the sector in relation to this issue. The Discussion Paper includes options to address these issues and questions for the sector relating to each of the key areas.

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

Noted

8.4 CONSULTATION ON DRAFT CLIMATE CHANGE ADVOCACY POSITION

By Rebecca Brown, WALGA Policy Manager Environment and Waste

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This item is intended to replace WALGA's 2018 Climate Change [Advocacy Position](#) and [Policy Statement](#).

ATTACHMENT

The Consultation Paper is available [online](#).

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

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

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

Noted

8.5 DISASTER READY FUND: ROUND 4 ANTICIPATED TO OPEN IN MARCH 2026

By Rachel Armstrong, WALGA Policy Manager Emergency Management

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

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

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

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

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

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

Noted

8.6 DRAFT RENEWABLE ENERGY PLANNING CODE

By Kieran McGovern, WALGA Senior Policy Advisor, Planning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA Advocacy Position 6.17 Renewable Energy Facilities calls for changes to the renewable energy State planning framework to ensure it is fit for purpose to guide the ongoing development of the sector.
- The State Government has released a draft Renewable Energy Planning Code and Guidelines with the aim of establishing a consistent assessment framework, clear

development standards, and improved certainty around impacts such as noise, landscape, environmental considerations, and safety.

- The Code initially focuses on wind farms but is designed to expand to other renewable technologies, requiring detailed technical reporting and encouraging (but not regulating) community benefit-sharing agreements.
- Proposed regulatory amendments would align local planning schemes with the Code and classify renewable energy projects valued at \$20 million or more as mandatory significant development, shifting decision-making authority to the WAPC.
- WALGA strongly encourages consideration of the draft Code by Zones. Local Governments should make their own submissions on the draft Code by 10 April 2026 and provide feedback to WALGA to inform our submission on behalf of the sector by 27 February 2026. Council endorsed submissions are preferred.

ATTACHMENT

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

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

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

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

- introducing a consistent development assessment framework for renewable energy infrastructure across Western Australia.
- establishing clear development standards and application requirements.

- addresses potential land use and environmental impacts, such as noise and landscape considerations.

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMMENT

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

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

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

There is also a lack of guidance regarding appropriate land uses in particular zones, specifically protecting rural land for agricultural purposes, instead stating that wind farms are generally compatible with agricultural land uses. WALGA's position is that regulatory amendments are required to create a model zone through the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015* for land identified as high quality agricultural land (noting most of this land is located in the South West region) known as the 'Priority Agriculture'.

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

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

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

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

Noted

8.7 REQUEST TO PRESENT

By Chantelle O'Brien, Zones Governance Officer

HC Construction Services Pty Ltd

WALGA was approached by HC Construction Services Pty Ltd requesting an opportunity to attend various Country Zone meetings to provide a deputation on how to navigate through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangement (DRFA).

HC Construction Services is a WA based company specialising in project management, consultancy and construction delivery. HC is a WALGA Preferred Supplier and has worked with several Local Governments to manage disaster relief funding claims. This includes by way of road condition video using their internally developed RF Vid Assist system.

The proposed presentation would include some tips, dos and don'ts, advice on pre disaster evidence requirements, and lessons learnt on three or four case studies where applicants have encountered problems. The presentation would also include information on how Local Governments can prepare a funding application, so they receive the maximum funding available in the event of a natural disaster.

Kolbany Yanginy – Local Government Reconciliation Resource

WALGA and Reconciliation WA are offering presentations to Zones on the new [Kolbang Yanginy website](#), a collaborative project between Reconciliation WA, WALGA, and State Agencies with support from Lotterywest.

The online platform is designed to support Local Governments across Western Australia to build strong relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Focusing on key themes like reconciliation, partnerships and placemaking, Kolbang Yanginy provides advice, resources, case studies and an interactive map to build capability across Local Governments.

The website also provides information about legislative, regulatory and policy requirements with respect to Aboriginal heritage and native title, with links to further information from State Agencies.

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Shannon Wright

Seconded: Cr Brad Vitale

That the Peel Country Zone:

- 1. does not support a deputation from HC Construction Services Pty Ltd at a future meeting in 2026.**
- 2. does not support a deputation from Reconciliation WA/WALGA at a future meeting in 2026.**

CARRIED

8.8 LATE ITEM - WATER CORPORATION'S SWAN COASTAL PLAINS BRIDGES IN CRISIS

By the Shire of Waroona

BACKGROUND

Of 269 Water Corporation bridges on the Swan Coastal Plains nearly one in seven, or 14%, are either load limited or are about to be.

As re-routing solutions are sought for trucks, this is playing havoc with rural industry, leading to longer travel times, inability to access property, more fuel consumption and the hazards of having to navigate on roads of lower design capacity. This is a significant economic impost on rural industry across the mining, agriculture and renewable energy sectors.

This also places significant strain on local governments which are expected to support alternative routes to cope with heavy truck movements on roads not designed for this purpose. This will exacerbate deterioration of these local roads.

This problem is likely to become much worse, as the load limiting is due to the types of bridges that were constructed. There are 192 Inverted U Beam Water Corporation bridges, or 65% of all bridges between the Swan Coastal plains local governments. It is understood that Main Roads WA structural assessment and testing of these Inverted U Beam bridges has shown that they are subject to shear failure and don't meet current standards, meaning this problem is likely to expand quickly.

To add to this, the average age of the Water Corporation bridges is just over 50 years old, meaning many are approaching end of design life in any case. The load limiting that is now occurring indicates an unfolding asset crisis that is going to rapidly escalate.

The Bridges were built to past traffic volumes and standards. In the same way replacement of these bridges must meet current load standards, they must also meet the standards of today in terms of width to cater for current and future traffic demands. Like for like replacement is dangerous where traffic types and volumes have increased.

Water Corporation Responsibilities

The Water Corporation has a significant asset base to look after. In the 2025 Annual Report the Water Corporation CEO Pat Donovan stated in his CEO's report –

*At Water Corporation, our vision is focussed on shaping a thriving future, and this year has reinforced the importance of adaptability and forward-thinking in managing one of the largest water, wastewater, **drainage** and bulk irrigation networks in the world.¹*

It is noted that the Water Corporation bridges are an asset subset not identified in the Annual Report.

1

[https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tables/papers.nsf/displaypaper/4210608ace2ef8b9fedb75aa48258d23001bcba1/\\$file/60163748.pdf](https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/publications/tables/papers.nsf/displaypaper/4210608ace2ef8b9fedb75aa48258d23001bcba1/$file/60163748.pdf), accessed 13/02/2026, pg. 29.

With the state of the bridges now impacting the economy and in end of life status, there is a need to address this through a thorough assessment of the issue to develop a cost to replace the bridges and rectify the present disruption.

Funding Issues

Payments from Government to country water, sewerage and drainage operations were projected at \$475 million for 2024/45, while only \$397 million was actually paid, as shortfall of \$79 million which would have made a difference were those funds spent on bridge replacements.

With the 2025/26 budget promising \$545.6 million for this purpose², we urgently seek these funds be applied to these bridges where there are funds unspent.

It is likely that significant further funds may be required to address this matter and request the State Government support for this.

Licence Obligations

There are no requirements under the Water Corporation's Water Services Licence with respect to the operating standards, serviceability or maintenance of its bridges.³ This licence issued by the Economic Regulatory Authority.

Bridge Limit Loads

Between the following local government districts, The Water Corporation owns 269 bridges, many of which are on local roads, as shown below –

Local Government	No. of Water Corporation Bridges	Presently Load Limited	Soon to be Load Limited
Waroona	36	5	2
Serpentine-Jarrahdale	34	5	
Rockingham	9	0	
Murray	31	4	
Harvey	92	7	6
Dardanup	16	1	
Capel	20	2	2
Busselton	26	0	3
Armadale	5	0	
Total	269	24	13
TOTAL		37	

Of these bridges 24 have been load limited and it is understood that another 13 are due to be load limited. This represents one in seven bridge, or 14% of Water Corporation bridges under load limiting.

Existing Water Corporation Bridges Under Load Limits				
Structure Number	Road Name	Local Government	Gross Limit	Load
5111	Bell Rd	Capel	15	

² <https://www.ourstatebudget.wa.gov.au/2025-26/budget-papers/bp3/2025-26-wa-state-budget-bp3.pdf>, accessed 13/02/2026, pg. 321.

³ <https://www.erawa.com.au/sites/default/files/21848/Water-Services-Licence-32-Version-17-31-March-2021---WL032---Water-Corporation.pdf>, accessed 13/02/2026

3498A	Clarke Rd	Capel	13
5354	Blawearry Cl	Dardanup	10
3726	Riverdale Rd	Harvey	11
3727	Riverdale Rd	Harvey	11
5205	Eighth St	Harvey	11
3781A	Crampton Rd	Harvey	15
3809A	Rodgers Rd	Harvey	15
3813A	Jackson Rd	Harvey	16
3814A	Jackson Rd	Harvey	11
3539	Fishermans Rd	Murray	10
4004	Mayfield Rd	Murray	12
3573	Thompson Rd	Murray	15
3540	Fishermans Rd	Murray	10
4552	Unknown Rd	Serpentine Jarrahdale	- 12
4376A	Hopeland Rd	Serpentine Jarrahdale	- 15
4387A	Utley Rd	Serpentine Jarrahdale	- 15
4433A	Orton Rd	Serpentine Jarrahdale	- 16
1402	Kingsbury Dr	Serpentine Jarrahdale	- 18
5190	Trotter Rd	Waroona	10
4010	Dorsett Rd	Waroona	11
4824	Williamson Rd	Waroona	11
5188	Somers Rd	Waroona	20
4011A	Old Bunbury Rd Svc Rd (East)	Waroona	15
TOTAL		24	bridges

Water Corporation Bridges Soon To Be Load Limited

MRWA No.	Bridge Road Name	LGA
3460A	Ruabon Rd	Busselton
3427	Chapman Hill Rd	Busselton
3419A	Acton Park Rd	Busselton
3491	Gavins Rd	Capel
3492	Gavins Rd	Capel
3838A	Bernies Rd	Harvey
3740A	Eckersley Rd	Harvey
3763A	River Rd	Harvey
3822	Swamp Rd	Harvey
3760A	Brockman Rd	Harvey
3780A	Wilson Rd	Harvey
4006	Somers Rd	Waroona
5313	McNeill Rd	Waroona

TOTAL	13	bridges
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It is understood (from discussion with Shire Engineers) that a number of additional bridges are to be closed to vehicular traffic, however, the exact number of these closures is unknown.

RESOLUTION

Moved: President Cr Mike Walmsley

Seconded: President Cr Doug McLarty

That the Peel Country Zone request WALGA to lobby for the State to:

- 1. Urgently assess the state of Water Corporation bridges on the Swan Coastal Plains and implementation of a rapid replacement program.**
- 2. Investigate solutions to keep load limits to a minimum and consider other timely and economical solutions to spanning the drains.**
- 3. Ensure replacement to current fit for purpose standards, not like for like.**
- 4. Recognise rural bridges in the Water Corporation's annual report and replacement program reporting.**
- 5. Provide State Government funding support to address this hidden economic handbrake and dangerous state of Water Corporation bridge assets.**
- 6. Include bridge standards and requirements in future Water Corporation Services Licence.**
- 7. Refer the matter to the Office of Auditor General for a performance audit.**

CARRIED

9 WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA

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

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

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

9.1 AVIATION ADVOCACY POSITIONS

By Negar Nili, Policy Officer Transport and Roads

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The current [WALGA Advocacy Positions](#) relating to Aviation are positions 5.9 Aviation and 5.9.1 Airfare Pricing in Regional Western Australia. The proposed new positions would be in addition to these existing positions.

5.9 Aviation

Position Statement *The Local Government sector supports the Department of Transport's State Aviation Strategy 2020, with more focus required on non-RPT airports to ensure it is representative of all of WA, more focus on general aviation development across WA and noting that the preferred ownership and governance of Local Governments is Council Controlled Organisations. The Local Government sector advocates for a clear position on the economic benefit of airports in regional areas to be included in the future state wide Airports State Planning Policy.*

5.9.1. Airfare Pricing in Regional Western Australia

Position Statement *The Local Government sector supports:*

1. *An evidence-based assessment commissioned by the State Government to determine the degree to which market structure and other factors influence the cost of providing air services on each route, the pricing structure offered and the actual prices paid.*
2. *The State Government providing oversight of airfares ensuring transparency, encouraging partnerships between*

Local Governments and airline carriers to grow the market and the provision of subsidies in some situations.

BACKGROUND

Aviation plays a critical role in Western Australia, particularly for regional, rural, and remote communities, by providing essential connectivity for access to healthcare, education, employment, and social engagement. Reliable and affordable air services are also vital to regional economic development, workforce mobility, and community resilience, especially where alternative transport options are limited.

WALGA's advocacy on aviation is underpinned by its existing policy framework, which emphasises the need for safe, reliable, and cost-effective air services across regional and remote Western Australia. These policies highlight the critical role of aviation in enabling regional connectivity, supporting service delivery, and contributing to economic development, while recognising the operational and regulatory responsibilities faced by Local Government-managed airports.

WALGA has also contributed to State-level policy development including the State Aviation Strategy 2020. This strategy supports key initiatives including regulating certain routes to support a sustainable service, the Regional Airfare Zone Cap, Regional Airports Development Scheme and regulation of closed charters in some situations. It is anticipated that the Department of Transport and Major Infrastructure will review and refresh the State Aviation Strategy in 2026-27.

At the national level, WALGA engaged in consultation processes leading to the Green and White Papers on Regional Transport and Aviation, representing Local Government perspectives and regional needs.

Two recently initiated inquiries – the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the determinants of regional airfares and the Senate (Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee) Inquiry into the State of Australia's Aviation Sector and its ability to deliver reliable and affordable services to rural, regional and remote communities – provide important opportunities to review and improve policies supporting regional aviation. Both inquiries have overlapping focus areas, including affordability, government intervention, and impacts on regional communities.

To inform its responses to both inquiries, WALGA has engaged with a sample of Local Governments to understand their experiences, challenges, and priorities for regional air services. This engagement has clarified the needs of Local Governments and communities, forming the basis for developing two proposed new Advocacy Positions to support Members and advocate for improved connectivity, affordability, and service sustainability across regional Western Australia.

NEW ADVOCACY POSITIONS

Regional Airports

Position Statement *WALGA supports the sustainable operation of Local Government owned regional airports and advocates for proportionate regulatory frameworks, targeted funding, and operational guidance to ensure safe, efficient, and resilient airport infrastructure and services.*

Background Regional airports are vital for connectivity, economic development, tourism, health access, and emergency response in Western Australia. Local Governments operating regional airports face increasing regulatory and operational pressures, including aviation security requirements, compliance obligations, ageing infrastructure, and limited staffing capacity. Many Council-owned airports cover day-to-day operating costs but lack sufficient capital to fund major infrastructure renewal or security upgrades. Airports that support both community access and FIFO activity can face additional funding constraints despite their ongoing role in servicing regional communities. These challenges highlight the need for regulatory settings and funding arrangements that reflect airport scale, risk profile, and regional operating conditions.

Regional and Remote Air Services

Position Statement *WALGA advocates for reliable, affordable, and equitable regional air services, calling for greater oversight of airline pricing practices, including transparent fare structures and equitable access to discounted and lower-cost fares, to mitigate the impacts of limited competition and dynamic pricing on regional residents, businesses, and essential travel. WALGA also promotes the continued viability of essential routes and recognises regional aviation as an essential service supporting community access, workforce mobility, and regional economic development.*

Background Regional communities rely on air services for essential travel, including access to health care, employment, education, and family connections, particularly where alternative transport options are limited. High airfares, limited availability of lower-cost seats, and opaque pricing structures reduce affordability for residents and businesses, even in markets with more than one airline. Regional air services are also vulnerable to sudden service reductions or route withdrawals, which can isolate communities and disrupt economic and social activity. These challenges underscore the importance of policy settings that support affordability, service continuity, and equitable access.

COMMENT

Engagement with a sample of Local Governments operating airports with Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) services highlighted operational, financial, and service delivery issues affecting both Council-owned airports and regional air services.

Key matters raised by Councils include:

- **Airline pricing and equitable access:** Complex, opaque, and highly variable fare structures; limited availability of lower-cost seats; competition does not always deliver affordable or equitable outcomes.
- **Aviation security requirements:** Standards designed for larger airports impose significant operational and financial burdens, with outdated equipment, regulatory ambiguities, and high upgrade costs creating compliance challenges.

- Funding and resource constraints: Many Councils operate airports with limited staff and capital; while day-to-day operating costs may be covered, major infrastructure renewal or expansion and security upgrades are often unfunded.
- Service continuity and reliability: Regional air services are fragile, with sudden route reductions or withdrawals impacting essential travel, community connectivity, and local economies.
- Coordination across governments and industry: Fragmented policy, regulatory, and funding arrangements limit Local Governments' ability to respond quickly to changes, highlighting the need for improved collaboration.
- Regional aviation as an essential service: Airports and air services underpin health access, emergency response, tourism, economic development, and social cohesion, demonstrating their broader value beyond transport alone.

Based on these issues and priorities identified through Local Government engagement, WALGA has developed the two proposed Advocacy Positions above on aviation – one focusing on regional airports and the other on regional and remote air services – to address the challenges of affordability, accessibility, operational sustainability, and service continuity for regional communities.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

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

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

RESOLUTION

Moved: Cr Ange Rogers
Seconded: Mayor Amber Kearns

That the Peel Country Zone supports the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 9.1 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

9.2 OTHER STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS

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

10 EXECUTIVE REPORTS

10.1 WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

WALGA Deputy President, Cr Paul Kelly presented the President's Report. The report was enclosed as an attachment within the Agenda.

Noted

10.2 STATE COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO THE ZONE

Peel Country Zone State Councillor, President Cr Michael Walmsley, provided an update on the activities of State Council since the last Zone meeting.

Noted

11 OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 WALGA DEPUTY PRESIDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Zone extends their appreciation and thanks to Cr Paul Kelly for his contribution to WALGA as Deputy President for the past four years as his term draws to a close.

12 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Peel Country Zone will be held on Thursday, 23 April 2026 via Teams, commencing at 1:00pm.

13 CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 2:22pm.