

8.3 TOURISM ADVOCACY POSITION UPDATE

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WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council replace Advocacy Position 3.9 Tourism with an updated position as follows:

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

- 1. Fund the implementation of the WA Visitor Economy Strategy and the supporting Tourism Destination Management Plans and Regional Tourism Development Strategies, including for:***
 - a. maintenance and renewal of Local Government assets and services that underpin a positive visitor experience***
 - b. new and existing tourism infrastructure***
 - c. improving telecommunications infrastructure***
 - d. measures to reduce the cost and improve the scheduling and routes of regional air services***
 - e. accredited Visitor Centres.***
- 2. Ensure that tourism destinations with a significant seasonal visitor influx have adequate medical and emergency services and reliable telecommunications.***
- 3. Articulate a clear tourism governance framework with defined roles and responsibilities to facilitate coordination and collaboration of tourism activities across the State.***
- 4. Adequately consult and consider Local Government when undertaking strategic tourism planning across Western Australia.***
- 5. Provide improved access to affordable, timely and granular data that delivers LGA-level insights on visitation, spend and event impacts.***

BACKGROUND

The visitor economy is an important driver of economic development for metropolitan and regional Local Governments in Western Australia. Comprising people travelling for leisure, business events, education, and those visiting friends and relatives, the visitor economy contributed \$18.3 billion to the Western Australian economy in 2023-24. Approximately 45 per cent of this spend took place in the regions.

In 2015, WALGA undertook research and consultation on tourism, developing a *Local Government and Tourism Discussion Paper* that included recommendations. As part of the recommendations, Advocacy Position 3.9 Tourism was endorsed by State Council in March 2017.

Local Governments are instrumental in maintaining the amenity of destinations, a critical factor in safeguarding tourism reputation and repeat visitation. There has been a growth in demands on Local Government resources to meet gaps in service delivery from other levels of Government or the private sector and to align with changes in community expectations (see [WALGA's submission on the Inquiry into Local Government Financial Sustainability](#)).

The WA Government's [Diversify WA](#) economic framework considers tourism and events a priority sector in the diversification of the state's economy. The *WA Visitor Economy Strategy* (WAVES) sets a vision for a \$25 billion visitor economy by 2033.

The State Government, through Tourism WA and the Regional Tourism Organisations, have developed regional tourism strategies, known as Tourism Destination Management Plans (TDMPs), to identify the challenges and opportunities across demand, supply and capability. TDMPs are the most informed articulation of a shared tourism vision undertaken to date, yet have no funding mechanism to implement them.

Tourism emerged as a key topic in WALGA's 2024 Economic Development Survey, with visitor attraction a focus area for Local Government economic development efforts. Responding to the findings, WALGA undertook a Tourism Survey in June 2025, which received 36 Local Government responses from a diversity of regions, with 92% of respondents stating that tourism had medium or high importance to their Local Government.

WALGA developed the *Role of Local Government in Tourism Discussion Paper*, which outlined the constraints and opportunities for Local Governments, and was distributed for Member and stakeholder feedback in September 2025. It also included a draft revised advocacy position. Feedback was received from 28 Local Governments, plus Tourism WA, Tourism Council WA and Regional Tourism Organisations. Local Government responses were received from each of the five tourism regions: Australia's South West, Australia's North West, Australia's Coral Coast, Australia's Golden Outback and Destination Perth.

The consultation provided unanimous support for the overarching intent of the draft advocacy position. Nearly half of respondents proposed amendments, which were considered and incorporated into the revised draft advocacy positions.

Key sector feedback during WALGA's consultation, included:

- Inadequate recognition of the pivotal role Local Government plays in providing community infrastructure and services that underpins amenity for visitors, and the need for sustainable funding mechanisms.
- Continued confusion about the roles of tourism agencies across WA and who to turn to for support.
- The prohibitive costs of accessing data relating to tourism in Local Government areas.
- Impacts of a difficult regulatory environment at all levels of government on tourism and events.
- The need for support addressing tourism literacy and the visitor economy.

The People and Place Policy Team endorsed the updated advocacy position at its meeting on 22 October 2025, with the inclusion of an additional point requesting resourcing for emergency management and medical services that face significantly increased demand during peak tourism periods.

ATTACHMENT

- [The Role of Local Government in Tourism - 2025 Research Paper](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's **current** position:

That WALGA:

1. *Continues to advocate for a Local Government tourism strategy to deliver local tourism outcomes;*
2. *In the short-medium term, advocates that the State Government:*
 - a. *Produces targeted communication and education for Local Government using existing Tourism WA data to demonstrate the value of tourism to local communities, Elected Members and Local Government officers;*
 - b. *Provides guidance for Local Government on marketing small projects including events and attractions;*
 - c. *Directs Regional Development Commissions to facilitate the coordination of tourism stakeholders to provide strategic support where required for Local Government; and*
 - d. *Provides funding to Local Government for tourist infrastructure.*
3. *In the long term, advocates that the State Government:*
 - a. *Articulates the lead agency and defines the roles of other agencies in tourism, to facilitate coordination and collaboration of tourism activities across the State and to enhance Local Government's understanding of tourism in WA;*
 - b. *Defines and communicates how it provides destination marketing support to Local Governments and communicates how Local Governments can most effectively direct their resources;*
 - c. *Develops a sustainable State Government tourism funding mechanism for both regional and metropolitan Local Governments which is clearly communicated to Local Governments;*
 - d. *Implements and invests in Regional Investment Blueprints and delivers through appropriate funding models such as Royalties for Regions and federal funding opportunities which are clearly communicated to Local Government;*
 - e. *Continues funding to support sustainability of visitor centres;*
 - f. *Undertakes improvements to tourism-related infrastructure and technology including mobile signals and WIFI in regional areas; and*
 - g. *Undertakes measures to reduce the cost and improve the scheduling and routes of regional air services.*

It is proposed that the position **be replaced** with:

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

1. *Fund the implementation of the WA Visitor Economy Strategy and the supporting Tourism Destination Management Plans and Regional Tourism Development Strategies, including for:*
 - a. *maintenance and renewal of Local Government assets and services that underpin a positive visitor experience*
 - b. *new and existing tourism infrastructure*
 - c. *improving telecommunications infrastructure*
 - d. *measures to reduce the cost and improve the scheduling and routes of regional air services*
 - e. *accredited Visitor Centres.*
2. *Ensure that tourism destinations with significant seasonal influxes of visitors have adequate medical and emergency services and reliable telecommunications.*

3. *Articulate a clear tourism governance framework with defined roles and responsibilities to facilitate coordination and collaboration of tourism activities across the State.*
4. *Adequately consult and consider Local Government when undertaking strategic tourism planning across Western Australia.*
5. *Provide improved access to affordable, timely and granular data that delivers LGA-level insights on visitation, spend and event impacts.*

COMMENT

Since the current advocacy position was adopted, tourism across the State has continued to evolve and change, including post pandemic visitation growth, changing tourism behaviour, and the increasing costs of doing business.

Many challenges identified in the current advocacy position persist and remain part of the new draft advocacy position. These include:

- a lack of clarity in tourism organisation roles and responsibilities
- ineffective coordination efforts
- lack of capacity building opportunities for Local Government
- and inaccessible and expensive data, often missing a localised focus.

The suggested revision to Advocacy Position 3.9 Tourism aims to provide a consolidated and contemporary position on the important role Local Government provides for tourism in WA and how best to capitalise on opportunities to benefit their communities.

The proposed updates to the advocacy position seek to:

- Align State Government investment and support with the contemporary Tourism Destination Management Plans (TDMPs).
- Reiterate the need for clear tourism governance across the State, without reference to which agency should lead the work.
- Reiterate and further clarify the need for accessible data to support informed decision making.
- Emphasise the pivotal role the Local Government sector plays in supporting the visitor experience, and advocate for adequate consultation and funding to ensure this role can be sustained.

WALGA will continue to work with State Government agencies and support the Local Government sector, including sharing the updated tourism research paper which provides context around tourism and the diverse roles Local Government can play.