

Great Eastern Country Zone Minutes

Friday, 13 June 2025

**Hosted by the Shire of Kellerberrin
Shire of Kellerberrin Recreation
and Leisure Centre
Commencing at 10:00am**

ZONE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The following items are the Zone's priority issues, as resolved at the February 2024 Zone meeting:

- Regional Health Services to include:
 - Hospitals
 - Aged Care
 - Future of Nurse Practitioner Service
- St John Ambulance Service – Impact on Volunteers and the provision of the service generally.
- Regional Subsidiaries
- Transport – Road Network
- Telecommunications
- Education
- Review of GROH Housing and Regional Housing issues
- Waste Management
- Agricultural Land Use

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES.....	5
1.1.	Opening	5
1.2.	Attendance	5
1.3.	Apologies	6
2.	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY	7
3.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.....	8
4.	ANNOUNCEMENTS	8
5.	LOCAL GOVERNMENT 'VIRTUAL HOST'	8
6.	GUEST SPEAKERS / DEPUTATIONS	8
6.1.	Speakers for the June Zone Meeting.....	8
6.1.1.	Lisa Harwood, Principal Policy Advisor, Economic Development, WALGA	8
6.1.2.	Mr Jai Thomas, Coordinator of Energy, Acting director General of the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety	9
7.	MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT	9
8.	AGENCY REPORTS	9
8.1.	Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.....	9
8.2.	Wheatbelt Development Commission	10
8.3.	Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt	10
8.4.	Main Roads Western Australia	10
8.5.	Water Corporation.....	10
9.	MINUTES	10
9.1.	Confirmation of Minutes from the Great Eastern Country Zone Meeting held on 10 April 2025	10
9.2.	Business Arising from the Minutes of the Great Eastern Country Zone Meeting held on 10 April 2025.....	11
9.2.1.	Potential Initiatives to Invest Excess Cash Reserves	11
9.2.2.	Development Assessment Panels.....	15
9.2.3.	Great Eastern Country Zone Conference 2025	17
9.3.	Minutes of the Great Eastern Country Zone Executive Committee Meeting held on 4 June 2025.....	17
9.4.	Business Arising from the Great Eastern Country Executive Committee Meeting held on 4 June 2025	17
9.4.1.	Guest Speaker Protocols.....	17
9.4.2.	Zone Meeting Locations and Payment of Costs	18
9.4.3.	Zone Budget 2025-2026	21
9.4.4.	August Meeting Date	23
10.	ZONE BUSINESS	24
10.1.	Update on ATU Pilot Program.....	24
10.2.	Living Well in the Wheatbelt Strategy	24
10.3.	Invitations to Members of Parliament to Attend Zone meetings.....	25
10.4.	Jacqui Dodd Scholarship.....	26
11.	ZONE REPORTS	27
11.1.	Chair Report.....	27
11.2.	Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee (DEMC)	28
11.3.	WALGA RoadWise.....	28

12.	WALGA STATE COUNCIL EXECUTIVE REPORTS	29
12.1.	WALGA President's Report	29
12.2.	State Councillor Report	29
12.3.	Status Report.....	30
13.	WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA	33
13.1.	Suspension and Disqualification for Offences Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda Item 8.1)	33
13.2.	State Development Applications and Decision Making Advocacy Position (State Council Agenda Item 8.2).....	39
13.3.	Public Library Agreement (State Council Agenda Item 8.3)	45
13.4.	Other State Council Agenda items.....	47
14.	EMERGING ISSUES	47
14.1.	Zone Strategic Priorities.....	47
15.	NEXT MEETING.....	47
16.	CLOSURE	47

ATTACHMENTS

The following are provided as attachments to the Minutes:

1. Item 5 Shire of Westonia presentation
2. Item 6.1.2 Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety presentation
3. Item 8.1 Local Government Reform Webinar 13 slides
4. Item 8.3 Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt Report June 2025
5. Item 11.3 WALGA RoadWise Report June 2025

1. OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1. OPENING

The Chair opened the meeting at 10:02am.

1.2. ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS	2 Voting Delegates from each Member Council
Shire of Bruce Rock	President Cr Ram Rajagopalan
	Cr Stephen Strange (State Council Representative)
	Mr Mark Furr, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Cunderdin	President Cr Alison Harris JP
Shire of Kellerberrin	Mr Raymond Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer (voting delegate)
Shire of Merredin	President Cr Donna Crook
	Ms Leah Boehme, A/Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Mount Marshall	President Cr Tony Sachse (Zone Chair)
Shire of Narembeen	President Cr Scott Stirrat
	Ms Rebecca McCall, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Nungarin	President Cr Pippa de Lacy
	Mr David Nayda, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Tammin	President Cr Charmaine Thomson (observer)
	Mr Andrew Malone, Chief Executive Officer (proxy)
Shire of Trayning	President Cr Melanie Brown
Shire of Westonia	President Cr Mark Crees
	Mr Bill Price, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Wyalkatchem	President Cr Owen Garner

Shire of Yilgarn	President Cr Wayne Della Bosca
	Cr Lisa Granich (observer)
	Mr Nic Warren, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting

GUESTS	
Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation	Mr Jai Thomas, Deputy Director General - Coordinator of Energy, (currently Acting Director General), Ms Jodi Cook, General Manager, Communications & Coordination Ms Ellen Barry, Communications Officer
Wheatbelt Development Commission	Mr Grant Arthur, Director Regional Development and Mr Chris Sharples, Senior Regional Development Officer

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
Hon Melissa Price MP, Member for Durack
Mr Lachlan Hunter MLA, Member for Central Wheatbelt

WALGA
Mr Sam McLeod, Manager Commercial Services (Executive Officer)
Ms Lisa Harwood, Principal Policy Advisor Economic Development
Ms Meghan Dwyer, State Council Governance Officer

1.3. APOLOGIES

MEMBERS

Shire of Cunderdin	Deputy President Cr Tony Smith
	Mr Stuart Hobley, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Dowerin	President Cr Robert Trepp
	Deputy President Cr Nadine McMorran
	Mrs Manisha Barthakur, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Kellerberrin	Deputy President Cr Emily Ryan
Shire of Koorda	President Cr Jannah Stratford
	Deputy President Cr Gary Greaves
	Mr Zac Donovan, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Merredin	Deputy President Cr Renee Manning
	Cr Mark McKenzie
	Mr Craig Watts, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Mount Marshall	Deputy President Cr Nick Gillett
	Mr Ben McKay, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting

Shire of Mukinbudin	President Cr Gary Shadbolt
	Ms Tanika McLennan, A/Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Narembeen	Deputy President Cr Holly Cusack
Shire of Nungarin	Deputy President Cr Gary Coumbe
Shire of Tammin	Deputy President Cr Tanya Nicholls
	Cr Nick Caffell
Shire of Trayning	Cr Michelle McHugh
Shire of Westonia	Deputy President Cr Ross Della Bosca
Shire of Wyalkatchem	Deputy President Cr Christy Petchell
	Ms Sabine Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Yilgarn	Deputy President Cr Bryan Close

GUESTS	
Main Roads WA	Mr Mohammad Siddiqui, Regional Manager Wheatbelt
CBH Group	Ms Kellie Todman, Manager Governance and Industry Relations
Wheatbelt Development Commission	Mr Rob Cossart, Chief Executive Officer Ms Renee Manning, Director Regional Development
Regional Development Australia WA	Mr Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development
Water Corporation	Ms Rebecca Bowler, Manager Customer & Stakeholder – Goldfields & Agricultural Region
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries	Mr Cameron Taylor, Director of Regulatory Reform - LG

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
Hon Steve Martin MLC, Member for Western Australia

WALGA
Ms Tracey Peacock, Regional Road Safety Advisor

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We, the Great Eastern Country Zone of WALGA acknowledge the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to Country, culture and community, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Nil

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Speaker Protocols

Please note the Zone has made minor updates to speaker protocols, which are intended to ensure the full business of the meeting to be dealt with prior to the scheduled closure time, and to allow maximum possible time for questions and discussion with delegates.

All invited speakers have been advised of the updated protocols.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT 'VIRTUAL HOST'

The **Shire of Westonia** made a presentation at the meeting (Attachment 1).

The Shire of Trayning is invited to make a presentation to next Zone meeting, in August.

6. GUEST SPEAKERS / DEPUTATIONS

6.1. SPEAKERS FOR THE JUNE ZONE MEETING

6.1.1. LISA HARWOOD, PRINCIPAL POLICY ADVISOR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WALGA

Ms Harwood manages WALGA's ongoing policy work on energy.

- Provided a brief overview of the Ministerial forum held on 12 June
- Provided a brief update on energy and land use policy matters, (see also item on DAPs at item 9.2.2 and 13.2)
- Introduced Mr Jai Thomas, Coordinator of Energy

Noted

6.1.2. MR JAI THOMAS, COORDINATOR OF ENERGY, ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, MINES, INDUSTRY REGULATION AND SAFETY

- Provided reflections on the Ministerial forum held on 12 June
- Provided remarks or a general update on energy policy relevant to the Zone recognising the appointment of the new Minister for Energy, the Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA, and the recent State and General election results.

The presentation slides are provided as an attachment (Attachment 2).

Noted

7. MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

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

- Hon Melissa Price MP, Member for Durack
- Mr Lachlan Hunter MLA, Member for Central Wheatbelt

Noted

8. AGENCY REPORTS

The Zone appreciates and prefers written updates (circulated with the agenda) wherever possible. Agency representatives are invited to make brief (5 minute) remarks if the speaker wishes to provide context or a further update on a specific matter.

The Zone appreciates if time can be left for questions, typically for around 10 minutes. Briefings on a significant policy proposal or contentious topic are to be dealt with by the agency representative attending as a Guest or Keynote Speaker (item 6).

8.1. DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SPORT AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Cameron Taylor, Director of Regulatory Reform was an apology for the meeting.

The DLGSC report was provided with the Agenda.

Slides from the recent reform webinar (11 June 2025) which provided an update on the status of reforms and the topics of interest were provided. These slides are attached to the Minutes (Attachment 3).

Noted

8.2. WHEATBELT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Mr Grant Arthur, Director Regional Development

Mr Arthur provide a brief update on WDC activities.

Noted

8.3. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA WHEATBELT

Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development was an apology for the meeting. The RDAW report for June is provided as an attachment (Attachment 4).

Noted

8.4. MAIN ROADS WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Mohammad Siddiqui, Regional Manager Wheatbelt is an apology for this meeting. Main Roads WA advised there is no report for tabling.

Noted

8.5. WATER CORPORATION

Rebecca Bowler, Manager Customer and Stakeholder was an apology for the meeting.

Ahead of the meeting, the Water Corporation advised the Zone of the [WA Government Media Release: Major budget boost to water supply for Goldfields and Wheatbelt](#). At the meeting, a Zone Member raised a query in relation to potential changes in afterhours arrangements for water infrastructure repairs, which were raised with the Water Corporation following the meeting.

Noted

9. MINUTES

9.1. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES FROM THE GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 10 APRIL 2025

The Minutes of the Great Eastern Country Zone meeting held on 10 April 2025 were previously circulated to Member Councils.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Bruce Rock

Seconder: Shire of Yilgarn

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Great Eastern Country Zone held on 10 April 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

CARRIED

9.2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 10 APRIL 2025

9.2.1. POTENTIAL INITIATIVES TO INVEST EXCESS CASH RESERVES

Following discussions at the Zone meeting held on 10 April 2025, a proposed set of initiatives to proceed with is proposed for consideration. There is approximately \$200,000 in reserve.

This proposed raised by delegates at the Zone meeting on 10 April 2025 for the Zone to support members to attend the Local Government Convention and training was split into two separate proposals (one for the Convention and one for other for training) to enable careful consideration of each potential initiative.

At its meeting on 4 June, the Zone Executive Committee, resolved as follows:

The Executive Committee recommend to the Zone:

1. The following initiative proposals and sub-options, in order of priority, for discussion and decision:
 - a. Zone delegation to Perth for specific zone Advocacy/Engagement Aims as proposed (approx. \$12,500)
 - b. WALGA Council Member Essentials Training in the Zone (face to face) as proposed (approx. \$24,000)
 - c. Funding for Delegates to attend the Local Government Convention, with the proposal details amended as follows:
 - one elected member
 - \$500 per Local Government
 - For an elected member who may not normally be able to attend e.g. if a Local Government President and Deputy President are normally approved to attend, the elected member must be someone other than the President or Deputy President.
2. Continue the existing eLearning Subscription grant for Local Governments (\$2,000 per Local Government purchasing an eLearning Subscription).

This paper therefore presents the initiatives, in priority order, for consideration of the Zone.

It should be noted that previous Zone programs have generally resulted in lower than expected actual expenditure. The following initiatives are proposed for inclusion in the budget (see item 0). However, it is considered unlikely that the full budget allocation for all of these initiatives would be expended.

Proposed Priority 1: Fund a Zone delegation to Perth for specific zone Advocacy/Engagement Aims (Approx. \$12,500)

It is proposed that a delegation to Perth during a Parliamentary sitting week is planned for the first half of 2026. This could be a standalone delegation, or held as part of a Perth-based or hybrid Zone meeting (similar to the practice of the Pilbara and Kimberley Zones) in April/May 2026.

It is envisaged that this would involve a two-night stay, with the potential for one delegate from each Zone Local Government. This delegation could also involve:

- Meetings with Ministers, Members of Parliament, and Party Leaders;
- A Parliamentary dinner (typically a Tuesday only);
- Meetings with key agencies and organisations (PoweringWA, Telstra, Synergy, etc.);
- Professional development opportunities for matters or topics of interest to Zone delegates; and
- Earned media opportunities.

The estimated costs are below:

Item	Notes	Indicative Budget
Accommodation	Assume 12 delegates, two nights, \$300 per room per night (inc. parking etc.)	Approx. \$7,200
Arrival Dinner	Opportunity to hold dinner with key stakeholders	\$1,000-\$2,000
Travel and incidental costs allowance per delegate (per diem)	Assume 12 delegates, three days, \$100 per day	Approx. \$3,600
Approximate total (estimate only)		Approx. \$12,500

These costs are an indicative estimate only, and a more detailed budget would be developed if this initiative is progressed. This could also become a biennial event held on the year in which there is no Zone Conference/Forum.

If this model proves successful, a similar trip to Canberra/ALGA could be planned for a later time. A trip to Canberra would involve additional air fare, ground transport, accommodation, and staffing expenses and is estimated at approximately \$35,000.

Proposed Priority 2: WALGA Council Member Essentials Training in the Zone (face to face) (Approx. \$24,000 – depending on options)

This initiative follows the proposal by delegates at the Zone meeting on 10 April 2025. Training provides ongoing benefits for members, and can promote Council Member and staff ongoing development and retention.

The Zone currently provides a Training Rebate for Council Member Essentials. The guidelines of this rebate are:

- A Local Government is required to purchase the WALGA eLearning Subscription for Council Member Essentials training. For Band 4 Local Governments for 2024/2025 this cost of the eLearning Subscription is \$5,040.
- The attractiveness of the eLearning subscription is at its maximum following Local Government elections - when council members may be required to undertake the training.

Previous take up of the rebate has been limited, and thus has only had modest budget impacts.

It is proposed that the Zone could fund in-person delivery of unit(s) of Council Member Essentials at a central location within the Zone. While the final cost would depend on specific details, it is envisaged that a budget of approximately \$20,000 would provide for the delivery of the following four Council Member Essentials units for 20 Council members for each unit as follows:

Option 1 (Approx. \$20,000)

Unit	Duration	Registrations
Serving on Council	2 days	20
Meeting Procedures	1 day	20
Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets	1 day	20

Other options for scale could be as follows:

Option 2 (Approx. \$26,000)

Unit	Duration	Registrations
Serving on Council	2 days	20
Meeting Procedures	1 day	20
Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets	1 day	20
Understanding Local Government	½ days	20
Conflicts of Interest	½ days	20

Option 3 (Approx. \$52,000)

Unit	Duration	Registrations
Location 1 (e.g. Kellerberrin):		
Serving on Council	2 days	20
Meeting Procedures	1 day	20
Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets	1 day	20
Understanding Local Government	½ days	20
Conflicts of Interest	½ days	20
AND		
Location 2 (e.g. Merredin):		
Serving on Council	2 days	20
Meeting Procedures	1 day	20
Understanding Financial Reports and Budgets	1 day	20
Understanding Local Government	½ days	20
Conflicts of Interest	½ days	20

Recent reforms mean that some training modules are being updated to provide training on the new legislative requirements. There are approximately 110 Council Members across the Zone.

Specific legislative requirements for Council Member training are in the table overleaf:

New Council Member First time elected	Must complete the Council Member Essentials (5 courses) within 12 months beginning on the day on which the council member is elected – refer s.5.126(1) and Admin.r.35. Councillor term of office begins on the day after the day on which the poll is held (or would have been held if elected unopposed) – refer s.2.28.
Re-elected Council Member Elected for the first time in 2021 and re-elected in 2025	If the Council Member completed the Council Member Essentials (5 courses) in the twelve months following their election in 2021, the Council Member will NOT be required to complete the training again until, and if, they are re-elected at the 2029 election. Admin.r.36 provides an exemption if the Council Member has completed the Council Member Essentials <u>OR</u> the Dip.LG within the period of 5-years ending immediately before the day on which the Council Member is elected.
Re-elected Council Member Elected in 2017, and re-elected in 2021 and 2025	The Council Member must complete the Council Member Essentials (5 Course) within 12-months beginning on the day on which the council member is elected – refer s.5.126(1) and Admin.r.35. Admin.r.36 exemption will only apply if the Council Member has chosen to complete this course <u>OR</u> the Dip.LG within the period of 5-years ending immediately before the day on which the Council Member is elected.
Any Council Member	Some LGs offer all Council Members the option to undertake the Council Member Essentials following each election cycle. Council Members who choose to participate in the Council Member Essentials although not required to, should be encouraged to complete the associated assessments as this provides them with the Admin.r.36 exemption if required following their future re-election.

Places would be offered to each Local Government on an equal basis, with the aim of filling all available places.

Proposed Initiative 3: Trial Funding for Additional Delegates to attend the Local Government Convention (Up to \$8,000)

This initiative would provide support for Zone delegates who would not otherwise be able to attend the annual Local Government Convention to do so.

Should the Zone proceed with this initiative, it is suggested that some guidelines are agreed, such as:

- Trialled for an initial first year (2025 Convention) only.
- Available only to support Council Members who would not otherwise attended the Convention (accordingly, the President and Deputy President of each Local Government would not be eligible).
- A grant of \$500 would be reimbursable the Local Government following provision of receipts to the Zone Executive Officer evidencing the attendance of the additional delegate, accompanied by a written declaration from the CEO that the Council member would not otherwise have attended the Convention.
- This would cap the budget cost at \$500 x 16 LGs = \$8,000.
- Zone Local Governments would not be eligible to receive funds if receipts are not lodged on or by 1 December 2025.

Take up of these grants would be reported to the Zone and used as the basis to consider any similar initiative in a future year.

Other Proposals

The remaining initiatives are listed below. It is proposed that this list of potential initiatives is maintained for reference, added to when potential new future initiatives are identified, and reviewed in the future when opportunity allows.

4. Canberra/ALGA Delegation
5. Expanded 2027 Conference (external speakers etc.)
6. Other professional development opportunities
7. Potential future shared grant-writing resource or initiative (to maximise future grant revenue)
8. Potential future study on borrowing against Local Government owned freehold land (e.g. to enable new housing)
9. Potential future study on maximising the reactivation/use of freight rail
10. Potential future initiatives related to primary healthcare in the regions
11. Any others suggested by the Executive, Zone, or Zone delegates.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Bruce Rock
Seconded: Shire of Wyalkatchem

That the Zone:

1. **Proceeds with the following initiatives for delivery in 2025-26:**
 - a. **Proposal 1: Holds a zone delegation to Perth for specific zone advocacy/engagement aims in early 2026 (approx. \$12,500)**
 - b. **Proposal 2: Holds WALGA Council Member Essentials Training in the Zone (face to face) with an indicative budget of \$26,000 – Option 2.**
2. **Continue the existing eLearning Subscription grant for Local Governments (\$2,000 per Local Government purchasing an eLearning Subscription).**

CARRIED

9.2.2. DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT PANELS

This report is provided following the discussion at the Zone meeting on 10 April 2025.

Background

Since the establishment of DAPs in 2011, the technical staff of the relevant Local Government draft a Responsible Authority Report (RAR) assessing the development proposal against the relevant planning scheme, policies, and other legislation – and providing a recommendation to the DAP. The RAR is then referred to inform the DAP's consideration of the proposal. While the RAR is a technical report that must be delivered within a statutory timeframe, they were sometimes considered by the Council of a Local Government before being lodged with the DAP.

The change that has now occurred under the new *Local Government (Development Assessment Panels) Regulations 2025* is that the RAR is unable to be considered or amended by Council before being lodged to the DAP. However, this does not prevent a Council from holding general debate in relation to a proposal, so long as they do not seek to direct the CEO or administration in relation to the RAR. This change only applies to proposals lodged from 1 May 2025, any proposal lodged before this date may still be considered by a Council under the historical arrangements.

While Councils will be prevented from directing staff in the preparation of RARs, the administration can continue to brief Council on the content and progress of any DAP applications. Local Governments can still raise views in relation to a proposal to the DAP directly, such as requesting a verbal deputation to the DAP during their deliberations.

Developments in the Great Eastern Country Zone

Following the Zone Meeting on 10 April 2025, WALGA has collated historical information about developments within the Zone that have been decided by the relevant Development Assessment Panel (DAP). A register of past applications was included as an attachment to the agenda (Attachment 2).

Next Steps

WALGA has now initiated a review of its advocacy position on DAPs, and is seeking Local Government comment on a revised draft position to include all State Government development assessments and approvals, including the significant development pathway.

Information on the review is available here: <https://walga.asn.au/media-and-resources/latest-news/dap-and-significant-development-pathway-review-and-advocacy#:~:text=WALGA%20is%20seeking%20Local%20Government,including%20the%20significant%20development%20pathway>.

A State Council paper is provided at item 13.2.

Further information on DAP applications is available at: <https://walga.asn.au/policy-and-advocacy/our-policy-areas/planning-and-building/development-assessment-panel-monitoring-project>

Further information is available at: <https://walga.asn.au/policy-and-advocacy/our-policy-areas/planning-and-building/development-assessment-panel-monitoring-project>

Noted

9.2.3. GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE CONFERENCE 2025

A survey of attendees has been completed, and a draft report compiling the results was included as an attachment to the Agenda.

The survey feedback was very positive. While the response rate was modest, the positive nature of findings and the general alignment with other feedback tends to support the validity of the findings.

The report contains suggestions intended to be used for reference when planning the 2027 conference.

The Executive Committee also proposed that for future events, survey should be conducted at the event to maximise responses.

Noted

9.3. MINUTES OF THE GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 JUNE 2025

The Minutes of the Great Eastern Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 4 June 2025 are provided as an attachment (Attachment 4).

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Cunderdin
Seconded: Shire of Nungarin

That the Minutes of the Great Eastern Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 4 June 2025 be received.

CARRIED

9.4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 JUNE 2025

9.4.1. GUEST SPEAKER PROTOCOLS

At its meeting on 4 June 2025, the Zone Executive Committee endorsed minor changes to the speaker protocols for Zone meetings, as follows:

- The main/keynote speaker (such as Ministerial addresses, contentious issues briefings, or an address on a key topic of interest) are generally 30 minutes with 15 minutes for questions
- For Members of Parliament
 - A brief (approx. 5-10 minute) address is appreciated, with similar time (5-10 minutes) for questions from delegates wherever possible.
- Guest deputations continue to have a time limit of 20 minutes.

- For Agency reports:
 - The Zone appreciates and prefers written updates (circulated with the agenda) wherever possible, noting that delegates who have provided an apology may review and refer questions to other delegates
 - Agency representatives are invited to make brief (5 minute) remarks if the speaker wishes to provide context or a further update on a specific matter.
 - The Zone appreciates and prefers time is left for questions and discussion, typically around 10 minutes depending on the number of questions from delegates.
 - Briefings on a significant policy proposal or contentious topic are to be dealt with as being a Guest Speaker (e.g. 20minute presentation with 15 minutes for questions).

Noted

9.4.2. ZONE MEETING LOCATIONS AND PAYMENT OF COSTS

At its meeting of 4 June 2025, the Zone Executive Committee considered this item, referring it for consideration of the Zone. Recognizing the distances between towns, the Zone has an ordinary meeting schedule alternating between Merredin and Kellerberrin.

The current arrangement provides for convenient access for most Zone members, and the virtual host system appears to be working well. However, there may be some minor drawbacks with not occasionally visiting Zone members.

As a desktop exercise, WALGA has collated the estimated total travel time for Zone delegates for the main townsites of each Zone Local Government, in the figure overleaf. This figure is based on adding the driving time (in minutes) for each Local Government to each destination in the Zone, and Perth, as an estimate of the total time delegates spend travelling (one way) to the meeting.

	Bruce Rock	Cunderdin	Dowerin	Kellerberrin	Kondinin	Koorda	Merredin	Mount Marshall	Mukinbudin	Narembeen	Nungarin	Tammin	Trayning	Westonia	Wyalkatchem	Yilgarn (Southern Cross)	Perth
Bruce Rock		68	114	37	53	119	31	175	75	24	55	51	76	64	88	103	167
Cunderdin	68		43	34	102	66	68	166	97	92	77	19	64	100	39	166	118
Dowerin	114	43		74	149	49	95	150	83	137	70	60	49	128	24	162	118
Kellerberrin	37	34	74		86	80	36	141	70	61	48	16	38	70	54	134	144
Kondinin	53	102	149	86		84	79	224	125	36	105	106	126	109	141	174	188
Koorda	119	66	49	80	84		84	104	49	132	60	65	45	101	28	128	166
Merredin	31	68	95	36	79	84		144	45	45	25	50	46	34	73	92	178
Mount Marshall	75	166	150	141	224	104	144		101	188	122	156	104	154	131	180	259
Mukinbudin	24	97	83	70	125	49	45	101		98	26	81	34	52	60	78	208
Narembeen	24	92	137	61	36	132	45	188	98		70	74	91	73	116	139	194
Nungarin	55	77	70	48	105	60	25	122	26	70		65	21	51	49	98	193
Tammin	51	19	60	16	106	65	50	156	81	74	65		51	85	40	149	134
Trayning	76	64	49	38	126	45	46	104	34	91	21	51		70	28	113	172
Westonia	64	100	128	70	109	101	34	154	52	73	51	85	70		106	69	216
Wyalkatchem	88	39	24	54	141	28	73	131	60	116	49	40	28	106		141	146
Yilgarn (Southern Cross)	103	166	162	134	174	128	92	180	78	139	98	149	113	69	141		282
Perth	167	118	118	144	188	166	178	259	208	194	193	134	172	216	146	282	
Totals for Zone Members	982	1201	1387	979	1699	1194	947	2240	1074	1376	942	1068	956	1266	1118	1926	2883
Totals plus Perth	1149	1319	1505	1123	1887	1360	1125	2499	1282	1570	1135	1202	1128	1482	1264	2208	2883

While the Merredin and Kellerberrin townsites have comparatively low total travel times for delegates, the Bruce Rock, Nungarin, Trayning, and Wyalkatchem townsites also have similar travel time implications.

Other Country Zones, such as the Kimberley and Pilbara Zones, regularly or occasionally hold Zone meetings in Perth, often with a hybrid in-person and online attendance model.

An occasional Perth meeting (with the option for attendees remaining at their home Local Government to attend virtually) could also help to facilitate participation of additional guests or speakers.

If reviewing the opportunity to occasionally hold meetings in other Zone locations is of interest, a potential 2-4 year long rotating meeting location cycle could be developed for the consideration of a future meeting.

Meeting Costs

The function room at the Merredin Regional Community and Leisure Centre is now managed by the Civic Bowling Club Merredin Inc, which charges \$275 (inc. GST) for half-day function room hire. In the interests of fairness, it is proposed that alternative venues that hold a Zone meeting may receive a similar venue fee if requested.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Westonia
Seconder: Shire of Bruce Rock

That the Zone:

- 1. Resolve to:**
 - a. hold occasional meetings in other locations in the Zone,**
 - b. hold occasional meetings in Perth (typically biennially, to coincide with delegation activity whenever possible), and**
 - c. develop a draft multi-year rotation cycle, maintaining that the majority of meetings are held in central towns within the Zone, for the consideration of the November Zone meeting and to set dates for 2026 Zone meetings.**
- 2. Notes the cost of holding meetings at Merredin, and agrees to make a budget allocation of \$300 per Zone meeting for venue hire if requested by the operator of the venue at which a Zone meeting is held.**

CARRIED

9.4.3. ZONE BUDGET 2025-2026

The following draft budget for 2025/2026 is submitted for consideration. This budget assumes all three proposed initiatives suggested above are progressed.

	BUDGET 2024-25	FORECAST 2024-25	BUDGET 2025-26	Comments
Income	\$	\$	\$	
General Subscriptions (16@ \$1,500)	24,000	24,000	24,000	<i>Remain at \$1,500</i>
Interest income	9,000	9,708	6,000	<i>Adjusted assuming reduction of \$50,000 in term deposit for Zone Initiatives during 25/26. 4% interest assumed.</i>
Total Income	33,000	33,708	30,000	
Expenses				
Zone Expenses - Audit fees			1,100	
Zone Expenses - Ordinary Meetings	5,874	3,502	5,250	<i>\$1500 for venue costs and \$3,750 for catering costs</i>
<i>Zone initiative - Delegation to Perth</i>	-	-	<i>12,500</i>	<i>Refer to agenda paper - proposal only</i>
<i>Zone initiative - Face to face training in the Zone</i>	-	-	<i>24,000</i>	<i>Refer to agenda paper - proposal only</i>
<i>Zone initiative - LGC Rebate</i>	-	-	<i>8,000</i>	<i>Refer to agenda paper - proposal only</i>
Elearning Subscription Grant			32,000	<i>Training year. \$2,000 per LG for elearning subscription.</i>
Zone Representative - Honoraria	1,982	2,042	2,102	<i>Correction of previous error in calculations reflected in forecast. 3% increase in costs in line with CPI.</i>
Zone Representative - Meeting Fees	1,030	-	-	<i>Remove line item.</i>
Conference costs	25,000	14,142	-	<i>Not required in 25/26</i>
Zone Representative - Travel Costs	515	-	550	<i>Retain at \$550.</i>
WALGA Travel to Zone			1,000	<i>Accommodation for WALGA staff for Zone meetings/events if required.</i>
Total Expenses	34,401	19,686	86,502	
Profit / Loss	(\$1,401)	14,022	(\$56,502)	<i>Noting assumed \$76,500 expenditure included on special initiatives and Elearning subscriptions grant which is unlikely to be fully expended.</i>
Cash Reserves				
Opening Balance	217,080	217,080	231,102	
Movement	(\$1,401)	14,022	(\$56,502)	
Closing Balance	215,679	231,102	174,600	

Term Deposit

If the proposed initiatives are progressed with, it is proposed that the majority of the funds in the term deposit (\$150,000) are re-invested for a further year, with a provision allocation of \$50,000 moved into shorter term (3 month) rolling term deposits to allow funds to be used for any approved Zone initiatives during the financial year.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Bruce Rock
Seconded: Shire of Merredin

The Zone:

1. Endorse the draft Budgeted Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ending 30 June 2026, subject to any revisions necessary to reflect the Zone's decisions on any proposed Zone initiatives. *(shown below)*.
2. Regarding the term deposit,
 - a. rollover \$150,000 of the term deposit for 12 months, and
 - b. rollover \$50,000 of the term deposit for 3 months, rolling over until funds are required.
3. Continue with external auditors to conduct a yearly audit of the Zone's account.

	BUDGET 2024-25	FORECAST 2024-25	BUDGET 2025-26	Comments
Income	\$	\$	\$	
General Subscriptions (16@ \$1,500)	24,000	24,000	24,000	<i>Remain at \$1,500</i>
Interest income	9,000	9,708	6,000	<i>Reduction of \$50,000 in term deposit for Zone Initiatives during 25/26. 4% interest assumed.</i>
Total Income	33,000	33,708	30,000	
Expenses				
Zone Expenses - Audit fees			1,100	
Zone Expenses - Ordinary Meetings	5,874	3,502	5,250	<i>\$1500 for venue costs and \$3,750 for catering costs</i>
Zone initiative - Delegation to Perth	-	-	12,500	
Zone initiative - Face to face training in the Zone	-	-	26,000	
Elearning Subscription Grant			32,000	<i>Training year. \$2,000 per LG for elearning subscription.</i>
Zone Representative - Honoraria	1,982	2,042	2,102	<i>Correction of previous error in calculations reflected in forecast. 3% increase in costs in line with CPI.</i>
Zone Representative - Meeting Fees	1,030	-	-	<i>Remove line item.</i>
Conference costs	25,000	14,142	-	<i>Not required in 25/26</i>

Zone Representative - Travel Costs	515	-	550	<i>Retain at \$550.</i>
WALGA Travel to Zone			1,000	<i>Accommodation for WALGA staff for Zone meetings/events if required.</i>
Total Expenses	34,401	19,686	80,502	
Profit / Loss	(\$1,401)	14,022	(\$50,502)	<i>Assumed \$70,500 expenditure included on special initiatives and Elearning subscriptions grant.</i>
Cash Reserves				
Opening Balance	217,080	217,080	231,102	
Movement	(\$1,401)	14,022	(\$50,502)	
Closing Balance	215,679	231,102	180,600	

9.4.4. AUGUST MEETING DATE

The 2025 LGIS Inter-municipal Golf Tournament has been scheduled to be held in Kellerberrin on 13-15 August.

This may impact the availability of Members for the August Zone meeting. However, the extent is unknown. Rescheduling the meeting may also have a similar impact on attendance.

The following options could be considered:

1. Retain the meeting on Thursday, 14 August as scheduled, noting Deputy Delegates might need to attend. This meeting date was set in November 2024 and in recognition that rescheduling meetings impacts multiple delegates, retaining the meeting date may be preferred.
2. Reschedule the meeting. One proposed date is the following Monday, 18 August, potentially held a little later in the day to accommodate travel.

A Presentation to the Zone on Living Well in the Wheatbelt is provisionally scheduled as the Keynote item for the August meeting.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Yilgarn
Seconded: Shire of Bruce Rock

That the Zone resolves to hold the August meeting at 10:00am on Monday, 18 August.

CARRIED

10. ZONE BUSINESS

10.1. UPDATE ON ATU PILOT PROGRAM

WALGA has continued to engage with DPIRD, the Wheatbelt Development Commission, DFES, and Telstra on the pilot.

WALGA met with State Agencies on 5 May to discuss the generator acquisition and deployment strategy. Telstra has supplied specifications for several potential development sites. As a result, the current thinking is that it would be most effective to procure 15 kVa single-phase and 25 kVa three-phase generators supplied on trailers, so that they can be deployed to any site as required. It is also considered that centrally storing generators at regional hubs (such as Merredin, Northam, Narrogin, etc.) will assist in minimising deployment time following an outage event.

WALGA has been assisting DPIRD engage with potential generator suppliers to inform a procurement process. WALGA has sought initial advice from prospective suppliers on generator specifications and availability.

Issues around maintenance, availability, and certification of qualified persons to connect generators are being carefully considered. A further meeting to discuss progress was held on 16 May 2025.

It is understood that Telstra's preference is to enable State agencies to settle a storage and deployment principles to then confirm parties to Community Support Agent Agreements.

Further discussions with WDC and DPIRD were held on 6 June 2025.

Noted.

10.2. LIVING WELL IN THE WHEATBELT STRATEGY

Further to the update provided in April 2025.

The following attachments were provided with the Agenda.

- a. Living Well in the Wheatbelt Strategy
- b. One-page summary of the Strategy priorities
- c. Table: Actions from the Strategy that Local Governments can incorporate and action in their local Public Health Plans
- d. Information Sheet for Shires
- e. How can WACHS help at each stage of planning
- f. Wheatbelt Public Health & Local Government Planning Collaborative

The Wheatbelt District Leadership Group (DLG) endorsed the Living Well in the Wheatbelt Strategy in April and this is now available to share with stakeholders. A copy of the Strategy, a one page summary of the priorities, and a one-page summary of the actions in the Strategy that are relevant to Local Governments for their public planning, aligned with the 4 pillars of the WA State Public Health are provided as an attachment.

Implementation is occurring via the Wheatbelt Human Services Managers Forum and its Working Groups. The Wheatbelt DLG hopes the Strategy will usefully guide and inform Local Government in their current Local Public Health (Health & Wellbeing) Plans (LPHPs) under the Public Health Act as a number of actions align with the State Government's PHP priorities and fit well with LPHPs and current activities (e.g. aged friendly communities, maintaining safe green public spaces for walking, playgrounds and social connectedness activities, supporting child care and playgroup activities or seniors activities).

The WACHS-Wheatbelt Health Promotion Network has provided an overview of the support that the WACHS Health Promotion Network can provide to Local Governments public health planning. The team can be contacted to guide and support Wheatbelt Local Governments in their LPHP planning (contact Chantelle.Jeffery@health.wa.gov.au Wheatbelt Health Promotion Coordinator).

An offer to provide a presentation to a future Zone meeting will be extended.

Noted.

10.3. INVITATIONS TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO ATTEND ZONE MEETINGS

By Kathy Robertson, Manager Association and Corporate Governance

BACKGROUND

The recent State election has brought with it two significant changes which may impact how Zones invite members of Parliament to attend Zone meetings:

1. The electoral regions for the Legislative Council were abolished under the *Constitutional and Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Equality) Act 2021* and replaced with a single "whole of state" electorate. As a result, the members of the Legislative Council are drawn from across the whole of the State and no longer represent a particular region or area.
2. Premier Roger Cook has appointed nine cabinet members with region-specific portfolios. These Regional Ministers cover the areas of the Kimberley, Pilbara, South West, Mid West, Goldfields-Esperance, Gascoyne, Peel, Great Southern and Wheatbelt.

A full list of MLCs can be found here: [Legislative Council of Western Australia, Forty Second Parliament, List Of Members](#)

A full list of WA Ministers, including Regional Ministers can be found here: [Western Australian Government Cabinet Ministers](#)

COMMENT

Zones can choose to invite members of Parliament (State or Federal) to meetings at their discretion. Some Zones have standing invitations for all MPs relevant to that region (including MLAs, MLCs and Federal members) whilst others choose to invite MPs on a meeting-by-meeting basis to speak on a particular topic or issue.

Those Zones that have a standing invite for MPs generally allow time on the Agenda for each politician in attendance to address the meeting (as a standing item).

It is understood that the Great Eastern Country Zone has generally had a practice of inviting:

- Ministers as relevant or topical to items of interest to the Zone;
- The Federal Member for Durack and O'Connor in the House of Representatives (MP);
- The Member for Central Wheatbelt and Roe in the Legislative Assembly (MLA); and
- Members of the Legislative Council representing the Agricultural Region (MLCs), with representatives such as the Hon Martin Aldridge and Hon Steve Martin attending on several previous occasions.

This year, engagement with the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Wheatbelt has been of key focus.

It is suggested that:

- The Zone continues to approach Ministers on a priority basis (particularly the Minister for Local Government, Minister for the Wheatbelt, Minister for Regional Development, and potentially the Ministers for Energy, Health, Water, etc. depending on areas of ongoing focus);
- The Member for Durack and O'Connor and Member for Central Wheatbelt and Roe continue to be standing invitees;
- The Zone continues to invite Hon Steve Martin MLC as a standing invitee; and
- The Zone writes to all major parties (Liberal, National, and Labor) to ask whether they wish to nominate a representative MLC as a standing invite for the Zone.

The Zone agreed to the proposed approach outlined above. It was also agreed that Mrs Kirrilee Warr MLA, Shadow Minister for Local Government, be invited to provide an address to a future Zone meeting.

The Executive Officer will action.

10.4. JACQUI DODD SCHOLARSHIP

By WALGA Training Team

The LGA50220 Diploma of Local Government – Elected Member Scholarship, named in honour of the late Jacqui Dodd, former long-serving WALGA Training Services Manager, has been awarded since 2021. This program is the highest qualification an Elected Member can achieve through WALGA Training and enables participants to increase their skills and knowledge in order to confidently provide leadership to their community.

The scholarship covers 50% of training and assessment fees and provides additional travel expense compensation for regional applicants upon completion of the program. WALGA Training awards this scholarship to two Metropolitan and two Regional Elected Members.

To qualify, applicants must be current Elected Members, have completed all Council Member Essentials training, and must not have previously received the scholarship.

This year's nominations will open on Tuesday, 1 July and close on Friday, 15 August 2025 at 12 noon. The scholarship winners will be announced at the Local Government Convention in September.

For more information and details on how to apply please visit the WALGA Training [website](#), contact the team via email training@walga.asn.au, or call us on (08) 9213 2088.

Noted

11. ZONE REPORTS

11.1. CHAIR REPORT

President Cr Tony Sachse

Welcome to our meeting for June 2025. The meeting date needed change due to a conflict with the WALGA Energy Forum with the Minister in Perth. The start time has also been amended to 10am given the short daylight hours currently and travel distances. Thank you for your understanding.

The Zone Executive met on Tuesday 4 June 2025. The minutes of the meeting are attached.

Thank you to all the Agency representatives for sending in their respective reports and for your attendance today. There will be sufficient time to give an overview and take questions during the meeting.

The Shire of Westonia is providing the 10-minute presentation today. There is a reasonably full Agenda on a range of items.

Thanks to the Shire of Kellerberrin for hosting us today.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Yilgarn

Seconder: Shire of Narembeen

That the Zone Chair's report be received.

CARRIED

11.2. WHEATBELT DISTRICT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (DEMC)

President Cr Tony Sachse

The last meeting of the Wheatbelt DEMC was on 12 March 2024. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 18 June 2025.

Exercise 'Sizzle Sync' is to provide Wheatbelt DEMC members with the ability to build capacity in DEMC members to provide coordinated response and communication during wide-spread heatwave conditions across the district. This desktop exercise will follow the meeting on 18 June 2025.

Please note that there have been some very informative webinars run by the DEMC over recent months. The Storm and Flood Preparedness Webinar is to be held on Thursday 12, June at 12.30 pm.

The Wheatbelt Operational Area Support Group (OASG)/ISG is now meeting on an as needed basis.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Tammin

Seconded: Shire of Yilgarn

That the Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee Report be received.

CARRIED

Note: Some delegates noted that in-person representation by DFES at LEMC meetings and activities has been limited. However, other delegates reported that DFES has been attending meetings in person. President Cr Sasche will raise the matter at the next DEMC meeting.

11.3. WALGA ROADWISE

Tracey Peacock, Regional Road Safety Advisor was an apology for the meeting. The RoadWise Report was tabled at the meeting (Attachment 5).

Noted

12. WALGA STATE COUNCIL EXECUTIVE REPORTS

12.1. WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The WALGA President's Report was provided with the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Bruce Rock

Seconded: Shire of Yilgarn

That the WALGA President's Report be received.

CARRIED

12.2. STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

Cr Stephen Strange

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Westonia

Seconded: Shire of Yilgarn

That the State Councillor Report be received.

CARRIED

12.3. STATUS REPORT

Agenda Item	Zone Resolution	WALGA Response	Update	WALGA Contact
13 February 2025 Zone Agenda Item 14.1 WA Telstra Automatic Transfer Unit Pilot Deployment Program	That the Great Eastern Country Zone requests WALGA organise a roundtable with WALGA, Telstra, Department of Fire and Emergency Services and Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development to discuss the drafting of Community Support Agents Agreement for the implementation of the WA Telstra Automatic Transfer Unit Pilot Deployment Program.	The Infrastructure Policy Team supported this proposal. WALGA met with senior representatives from InfraCo (a subsidiary that holds Telstra's exchanges, poles, ducts, pits and pipes, and fibre network) and Telstra. Discussions with DPIRD and Telstra have commenced. It now seems likely that the service agreements will not be with Local Governments.	June 2025	Ian Duncan Executive Manager Infrastructure iduncan@walga.asn.au 9213 2031
5 March 2025 State Council Agenda Item 8.1 Climate Change Advocacy Position	The Zone supported the recommendation. However, the Zone also requests that WALGA remains open minded to further conversations on climate change.	This item has been referred to the Environment Policy Team for consideration. See the Environment Policy Team Report in the July State Council Agenda for more information.	June 2025	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039
11 April 2024 Zone Agenda Item 9.1.2 Agricultural Land Use	That the Great Eastern Country Zone recommend that WALGA 1. In considering Agricultural Land Use, establishes and promotes policy templates to guide Local Governments for their individual adoption to protect and prioritise the preservation of agricultural land against its displacement	State Council endorsed the Renewable Energy Facilities Advocacy Position at its meeting of 4 September, 2024. This position calls for the State Government to develop a renewable energy facility state planning policy that would provide	June 2025	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039

	<p>by non-agricultural activities that lead to a net reduction of the State's productive agricultural land.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Within the Policy includes such uses but not limited to tree planting for offsets or carbon, renewable energy generation and transmission. 3. Investigates potential impacts to local government rates on rural land, that has approved long term tree planting for different purposes, for example but not limited to planting for carbon offsets, planting for clearing offsets, or planting for renewable fuels; and renewable energy investments. 4. Provides advice to local government on what Policies or Special Area Rates should be considered for the land affected. 	<p>greater guidance to applicants and decision makers.</p> <p>WALGA is continuing its energy transition advocacy and has written to the Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson BA MLA seeking further discussion on this issue.</p> <p>WALGA has appointed consultants to carry out work on the rating of Renewable Energy Projects.</p> <p>This work will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislative Framework Review - to determine the current legislative provisions available to WA Local Governments and provide recommendations for any legislative changes in relation to the rating of renewable energy facilities. • National and Local Review - to research how other Australian jurisdictions are managing the rating of renewable energy facilities and consult with a selection of Western Australian Local Governments. • Way Forward - provide a summary of options and recommendations of the rating of renewable energy facilities by 		<p>Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au</p>
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		<p>Local Governments going forward.</p> <p>This work should be completed in mid-July 2025.</p>		
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Noted

13. WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA

Zone Delegates are invited to read and consider the WALGA State Council Agenda, which has been provided as an attachment with this Agenda (Attachment 7) and 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.

13.1. SUSPENSION AND DISQUALIFICATION FOR OFFENCES ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.1)

By Jason Russell, Senior Governance Specialist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The South East Metropolitan Zone (SEMZ) passed a motion requesting that WALGA advocate for additional powers for the Minister to suspend Council Members charged with criminal offences likely to damage the reputation of the Local Government, and disqualify if convicted.
- Suspension, dismissal and disqualification must balance the public interest in elected representatives of good character, with protections for the individual and respect for democratic processes.
- While the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) includes a range of suspension, dismissal and disqualification mechanisms, their operation also depends on how the relevant decision-makers choose to use their powers.
- This report recommends that the dismissal mechanisms under the Act are sufficient to address the Zone's concern, but that WALGA's advocacy position be amended to include an additional suspension power for the Minister of Local Government.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the advocacy position at its meeting on 19 May.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Influence:

- Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government.

Support:

- Provide practical sector-wide solutions based on research and evidence.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The current Advocacy Position 2.5.5 Disqualification Due to Conviction position provides as follows:

Position Statement: A new disqualification criterion should be added to the *Local Government Act 1995* that disqualifies a person from serving as an Elected Member if they have been convicted of an offence against the *Planning and Development Act*, or the *Building Act* in the preceding five years.

Background: A planning or building system conviction is potentially more serious than a *Local Government Act* conviction because of Local Government's prominent role in planning and building control and the significant personal benefits which can be illegally gained through these systems.

This report recommends that this position is renamed and amended to include an additional point 2, as follows:

Suspension and Disqualification for Offences

The WA Local Government sector advocates that:

- 1. A new disqualification criterion should be added to the Local Government Act 1995 that disqualifies a person from serving as an Elected Member if they have been convicted of an offence against the Planning and Development Act, or the Building Act in the preceding five years.*
- 2. A new suspension criterion should be added to the Local Government Act 1995 allowing the Minister of Local Government to suspend a Council Member charged with an offence, where the Minister is satisfied this would be in the best interests of the Local Government, based on advice of the Director General.*

BACKGROUND

At its November 2024 meeting, the SEMZ asked WALGA to advocate:

That the Local Government Act 1995 be amended to give the Minister for Local Government the power to:

- 1. Disqualify a person from membership of a council if the person has been convicted of a criminal offence that, in the opinion of the Minister for Local Government, under the advice of the State Solicitor's Office, has the potential to damage the reputation of the local government or the local government sector more broadly.*
- 2. Suspend the council member who is charged with a criminal offence that has the potential to damage the reputation of the local government or the local government sector more broadly, until the charges are dealt with; and*
- 3. Require a person to be paid fees and allowances until they are disqualified.*

COMMENT

The *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) automatically disqualifies someone from membership of a Council if convicted of certain types of offences. The Act also includes mechanisms for suspending and dismissing Council Members. Each mechanism differs in terms of the parties, processes, powers, and preconditions involved.

While suspended, a Council Member cannot perform any of the powers and duties of their role. Suspension does not affect the duration of a Council Member's term or their eligibility to be a candidate for election to Council. If a Council Member is dismissed, the office of the member becomes vacant from the time when the order dismissing the member takes effect. A Council Member that is dismissed is not prevented from standing in future elections. In contrast, persons disqualified are ineligible to hold or be elected to office as a Council Member.

It is necessary for these mechanisms to balance the public interest in ensuring that elected representatives are of good character, with protections for due process, the presumption of innocence and resumption of rights following completion of a sentence. There must also be an appropriate level of respect for the democratic process and the rights of communities to choose their representatives.

Whether the suspension, dismissal and disqualification framework is fit-for-purpose depends on the legislative framework (e.g. legislative settings for disqualification, powers and constraints on powers to suspend and dismiss) and its implementation (e.g. how decision-makers exercise their discretion to intervene).

Existing Disqualification Provisions

A person may be disqualified from membership of a Council based on the following provisions of the Act:

Provision	A person is disqualified –
2.20	If they are a member of a parliament
2.21	If they are a bankrupt or their affairs are under insolvency laws
2.22	Because of conviction
2.23	If they are a member of another Council
2.24	Because of misapplication of local government funds or property
5.117	If SAT orders disqualification (for not more than 5 years) for serious or recurrent breach, or failure to comply with order

Section 2.22 of the Act provides that a person is disqualified if:

- they have been convicted of a crime and are in prison serving a sentence for that crime,
- have been convicted of a serious local government offence in the previous 5 years, or
- have been convicted of an offence carrying an indictable penalty of imprisonment for more than 5 years.

Clearly, the threshold for disqualification is high, excluding all lower-level offences and even indictable offences with a penalty of 5 years or less. As an example, high-level indecent assault will be dealt with as an indictable offense, with the offender liable for up to 5 years imprisonment. Serious local government offences are offences against the Act for which a person may be sentenced to imprisonment or a fine of over \$10,000. A court sentencing a person for a serious local government offence may make an order waiving the disqualification, or reducing the period for which it applies.

There is currently no ability for the Minister to disqualify a person from Council membership. SAT has discretion to order disqualification in some circumstances, while a court has the authority to order that disqualification not apply. In the context of these judicial or quasi-judicial processes, there are strong protections for the rights of the affected person. This reflects the seriousness of this penalty. While the SEMZ motion calls for disqualification, dismissal may be a more appropriate penalty if the exercise of Ministerial discretion is required.

Current Dismissal Provisions

Under sections 8.15K and 8.15L of the Act, the Minister may recommend that the Governor dismiss a Council Member, if the Minister is satisfied that it is appropriate to intervene. The Minister must be satisfied based on the Director General's written advice that:

- the member is impeding the Local Government's ability to perform its functions and duties under the Act, and/or

- it is in the best interest of the Local Government that the member be dismissed.

The Minister must also be satisfied that the seriousness of the situation for the Local Government requires intervention.

The Minister must give the member:

- a report that includes their proposed recommendation and grounds for the recommendation;
- a show cause notice;
- 21 days to respond.

The Minister must consider the member's response prior to making a recommendation to the Governor that the member be dismissed.

Best interest is not defined and allows for a broad range of factors to form the grounds for dismissal. This could include where a Council Member has been charged with or convicted of an offence, and the charges or conviction are adversely affecting the Local Government.

It appears that the existing framework for dismissal has the capacity to respond to circumstances referenced in the SEMZ's motion and rationale. WALGA considers it is reasonable to expect that the Local Government Inspector may have greater capacity to provide targeted and timely investigation and advice to support this mechanism.

Current Suspension Provisions

Section 8.15E of the Act enables the Minister to suspend a Council Member or order them to undertake remedial action.

The Minister can only act where they are satisfied that it is appropriate to intervene, based on one or more of the following:

- The member has been charged with a disqualification offence.
- The Director General has made an allegation to SAT against the member, of a serious or recurrent breach.
- The Director General has written to the Minister advising that they suspect on reasonable grounds that one or more of the following applies:
 - The member has failed to perform their role, functions or duties;
 - The member's conduct has adversely affected the ability of another person to perform their role, functions or duties;
 - The member's conduct has adversely affected the ability of the Local Government to comply with the principles that apply under section 5.40 of the Act (principles affecting employment by Local Government, including the responsibility to provide safe and healthy working conditions in accordance with WHS legislation).

The Minister must give:

- The member a written notice of the proposed order that provides the allegations and particulars supporting the proposed order is based on.
- The member a show cause notice, allowing 21 days for the member's response
- Any submissions made by the member consideration prior to making the order.

While suspended, a Council Member is not entitled to be paid any fee or allowance to which they would otherwise be entitled. A Council Member is liable to repay annual allowances and fees paid in advance, as if the member had, for the period of their suspension, ceased to hold the office.

Options for reform of suspension

The current system shares some common elements with the Zone's proposal, however, some changes could be made to bring them into closer alignment. Under the current framework, the Director General and Minister would need to be satisfied that any reputational damage resulting from charges was impeding the workings of the Local Government before they could move to suspend a Council Member.

Charges resulting in reputational damage could be included in the legislation as an explicit ground for which the Director General can recommend suspension to the Minister. However, reputational damage may be somewhat narrow or subjective.

A 'best interests' test, consistent with that provided in the dismissal mechanism (discussed above), could allow the consideration of a broad range of factors, including reputational damage. A mechanism could be introduced allowing the Minister to suspend a Council Member who is charged with an offence that, despite not being a disqualification offence, satisfies the Minister that it is in the best interests of the Local Government to suspend the member. Consistent with the other grounds for suspension, this could be on the advice of the Director General, as the State Solicitor's Office will be primarily concerned with avoiding prejudice to any matter currently before the courts.

Local Government Reform Amendments

The *Local Government (Amendment) Act 2024* will transfer the powers of the Director General under these provisions to the soon-to-be-established Local Government Inspector. The Inspector/Inspectorate model has been introduced to provide improved oversight and early interventions capability into the Local Government sector.

The Inspector will be able initiate inquiries into the affairs of a local government and recommend suspension and dismissal of Council Members. It is expected that this newly created office may have greater independence, timeliness, focus and flexibility in addressing conduct issues.

The Governance Policy Team considered and endorsed the proposed advocacy position at its meeting on 19 May.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

1. That WALGA amend and rename advocacy position 2.5.5 *Disqualification Due to Conviction* to read as follows:

Suspension and Disqualification for Offences

The WA Local Government sector advocates that:

1. *A new disqualification criterion should be added to the Local Government Act 1995 that disqualifies a person from serving as an Elected Member if they have been convicted of an offence against the Planning and Development Act, or the Building Act in the preceding five years.*
 2. *A new suspension criterion should be added to the Local Government Act 1995 allowing the Minister of Local Government to suspend a Council Member charged with an offence, where the Minister is satisfied this would be in the best interests of the Local Government, based on advice of the Director General.*
2. That WALGA incorporate advocacy on this issue into its ongoing legislative reform engagement.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Bruce Rock

Seconder: Shire of Merredin

That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.1 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

13.2. STATE DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS AND DECISION MAKING ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.2)

By Coralie Claudio, Senior Policy Advisor Planning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- It is proposed that Advocacy Position 6.4 Development Assessment Panels be replaced with a new, expanded position that includes all forms of State Government development assessment and decision making.
- The updated position incorporates principles for state decision making, a refined list of recommended reforms to the Development Assessment Panels (DAPs) system and recommends that the significant development pathway be abolished but includes a list of recommended reforms if the pathway is retained.
- The draft position was informed by WALGA's review of the operation of the DAPs and the state significant development pathways, input from Local Government officers, and previous WALGA submissions.
- The draft position and accompanying review reports were provided to Local Governments for Council endorsed or CEO approved preferred feedback by 23 May.
- The Environment Policy team endorsed the position at their meeting on 29 May.

ATTACHMENT

- [Rationale for draft advocacy position](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

It is proposed State Council replace the **current** Advocacy Position **6.4 Development Assessment Panels**:

The Association does not support Development Assessment Panels (DAPs), in their current structure.

Necessary changes to the structure of the DAPs system include:

1. *The abolishment of the current 'mandatory' mechanism where a proposal has a value of \$10 million or greater, and its replacement with an 'opt in' mechanism for all proposals.*
2. *Raising the DAP threshold from the current \$2 million to \$5 million,*
3. *The composition of DAPs should be modified to provide equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members.*
4. *The creation of a distinct Special Matters DAP (SMDAP) is not supported, given there are already multiple avenues for determination on the basis of zoning and monetary value of applications. Should the State Government progress with the implementation of a SMDAP, the following changes are proposed to the model released in March 2022:*
 - *allow proponents with proposals that meet the threshold or criteria being able to opt-out of the SMDAP pathway and allow assessment and determination by Local Government*
 - *mandate consultation with the relevant Local Governments prior to the issuing of a Ministerial Order in relation to SMDAP Precinct Criteria, and ensure SMDAP Precincts be identified through regulations, rather than by the Minister,*
 - *include greater professional planning expertise, and knowledge of local context through the Local Government members of the District DAP, by including majority professional town planner panel members, with two Local Government*
 - *representatives*

- *expand the role of Local Governments in SMDAP processes and appropriate remuneration for involvement of Local Governments be included to support the SMDAP decision-making process.*
5. *In principle, the further reduction in the number of panels from five to three is supported, to the extent that this reduces the administrative burden on local governments and enhances consistency of decision making.*
 6. *In principle, the permanent appointment of panel members where this results in consistent decision-making is supported as this reduces the potential for conflicts of interest and ensures sound knowledge of DAP processes and procedures.*
 7. *WALGA supports greater transparency around DAP processes and decisions, as community distrust of DAP decision-making is a key area of concern for many local governments.*

with a **new** advocacy position **6.4 State Development Applications and Decision Making Advocacy Position:**

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

1. *Ensure that decision making on development applications (DAs) is:*
 - a. *consistent and accountable*
 - b. *accessible to local communities*
 - c. *respectful of, and appropriately applies, local planning frameworks in line with their statutory weight.*
2. *Reform the Development Assessment Panel (DAP) system to:*
 - a. *raise the DAP threshold from the current \$2 million to \$5 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. *modify the composition of DAPs to provide equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members*
 - c. *review DAP processes to ensure proponents provide necessary information in a timely manner*
 - d. *provide clear procedural guidance on the roles and functions of Local Government officers and Council*
 - e. *allow access to the State Referral Coordination Unit for DAP applications to ensure timely and adequate referral responses from State Government agencies are provided to Local Governments.*
3. *Abolish the state significant development assessment pathway (Part 11B of the Planning and Development Act 2005).*
4. *If the significant development assessment pathway is retained, implement the following reforms:*
 - a. *raise the cost threshold to \$50 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. *align statutory timeframes with DAP and Local Government determined DAs*
 - c. *ensure all developments are consistent with applicable local planning instruments and provide comprehensive guidelines for discretionary decision making, including applying extraordinary discretion*
 - d. *delete references to 'mandatory significant development' to ensure the pathway remains entirely opt-in*
 - e. *undertake periodic reviews of its operation and effectiveness.*

BACKGROUND

There are a range of development application (DAs) decision makers in the Western Australian Planning system. While Local Governments process and determine the vast majority of DAs, other State Government boards or agencies are also decision makers, particularly for complex proposals and public works. This includes DAPs, the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) and other State Government agencies (i.e. DevelopmentWA) that determine DAs such as DAPs, significant development applications (Part 17 and Part 11B of the *Planning Development Act 2005*) and developments under region schemes, redevelopment schemes and improvement schemes and public works.

WALGA has historically opposed DAPs and the significant development pathway as they erode the role of Local Government in providing a valuable community perspective on planning proposals.

WALGA has undertaken two reviews of the performance of the DAP system in [2016](#) and [2020](#). Those reviews informed WALGA's current advocacy position, endorsed in May 2022, that recommends changes to the DAP system to ensure it operates in an efficient, effective, and transparent way, and appropriately considers matters of local planning context in decision-making.

The current position is being reviewed as part of WALGA's regular position review process and in recognition of significant planning reforms in 2024, specifically the replacement of the proposed special matters DAP with the permanent significant development pathway (Part 11B).

To inform the review of the DAP position and its ongoing advocacy, WALGA collated and reviewed data on the operation of the DAPs and the significant development pathway.

The [DAP Report](#) examines DAP data from its inception in 2011 to the end of the 2023-24 financial year, with a focus on observable trends since the previous report in 2020. The report indicates minor improvements in the DAP system, particularly in reliability and consistent decision making. Despite this, the DAP system continues to determine many low-value applications that lack strategic importance and should be redirected to the Local Government pathway.

The [Significant Development Pathway Report](#) examines data from the pathway's commencement in 2020 until 1 April 2025. The report finds that this pathway is used infrequently and does not process applications efficiently, contrary to its intended purpose and that the pathway's other goals, driving economic recovery (Part 17) and aiding housing supply (Part 11B), have also not been met.

The collated data will be uploaded to the [DAP Dashboard](#) on WALGA's website.

WALGA has drafted a revised advocacy position that will sit within the context of the Planning Principles and Reform advocacy position and will expand on the DAP position to:

1. Be applicable to all State Government DAs and approvals (e.g. significant development pathway, DAPs, Public Works, region scheme approvals, Development WA).
2. Establish principles to guide transparent and accountable decision-making on development applications, ensuring that local planning frameworks are appropriately considered, and communities, particularly in regional areas, are granted equitable access to the decision-making process.

3. Include a refined list of reforms to the DAP system, while retaining the position to increase the DAP threshold and for equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members.
4. Include a recommendation that the significant development pathway be abolished based on the findings of the significant development pathway report, and includes a list of reforms if the pathway is to be retained to ensure it operates more efficiently and only processes genuine state significant projects.

The draft position and accompanying review reports were provided to Local Governments for Council endorsed or CEO preferred feedback by 23 May.

COMMENT

The current DAP advocacy position is outdated and does not reflect the current planning framework, specifically the introduction of the permanent significant development pathway (Part 11B of the *Planning and Development Act 2005*).

The proposed new advocacy position will complement WALGA's planning advocacy position, 6.1 Planning Principles and Reform, that notes decisions should be made by the level of government closest to and most impacted by a planning proposal and should appropriately reflect local environment, context, communities and character.

The proposed advocacy position has been informed by feedback from CEO approved and Council endorsed submissions, Local Government officer input and WALGA's previous submissions, specifically on DAP reforms and amendments to the *Planning and Development Act 2005* that introduced the significant development pathway.

Some minor amendments were made to the draft position in response to members' feedback, particularly regarding the recommendations for the state significant development pathway.

Local Government feedback was that the pathway was not functioning effectively in its current form. While some Local Governments advocated for its abolition, others considered that there may be benefits if the pathway was limited to genuine state-significant projects only and operated more efficiently. The draft position calls for the reforms to the pathway and for it to be subject to periodic review if retained.

Further information on the rationale for the position and feedback provided is attached.

The Environment Policy agreed to recommend that State Council endorse the new expanded position at their meeting on 29 May.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA:

1. Replace Advocacy Position 6.4 Development Assessment Panels with the following:

6.4 State Development Applications and Decision Making

WALGA calls on the State Government to:

- 1. Ensure that decision making on development applications (DAs) is:*
 - a. consistent and accountable*
 - b. accessible to local communities*
 - c. respectful of, and appropriately applies, local planning frameworks in line with their statutory weight.*
 - 2. Reform the Development Assessment Panel (DAP) system to:*
 - a. raise the DAP threshold from the current \$2 million to \$5 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. modify the composition of DAPs to provide equal representation of Specialist Members and Local Government Members*
 - c. review DAP processes to ensure proponents provide necessary information in a timely manner*
 - d. provide clear procedural guidance on the roles and functions of Local Government officers and Council*
 - e. allow access to the State Referral Coordination Unit for DAP applications to ensure timely and adequate referral responses from State Government agencies are provided to Local Governments.*
 - 3. Abolish the state significant development assessment pathway (Part 11B of the Planning and Development Act 2005).*
 - 4. If the significant development assessment pathway is retained, implement the following reforms:*
 - a. raise the cost threshold to \$50 million and mandate periodic reviews of the threshold*
 - b. align statutory timeframes with DAP and Local Government determined DAs*
 - c. ensure all developments are consistent with applicable local planning instruments and provide comprehensive guidelines for discretionary decision making, including applying extraordinary discretion*
 - d. delete references to 'mandatory significant development' to ensure the pathway remains entirely opt-in*
 - e. undertake periodic reviews of its operation and effectiveness.*
2. Notes the Development Assessment Panel 2011 – 2024 Review and State Development Pathway 2020 – 2025 Review reports.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Bruce Rock

Seconder: Shire of Tammin

That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.2 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

13.3. PUBLIC LIBRARY AGREEMENT (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.3)

By Rebecca Hicks, Policy Officer Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- WALGA is a signatory to the *State and Local Government Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia* (the Agreement).
- The five-year Agreement defines roles and responsibilities in the delivery of public libraries and provides the structure and framework for the delivery of the WA Public Libraries Strategy and future vision for public library services.
- The current Agreement, endorsed by State Council in July 2020, is due for renewal in September 2025.
- WALGA has participated in the review of the Agreement, which has recommended minor amendments.
- Following the signing of a new Agreement, a sector consultation process will be undertaken for the associated Local Level Agreements between the State Library and Local Governments.
- The Agreement does not include funding arrangements for public libraries. WALGA continues to advocate for increased public library funding.

ATTACHMENT

- [State and Local Level Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia 2025 – 2030](#)

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Endorsing the Agreement aligns with WALGA's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, particularly:

- Influence – Lead advocacy on issues important to Local Government and empower the Local Government sector to build communities equipped for the future.
- Support – Grow opportunities for Local Governments' sharing of services and resources.
- Expertise – Optimise organisational capability to service members' needs and foster relationships between our subject matter experts and stakeholders.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Endorsement of the new Agreement aligns with WALGA's current [Advocacy Position 3.8 Public Libraries](#), which states:

1. *Western Australian Local Government public libraries provide valuable local cultural infrastructure, creating social and community hubs for community capacity building, recreation, education and literacy, digital inclusion, and social connection, cohesion and inclusion.*
2. *WALGA supports the provision of Public Library services in Western Australia through a formal partnership between Local Government and the State Government of Western Australia, governed by the Library Board Act 1951, namely the State and Local Government Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia (2020).*
3. *The WA Public Libraries Strategy 2022-2026 provides a framework for a shared vision, strategic direction and collaborative action in the provision of a vibrant and sustainable 21st century public library network.*
4. *It is essential that a sustainable funding model enables Local Governments to continue to deliver library services to support continued growth and adaptation to changing community needs.*

BACKGROUND

WALGA is a signatory to the *State and Local Government Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia* (the Agreement), which is due for renewal in September 2025. The Agreement defines the roles and responsibilities for each tier of government in the delivery of public libraries and provides the structure and framework for the delivery of the [WA Public Libraries Strategy 2022-2026](#) and the future vision for public library services.

Following internal endorsement from signatories, the current Agreement received final endorsement in September 2020 by the Public Library Working Group (PLWG), which includes: WALGA, the State Library of Western Australia (SLWA), the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), Public Libraries WA Inc. and Local Government Professionals Australia WA. The same process will be undertaken for this renewal.

Connected to the Agreement are Local Level Agreements between the SLWA and individual Local Governments that provide public library services. Local Level Agreements set out more detailed public library service delivery requirements and will be reviewed in early 2026, including sector consultation.

COMMENT

WALGA has worked with SLWA to review the Agreement to meet the September 2025 renewal date. Amendments are minor and do not raise any issues for WALGA Members.

The scope of the Agreement does not extend to public library funding. SLWA is currently reviewing the Public Library Material Funding Allocation Model. WALGA and Local Governments will be consulted as part of the review.

State Government funding has failed to keep pace with the needs of public libraries, population growth or inflation. WALGA continues to [advocate](#) for increased overall funding for public libraries to maintain and enhance service levels that meet the diverse needs of communities across WA and support the implementation of the WA Public Library Strategy.

Following the renewal of the Agreement, WALGA will work with SLWA to develop a sector-wide consultation plan for the review of Local Level Agreements.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the *State and Local Level Agreement for the Provision of Public Library Services in Western Australia*.

RESOLUTION

Mover: Shire of Nungarin
Seconded: Shire of Narembeen

That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.3 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

13.4. 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.

14. EMERGING ISSUES

14.1. ZONE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

During the meeting, President Cr Crees raised the Zone's Strategic Priorities and proposed that Agricultural Land Use be considered a key focus area for the Zone.

The Chair clarified that the current list of priorities is not ranked in any particular order and is reviewed biennially with each new Zone cohort. However, the Chair noted that a formal item on Agricultural Land Use could be prepared and brought forward for discussion by the Executive Committee.

Noted

14.2. CARETAKER PROVISIONS

A question was raised regarding the implications of the Local Government caretaker provisions on the timing and conduct of CEO Performance Reviews.

The Executive Officer advised on the relevant provisions of the Act, which identify 'significant acts' which Local Governments are prohibited from doing during a caretaker period.

15. NEXT MEETING

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, 6 August commencing at 8:00am, via MTeams.

The next Great Eastern Country Zone meeting will be held on Monday, 18 August, commencing at 10:00am.

Month	Executive Committee	Zone
August	Wednesday, 6 August at 8:00am MTeams	Monday, 18 August Shire of Merredin
November	Tuesday, 4 November at 8:00am MS Teams	Thursday, 13 November Shire of Kellerberrin

16. CLOSURE

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 1:02pm.