

Great Eastern Country Zone Minutes

10 April 2025

**Hosted by the Shire of Merredin
Merredin Regional Community
Leisure Centre**

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

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ATTACHMENTS

The following are provided as attachments to the Minutes:

1. Item 6 WALGA Executive Manager Infrastructure presentation
2. Item 8.4 Main Roads WA presentation
3. Item 8.5 Water Corporation presentation

1. OPENING, ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

1.1. OPENING

Chair, President Cr Tony Sachse opened the meeting at 9:32am.

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)
Shire of Cunderdin	President Cr Alison Harris JP
	Deputy President Cr Tony Smith
	Mr Stuart Hopley, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Kellerberrin	Deputy President Cr Emily Ryan
	Mr Raymond Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer (voting delegate)
Shire of Koorda	President Cr Jannah Stratford
	Mr Zac Donovan, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Merredin	Cr Mark McKenzie
Shire of Mount Marshall	President Cr Tony Sachse (Zone Chair)
	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
	Ms Rebecca McCall, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Nungarin	Deputy President Cr Gary Coumbe
Shire of Tammin	Deputy President Cr Tanya Nicholls
	Mr Andrew Malone, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Trayning	Mr John Merrick, A/Chief Executive Officer, non voting

Shire of Westonia	President Cr Mark Crees
	Ms Jasmine Geier, Deputy Chief Executive Officer non-voting
Shire of Wyalkatchem	President Cr Owen Garner
	Ms Sabine Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Yilgarn	President Cr Wayne Della Bosca
	Mr Nic Warren, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting

GUESTS	
Main Roads WA	Mr Mohammad Siddiqui, Regional Manager Wheatbelt
Regional Development Australia WA	Mr Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development
Water Corporation	Ms Rebecca Bowler, Manager Customer & Stakeholder – Goldfields & Agricultural Region
CBH Group	Ms Kellie Todman, Manager Governance and Industry Relations

WALGA	
Cr Paul Kelly, WALGA Deputy President	
Mr Ian Duncan, Executive Manager, Infrastructure	
Mr Sam McLeod, Manager Commercial Services (Zone Executive Officer)	
Ms Chantelle O'Brian, Governance Support Officer	

1.3. APOLOGIES

MEMBERS

Shire of Bruce Rock	Mr Mark Furr, 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 Kondinin	President Cr Kent Mouritz
	Deputy President Cr Bev Gangell
	Mr David Burton, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Koorda	Deputy President Cr Gary Greaves
Shire of Merredin	Deputy President Cr Renee Manning
	Mr Craig Watts, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Mount Marshall	Deputy President Cr Nick Gillett
Shire of Narembeen	President Cr Scott Stirrat

Shire of Nungarin	President Cr Pippa de Lacy
	Mr David Nayda, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Tammin	Cr Nick Caffell
Shire of Trayning	President Cr Melanie Brown
	Cr Michelle McHugh
Shire of Westonia	Deputy President Cr Ross Della Bosca
	Mr Bill Price, Chief Executive Officer, non-voting
Shire of Wyalkatchem	Deputy President Cr Christy Petchell
Shire of Yilgarn	Deputy President Cr Bryan Close

GUESTS	
Wheatbelt Development Commission	Mr Rob Cossart, Chief Executive Officer

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT	
Hon Martin Aldridge MLC, Member for Agricultural Region	
Hon Melissa Price MP, Member for Durack	
Mr Rick Wilson MP, Member for O'Connor	
Hon Sandra Carr MLC, Member for Agricultural Region	
Hon Colin de Grussa MLC, Member for Agricultural Region	
Hon Steve Martin MLC, Member for the Agricultural Region	
Hon Shelley Payne MLC, Member for Agricultural Region	
Hon Darren West MLC, Member for Agricultural Region	
Mr Lachlan Hunter MLA, Member for Central Wheatbelt	
Mr Peter Rundle MLA, Member for Roe	

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 Chair 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

Nil.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT 'VIRTUAL HOST'

A Zone member Local Government was invited to make a short presentation on what is occurring in their Local Government.

The **Shire of Wyalkatchem President, Cr Owen Garner** made a presentation to the Zone.

The **Shire of Westonia** is invited to make a presentation to the next Zone meeting, in June.

6. GUEST SPEAKERS / DEPUTATIONS

6.1. SPEAKERS FOR THE APRIL ZONE MEETING

6.1.1. IAN DUNCAN, WALGA EXECUTIVE MANAGER INFRASTRUCTURE

Ian presented on infrastructure matters of interest to the Zone.

The presentation is attached with the Minutes (Attachment 1).

Noted

7. MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

There were no Members of Parliament in attendance.

A brief apology was given on behalf of the new Member for the Central Wheatbelt, Mr Lachlan Hunter MLA, noting that the meeting was held during the first sitting week of the new Western Australian Parliament. It was also acknowledged that Mr Hunter's office has indicated an interest in representing Mr Hunter at future Zone meetings when Mr Hunter is unable to personally attend.

Noted

8. AGENCY REPORTS

8.1. DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SPORT AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

No report was received.

Noted

8.2. WHEATBELT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Rob Cossart, Chief Executive Officer

Rob Cossart was an apology for this meeting. A brief update was provided by the Executive Officer.

Noted

8.3. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA WHEATBELT

Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development

The Regional Development Australia report was provided with the Agenda. Mr Pomykala was available to answer questions.

Noted

8.4. MAIN ROADS WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Mohammad Siddiqui, Regional Manager Wheatbelt

Mohammad spoke to his report.

The presentation is attached with the Minutes (Attachment 2).

Noted

8.5. WATER CORPORATION

Rebecca Bowler, Manager Customer and Stakeholder

Rebecca provided a presentation to the Zone.

The presentation is attached with the Minutes (Attachment 3).

Noted

8.6. CBH GROUP

Kellie Todman, Manager - Government & Industry Relations

Kellie provided a verbal update to the Zone.

Noted

9. MINUTES

9.1. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES FROM THE GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2025

The Minutes of the Great Eastern Country Zone meeting held on 14 February 2025 have previously been circulated to Member Councils.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Koorda**
Seconder **Shire of Cunderdin**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Great Eastern Country Zone held on 14 February 2025 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings, subject to noting President Cr Mark Crees and CEO Mr Bill Price, Shire of Westonia as apologies.

CARRIED

9.2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2025

9.2.1. ITEM 8.1: DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, SPORT AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES ATTENDANCE

Background

The Zone requested WALGA enquire about DLGSC representatives attending Zone meetings as it has been a significant period of time since the Zone had an attendee. It is understood that DLGSC representatives did not attend the February round of Zone meetings, which fell during the State Government caretaker period.

On 31 March, Machinery of Government changes were announced, including the transfer of the Local Government and Racing & Gaming (Liquor) portfolios to a new **Department of Local Government, Commerce, Industry Regulation and Safety**, to substantially replace the existing Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DEMIRS).

WALGA will continue to engage with the Local Government portfolio staff to facilitate attendance and reports for Zone meetings.

Noted

9.2.2. ITEM 10.1: DRAFT OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE 113: OPERATIONAL BOUNDARIES AND ASSET MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITIES: RURAL REGIONS

A submission to Main Roads WA with the inclusion of collated feedback from the Sector was submitted on 24 March. This submission was attached to the Agenda.

Since this is a procedure of high significance to the operations of both Main Roads and Local Governments, it has been rerecommended that any subsequent drafts be referred to the sector, including Regional Road Groups for further review.

WALGA has also suggested the formation of a reference group comprising representation from the Main Roads Regions, Local Governments, WALGA and Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA) be established to guide the final outcome.

Noted

9.2.3. ITEM 14.1: WA TELSTRA AUTOMATIC TRANSFER UNIT PILOT DEPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Background

The Zone resolved the following:

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.

Comment

Following the February meeting, WALGA has been engaging with a range of stakeholders on this important issue.

WALGA met with Mr Brendon Riley, Chief Executive Officer of Telstra InfraCo, and Mr Boyd Brown, Regional General Manager, Telstra, on 10 March, to discuss a range of matters including the Community Support Agents Agreements for the ATU Pilot. WALGA followed up on this meeting and is awaiting further advice from Telstra on the draft Community Support Agents Agreements. It is understood that Telstra's legal division is still developing agreements.

WALGA met separately with DPIRD on 13 March and has been engaging with DPIRD on the potential options for procuring generators. WALGA understands that final site inspections and confirmation of generator specifications is required before procurement can progress.

The Zone Executive Officer also received a helpful overview of pilot work from the Acting CEO of the Shire of Mukinbudin. Initial trial work with the Shire of Mukinbudin has benefited from the Shire's personnel having pre-existing site access credentials through their prior work experience.

WALGA has been advised of a potential further meeting and is awaiting advice on the next date from the Wheatbelt Development Commission.

Noted

9.2.4. TIER 3 RAIL

The Executive Officer advised that WALGA would provide the Zone with WALGA's Advocacy Position on Freight on Rail.

This is WALGA's current Advocacy Position:

5.1.1 Freight on Rail

The Local Government sector supports keeping grain freight (Tier 3) rail lines open.

Please refer to Item 10.3 for a potential related initiative.

Noted

9.3. MINUTES OF THE GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2025

The Minutes of the Great Eastern Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 1 April 2025 were provided as an attachment to the Agenda.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Cunderdin**
Seconder **Shire of Mukinbudin**

That the Minutes of the Great Eastern Country Zone Executive Committee meeting held on 1 April 2025 be received.

CARRIED

9.4. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2025

These are reported in Zone Business below.

10. ZONE BUSINESS

10.1. PROVISION OF RURAL GP SERVICES IN RM 6 AND RM 7 COMMUNITIES

Shire of Narembeen

BACKGROUND

Following the WALGA-hosted Band 4 Local Governments meeting on 11 October 2024, where key issues impacting local governments were discussed, the Shire of Lake Grace convened a meeting on 29 November 2024 with six local governments (Band 3 and Band 4) and key stakeholders.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the financial and in-kind contributions made by local governments to secure medical service providers in their communities. It was agreed that submissions be made to both the State and Federal Governments for budget consideration to address this pressing issue.

To support this advocacy, Caroline Robinson from 150 Square was contracted to prepare a comprehensive submission and subsequent actions. A position paper was developed on behalf of the Shires of Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Kojonup, Narembeen, Lake Grace, and Ravensthorpe and was formally submitted to the Federal Budget Pre-Submission process for consideration.

Additionally, the participating local governments agreed that a motion should be prepared and submitted to the ALGA National Assembly of Local Government, scheduled to be held in Canberra from 24-27 June 2025. The Shire of Lake Grace is submitting this motion to ALGA on behalf of the alliance, now collectively referred to as the 'Alliance of RM 6 and RM 7 Councils.'

COMMENT

The motion to be submitted to ALGA calls on the Australian Government to increase Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) for regional and remote local governments (RM6 and RM7) to cover costs associated with attracting and retaining general practitioners. The aim is to redirect ratepayer funds back to essential local government responsibilities rather than subsidising medical services.

This initiative aligns with the Local Government Primary Healthcare Services Survey conducted by Rural Health West and endorsed by WALGA in December 2024.

The full submission detailing the challenges and proposed solutions for attracting and retaining GPs in RM 6 and RM 7 communities was attached to the Agenda for reference.

The current plan is to send up to four delegates to the Assembly, which will also include meetings with relevant government departments.

If the advocacy campaign is successful, local governments will experience financial relief, enabling them to sustainably retain medical services within their communities while reallocating resources to core local government functions.

RECOMMENDATION (SHIRE OF NAREMBEEN)

That the Great Eastern Country Zone notes the motion submitted to the National Assembly of Local Government regarding financial assistance for the provision of medical services to regional and remote local governments.

WALGA SECRETARIAT COMMENT

WALGA supports the Alliance of RM 6 and RM 7 Councils' (the Alliance) motion submitted to the ALGA NGA calling for increased Australian Government financial support for Local Governments supporting the provision of essential healthcare services for their communities. The provision of healthcare services in Australia is both an Australian and State responsibility, principally through the Medicare system at the Federal level. Raising this issue at the ALGA NGA provides an opportunity to elevate the issue to an ALGA priority at the National level and gain support from Local Governments experiencing similar cost imposts in other jurisdictions. It is pleasing to hear that the WALGA commissioned Local Government Primary Healthcare Services Survey Report (Survey Report) was useful in the development of the Alliances' Position Paper and ALGA motion.

Equitable access to primary healthcare is an important issue for many WALGA, including some that fall outside of the rural zone according to the Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Area (RRMA) classification. Reflective of the financial impact on the sector and building on the Survey Report, WALGA has begun a strategic advocacy plan which includes targeted actions for the Australian and State Governments, leveraging the opportunities of elections, new Cabinet compositions and the renegotiation of the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) between the Australian Government and States and Territories. WALGA continues to offer its support to the Alliance on this important issue.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Wyalkatchem**
Seconder **Shire of Koorda**

That the Great Eastern Country Zone supports the motion submitted to the National Assembly of Local Government regarding financial assistance for the provision of medical services to regional and remote local governments.

CARRIED

10.2. POTENTIAL INITIATIVES TO INVEST CASH RESERVES

The Great Eastern Country Zone has approximately \$200,000 in funds currently held at bank. While having adequate reserve funds provides a financial buffer for the Zone, the buffer is very substantial, and there may be opportunities to invest some of the funds towards new initiatives for the general benefit of Zone members.

At the suggestion of the Zone, WALGA have developed a range of suggestions for how some proportion of the reserve funds could be invested in initiatives or the benefit of Zone Local Governments.

A wide range of potential initiatives has been identified. The management time required to coordinate delivery of these initiatives is expected to be significant, so it is suggested that focusing on the delivery of one preferred initiative may provide for timely completion. One approach could be to provisionally schedule a sequential order of initiatives into the future, which could be reviewed on a regular basis.

It is important to consider that, while WALGA will provide support for any initiatives, the success of any initiative will ultimately depend on the degree to which Zone-based officials contribute to managing the practical delivery of the initiative. This is likely to be particularly imperative for projects that involve consultants and/or specific advocacy for the Zone.

Suggestions are as follows. The estimated cost magnitude represents a realistic upper-bound estimate for what the initiative is expected to cost.

Potential Initiative	Potential Cost Magnitude	Other Resourcing Required from Zone
<p>1. Engage a consultant to undertake a study on potential uses of the new powers for Local Governments to mortgage freehold land to fund development or upgrades to Local Government housing (potentially with/through CEACA), to deliver a report for all Zone members.</p> <p>This work could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in ensuring future advocacy is positioned recognising the needs of Zone LGs; Inform engagement with DLGSC in ensuring any regulations on these powers are fit-for-purpose; Assist Zone LGs with asset and budget planning. 	\$50,000	<p>Advice from Zone CEOs on landholdings</p> <p>Lead zone-based person to assist the consultant.</p>
<p>2. Trial of employing a shared resource to strategically target grant funding opportunities (potentially targeting 2026 Disaster Resilience and Recovery Funding as combined applications, etc.)</p>	\$75,000	<p>Zone LG to be employer or principal for contractor. CEOs to assist with access to records etc.</p>
<p>3. Engage consultant to undertake research and opportunity assessment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform advocacy on measures to shift grain freight task back to specific rail routes; and/or Position advocacy in relation to any potential transfer of freight railway transition back to State Government. <p>This work could potentially base on a case study route to be determined by the Zone (as an example that might apply for other railway lines generally, etc.). This work could assist with significant advocacy and earned media.</p>	\$50,000	<p>Zone to determine specific focus of study (routes, issues, etc.)</p> <p>Zone CEOs to be available to brief consultant and provide data if required.</p> <p>May work best if lead LG on relevant freight corridor manage the engagement.</p>

<p>4. Fund a Zone delegation to Perth for specific zone advocacy/engagement aims.</p> <p>Suggest delegation during a Parliament sitting week with the aim of meeting several Ministers on one Parliament Sitting day. Likely to realise greatest value if the delegation was focussed on targeting specific outcomes from political representatives and agencies. This delegation could utilise WALGA's new Member Hub or central city hotel as base.</p> <p>This delegation could also involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with Party Leaders and/or 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. • Earned media opportunities. 	\$15,000	<p>Zone to resolve key intended aims of trip.</p> <p>Zone to confirm travelling party and priority engagements.</p> <p>Zone LG may need to coordinate some logistics.</p>
5. Delegation to Canberra or elsewhere interstate for ALGA Conference	\$35,000	Zone LG may need to coordinate some logistics.
6. Expanded 2027 conference to include interstate or international speakers (potentially regional development experts, economists, agronomists, etc.).	\$20,000	Zone to give direction on areas of interest.
<p>7. Provide group professional development opportunities for Zone Council Members and/or staff - may be able to facilitate discount on all-in training delivered at host LG.</p> <p>Types of PD activity that may be of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WALGA short courses • Guest speakers on specific topics (e.g. updates on use of technology in regional economic sectors) • Media training • Training for potential future CEOs employed by Zone LGs 	\$15,000	<p>Zone LG to host.</p> <p>Zone to define scope of training (what, for who) advise on types of PD of interest.</p>

There may be other initiatives that have not been identified. Further initiatives could be added to the list at the suggestion of Zone members, although it could be advisable to avoid initiatives which might:

- Overlap or duplicate other initiatives or programs,
- Provide only a benefit for a small number of member Local Governments,
- Involve significant risks, or
- Require unrealistic management overhead.

It is proposed that the Zone discusses potential initiatives and priorities, so that further work and proposed priority initiatives can be presented for a formal decision at the June Zone meeting.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Bruce Rock**
Second **Shire of Mukinbudin**

That the Great Eastern Country Zone:

- 1. Notes and reviews this report.**
- 2. Discusses the listed initiatives and adds to the list – Funding for delegates to attend the Local Government Convention and Training for Delegates.**
- 3. Discusses potential considerations for determining priority initiatives.**
- 4. Requests the Executive Committee reports back with proposed priority initiatives for decision at the next Zone meeting on 12 June 2025.**

CARRIED

10.3. AVONWEST LOGISTICS AND ENTERPRISE HUB (NORTHAM FREIGHT HUB) – POTENTIAL TRAFFIC IMPLICATIONS FOR GREAT EASTERN HIGHWAY

Following the Executive Committee meeting on 1 April, WALGA made inquiries in relation to the proposed Northam Freight Hub – known also as the Avon Logistics Hub (AvonWest) - which has been supported by studies by the Wheatbelt Development Commission: <https://wheatbelt.wa.gov.au/project/northam-freight-hub-study/>.

A desktop review indicated that part of the site was recently rezoned from “Environmental Conservation” to “Light and Service Industry”, with the amendment gazetted on 12/04/2024. The Shire of Northam appears to have indicated support for the proposal through the relevant planning processes.

Public documents appear to indicate that the logistics hub could potentially facilitate logistics strategies such as load consolidation and multimodal transfers via the Avon Rail Yard, which could improve efficiency of heavy vehicle movements on Great Eastern Highway.

In reply to queries, the Shire of Northam advised that:

The developer, Procon Developments, have a website at <https://www.procondevelopmentsaustralia.com/>, which will provide you an overview of their proposal.

Regarding the traffic concerns / implications, [the] Shire and Main Roads have considered the traffic implications and management as part of the subdivision proposals, which have concluded that the traffic can be managed with upgrades to Yilgarn Ave and the entry and exit points of the site that will cater for RAV7 vehicles.

[The Scheme amendment] relates to 2 portions of the site and the remainder of the site was already zoned Light & Service Industry. This amendment did not really reassess the traffic as it was considered as part of an earlier subdivision application.

Additionally, the developer has also been in discussions with Main Roads to manage any impacts relating to the use and upgrading of their existing road train assembly area to ensure that the area can continue to be used during the construction phase.

WALGA is awaiting further advice from the Shire in relation to any forecast traffic implications for Great Eastern Highway.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Cunderdin**
Second **Shire of Wyalkatchem**

That the Great Eastern Country Zone:

- 1. Notes this report.**
- 2. Invites the proponent to provide an address at the June Zone meeting.**
- 3. Considers any potential advocacy position in relation to the development.**

CARRIED

10.4. GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE CONFERENCE 2025

The Forum was held on Friday, 28 March at the Bruce Rock Town Hall, and was attended by around 90 delegates. The Forum ran to plan and initial feedback has been positive. After the Forum, a brief media statement was circulated to Wheatbelt media and published on WALGA's website.

The Zone Executive Committee discussed potential learnings and improvements for future conferences as follows:

General comment:

- The Committee thanked the Shire of Bruce Rock for hosting the Forum, thanked all speakers for their contributions, and expressed appreciation to everyone involved in organising the event.
- Local businesses in the Shire of Bruce Rock were thankful for the business due to the Forum.
- Mr. Lachlan Hunter was pleased to be available for the afternoon session.

Things that worked well:

- The MC, Di Darmody, did an excellent job.
- The centrally located venue was ideal for the event and the venue was well suited to the Forum.
- A good amount of time was provided for networking.

Potential improvements for future events:

- Increase the number of Councillors from the Zone by promoting the event earlier, using more impactful advertising, and featuring a high-profile or must-see keynote speaker or presentation.
- Make sessions more interactive by allocating time for questions and answers, ensuring delegates gain the most benefit from the sessions and can leverage the expertise of the speakers.
- Develop a strategy to address the mid-afternoon slump.
- Clearly define the key question each session aims to answer and continually refer back to it to stay on track.

A short attendee feedback survey has been developed and sent to registered delegates, which is available here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Y3HKNVJ>. All attendees are encouraged to complete the survey by 5:00pm on Friday, 11 April.

A report of the outcomes of the Survey will be presented to the June Zone meeting.

During the Acknowledgement of Country, Shayna Campbell gifted the Zone Chair a message stick as a gesture to welcome the Forum to Bruce Rock. It is proposed that this message stick is bequeathed by the Zone to the Shire of Bruce Rock in recognition of the Shire's generous hospitality at the Forum.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Bruce Rock**
Seconder **Shire of Mukinbudin**

That the Great Eastern Country Zone:

- 1. Invites verbal reports from President Cr Gary Shadbolt (Conference Committee Chair) and President Cr Ram Rajagopalan (Host Local Government President) on their reflections on the Forum.**
- 2. Considers the reports and receives any further verbal feedback Zone members wish to provide at the Zone meeting.**
- 3. Bequeaths the message stick received from Shayna Campbell to the Shire of Bruce Rock in recognition of the Shire's hospitality at the Forum.**
- 4. Note that a formal report will be presented to the Executive Committee and Zone during the June meetings.**

CARRIED

Cr Shadbolt Comments

Special thanks to Executive: James (prior to leaving WALGA), Tony, Sam, and Meghan.

The Program was excellent.

Discussed the process for planning the Forum.

A future suggestion would be to have more time for Q&A in all sessions.

Cr Rajagopalan Comments

Thanks to the Zone for allowing Bruce Rock to host.

Additionally, thanks to Executive team.

Central location within the Zone was a good place to have the Forum for attendance.

Executive arriving to the region early was well regarded.

Suggestion of an Officer CEO speaker/s maybe a panel for perspective in the role of CEO.

10.5. ZONE PRIORITIES FOR MINISTERIAL BRIEFINGS

By Dana Mason, External Affairs Manager, WALGA

BACKGROUND

Following the March election, the Cook Government has unveiled its new Cabinet, emphasizing regional representation by appointing a dedicated Minister for each region.

The new Cabinet structure shows that the Government intends to have a greater focus on regional WA during this term.

WALGA has written to all Ministers responsible for specific regions, inviting them to participate in upcoming meetings of their respective WALGA Zones.

WALGA will also provide each Minister with a written briefing on the key issues facing their region.

To ensure these briefings are comprehensive, WALGA is seeking input from the Zones to identify the top three to five priorities they would like highlighted.

The Great Eastern Country Zone identified its priority issues at the February 2024 Zone meeting (see page 2) and may like to use these as a basis for identifying their top priorities.

The Zones provide an important opportunity for the Government to have a direct line of communication and engagement with regional WA and ensure that local issues are considered in the broader policy agenda.

WALGA will report on engagements with Ministers responsible for specific regions through the President's report at future Zone meetings.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Yilgarn**
Second **Shire of Wyalkatchem**

That the Great Eastern Country Zone provide the below top three items to WALGA as the Zone's priorities:

- a. Housing**
- b. GP Services including Locums**
- c. Roads**

CARRIED

10.6. AUTHORISATION OF PUBLIC OFFICER FOR THE ZONES AUSTRALIAN TAXATION OFFICE (ATO)

By Richard May, Finance Manager

Managing the Zones for taxation, registration, and annual reporting requirements occurs through the ATO online services. To ensure adequate cover of authorised officers, the Zone is requested to approve the access to the following WALGA Finance team member:

Public Officer

Richard Andrew Murray Chief Financial Officer

RESOLUTION

Mover Shire of Bruce Rock

Seconded Shire of Cunderdin

That the Great Eastern Country Zone authorise Richard Andrew Murray as Public Officer for the Great Eastern Country Zone.

CARRIED

10.7. UPDATE ON SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

Further to comments about potential School Bus Route changes at the February Executive meeting, the Executive Officer lodged an inquiry with the Public Transport Authority (PTA). It is understood that the PTA review School Bus Routes at the commencement of every school year to make route adjustments in line with enrolments.

In line with the findings of the 2022 Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into the Student Transport Assistance Policy Framework, the PTA has been working to re-institute School Bus Advisory Committees. Further information on those is available here: <https://schoolbuses.wa.gov.au/News/TabId/598/ArtMID/1748/ArticleID/84/School-Bus-Advisory-Committee.aspx>.

After the April Executive Committee meeting, the PTA provided an email response as follows:

"There are no significant changes as such with regard to the way routes are altered i.e. eligibility drives where buses are directed for farm gate pick ups.

"The best way for Shires to get an understanding of school bus routes for 2025 throughout regional Western Australia is to access the spatial data set from SBS' GIS mapping database (MAPNET). Any Shire can access this data by utilising SLIP, which is hosted by Landgate. PTA regularly updates spatial data to SLIP so the bus routes are reasonably up to date. As the start of the new school year results in the most changes of bus routes, it may take a couple of months for all routes to be published via SLIP. Specific detail can also be raised with our Contract Officers. Contact details are on our website linked to regional towns at www.schoolbuses.wa.gov.au."

WALGA has mapped the latest available School Bus Route data for the Great Eastern Country Zone (Attachment 5). It should be noted that this data and map may not yet reflect route changes for the 2025 school year.

If required, WALGA could re-map this dataset following the next update being published by the PTA.

Noted

10.8. UPDATE ON BAND 4 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MEETING

By Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services

BACKGROUND

Following the Band 4 roundtable meeting hosted by the Minister for Local Government, Hon Hannah Beasley, on 3 September 2024, WALGA was pleased to host a further meeting of Band 4 Local Governments to continue the discussion.

The meeting was held on 11 October 2024 at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. All 60 Band 4 Local Governments in the State were invited to attend. Overall, 72 representatives from 48 Local Governments attended the meeting.

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

Caroline Robinson, Director of 150 Square facilitated the discussion.

As the main outcome of the meeting, the group identified the top four strategic and operational issues facing Band 4 Local Governments (from most pressing to least pressing):

1. Housing;
2. Audit;
3. Provision of medical services; and
4. Financial Assistance Grants (timing).

WALGA has since undertaken considerable work on the above issues.

An update report on the work done to date was recently circulated to all Band 4 CEOs and Presidents and is provided as an attachment (Attachment 6)

Noted

10.9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT PANELS) REGULATIONS 2025

By Chris Hossen, Policy Manager, Planning and Building and Felicity Morris, Manager Governance and Procurement

BACKGROUND

The State Government's 2021 updates to the *Action Plan for Planning Reform* included measures to improve consistency and transparency for DAP applications, including clarifying the respective role of Elected Members and officers to remove Elected Members from what were deemed to be administrative DAP functions.

These changes were not included in amendments to the *Planning and Development Act 2005*, but were included as part of the 2024 reforms to the *Local Government Act 1995* through the insertion of a new section (s. 9.69 B) to allow for the creation of regulations that specify DAP functions that must be performed on behalf of the Local Government by the CEO or authorised officer.

On Tuesday 1 April, new *Local Government (Development Assessment Panels) Regulations 2025* (the Regulations) were gazetted. The Regulations come into full effect from 1 May, and will apply to all Development Assessment Panel (DAP) applications lodged from that date. The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) sent an LG Alert to the sector on 2 April advising of the new regulations.

The Regulations:

- require Responsible Authority Reports (RARs) to be prepared and submitted by the CEO of a Local Government, or an employee authorised by the CEO
 - CEOs of Class 1 and 2 Local Governments must authorise at least one employee
 - Local Governments will still be able to engage external consultants to assist in preparing RARs
- prohibit the Council from directing the CEO, an authorised employee or a consultant in preparing the RAR or directing the CEO to engage a particular consultant
- require the CEO and authorised employees to disclose conflicts of interests in accordance with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995*, and not undertake any DAP functions in which they have a conflict of interest.

The Regulations are available on the [WA Legislation website](#).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA [Advocacy Positions](#) 6.1 Planning Principles and Reform and 6.4 Development Assessment Panels.

COMMENT

Local Governments have one month to consider and implement the appropriate authorisations, and any resulting changes to systems and processes. WALGA will produce template authorisations and will host an officer information session with the relevant departments to assist Local Governments.

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. There are no changes to the composition of DAPs.

WALGA will continue to oppose changes that erode Local Government autonomy and influence in the WA planning system and will continue to advocate for reforms that recognise the benefits of local decision making in planning.

WALGA is commencing a review of its Development Assessment Panel advocacy position and will consult with the sector and zones as part of that process.

Questions regarding the Regulations can be directed to the local government reform team at actreview@dlgsc.wa.gov.au or the DAP secretariat at daps@dplh.wa.gov.au.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Cunderdin**
Second **Shire of Yilgarn**

That the GECZ requests the Executive considers the DAP changes and seek advice from WALGA planning staff, to report back to the June meeting.

CARRIED

11. ZONE REPORTS

11.1. CHAIR REPORT

President Cr Tony Sachse

Welcome to our April 2025 meeting.

The Zone Executive met on Tuesday 1st of April. The minutes of the meeting were attached with the Agenda.

The GECZ Forum was held in Bruce Rock on Friday 28th of March. Many thanks to the guest speakers, Shire of Bruce Rock for hosting, MC Di Darmody, WALGA and to the GECZ Forum Subcommittee for organising the forum. It was very successful and well attended. There is an Agenda item including a debrief today. Congratulations to everyone involved.

We welcome and congratulate Ministers Dawson (Regional Development), Winton (Wheatbelt), and Beazley (Local Government) with their appointments in the State Government. We look forward to working with you and hope that you can attend future meetings of our Zone.

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 Wyalkatchem provided a 10-minute presentation.

Some other Agenda items include Provision of Remote GP Services, Zone actions, the Northam Freight Hub and Great Eastern Highway implications, potential initiatives to invest cash reserves, and WALGA business including State Council recommendations. It has been suggested that sufficient time be allowed to go through the WALGA State Council Agenda Items with appropriate input from WALGA Zones.

Thanks to the Shire of Merredin for hosting us today.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Westonia**
Seconder **Shire of Mukinbudin**

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. At the time of writing the minutes are not yet available.

Agenda items included:

- Overdue LEMA
- Advising of Agency exercises
- DEMC Webinars and Exercises
- Heatwave Reflection led by WA Country Health Services
- High Risk Weather Period Reflections – OASG Activations
- Community Disaster Resilience Strategy Implementation Plan Project: For Noting
- SEMC Policy Response Subcommittee – EM Districts
- Other information including exercising, OASG debriefs/outcomes, LEMC dates, LEMA status
- Agency Reports

Please note that there have been some very informative webinars run by the DEMC over recent months.

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

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Koorda**
Second **Shire of Nungarin**

That the Wheatbelt District Emergency Management Committee Report be received.

CARRIED

11.3. WALGA ROADWISE

Tracey Peacock, Regional Road Safety Advisor is an apology for the meeting.

Nil.

12. WALGA STATE COUNCIL EXECUTIVE REPORTS

12.1. WALGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Deputy President, Cr Paul Kelly presented the President's report.

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

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Bruce Rock**
Second **Shire of Merredin**

That the WALGA President's Report be received.

CARRIED

12.2. STATE COUNCILLOR REPORT

Cr Stephen Strange

State Councillor, Cr Stephen Strange provided an update from the previous State Council meeting and State Councillor report to the Zone.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Mukinbudin**
Second **Shire of Tammin**

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.	<p>The Infrastructure Policy Team supported this proposal.</p> <p>WALGA met with senior representatives from InfraCo (a subsidiary that holds Telstra's exchanges, poles, ducts, pits and pipes, and fibre network) and Telstra.</p> <p>Discussions with DPIRD have commenced.</p>	April 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.	<p>State Council ALTERNATE MOTION</p> <p>That State Council refer this advocacy item back to the Environment Policy Team for further development.</p> <p>RESOLUTION 003.1/2025 CARRIED</p>	April 2025	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039
11 April 2024 Zone Agenda Item 9.1.2 Agricultural Land Use	<p>That the Great Eastern Country Zone recommend that WALGA</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 by non-agricultural activities that lead to a net reduction of the State's productive agricultural land. 2. Within the Policy includes such uses but not limited to tree planting for offsets or carbon, 	<p>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 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>	April 2025	Nicole Matthews Executive Manager Policy nmatthews@walga.asn.au 9213 2039

	<p>renewable energy generation and transmission.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>4. Provides advice to local government on what Policies or Special Area Rates should be considered for the land affected.</p>	<p>In respect to the rating issues, it is noted that the land remains rateable land. In WA, rural property is generally based on Unimproved Value (UV) unlike NSW and Victoria which use Capital Improved Value as the basis. Also in Victorias there is Payment in Lieu of Rates (PILOR) system. Established under section 94(6A) of the Electricity Industry Act 2000 (EI Act), the Payment in Lieu of Rates (PiLoR) framework allows for councils and electricity generators to negotiate annual payments. The methodology combines a fixed charge with a variable charge based on the capacity of the power station in megawatts.</p> <p>WALGA is currently scoping a piece of work to research the rating system and other charging regimes. This work is ongoing.</p>	<p>April 2025</p>	<p>Tony Brown Executive Director, Member Services 9213 2051 tbrown@walga.asn.au</p>
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Noted

Shire of Koorda left the meeting at 12.49pm and did not return.

13. WALGA STATE COUNCIL AGENDA

Zone Delegates are invited to read and consider the WALGA State Council Agenda, which was provided as an attachment to the Agenda 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. REGULATIONS FOR CEO KPIS AND ONLINE REGISTERS – WALGA SUBMISSION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.1)

By Tony Brown, Executive Director Member Services and Felicity Morris, Manager Governance and Procurement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Consultation is open on the draft Local Government Regulations Amendment Regulations 2024 (the Draft Regulations), which give effect to reforms relating to the publication of online registers, publication of CEO performance criteria and performance reviews, and other CEO matters.
- The Local Government legislation reform platform from the State Government indicated that one of the reform outcomes was "Reducing red tape, increasing consistency and simplicity".
- The overwhelming sector feedback is that these reforms will not achieve this aim and will instead increase red tape without any clear public benefit.
- Sector feedback has been collated and identifies overarching concerns listed in this report.
- The attached submission, informed by this feedback, is recommended for endorsement.

ATTACHMENT

- [Regulations for CEO KPIs and public registers Draft WALGA submission](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's existing advocacy positions are based on the high-level reform proposals provided for public consultation in 2022.

The current [Advocacy Positions](#) are:

2.2.4 CEO Recruitment Panel

The Local Government sector supports the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries establishing a panel of approved panel members to perform the role of the independent person on CEO recruitment panels.

2.5.27 Online Registers

The Local Government sector supports requiring Local Governments to report specific information in online registers on the Local Government's website, including registers for leases, community grants, interests disclosures, applicant contributions and contracts (excluding contracts of employment).

2.5.28 Publishing CEO Key Performance Indicators

- 1. The Local Government sector conditionally supports the reporting of CEO Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are consistent with the strategic direction and operational function of the Local Government, subject to exemptions for publishing KPIs of a confidential nature.*
- 2. The Local Government sector does not support results of CEO performance reviews being published.*

BACKGROUND

The *Local Government Amendment Act 2023* (2023 Amendment Act) contained the Tranche 1 reforms to the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act). This included the following changes which are yet to commence:

- Requirements for Local Government CEO's performance criteria and performance reviews to be published.
- Establishment of a panel of independent persons for CEO performance reviews.
- A requirement for Local Governments to publish and maintain registers on their website.

The draft Local Government Regulations Amendment Regulations 2024 (the Draft Regulations), which will give effect to these reforms, have been released for public consultation. The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) have requested comment by 8 May. Information is available on the [DLGSC website](#), including a copy of the [Draft Regulations](#) and a [DLGSC Consultation Paper](#).

WALGA circulated a discussion paper and request for comment to all Local Governments on 30 January.

COMMENT

Responses received from Local Governments indicate serious concerns with the detail of the Draft Regulations. Overarching concerns include:

- The creation of red tape and excessive administrative burden, in conflict with a stated aim of the reform, and without clear public benefit.
- Continued proliferation of compliance requirements for Local Governments, including overlapping but inconsistent reporting obligations.
- Unreasonable implementation timeframes given existing Local Government workload, cumulative burden of ongoing program of reform and upcoming elections.
- Confusion and lack of clarity (plain English drafting) in the Draft Regulations.

Specific concerns are discussed in relation to each proposal.

CEO matters: Publishing performance criteria and reports on performance review

Of the submissions that provided comment on this aspect of the Draft Regulations, over half expressed strong opposition to publication of CEO KPIs and performance reviews. Opposition was based on factors including the inconsistency with public sector practice, risks to CEOs, mechanisms for reporting on organisational rather than individual performance and the erosion of Local Government autonomy. A small number of Local

Governments broadly supported the regulations or their intent. In addressing the content of Draft Regulations 18AA and 18FAA, submissions raised concerns with the proposed reporting of target achievement and the mechanisms for exclusion of performance criteria from publication.

CEO matters: Independent persons panel (CEO recruitment)

Key concerns included a lack of clarity about the selection criteria and processes to be followed by the Departmental CEO in establishing the panel, the capacity for Councils to appoint independent members from within their own districts, and the management of conflicts of interest.

CEO matters: Certification, recruitment and termination

There were divided views on the requirement for separate certification, but support for the retention of a requirement to conduct a selection process before contract expiry, the option to include additional information in a performance criterion and the proposed modification of the CEO Standards in relation to termination during probation.

Registers: General considerations

Local Governments articulated a range of concerns that are applicable to all registers, including the administrative burden, unreasonable commencement and retrospectivity, lack of clarity and difficulty in applying the requirements, and the implications of the *Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024* (the PRIS Act).

Lease register

Submissions raised considerable concerns with this proposed register. Issues include the breadth of the lease definition, safety and confidentiality for residents and community groups, commercial in confidence information and the ability of Local Governments to generate best value from assets, whether through commercial returns or community benefits.

Grants and sponsorships register

Some Local Governments provided general support for the register, subject to the exclusion of retrospectivity. However, the majority of submissions identified concerns regarding the value threshold, privacy and confidentiality, and a lack of clarity in the calculation of value.

Development contributions register

The majority of submissions expressed concerns regarding the administrative burden with limited improvements in transparency and oversight of Developer Contribution Plans (DCPs) than is currently provided for under the state planning framework. This burden is exacerbated by the retrospectivity and short implementation timeframe. Those Local Governments with a high number of DCPs advise that this is likely to lead to delays and increased costs in the administration of DCPs. Privacy considerations and practical issues with the calculation of interest for individual contributions, and the list of items and percentage of expenditure were also identified.

Contracts for goods and services register

All submissions that commented on the contract register highlighted concerns including the administrative burden associated with the unreasonably low threshold value and duplication of existing reporting requirements. Members raised heightened fraud risks, and issues relating to commercial in confidence information. There is also a lack of clarity regarding the definition of contract and contract value.

This sector feedback and detailed analysis of the Draft Regulations has informed the preparation of the attached draft WALGA submission.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA endorse the recommendations contained in the attached *'Regulations for CEO KPIs and public registers submission'*.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Cunderdin**
Second **Shire of Kellerberrin**

That the Zone strongly 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. DOG AND CAT MANAGEMENT ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.2)

By Felicity Morris, Manager Governance and Procurement and Marnie Herrington, Governance Specialist

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Motions from Zones regarding the PetsWA Centralised Registration Database provide an opportunity to review the existing *Puppy Farming* advocacy position and replace it with a new *Dog and Cat Management* advocacy position.
- The purpose of the new position is to reflect the progression of the *Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021* and the emerging concerns of the Local Government sector regarding the PetsWA centralised registration system.
- The Governance Policy Team endorsed the new advocacy position at its meeting on 24 March.

ATTACHMENT

- [Comparison table between current Advocacy Position 2.12 Puppy Farming, and proposed advocacy position Dog and Cat Management.](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This item is to replace existing Advocacy Position 2.12 *Puppy Farming* with a new *Dog and Cat Management* position.

The current Advocacy Position is as follows:

2.12 *Puppy Farming*

1. *The WA Local Government sector:*
 - a) *Welcomes a cost modelling review of the financial impact on Local Governments to ensure that Local Government is able to fully recover costs and not be disadvantaged in ensuring compliance of any new legislation to Stop Puppy Farming.*
 - b) *Acknowledges the benefit of de-sexing of dogs not used for approved breeding purposes, and request further information on the complexities associated with de-sexing of dogs prior to considering supporting the proposal.*
 - c) *Supports a centralised dog registration system that is developed, operated and maintained by State Government.*
 - d) *Supports appropriate legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.*
 - e) *Does not support the transition of pet shops to adoption centres.*
 - f) *Requests there be a Local Government-specific consultation process in relation to the proposed amendments to the Animal Welfare Act to introduce Standards and Guidelines for the Health and Welfare of Animals including dogs.*
 - g) *Supports a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from professional registered breeders.*
 - h) *Requests the State Government discontinue the use of the term 'Farming' due to the negative connotation that may be associated with other regulated industries, and consider re-naming the initiative 'Stop Puppy Mills'.*

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

The recommended new Advocacy Position is as follows:

Dog and Cat Management

In regard to the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the PetsWA Centralised Database, the WA Local Government sector advocates:

- a) *that fees reflect completed cost modelling to ensure that Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011.*
- b) *that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.*
- c) *that the PetsWA centralised registration database is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government registration fee revenue.*
- d) *that the function of PetsWA be restricted to the registration of dogs and cats, exclude ancillary functions such as animal related complaints and infringement notices, and integrate with existing Local Government corporate systems.*
- e) *for the continued legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.*
- f) *for a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from approved breeders.*

A table comparing the current and proposed advocacy position can be seen in Attachment A.

BACKGROUND

Stop Puppy Farming Legislation

- At its September 2018 meeting, State Council adopted a detailed position in relation to the Stop Puppy Farming Initiative (*Resolution 103.6/2018*).
- At its March 2020 meeting, State Council resolved that "WALGA write to the Minister and request that he withdraw the Stop Puppy Farming Bill and more appropriately consult with the sector, traditional custodians and the wider community, or failing that, that he remove any reference to Local Government in the bill as the sector does not endorse it in its current form" (*Resolution 13.1/2020*).
- At its September 2021, State Council adopted additional points to the advocacy position, supporting WALGA continuing to advocate that:
 - a. any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act be paid by the State Government; and
 - b. the Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and at minimum, be adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.
 (*Resolution 275.5/2021*)
- In December 2021, the *Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021* (the Act) was passed by Parliament. The Act amended both the *Dog Act 1976* and the *Cat Act 2011* in several ways.

- The implementation of the legislation is occurring in phases, with existing pet shops needing to transition to adoption centres by obtaining a 'pet shop approval' through their Local Governments by 26 May.
- It is anticipated that dog breeding approval provisions and mandatory sterilisation of dogs (unless an exemption is in place) will take effect later in 2025. In August 2024, the State Government awarded a contract to Seisma Group to establish PetsWA (the new centralised registration system for dogs and cats), which is anticipated to be operational later in 2025.

Fees and cost recovery

In a letter to WALGA dated 1 November 2021, Minister John Carey confirmed that “the State Government has committed to covering the costs associated with the establishment of the Centralised Registration System, to centrally record the registration of all domestic cats and dogs within Western Australia”. However, the State Government position relating to ongoing costs associated with the system and the particulars about revenue generated from registrations has not been made clear.

In early 2024, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) released a Consultation Paper prepared by consultants Marsden Jacob Associates on the new and existing fees and charges under the *Dog Act 1976* and *Cat Act 2011*. WALGA provided a submission in line with State Councils advocacy position as follows.

That WALGA:

1. *Welcomes a cost modelling review of the financial impact on Local Governments to ensure that Local Government is able to fully recover costs and not be disadvantaged in ensuring compliance of any new legislation to Stop Puppy Farming;*
2. *Supports a centralised dog registration system that is developed, operated and maintained by State Government;*
3. *Any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act be paid by the State Government; and*
4. *The Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed biennially and at minimum, be adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.*

Zone resolutions

Central Country Zone

At the Central Country Zone Meeting of 15 November 2024, the Zone considered an item which raised concerns that the administrative costs of the PetsWA central registration system would be withheld by the State Government from registration fees collected by Local Governments. As already noted, registration fees are already insufficient to cover the costs of Local Government cat and dog management responsibilities.

The Zone resolved:

That the Central Country Zone request WALGA to:

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

North Metropolitan Zone

At the North Metropolitan Zone Meeting of 20 November 2024, the Zone considered an item which raised concerns that the community would be able to lodge complaints through the PetsWA centralised registration system and that infringements would be issued through the system. As no integration with Local Government systems has been advised, this would create a duplicate workload for officers.

The Zone resolved:

That WALGA advocate to the State Government for the PetsWA Centralised Registration Database scope to be restricted to a centralised registration system (excluding complaints and infringements) that integrates with Local Government's existing corporate systems.

COMMENT

As the Act has progressed, the existing advocacy position should be reviewed to reflect the current state.

A comparison between the current and proposed advocacy position is provided in Attachment A, with key themes addressed below.

Cost Recovery

Under the *Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021*, Local Governments will have increased responsibilities, including approvals to breed and pet shop approvals, as well as associated investigation and enforcement functions. WALGA has continued to advocate to the State Government for fees and charges to be set at a level that achieves full cost recovery and that any additional costs incurred by a Local Government in administering the Dog Act be paid by the State Government. The proposed advocacy position retains these key positions.

The fees from registrations and animal related infringements do not currently cover all costs associated with Local Government responsibilities. There is a risk that the State Government could administer the PetsWA system in a way which reduces Local Government income from registrations.

WALGA's existing advocacy position supports PetsWA to be managed by the State (Advocacy Position 2.12.b). The proposed *Dog and Cat Management* Advocacy Position expands on the existing position to make it absolutely clear that there should be no loss of registration fee revenue to the Local Governments in administering the database.

Scope of PetsWA

The Act provides for a centralised registration system, known as PetsWA, to be managed by the State Government. DLGSC has been tasked with the implementation of the system. The contract to develop PetsWA was awarded on 2 August 2024 and is expected to launch in the second half of 2025. PetsWA is intended to replace the dog and cat registers managed by individual Local Governments with a single online system, used state-wide. PetsWA will allow dog and cat owners to register their pets and make payments online.

In addition to uncertainty about revenue from fees and charges under PetsWA, there is ambiguity about the scope of information recorded within PetsWA. DLGSC has noted that PetsWA could be used to manage public complaints, request ranger visits, manage dangerous dog notices, and issue infringements. This could increase administrative burden

on Local Government staff by duplicating data entry with existing record management systems, as there is no clarity on the extent of the integration with Local Government's existing systems.

To avoid this, PetsWA should be integrated with Local Government's existing systems and the scope should be restricted to its original function as a centralised registration system.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA replace Advocacy Position 2.12 *Puppy Farming* with a revised *Dog and Cat Management* advocacy position, as follows:

In regard to the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 and the PetsWA Centralised Database, the WA Local Government sector advocates:

- a) that fees reflect completed cost modelling to ensure that Local Governments achieve full cost recovery in ensuring compliance with the Dog Act 1976 or Cat Act 2011.*
- b) that Fees and Charges set in Regulations are reviewed bi-annually and, at minimum, adjusted by the Local Government Cost Index.*
- c) that the PetsWA centralised registration database is developed, operated and maintained by State Government, with no loss to Local Government registration fee revenue.*
- d) that the function of PetsWA be restricted to the registration of dogs and cats, exclude ancillary functions such as animal related complaints and infringement notices, and integrate with existing Local Government corporate systems.*
- e) for the continued legislative exemptions for livestock working dogs in recognition of their special breeding requirements.*
- f) for a State Government-led education initiative whereby the community is encouraged to purchase puppies from approved breeders.*

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Cunderdin**
Seconder **Shire of Bruce Rock**

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. NATIVE VEGETATION CLEARING REGULATIONS ADVOCACY POSITION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.3)

By Nicole Matthews, Executive Manager Policy and Ian Duncan, Executive Manager Infrastructure

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The effectiveness, cost and complexity of the regulatory system for native vegetation clearing has been a longstanding concern for Local Governments, particularly in relation to its impacts on the delivery of road and other infrastructure projects.
- WALGA has made numerous representations and submissions to the State Government on this issue.
- WALGA's current [advocacy positions](#) relating to the regulation of clearing of native vegetation were endorsed by State Council in 2004 (5.2.1) and 2006 (5.2.2).
- Numerous reviews and significant legislative and policy changes aimed at streamlining regulatory requirements have occurred since that time which has resulted in some improvement, however, problems persist.
- The updated Advocacy Position, seeks to respond to feedback and issues raised by the sector, calls the State Government to:
 - implement **legislative, policy and process changes**, including the imposition of statutory timeframes for assessments and appeals; increasing the duration of clearing permits; providing a permanent exemption to enable clearing in previously legally cleared transport corridors; and strengthening environmental data sharing requirements.
 - allocate **adequate resources** to implement an expedited process for road safety and state and federally funded or co-funded projects; a dedicated Local Government unit to process applications and support the sector; timely compliance and enforcement action; and implement a state-funded collection and provision of data.
 - undertake **bioregional planning** and implement **strategic solutions for environmental offsets** for Local Government.
 - **reduce duplication** between the State and Australian government regulatory systems.
- At their joint meeting on 24 March, the Environment and Infrastructure Policy Teams recommended that State Council endorse the Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations advocacy position.

ATTACHMENT

- [WALGA Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Issues Paper](#)
- [Road Safety Briefing Note](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This item is to replace existing Advocacy Positions 5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act and 5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves with a new *Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations* position.

The current [Advocacy Positions](#) are as follows:

5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act

Impact on Road Reserves Position Statement. The Local Government sector supports continued advocacy to minimise the impact on road reserves and in regards to

Regulations, processing times, access to vegetation data and a Code of Practice on maintenance activities.

5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves

The Local Government sector supports Schedule 2 of the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 as a permanent exemption for the maintenance of existing transport corridors and supports the continued advocacy for improvements to processing and timelines of the current clearing legislation.

The proposed Advocacy Position is as follows:

Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations

WALGA calls on the Western Australian Government, in consultation with Local Government, to undertake legislative and policy reform to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the regulatory system for clearing native vegetation in Western Australia, including:

- 1. Amending the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and associated regulations to remove unnecessary process, complexity and improve timeframes, including:*
 - a. introducing statutory timeframes for the determination of referrals, permit applications and appeals*
 - b. increasing the default duration of Area and Purpose Permits to 10 years*
 - c. provide a permanent exemption for clearing of previously legally cleared transport corridors*
 - d. strengthening environmental data sharing requirements to ensure proponents cannot opt-out of sharing data collected for environmental assessment and monitoring purposes.*
- 2. Ensuring the regulatory system is adequately resourced to:*
 - a. implement an expedited process for clearing permits for projects that prevent death and serious injury (road safety), and state and federally funded or co-funded projects*
 - b. establish a dedicated Local Government unit within the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to:*
 - i. case manage Local Government referrals and clearing permit applications*
 - ii. provide guidance and training for Local Governments, particularly in relation to roadside vegetation management*
 - iii. support partnerships with Local Governments in strategic environmental offsets*
 - c. enable timely investigation and enforcement action for illegal clearing*
 - d. increase investment in the collection and provision of statewide biodiversity data, including:*
 - i. funding and coordinating a state-wide biodiversity survey program to standardise habitat and vegetation mapping*
 - ii. making biodiversity data more discoverable, accessible and useable.*
- 3. Undertaking bioregional planning for native vegetation management, with a focus on highly cleared areas and implementing strategic solutions for environmental offsets that can be utilised by Local Government.*
- 4. Working with the Australian Government to reduce duplication between the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.*

BACKGROUND

Western Australia is one of the most biodiverse places on Earth and has significant regional endemism, meaning it has plants and animals that only live in a particular location (Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute). Eight of Australia's 15 declared biodiversity hotspots are in WA and the South West Ecoregion, (running from Shark Bay in the northwest to Esperance in south east with a narrow strip along the southeastern coast to the border between WA and SA) is one of only 34 internationally recognised Global Biodiversity Hotspots (and the only in Australia). A Global Biodiversity Hotspot is defined as a geographical region that has at least 1,500 vascular plant species and has lost at least 70 per cent of its original supporting habitat.

In Western Australia the clearing of native vegetation is primarily regulated under Part V Division 2 of the [Environmental Protection Act 1986](#) (EP Act) and [Environmental Protection \(Clearing of Native Vegetation\) Regulations 2004](#) (Regulations). Under section 51C of the EP Act clearing of native vegetation is an offence unless a permit has been granted, or an exemption applies.

The Regulations provide exemptions for routine land management practices, including for clearing done for maintenance in existing, previously legally cleared transport (road and rail) corridors, provided that the previous clearing occurred within the preceding 10 years (Regulation 5, Item 22). Schedule 2, cl. 2 of the Regulations specify the extent of maintenance clearing for an area or purpose:

Area or purpose	Extent of clearing
Crossover area	Clearing to the extent previously cleared for the area.
Lateral clearance area	Complete clearing to the width and height previously cleared for that stretch of road or railway.
Maintenance and protection of transport corridor infrastructure	Clearing to the extent necessary to – a) Maintain the efficacy and safety of the infrastructure; b) Protect the infrastructure (for example from fire); and c) Provide access to the infrastructure to maintain it.
An area that is a public roadside facility	Clearing to the extent necessary to maintain (but not extend) the intended use of the area.
Sight line area	Clearing to the extent previously cleared for that area.

Schedule 2, cl. 1 of the Regulations provides the following definitions:

- *crossover area* means the area occupied by a crossover from a road to a property adjacent to the road and any associated sight line areas;
- *lateral clearance area*, in relation to a stretch of road or railway, means the area (if any) parallel to and immediately adjacent to the stretch of road or railway that is ordinarily cleared;
- *public roadside facility* includes a camping area, rest area, information bay, road train assembly area or parking area or a footpath or cycle track in the road reserve;

- *transport corridor infrastructure*, in relation to a stretch of road or railway, includes barriers, signs, guideposts, drains, levies, embankments, gutters, bridges, overpasses and other similar structures or works.

While this exemption does not apply in an environmentally sensitive area, an area that would otherwise be an environmentally sensitive area is not an environmentally sensitive area to the extent it is in a maintenance area of transport corridor.

The Australian Government regulates clearing that is likely to impact a matter of National Environment Significance through the application of Parts 7 - 9 of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) and *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000*.

The effectiveness, cost, complexity and timeframes associated with the regulatory system for native vegetation clearing have been a longstanding concern for Local Governments, particularly in relation to impacts on the delivery of road projects, which make up approximately 60 per cent of Local Government clearing permit applications and 30 per cent of referrals (Dec 2021 – Oct 2024). WALGA has made numerous representations and submissions to the State Government on this issue.

WALGA has three [advocacy positions](#) related to native vegetation clearing regulation dating (2004, 2006, 2018). Numerous reviews and significant legislative and policy changes have occurred since that time, aimed at streamlining regulatory requirements, including the Western Australian Offset Policy (2011) and Guideline (2014), the Review of the Western Australian Offsets Framework (2019), the implementation of cost recovery for clearing permit applications (2019), the release of the [Native Vegetation Policy for Western Australia](#) in 2022, the [Independent \(Vogel-McFerran\) Review of WA Environmental Approvals Processes and Procedures](#) (2023) and amendments to the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* in 2020 and 2024.

As a result of these changes, the exemption for clearing in previously cleared transport corridors increased from 5 to 10 years, a referral process was introduced for low impact clearing and minor scheme amendments no longer require referral to the Environmental Protection Authority.

While these changes have resulted in some improvements, problems persist. This was recognised by the Vogel-McFerran Review, which found that “approvals processes have become overly complex, time-consuming, and costly – holding back economic development without any benefit to the environment”.

In 2024, to inform the development of an updated advocacy position on native vegetation clearing regulation, WALGA undertook research and analysis of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) and the Office of the Appeals Convenor data, previous submissions and Zone resolutions/feedback and held a sector webinar to inform the development of an [Issues Paper](#). The Paper was considered by the Environment Policy Team and included in the November 2024 Zone meeting Agendas for feedback.

The main themes from the consultations, Zones and issues paper feedback were:

- key challenges faced by the sector related to the complexity of the regulatory system, costs associated with the process and the time taken for assessment and appeals; and

- these challenges can delay critical road and infrastructure projects and impact Local Government's ability to attract and retain grant funding.

COMMENT

A consolidated, updated advocacy position will enable WALGA to comprehensively advocate for members to address the challenges of operating in a complex and costly regulatory environment, whilst balancing the protection of the environment.

The updated Advocacy Position calls on the State Government to:

- Implement **legislative, policy and process changes** including:
 - the imposition of statutory timeframes for assessments and appeals;
 - a permanent exemption for clearing in previously legally cleared transport corridors;
 - increasing the duration of clearing permits; and
 - strengthening environmental data sharing requirements.
- Allocate **adequate resources** to implement an expedited process for road safety and state and federally funded or co-funded projects; a dedicated Local Government unit to process applications and support the sector; timely compliance and enforcement action; and implement a state-funded collection and provision of data.
- Undertake **bioregional planning** and implement **strategic solutions for environmental offsets** for Local Government.
- **Reduce duplication** between the State and Australian government regulatory systems.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA replace the following Advocacy Positions:

5.2.1 Environmental Protection Act

5.2.2 Land Clearing in Road Reserves

with an updated Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations Advocacy Position as follows:

WALGA calls on the Western Australian Government, in consultation with Local Government, to undertake legislative and policy reform to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of the regulatory system for clearing native vegetation in Western Australia, including:

1. *Amending the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and associated regulations to remove unnecessary process, complexity and improve timeframes, including:*
 - a. *introducing statutory timeframes for the determination of referrals, permit applications and appeals*
 - b. *increasing the default duration of Area and Purpose Permits to 10 years*
 - c. *provide a permanent exemption for clearing of previously legally cleared transport corridors*
 - d. *strengthening environmental data sharing requirements to ensure proponents cannot opt-out of sharing data collected for environmental assessment and monitoring purposes.*
2. *Ensuring the regulatory system is adequately resourced to:*

- a. *implement an expedited process for clearing permits for projects that prevent death and serious injury (road safety), and state and federally funded or co-funded projects*
 - b. *establish a dedicated Local Government unit within the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to:*
 - i. *case manage Local Government referrals and clearing permit applications*
 - ii. *provide guidance and training for Local Governments, particularly in relation to roadside vegetation management*
 - iii. *support partnerships with Local Governments in strategic environmental offsets*
 - c. *enable timely investigation and enforcement action for illegal clearing*
 - d. *increase investment in the collection and provision of statewide biodiversity data, including:*
 - i. *funding and coordinating a state-wide biodiversity survey program to standardise habitat and vegetation mapping*
 - ii. *making biodiversity data more discoverable, accessible and useable.*
3. *Undertaking bioregional planning for native vegetation management, with a focus on highly cleared areas and implementing strategic solutions for environmental offsets that can be utilised by Local Government.*
 4. *Working with the Australian Government to reduce duplication between the Environmental Protection Act 1986 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.*

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Bruce Rock**
Seconder **Shire of Mukinbudin**

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. SUBMISSION ON THE STATE RECOVERY ARRANGEMENTS (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.4)

By Rachel Armstrong, Policy Manager Emergency Management

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) is consulting on revised State Recovery Arrangements via [Engage WA Emergency Management](#). Formal consultation closes Friday, 2 May.
- WALGA was granted an extension to enable the draft submission to be included as an Item for Decision in the 7 May State Council Agenda.
- The revised arrangements integrate lessons from past recoveries, current best practices, and clarify roles and responsibilities.
- There are no significant changes to Local Government roles and responsibilities under the *Emergency Management Act 2005* and State Emergency Management Framework.
- The Commonwealth - State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements - Western Australia (DRFA-WA) are not part of the State Emergency Management Framework and are outside the scope of the review.
- WALGA's draft submission was shared with Local Governments and the draft final version incorporates feedback.
- WALGA's submission is generally supportive of the revised State Recovery Arrangements, which provide improved clarity on roles and responsibilities in recovery, particularly for State Government, and clearer arrangements for transitioning from response to recovery and from recovery to business as usual.
- WALGA's submission highlights the need for State Government investment in streamlined, appropriate and effective funding mechanisms for recovery and resilience building, and the need to ensure adequate support to Local Governments.
- The People and Place Policy Team noted the draft submission at its 18 March meeting.

ATTACHMENT

- [Draft State Recovery Arrangements – WALGA submission](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's submission on the State Recovery Arrangements is aligned to the following [Advocacy Positions](#) :

8.1 Emergency Management Principles

- 1. The State Government bears fundamental responsibility for emergency management and has the role of providing strategic guidance, support and services for emergency management activities in Western Australia.*
- 2. The State Government should provide financial and resourcing support as necessary to enable Local Governments to adequately deliver their extensive emergency management roles and responsibilities under the State Emergency Management Framework.*
- 3. The Local Government Sector should be engaged as a partner in policy and legislative reviews that impact Local Government emergency management roles and responsibilities.*

8.2 State Emergency Management Framework

Local Governments are supported to undertake their emergency management responsibilities by a simple and streamlined State Emergency Management Framework with the primary objectives of:

- 1. Protecting people, the economy, and the natural environment from disasters;*
- 2. Supporting communities in preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies;*
- 3. Clearly outlining roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for Local Government and other emergency management stakeholders;*
- 4. Scalability and adaptability that supports Local Governments of varied capacity and capability; and*
- 5. Supporting agency interoperability through common systems and approaches to key activities including data management, communications, and hazard management.*

8.3 Sustainable Grant Funding Model for Emergency Management

Local Government should be empowered to discharge its emergency management responsibilities through sustainable grant funding models that support a shared responsibility and all hazards approach to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from natural disasters. A sustainable grant funding model for Local Government emergency management:

- 1. Empowers Local Governments to undertake proactive approaches to preparedness, prevention, response and recovery;*
- 2. Supports the resilience of local communities through capacity-building activities and programs;*
- 3. Is responsive to the variations in Local Government resourcing and context; and*
- 4. Develops the skills, capacity and capability of the emergency management workforce; and*
- 5. Is consistent, flexible, timely, accessible, scalable, strategic and the guidance provided is comprehensive.*

8.11 Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA)

- 1. The State Government should fund the implementation of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Improvement Plan endorsed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC).*
- 2. A reformed LEMA system should:*
 - a. Clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of Local Governments in emergency management;*
 - b. Simplify the reporting processes and reduce the administrative burden of maintaining compliance;*
 - c. Provide a suite of scalable tools and guidance materials that are accessible through an online knowledge hub;*
 - d. Build the emergency management capacity and capability of Local Governments through the provision of targeted training, exercising support, human resources and sustainable funding;*
 - e. Assist Local Governments to continue to deliver their core business activities and provide public information during an emergency event;*
 - f. Improve the connectivity of Local Governments' various risk management and hazard planning processes through an integrated approach; and*
 - g. Enable resource sharing and collaboration across the Local Government sector.*

5.4.3 Betterment (resilience)

The Local Government sector supports increased funding for the replacement or restoration of damaged assets to a more resilient standard following an event.

BACKGROUND

Since 2020, Western Australia has faced complex recovery challenges from events like Cyclone Seroja, Wooroloo bushfires, and Kimberley floods, necessitating greater State involvement. The review of State Recovery Arrangements aims to integrate lessons from past recoveries, update best practices, and clarify roles.

There are no changes to Local Government's responsibility to manage recovery following an emergency affecting the community in its district as set out in the *Emergency Management Act 2005* (s36b). There are no substantive changes to Local Government roles and responsibilities for recovery under the State Emergency Management Framework.

The proposed changes to the State Recovery Arrangements include:

- introducing four State Strategic Recovery Priorities which are informed by the National Principles for Disaster Recovery in the [Australian Disaster Recovery Framework](#).
- implementing a new four-tiered Model for State Involvement in Recovery where the State's involvement increases with the complexity of the recovery.
- clarifying roles and responsibilities for Local Government, Hazard Management Agencies, State agencies, and support organisations. The improved clarity in State roles in recovery should make it easier for Local Governments to access the support they need to coordinate community-led recovery.
- emphasising greater community engagement in recovery.
- reduced emphasis on an Impact Statement as a trigger for transitioning recovery coordination from the Hazard Management Agency (HMA) to Local or State Government and a new requirement for transition arrangements to be planned/agreed with Local Governments.
- clarifying the requirement for a planned transition from recovery arrangements to 'business-as-usual' service delivery for Local and State Government.

WALGA and Local Governments have been involved in preliminary consultations to support the development of the revised State Recovery Arrangements, including through the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC), WALGA's Local Government Emergency Management Advisory Group (LGEMAG) and Local Government Focus Groups.

COMMENT

WALGA requested and was granted an extension to enable the draft submission to be included as an Item for Decision in the 7 May State Council Agenda.

WALGA's draft submission incorporates feedback from preliminary consultation, WALGA's advocacy positions, and input from the sector via the Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMA) Review and the 2023 Local Government Emergency Management Survey. This feedback has consistently demonstrated support within the sector for shared responsibility for recovery, with the level and type of support required varying with the size, scale and complexity of the event and Local Government capacity.

Overall, the amended State Recovery Arrangements provide much improved clarity on how responsibility for recovery is to be shared and therefore a better foundation for recovery coordination.

The submission recommends:

1. The State Government should develop streamlined, appropriate and effective funding mechanisms to invest in Local Government recovery and resilience building.
2. Investment in recovery should not be limited by the eligibility requirements of the DRFA-WA and should meet the recovery requirements of Local Governments and Communities.
3. The DRFA-WA must be urgently reviewed to streamline administration, approvals and evidentiary requirements, address the cash-flow impacts of the reimbursement model and enable resilient reconstruction / betterment following a disaster.
4. The State Government should invest in effective risk assessment and risk reduction, in addition to ensuring to providing effective and fit for purpose State Recovery Arrangements.

State Strategic Recovery Priorities

5. WALGA supports the proposed four State Strategic Recovery Priorities: 1. Assist people to meet their recovery needs; 2. Enable community-centred recovery; 3. Restore community function and wellbeing; 4. Foster community disaster resilience.

Model for State Involvement in Recovery

6. WALGA supports the proposed 4-tier Model for State involvement in Recovery.
7. WALGA supports the roles assigned to Local Government under each recovery level (R1-4). The roles and responsibilities are aligned to current roles and responsibilities.
8. WALGA supports the roles assigned to State Government under each recovery level (R1-4), which provide improved clarity.

Roles and responsibilities

9. WALGA supports the roles and responsibilities allocated to Local Governments in the revised State Recovery arrangements, including section 6.3 of the revised State EM Policy, with minor amendments as outlined in Appendix 1. The roles and responsibilities in the revised arrangements are aligned to current roles and responsibilities.
10. WALGA recommends that the revised State Recovery Arrangements clearly reinforce the role of the State Recovery Coordinator to confirm individual Local Government's capacity to undertake their allocated roles and responsibilities during recovery and ensures additional support is provided as required.
11. WALGA supports the roles and responsibilities allocated to Hazard Management Agencies and Controlling Agencies in section 6.6 of the revised State EM Policy, which provide improved clarity.
12. WALGA supports the roles and responsibilities allocated to State agencies in section 6.7 and Appendix F of the revised State EM Policy, which provide improved clarity.
13. The revised State Recovery Arrangements should formalise coordination protocols between Local Governments and State agencies to enable rapid mobilisation of essential workers in disaster impacted communities.
14. The revised State Recovery Arrangements should consider inclusion of roles, responsibilities and coordination protocols for essential services, as coordinated restoration of essential services is fundamental to early recovery.
15. The revised State Recovery Arrangements should reinforce compliance with data sharing arrangements under 6.172 of the EM Act to ensure that State Agencies are sharing information effectively in recovery and include this as a specific function of the State Recovery Coordinator / Controller.

Greater emphasis on engaging community

16. WALGA supports the greater emphasis on engaging communities in planning recovery, and the flexibility in approach so that this can be adapted to meet Local Government and community needs and capacities.

Phases of Recovery

17. WALGA supports amendments to the State EM Plan to introduce three phases of recovery: 1) Recovery Planning. 2) Response and Early Recovery. 3) Recovery Operations.
18. Considering Phase 3) Recovery Operations:
 - a. The requirements for Local Governments to review and evaluate the Local Operational Recovery Plan should be scalable to the Local Government's capacity, and the recovery level and context and supported by simple and effective guidance.
 - b. All monitoring and evaluation requirements for DRFA-WA programs, if applicable, should be coordinated by the State Government.
19. Recovery Operations should be supported by pre-prepared State-level Urgent Recovery Programs and surge capacity for implementation.
20. Streamlined guidance should be provided for needs assessment, review and evaluation. The approach should be scalable to the Local Government's capacity, and the recovery level and context.

Public Information and Communication

21. WALGA supports nomination of DFES, instead of the State Emergency Public Information Coordinator to coordinate State-level recovery public information and communications. DFES should consult and coordinate with Local Governments on recovery communications.

Transition between response and recovery

22. WALGA supports the proposed requirements for a planned transition of recovery coordination by agreement between the Hazard Management Agency and Local Government for R1 and R2 recoveries.
23. WALGA supports the proposed requirements for a planned transition of recovery coordination between the Hazard Management Agency and State Government for R3 and R4 recoveries with a written transition plan.

Transition from recovery to 'business-as-usual' service arrangements

24. WALGA supports the proposed requirements for the State to plan the de-escalation of State recovery involvement and transition to 'business as usual' service arrangements. The requirements for a transition plan are clearly described and sufficient, however should be outlined in a written plan.

Requirement for an Impact Statement

25. WALGA supports the requirement that the HMA prepares an Impact Statement in all Level 2 and 3 incidents.

Local Operational Recovery Plans

26. WALGA supports the general requirement for a Local Operational Recovery Plan to be prepared for R2, R3 and R4 events.
27. The Local Recovery Guideline should be revised to provide better guidance to Local Governments on how to prepare a Local Operational Recovery Plan.

28. State Recovery support should be provided to prepare a Local Operational Recovery Plan, if requested by the Local Government.
29. WALGA Recommends renaming the Local Operational Recovery Plan to [Event] Recovery Action Plan.

Executive Government Forum

30. WALGA supports provisions to enable strategic oversight and direction for complex recovery issues via referral to an existing cross-government executive forum or a Director General/Chief Executive Officer-level forum.

The People and Place Policy Team noted the draft submission at their 18 March meeting.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the submission to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services on proposed revisions to the State Recovery Arrangements.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Yilgarn**
Seconder **Shire of Tammin**

That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.4 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

13.5. HEALTH (PUBLIC BUILDINGS) REGULATIONS CONSULTATION (STATE COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM 8.5)

By Coralie Claudio, Senior Policy Advisor, Planning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Department of Health (DoH) is seeking feedback on the [Consultation Paper 2025 Health \(Public Buildings\) Regulations 1992](#) (Consultation Paper), which examines whether the Regulations should be repealed without replacement.
- Repealing the Regulations is not supported by the sector, as it would impede Local Governments' ability to proactively manage and mitigate public health risks.
- Revised Regulations are supported to provide a contemporary, risk-based approach to public building management, eliminating unnecessary building construction requirements and incorporating modern compliance and enforcement tools.
- WALGA received an extension of time from DoH to allow the submission to be considered by State Council as part of the May Agenda.

ATTACHMENT

- [WALGA's submission on the Health \(Public Buildings\) Regulations Consultation](#)

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

WALGA's submission is consistent with the following [WALGA Advocacy Position](#)

6.6 Building Act and Regulations

Assessments of the effectiveness of building control systems across Australia have recognised that there is diminishing public confidence in the building and construction industry, and that change is required to ensure buildings are safe and perform to expected standards. Now more than ever, the focus is on Local Government building departments to deliver good governance, local leadership and sustainable services that meet the needs of their communities whilst supporting local jobs and economic growth. The Association has the following endorsed positions:

- 1. Support the retention of Local Government as the primary permit authority in Western Australia for decisions made under the Building Act 2011.*
- 2. Supports mandatory inspections for all classes of buildings; however, Local Government should not be solely responsible for all mandatory inspections.*
- 3. Advocate for the State Government to urgently prioritise legislative reform that addresses systemic failures in the current building control model and to provide clarification on the role of Local Government in building control to ensure building legislation supports the following objectives:*
 - a. Quality buildings that are cost efficient.*
 - b. Functional, safe and environmentally friendly buildings.*
 - c. Good decision making in all aspects of building.*
 - d. Efficiency and effectiveness in building management, administration and regulation.*
 - e. Openness and accountability with respect to all building matters.*
 - f. Recognition of the rights and responsibilities of all parties in building matters in an equitable manner.*
- 4. Existing and proposed building control related fees and charges to be cost recovery for Local Government.*
- 5. WALGA will work with members, state agencies and industry groups to develop training opportunities and to promote the Local Government building surveying*

profession to ensure sustainability of Local Government building control services.

6. *WALGA supports the Australian Building Codes Boards Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings by supporting Local Governments to meet community strategic objectives of a net zero carbon future by 2050 through work with members, state agencies and industry groups.*

BACKGROUND

The *Health (Public Buildings) Regulations 1992* (the Regulations) were established to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of people using public buildings in Western Australia. The current definition of a public building is broad, and captures most public areas where people gather for a pre-determined purpose, including for entertainment, sports and recreation, worship and educational purposes.

These Regulations set standards for the construction, maintenance, and operation of public buildings, covering aspects such as occupancy limits, emergency exits, evacuation plans, ventilation, lighting and sanitary facilities. Local Governments play a crucial role in enforcing the Regulations, specifically by conducting routine inspections to ensure ongoing compliance with health and safety standards.

In 2018, the DoH released a Discussion Paper *Managing public health risks in public buildings in Western Australia*, that sought feedback on two options: repealing the Regulations without replacement or providing new, updated Regulations under the *Public Health Act 2016*.

WALGA's submission at the time supported the latter option as Regulations would continue to allow for the assessment and maintenance of the operational safety of public buildings that would maintain patron safety and provide adequate control and enforcement tools for Local Government officers.

This was the position of DoH when the Consultation Summary Report was published in 2019. The report also noted that the Regulations shouldn't duplicate the construction requirements in building legislation and instead focus on the ongoing management of public health risks associated with the building. No updated Regulations were released.

In February, DoH released the Consultation Paper that re-examined if the Regulations should be repealed without replacement. The paper outlines relevant legislative and regulatory changes since 2019 and further examines the need for Regulations in addition to the WA building legislation and the National Construction Codes (NCC) that set safety standards and protocols for building construction.

COMMENT

WALGA does not support the repealing of the Regulations, as it would impede Local Governments' ability to undertake routine inspections, proactively managing and mitigating public health risks related to public buildings.

WALGA's submission acknowledges that the Regulations are outdated, and they should be reviewed and updated to ensure they are contemporary, fit for purpose and focus on the ongoing management of public buildings, rather than building construction requirements.

Health provisions, specifically the ongoing management of public buildings, are not appropriately placed within building legislation, and the building sector is not adequately trained or resourced to effectively manage ongoing public health risks.

Additionally, the general public health duty under the updated *Public Health Act 2016*, along with other legislation and inspections undertaken by government agencies, does not provide effective management and compliance mechanisms to address public building safety.

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA endorse the submission on Health (Public Buildings) Regulations Consultation to the Department of Health.

RESOLUTION

Mover **Shire of Mukinbudin**
Second **Shire of Merredin**

That the Zone support the WALGA recommendation for State Council Agenda item 8.5 as contained in the State Council Agenda and as provided above.

CARRIED

13.6. 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

Nil.

15. NEXT MEETING

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, 4 June commencing at 8:00am, via MSTeams.

The next Great Eastern Country Zone meeting will be held on Thursday, 12 June commencing at 9:30am. This meeting will be hosted by the Shire of Kellerberrin.

Depending on confirmation of speakers, it is provisionally anticipated that this meeting will partly have a focus on matters related to Renewable Energy.

The Chair raised the duration of guest speakers and the potential to limit agency speakers at future meetings to 10 minutes. The issue will be raised at the next Executive Committee meeting for possible adjustments to future Zone meetings.

16. CLOSURE

There being no further business, the Chair closed the meeting at 1:20pm.