



Avon Regional Organisation of Councils

AROC Governance Group Meeting

13 May 2024

Commencing at 11 am

AGENDA

Notice of Meeting.

To: AROC Members

The next AROC Governance Group (President's & CEO's) meeting will be held on the abovementioned date and commencement time, in Council Chambers at the Shire of Toodyay, 15 Fiennes St, Toodyay.

Tabitha Bateman

ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

AROC Secretariat

7 May 2024

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ATTACHMENTS with separate index follows item 5.

1. DECLARATION OF OPENING

The AROC in-person meeting will commence at 11.00 am.

1.1. Announcement of Visitors

1.2. Record of Attendance and Apologies

2. MINUTES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes

RECOMMENDATION

That the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils meeting held on 11 March 2024 be accepted as a true and correct record.

2.2 Review of Status Report

Review of actions and progress arising from previous meetings and decisions.

2.3 Inward / Outward Correspondence

2.3.1 Financial Report

RECOMMENDATION

That the financial report, as forwarded, be received.

3. OTHER BUSINESS / NEW BUSINESS OF AN URGENT NATURE

3.1 Submissions, presentations or representations from third parties;

3.2 Matters referred by the Officer's Group for consideration or decision;

3.2.1 AROC budget allocation 2024-2025.

The following information is provided to support AROC members to determine a budget for AROC initiatives in the 2024/25 financial year.

The annual membership fee is \$5,000 per annum, which currently covers the cost of employing an Executive Officer to support AROC's activities.

Existing commitments include:

- Executive Officer employment - \$25,000 per annum comprised of:
 - Wages & Superannuation - \$23,200 (400 hours)
 - Mobile phone - \$744 per annum
 - Administration (Zoom & DocuSign subscriptions) - \$409 per annum
 - Travel allowance - \$200 per annum
 - Training / events - \$447 per annum
- Corella Management Project - \$50,000 per annum for a three-year term (from 2023/24 to 2025/26), comprised of:
 - \$25,000 from AROC accumulated funds per annum, and

- \$5,000 from each member per annum.

AROC has paid \$25,000 for January-June 2024, and was advised by Wheatbelt NRM at the March Governance Group meeting that there would be no further invoices this financial year. Given that member contributions were not required this year, contributions already paid can be carried over to the next financial year.

New allocations to consider:

- Proposal to allocate funds (\$30,000-\$40,000) to develop an AROC Waste Management Strategy in 2025.

AROC supports collaboration in the planning and operation of waste management infrastructure and services, where mutual benefits can be obtained.

It is recommended that AROC develop a scope of works to develop a strategy to guide planning and investment in waste management infrastructure and services for the region.

The scope of works will be informed by the WA government's waste strategy which is due to be released in the first half of the year.

The Wheatbelt Waste & Environment Summit (30 & 31 May) will also provide opportunities to workshop local waste management issues and opportunities.

Following the preparation of an agreed scope of works and cost estimate, members may determine if the costs will be met using accumulated funds, or if an additional contribution by participating members is required.

- Proposal to develop an AROC logo (\$1,000)
AROC currently uses five Shire logos on all correspondence. To develop AROC's identity as a collaboration of member local governments, it is recommended that AROC members approve the design and adoption of a logo which represents the Avon region and AROC's collaboration.

A logo will assist in building recognition of AROC. Examples of other ROC logos, for NEWROC and WEROC, are provided below.



North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils
Dowerin | Koorda | Mt Marshall | Mukinbudin | Nungarin | Trayning | Wyalkatchem



Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils Inc.

In summary, the proposed budget allocation for 2024/25 is:

Committed	2024/25	2025/26
Executive Officer Role	\$25,000	\$25,000
Corella Management Project*	\$50,000	\$50,000
Proposed		
Waste Management Strategy	\$40,000	
Logo design	\$1,000	
Total	\$116,000	\$75,000

*comprised of \$25,000 accumulated funds and \$25,000 in additional member contributions each year.

The expenditure of accumulated funds will be offset by member annual contributions (\$25,000) and Corella Project contributions (\$25,000) in that year.

Recommendation – That AROC approves the budget allocation as provided.

3.3 Matters raised by individual member local governments for consideration;

3.3.1 Advocacy for improved energy and communications infrastructure in the regions.

See attached Farm Weekly article, ‘Regional councils add up outage costs’.

The Wheatbelt Business Network (WBN) is working with NEWROC and WEROC on advocacy regarding the impact of regular power and telecommunications outages. Wheatbelt Business Network CEO, Rik Soderland, was unable to attend this AROC Governance Group meeting to provide further advice about advocacy efforts. However, he said, it was a key topic at the recent Wheatbelt Futures Forum held at the Northam Town Hall at which both Horizon Power and Telstra representatives were speaking. WBN are in regular contact with the State Government as well as Telstra and Horizon Power.

4. CONFIRMATION OF NEXT MEETING

The proposed 2024 meeting schedule is:

2024	Officer's Group (CEO) Meetings	Governance Group (President's) Meetings
	11.00am	11.00am
	Zoom Meetings	Council Chambers
JAN	No meeting	No meeting
FEB	19/02/2024	
MAR		11/03/2024
APR	15/04/2024	
MAY		13/05/2024
JUNE	10/06/2024	
JULY		22/07/2024
AUG	12/08/2024	
SEPT		9/09/2024
OCT	14/10/2024	
NOV		18/11/2024
DEC	No meeting	No meeting

5. CLOSURE OF MEETING



AROC Governance Group Meeting

Attachments to Agenda – Monday 13 May 2024

Minutes and additional information

- 2.1 Minutes of the Governance Group meeting held on 11 March 2024
- 2.2 Status report
- 2.3 Inward / outward correspondence
 - 2.3.1 Financial report to 30 April 2024

Other business / new business of an urgent nature

- 3.3.1 Advocacy for improved energy and communications infrastructure in the regions – see Farm Weekly article 21 March 2024 ‘Regional councils add up outage costs’.



Avon Regional Organisation of Councils

AROC Governance Group Meeting

11 March 2024

Commencing at 11 am

MINUTES

To: AROC Members

Here within are the minutes of the AROC Governance Group (President's & CEO's) meeting held on the abovementioned date and commencement time, in Council Chambers at the Shire of Toodyay, 15 Fiennes St, Toodyay.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tabitha Bateman'.

Tabitha Bateman

ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
AROC Secretariat

12 March 2024

Preface

These Minutes will remain "Unconfirmed" until the next AROC Meeting, where the Minutes will be tabled and confirmed subject to any amendments.

The "Confirmed" Minutes are then signed off by the Chairperson.

Attachments that formed part of the Agenda, in addition to those tabled at the Meeting are incorporated into a separate attachment to these Minutes

Distribution

These minutes were approved for distribution on 12 March 2024.



Tabitha Bateman
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Confirmation

These minutes of meeting were confirmed at a meeting held on

..... 2024.

Signed:

Note: The Presiding Member at the meeting at which the minutes were confirmed is the person who signs above.

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ATTACHMENTS with separate index follows item 5.

1. DECLARATION OF OPENING

The AROC in-person meeting commenced at 11.04 am.

1.1. Announcement of Visitors

Ms Jacque Lucas, Corella Management Project Coordinator, Wheatbelt NRM
Ms Felicity Gilbert, Program Manager - Sustainable Agriculture, WNRM
Ms Conor McGill, Senior Policy Advisor, Waste Management, WALGA

1.2. Record of Attendance and Apologies

Cr M McKeown	Shire of Toodyay
Ms T Bateman	A/CEO, Shire of Toodyay
Cr P Bantock	Shire of Victoria Plains
Mr S Fletcher	CEO, Shire of Victoria Plains
Ms D Terelinck	CEO, Shire of Northam
Cr A Mencshelyi	Shire of Northam
Mr P Bentley	CEO, Shire of Goomalling
Cr J Chester	Shire of Goomalling
Cr K Trent	Shire of York
Ms A Behan	A/CEO Shire of York
Cr D Smythe	Shire of York (observer)
Mrs K Murray	Executive Officer, AROC

Apologies

Cr S Dival	Shire of Toodyay
Mr C Linnell	CEO, Shire of York
Cr C Antonio	Shire of Northam

2. MINUTES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes

RECOMMENDATION/AROC RES. NO.01/03/24

MOVED Cr Trent SECONDED Cr Bantock

That the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils meeting held on 13 November 2023 be accepted as a true and correct record.

MOTION CARRIED

2.2 Review of Status Report

Review of actions and progress arising from previous meetings and decisions.

Points raised as follows:

Climate Change Initiatives

EO noted a suggestion from the Officer's group that further action on the adoption of a climate change declaration/policy be put on hold until members have the resourcing capacity to further this initiative.

Corella Management

To be discussed under 3.1.1.

Water sustainability

No recent action.

Road clearing permits

To be discussed under 3.1.2.

Housing shortage

EO – Stakeholder engagement is underway, the business survey closed on 23 February 2024.

SF – Survey results indicated ~68% of businesses reported a need for an additional 2-5 employees; engagement with State government agencies is underway to determine employee housing demand.

Regional Collaboration on Waste

EO – reported that WALGA State Council determined not to amend its advocacy position on waste management, following a motion from the Avon-Midland Zone meeting to advocate for a metropolitan waste levy to fund investment in alternative waste management locations and technologies in regional areas. The Secretariat comment indicated WALGA’s current advocacy policy, and 2024/25 budget submission supports the need for investment in regional waste management planning and infrastructure.

2.3 Inward / Outward Correspondence

2.3.1 Financial Report

RECOMMENDATION/AROC RES. NO.02/03/24

MOVED Cr Mencshelyi **SECONDED** Cr Bantock

That the financial report, as forwarded, be received.

MOTION CARRIED

3. OTHER BUSINESS / NEW BUSINESS OF AN URGENT NATURE

3.1 Submissions, presentations or representations from third parties;

3.1.1 Corella project coordinator update (Jaquie Lucas & Felicity Gilbert)

- Felicity – Acknowledged reported frustrations with a perceived lack of action in the Corella project; and said the development of documentation required to meet partner expectations of CBH has been time intensive.
- Jaquie – Referred to the project documentation distribution by email to members and requested feedback by the end of March.
- J - Investigating approval process and operating procedures to enable use of anaesthetising agent alpha chloralose (works by stunning corellas making them drop to the ground to be collected and destroyed in a humane way). Permit process is onerous, and a permit is required for every site. Toodyay and Merredin could be trial sites for alpha chloralose.
- J - CBH is trialling use of drones at six sites to move on corellas, awaiting trial results; disadvantages – expensive technology, which is manually operated, requires a permit.
- J – Shooting method has been most used as a control strategy as it doesn't require a permit but is often unpopular with communities; adjustments to infrastructure is also a strategy but often expensive.
- J – Sent an email to CEOs requesting evidence of economic impacts of corella management; essential information to demonstrate the costs and justify investment in action.
- J – Technical advisory group is being formed, will meet 3-4 times per year.
- J – Survey completion rate has been high, 204 completed in the past three months; will remain open until November with social media push posts each month; results indicate that corellas are more of an issue in the summer months; social media discussion on culling as an action has generated lively debate; 120 individuals have completed a survey and agreed to complete it again in three years.

Discussion points:

- Budget allocation – AROC \$50,000 p.a./3 years (including \$5,000 p.a. each member contribution); CBH \$50,000 p.a.; AROC has paid \$25,000 for two quarters Jan-June 2024 (not from October 2023 as originally requested). Felicity advised there would be no further invoices for the 2023/24 financial year.
- Cr McKeown – Asked how long it may take to secure a permit for use of alpha chloralose? It is difficult to coordinate action without an indication of timeline for securing a permit.
- J – Unsure how long the permit process will take. Intention is for WNRN to apply for permits on behalf of project partners.

- PB – Reported that shooting is not an option in Goomalling as sites are too close to town; use of a gas gun is the only current strategy in use, which is not very effective.
- TB – Noted concerns about the resourcing/costs associated with collecting and culling corellas after the use of alpha chloralose.
- SF – Shooting is used in Victoria Plains with no push back from the community.
- Cr Trent – Shooting not an option in York as the potential for dead birds to be found around town is not acceptable to community or visitors.
- DT – Shooting is not occurring in Northam and is unlikely to be utilised. What is the end game? Action is needed.

ACTION – *Jacquie to forward corella survey results and advise what information is required to obtain a permit for the use of alpha chloralose.*

3.1.2 Native vegetation advocacy update (Conor McGill)

WALGA has undertaken an analysis of Native Vegetation Clearing appeals from 2021 to present day, using information from the Office of the Appeals Convenor and Department of Water and Environmental Regulation.

Key points from the analysis include:

- 160 DWER decisions on clearing permits were appealed in the timeframe.
- Of the 160, 35 appeals list Local Government as a proponent.
- Local Government Clearing Permits were most often sought for road construction or upgrades.
- The maximum decision duration was 553 days (Shire of Victoria Plains)
- The average duration decision for LG proponent appeals was 138 days.

Results of the analysis will be used to inform a Discussion Paper to inform WALGA's advocacy for a strategic approach to clearing permits, a collective approach for offsets and reducing resource burden on Local Governments.

Discussion points:

- AB – Advised that York has experience of timeframes for permit approvals which have taken longer than two years to be granted, prior to any appeal being launched. It's important that WALGA provides data that includes the timeframes for permit applications from the point of submission, not just those that have been appealed.
- AB – Agreed to provide case study examples to inform the development of WALGA's discussion paper.
- DT – Encouraged WALGA's environment team to reach out to the infrastructure team to support understanding of impacts on LG road infrastructure projects.

3.1.3 Waste and environment summit (Conor McGill)

Conor advised that a Wheatbelt Waste and Environment Summit will be held in Northam on 30 & 31 May 2024. This event will bring together Local Government, State Government, business, and the community to build relationships and share knowledge, to improve service delivery, social opportunities, and environmental outcomes for local communities.

There will be a focus on biodiversity, biosecurity, and waste management. Participants will have the opportunity to workshop local waste management issues, and opportunities, with their colleagues from the region. A draft program is underway and WALGA is seeking suggestions on speakers and tour options.

Discussion points:

- KM – Asked if the WA Government's waste strategy will be available by then?
- Conor - Indicated that the strategy is due to be released in the first half of this year, as is advice regarding the proposed roll out of a waste levy to regional areas.

3.2 Matters referred by the Officer's Group for consideration or decision;

3.3 Matters raised by individual member local governments for consideration;

3.3.1 Tourism cooperation in the Avon Arc

- Cr Trent reiterated the value of cooperation to encourage tourism in the Avon area.
- AB – Acknowledged past and ongoing collaborations with AROC Shires in tourism strategy and marketing campaigns e.g., Destination Perth. Collaboration with other members is currently being formalised through an MOU.
- Cr Bantock – Victoria Plains did not participate in the past because of the use of the term Avon to define the area, which excludes a significant part of the Shire. If current/future efforts are AROC focussed, then Victoria Plains may be interested in collaborating.

Electric vehicle charging facilities

- DT – Northam will have two fast and one slow charging station at the Visitor Centre.
- Cr McKeown – Toodyay has an electric vehicle charging station.
- SF – Victoria Plains has applied for funding for electric vehicle charging facility.

Accommodation

- Cr Trent – York has an adequate supply of accommodation.
- DT – Northam has an insufficient supply of accommodation; some recent issues with Hipcamp operations/approvals.

- SF – Victoria Plains mostly attracts tourists via Bolgart; has Boshack Farm accommodation, Mogumber Hub, Space Station opening to tourists and is exploring opportunities at New Norcia.
- Cr McKeown – Toodyay has two good caravan parks, two pubs and other establishments that offer accommodation.

Action – AB to share collaborative tourism strategy/MOU.

3.3.2 Resource Sharing

What capacity is there to share staff resources e.g., Town Planners, Environmental Officers? How can resources be shared to support road works programs?

PB – Officer's regularly discuss the potential for resource sharing and have some success in doing so. However, it's not feasible to share resources for road works programs as most Shire's require the resources at the same time.

SF – Victoria Plains and Toodyay are recruiting for a shared Environment Officer, exploring potential for a shared Communications/Marketing role, and Economic Development.

AB – York has the university; strategy is to train locals for jobs which are in demand in the regions; opportunities exist for student placements in the region.

4. CONFIRMATION OF NEXT MEETING

The proposed 2024 meeting schedule is:

2024	Officer's Group (CEO) Meetings	Governance Group (President's) Meetings
	11.00am	11.00am
	Zoom Meetings	Council Chambers
JAN	No meeting	No meeting
FEB	19/02/2024	
MAR		11/03/2024
APR	15/04/2024	
MAY		13/05/2024
JUNE	10/06/2024	

MINUTES – AROC GOVERNANCE GROUP
AVON REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS
11 MARCH 2024

JULY		22/07/2024
AUG	12/08/2024	
SEPT		9/09/2024
OCT	14/10/2024	
NOV		18/11/2024
DEC	No meeting	No meeting

5. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 12.59 pm.



AROC Governance Group Meeting

Attachments to Minutes – Monday 11 March 2024

Minutes and additional information

- 2.2 Status report
- 2.3 Inward / outward correspondence
 - 2.3.1 Financial report to 31 January 2024

Other business / new business of an urgent nature

- 3.1.2 Native vegetation advocacy update presentation slides (Conor McGill)

AROC STATUS REPORT
Avon Regional Organisation of Councils

Secretariat
CEO - Shire of Toodyay

Purpose	Meeting Date	Resolution	Target date for completion	Actioned by	Completion Date	Meeting Commentary
2.1 Confirmation of Minutes	13/11/2023	That the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils Governance Group meeting held on 13 November 2023 be accepted as a true and correct record.	March 2024	EO	11 March 2024	13.2.24: Minutes to be confirmed and signed at the March 2024 Governance Group meeting.
Climate Change Initiative	12/07/2021	AROC CEOs to work together to identify a project we could apply for funding on a regional level.	Ongoing	ALL	November 2023	11.3.24: EO noted a suggestion from the Officer's group that further action on the adoption of a climate change declaration/policy be put on hold until members have the resourcing capacity to further this initiative.
Corella Management	13/03/2023	AROC RES. NO.02/03/23: That AROC members individually commit \$5,000 per annum in 2023, 2024 and 2025, and commit \$25,000 pa from AROC funds for three years, towards corella management activities.	2025	ALL	2025	11.3.24: To be discussed under 3.1.1. Jacquie Lucas and Felicity Gilbert in attendance to address the Governance Group.
Water sustainability	10/05/2021	Avon River health & access to funding.		Northam, York & Toodyay		11.3.24: No recent action.

Purpose	Meeting Date	Resolution	Target date for completion	Actioned by	Completion Date	Meeting Commentary
Road clearing permits and pre-funding for road projects.	08/05/2023	That AROC submit a motion to the WALGA Avon Zone meeting to advocate for specific changes to the native vegetation clearing permit system.	23/06/2023	EO	Ongoing	11.3.24: To be discussed under 3.1.2. Conor McGill (WALGA) to provide an update on the progress of advocacy on changes to the permit system.
Housing shortage	16/05/2022	AROC to advocate to relevant Ministers and Shadow Ministers (Housing & Local Government) to address a critical shortage of housing in the Avon Region.	Ongoing	EO	May 2024	11.3.24: Stakeholder engagement processes is underway; the business survey closed 23 February and the public sector stakeholder questionnaires is also underway.
Regional Collaboration on Waste	13/11/2023	That AROC submit a motion to the WALGA Avon Zone meeting to advocate for a metropolitan waste levy to fund investment in alternative waste management locations and technologies in regional areas.	2024	EO	Ongoing	11.3.24: EO – reported that WALGA State Council determined not to amend its advocacy position on waste management, following a motion from the Avon-Midland Zone meeting to advocate for a metropolitan waste levy to fund investment in alternative waste management locations and technologies in regional areas. The Secretariat comment indicated WALGA's current advocacy policy, and 2024/25 budget submission supports the need for investment in regional waste management planning and infrastructure.

AVON REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS

Statement of Comprehensive Income

Administered by Shire of Northam

WALGA Update to AROC

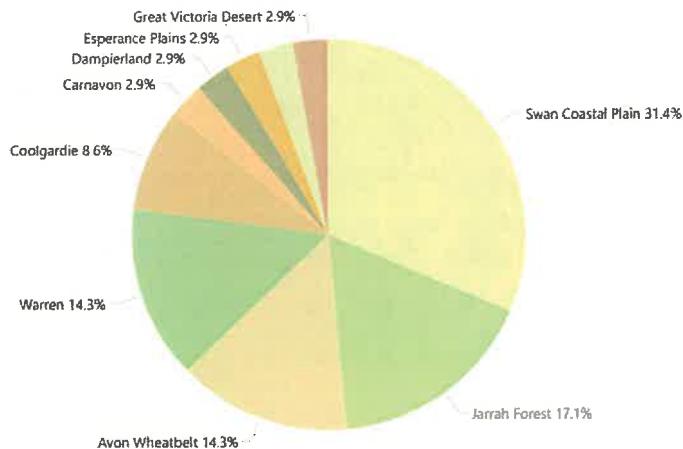
March 2024

Native Vegetation Clearing

- WALGA has undertaken an analysis of Native Vegetation Clearing appeals from 2021 to present day, using information from the Office of the Appeals Convenor and Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
- Key points from the analysis include:
 - 160 DWER decisions on clearing permits were appealed in the timeframe
 - Of the 160, 35 appeals list Local Government as a proponent
 - Local Government Clearing Permits were most often sought for road construction or upgrades
 - The maximum decision duration was 553 days (Shire of Victoria Plains)
 - The average duration decision for LG proponent appeals was 138 days
- The results of the analysis will be used to inform a Discussion Paper to support WALGA's advocacy towards a strategic approach for assessing clearing permits, a collective approach for offsets and reducing resource burden on Local Governments

Avon-Wheatbelt appeals

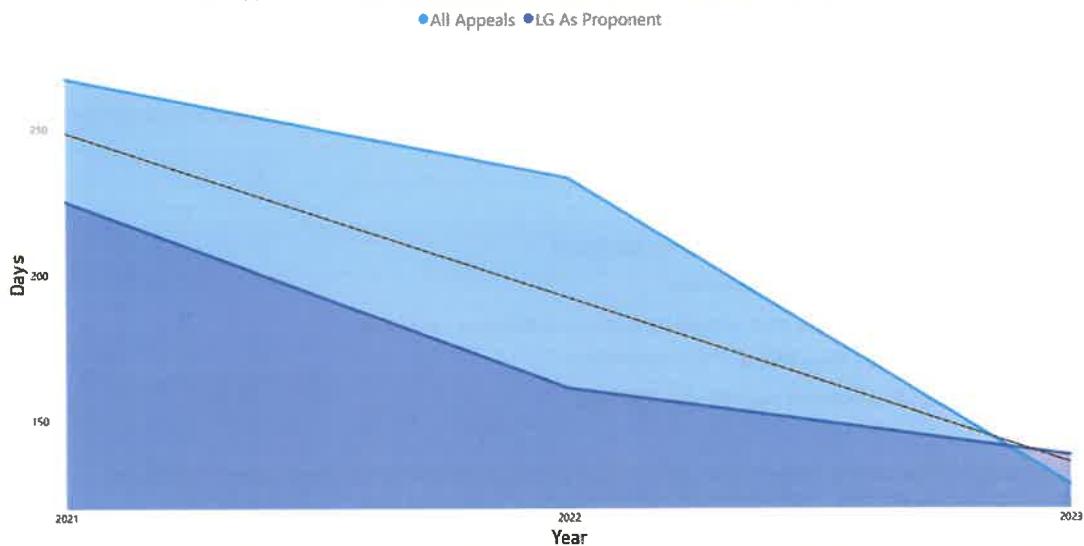
LG Proponent Appeals by Bioregion
Office of the Appeals Convenor WA 2021-2023



- Four appeals on permits for AROC councils from 2021 – 2024
- Average decision time for the appeals was 273 days, with the highest being 553 days for the Shire of Victoria Plains



All Appeals and Local Government As Proponent Average Duration By Year



The average time between the Appeals Convenor receiving an appeal where a Local Government is a proponent and making a decision decreased by 39% between 2021 and 2023 from 225 days to 138 days. *

*Note: 46 of the total 160 appeals are still under appeal with a decision listed as 'Not yet determined' and are not included in the calculation of decision time.





Wheatbelt Waste and Environment Summit

- The sixth Regional Waste and Environment Summit will be held in Northam from May 30-31 2024
- This event will bring together Local Government, State Government, business and the community to build relationships and share knowledge, to improve service delivery, social opportunities and environmental outcomes for local communities.
- Focus on Biodiversity, Biosecurity and Waste Management
- Participants will have the opportunity to workshop local waste management issues, and opportunities, with their colleagues from the region
- Draft program is underway and WALGA is seeking suggestions on speakers and tour options



AROC STATUS REPORT
Avon Regional Organisation of Councils

Secretariat
CEO - Shire of Toodyay

Purpose	Meeting Date	Resolution	Target date for completion	Actioned by	Completion Date	Meeting Commentary
2.1 Confirmation of Minutes	13/11/2023	That the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils Governance Group meeting held on 11 March 2024 be accepted as a true and correct record.	March 2024	EO	May 2024	3.5.24: Minutes to be confirmed and signed at the May 2024 Governance Group meeting.
Climate Change Initiative	12/07/2021	AROC CEOs to work together to identify a project we could apply for funding on a regional level.	Ongoing	ALL	November 2023	3.5.24: On hold.
Corella Management	13/03/2023	AROC RES. NO.02/03/23: That AROC members individually commit \$5,000 per annum in 2023, 2024 and 2025, and commit \$25,000 pa from AROC funds for three years, towards corella management activities.	2025	ALL	2025	3.5.24: Wheatbelt NRM will host a Corella Stakeholder meeting on 15 May.
Water sustainability	10/05/2021	Avon River health & access to funding.		Northam, York & Toodyay		3.5.24: No recent action.

Purpose	Meeting Date	Resolution	Target date for completion	Actioned by	Completion Date	Meeting Commentary
Road clearing permits and pre-funding for road projects.	08/05/2023	That AROC submit a motion to the WALGA Avon Zone meeting to advocate for specific changes to the native vegetation clearing permit system.	23/06/2023	EO	Ongoing	3.5.24: WALGA to continue advocacy on changes to the permit system. No further update.
Housing shortage	16/05/2022	AROC to advocate to relevant Ministers and Shadow Ministers (Housing & Local Government) to address a critical shortage of housing in the Avon Region.	Ongoing	EO	May 2024	3.5.24: A draft AROC-Dandaragan Workforce Housing Study report will be available in May. A joint application has been submitted to the federal Housing Support Program stream 1 to fund planning works for a housing project in each of the six LG partners. Stream 2 (infrastructure) funding opens for applications in May 2024.
Regional Collaboration on Waste	13/11/2023	That AROC submit a motion to the WALGA Avon Zone meeting to advocate for a metropolitan waste levy to fund investment in alternative waste management locations and technologies in regional areas.	2024	EO	Ongoing	3.5.24: Awaiting Wheatbelt Waste & Environment Summit on 30 & 31 May; and release of WA government waste strategy, to guide scope of works for AROC Waste Management Strategy.

AVON REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS

Statement of Comprehensive Income

Administered by Shire of Northam

Regional councils add up outage costs



The NEWROC team has been advocating for better power and telecommunications infrastructure for several years, but now it has a report which can quantify what a week-long power outage does to small towns.

By PERRI POLSON

THE North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils (NEWROC) has finalised an economic analysis of the damage caused by a six-day power outage in the Wheatbelt in January.

Economic consulting company, Econisis, estimated there were at least \$11.1 million in financial losses over the seven NEWROC councils (Koorda, Mount Marshall, Mukinbudin, Nungarin, Trayning, Wyalkatchem and Dowerin) during the power outage starting on January 19.

At least \$800,000 of this was lost due to an internet outage which lasted three days.

This figure is the sum of commercial business losses, as well as private and residential losses, however does not include onfarm losses.

It also doesn't include social and community losses, which is difficult to quantify.

The report highlights that \$240 in compensation was given to each affected household, however there was no compensation for businesses.

NEWROC executive officer Caroline Robinson said the figure leaned on the conservative side.

She said the seven councils have listed power and telecommunications as a priority for several years.

Ms Robinson said NEWROC had previously put up two market-led applications to the State government with potential solutions to townsit power, including a microgrid, and a community battery, which were knocked back.

"We commissioned an economic impact report because we felt like we needed the hard data to help us in our discussions with

government and private industry," Ms Robinson said.

"Our argument is that power is a fundamental piece of infrastructure that we need for regional development.

"We have to start arguing it from an economic point of view."

With this data, NEWROC is looking to present the findings to WA Energy Minister Reece Whitby, Regional Development Minister Don Punch, Western Power and former government minister Alannah MacTiernan, who is now the chairwoman of the Federal government's 2024 Regional Telecommunications review.

"We're trying to overcome those barriers to investment and demonstrate our importance," Ms Robinson said.

The report said NEWROC councils produced a total economic output of \$605m last year, agriculture accounting for the largest part of this.

NEWROC councils are on the edge of the South West Interconnected System, better known as SWIS, which is an electricity grid between Kalbarri and Kalgoorlie, managed by Horizon Power.

Ms Robinson said this infrastructure was ageing and outdated.

"You've got long powerlines trying to push a lot of energy, and it's really fragile," she said.

"We need a different solution because you have one break along that line and everyone else after it goes out."

"We need to find a tailored solution."

"We want to work with the government on some solutions but we just cannot get through their criteria," Ms Robinson said.



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