



Avon Regional Organisation of Councils

AROC Governance Group Meeting

1 September 2025

Commencing at 11 am

MINUTES

To: AROC Members

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

Aaron Bowman

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

AROC Secretariat

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

5/9/ 2025.




Aaron Bowman
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Confirmation

These minutes of meeting were confirmed at a meeting held on

17 NOV 2025.

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 11.07 am.

1.1. Announcement of Visitors

Mr Scott Wildgoose	CEO, Shire of Gingin
Cr Linday Balcombe	Shire President, Shire of Gingin
Ms Melinda Prinsloo	CEO, Shire of Chittering
Cr Mary Angus	Deputy Shire President, Shire of Chittering

1.2. Record of Attendance and Apologies

Cr M McKeown	Shire President, Shire of Toodyay
Mr A Bowman	CEO, Shire of Toodyay
Cr P Bantock	Shire President, Shire of Victoria Plains
Cr K Trent	Shire President, Shire of York
Mr C Linnell	CEO, Shire of York
Cr C Antonio	Shire President, Shire of Northam
Ms D Terelinck	CEO, Shire of Northam
Mrs K Murray	Executive Officer, AROC

Apologies

Mr S Fletcher	CEO, Shire of Victoria Plains
Cr J Chester	Shire President, Shire of Goomalling
Mr S Bryce	CEO, Shire of Goomalling
Josh Pomykala	Director Regional Development Australia, Wheatbelt

2. MINUTES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 Confirmation of Minutes

RECOMMENDATION/AROC RES. NO.01/09/2025

MOVED Cr Trent **SECONDED** Cr Antonio

That the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils meeting held on 7 July 2025 be accepted as a true and correct record.

MOTION CARRIED

2.2 Review of Status Report

See attached status report for an update on actions and progress arising from previous meetings and decisions.

2.3 Inward / Outward Correspondence

In – Shire of Chittering to re-join AROC

2.3.1 Financial Report

RECOMMENDATION/AROC RES. NO.02/09/2025

MOVED Cr Antonio

SECONDED Cr Bantock

That the financial report to 31 July 2025 is received.

MOTION CARRIED

3. OTHER BUSINESS / NEW BUSINESS OF AN URGENT NATURE

3.1 Submissions, presentations or representations from third parties;

3.1.1 Regional Development Australia - Wheatbelt

Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development. See attachments for report.

3.1.2 Wheatbelt Development Commission

No update.

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

3.2.1 Accept membership of the Shire of Chittering

Correspondence from the Shire of Chittering received 22 July 2025 advised that Council has resolved to join AROC, and *'looks forward to actively contributing to AROCs collaborative advocacy and regional development initiatives'*.

The AROC MOU states that:

"Any new member will be required to buy in to the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils;

The buy in figure will be determined by preparing a balance sheet for AROC and dividing the net equity position by the number of Members".

The most recent financial statement has a balance of \$142,551 as at 31 July 2025. After payment of outstanding expenses, the estimated balance at 31 August 2025 will be ~ \$124,558. A buy in figure based on the net equity position divided by the number of members is likely to be $\$124,551 / 5 = \$24,910$.

The proposed buy in figure will enable the Shire of Chittering to benefit from the AROC's current commitments, including:

- Learnings from the Corella Management Project
- Inclusion in the Waste Facilities and Resource Recovery Plan
- Inclusion in AROC brand development

- Developing advocacy approach with federal and state government

RECOMMENDATION

That AROC determines a buy-in figure for the Shire of Chittering to become a member of AROC.

Discussion: members expressed that:

- The proposed buy-in figure was too high and could be a disincentive for new members.
- The calculation model is flawed as it incentivises new members to join when AROC has less equity.
- There needs to be a way to preserve the equity contributed by the five current members over time e.g. a project contribution by new members for any joint project funded from AROC's accumulated funds;.
- Chittering advised that Council approved membership based on a \$5,000 per annum membership fee and that any additional buy-in figure would need Council approval.
- The terms of the current MOU need to be reviewed, that is:
 - Replace a buy in figure for new members with an annual membership contribution plus a commitment to project contributions where projects are funded using AROC's accumulated funds.
 - Remove the financial payout for departing members.
- All members should have the option to opt out of a project that is deemed not to benefit that member.
- The current equity is a result of minimal expenditure over a long period of time and pre-dates the employment of an Executive Officer. Current annual members contributions (\$5,000 pa) cover the costs of employing an Executive Officer only.

RECOMMENDATION/AROC RES. NO.03/09/2025

MOVED Cr Bantock **SECONDED** Cr Trent

That:

1. AROC accepts the Shire of Chittering as a member of AROC.
2. The AROC MOU be referred to the Officers Group to determine recommended changes to the terms and fees associated with members joining and departing AROC, to provide equity for current and future members.

MOTION CARRIED

3.2.2 Advocacy

Thursday 18 September session

With Trish Cook MP, Dr Chris Rodwell, Transition Advocate and Assistant Minister for Climate Change & Energy, Assistant Minister for Emergency Management, Josh Wilson MP.

It is recommended that members determine Shire and collective priorities to raise with speakers and how best to communicate these points.

Cr Antonio – Focus discussion with Dr Rodwell on what the transition package provides for our communities.

It was suggested that the Shire of Victoria Plains take the lead on energy discussions with the Assistant Minister, Josh Wilson MP.

D Terelinck – Opportunity to push for better access to disaster relief funding, including expansion of purpose to enable prevention works.

C Linnell – Would like an indication from Trish Cook as to how she would like to manage requests for attendance from the public.

Approach to advocacy

EO to continue liaison with Trish Cook's office to bring Ministers to the AROC region for an audience with members; and to facilitate meeting arrangements with Ministers in Canberra, ideally before the last sitting week of the year (24-27 November).

AROC members to consider which issues/priorities and related Ministers should be approached.

3.2.2 Draft Guideline on Community Benefits for Renewable Energy Projects

At the July Governance Group meeting, members resolved (Res.No.04/07/2025) to review the Country Local Governments Renewables Energy Alliance's submission on PoweringWA's Draft Guideline on Community Benefits for Renewable Energy Projects, and if no objections are raised, that AROC support the position outlined by the submission.

RECOMMENDATION/AROC RES. NO.04/09/2025

MOVED Cr Bantock **SECONDED** Cr Antonio

That AROC supports the position outlined by the Wheatbelt Renewables Energy Alliance's submission on the Draft Guideline on Community Benefits for Renewable Energy Projects.

MOTION CARRIED

3.3 Matters raised by individual member local governments for consideration;

3.3.1 Name change to reflect membership

Cr Bantock suggested that AROC should consider a change of name to reflect the current and proposed membership.

RECOMMENDATION/AROC RES. NO.05/09/2025

MOVED Cr Bantock **SECONDED** Cr Antonio

That a change of name is referred to the Officers Group for consideration and report back to the next Governance Group meeting.

MOTION CARRIED

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

5. CONFIRMATION OF MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2025

2025	Officer's Group (CEO) Meetings	Governance Group (President's) Meetings
	11.00am	11.00am
	Zoom Meetings	Council Chambers
OCT	13 October	
NOV		17 November
DEC	No meeting	No meeting

6. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 12.18 pm.



AROC Governance Group Meeting

Attachments to Minutes – Monday 1 September 2025

Minutes and additional information

2.2 Status report

2.3 Inward / outward correspondence

2.3 Letter from the Shire of Chittering

2.3.1 Financial report to 31 July 2025

Other business / new business of an urgent nature

3.1 Submissions, presentations or representations from third parties;

3.1.1 Regional Development Australia - Wheatbelt

Report provided by Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development.

3.2.2 Draft Guideline on Community Benefits for Renewable Energy Projects

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	2/9/2024	That the Unconfirmed Minutes of the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils Governance Group meeting held on 7 July 2025 be accepted as a true and correct record.	9/2025	EO		25.8.25: Minutes to be confirmed and signed at the 1 September 2025 Governance Group meeting.
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.	2026	ALL	2026	25.8.25: WNRM to assist in coordinated Corella Cull; Q4 2024/25 report circulated on 29 July; next Corella steering group meeting is on 22 September at 9am.
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.	2026	EO	Ongoing	25.8.25: Shire of VPs had advised that 70% of the total amount of funding from HSP1 has been received and invoices should be raised accordingly.
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	2025-2026	EO	Motion completed. Waste strategy continues.	25.8.25: RfQ to be approved for release; and assessment panel to be appointed.

Purpose	Meeting Date	Resolution	Target date for completion	Actioned by	Completion Date	Meeting Commentary
		regional areas.				
Branding & Promotions	2/9/2024	RES. NO.03/09/24: That the Officer's Group prepare a branding brief for AROC to be considered by the Governance Group.	18/11/2024	Officers		4.6.26: On hold. The Officer's Group panel selected Market Creations and recommended that the Governance Group postpone commencement of branding work until the outcome of discussions with the Shire of Gingin and Shire of Chittering are known. Market Creations has advised that they will be available to work with AROC when required.
Canberra Advocacy	22/7/2024	Res.04/07/24: That AROC members seek the support of their Council's for the Shire President and CEO to form an AROC delegation to lobby Ministers and Shadow Ministers regarding collective and individual priorities prior to the Federal Election.	30/9/24	ALL		25.8.25: Trish Cook (Member for Bullwinkle) has invited Josh Wilson MP and Dr Chris Rodwell (Transition Advocate) to a meeting on 18 September, hosted by the Shire of Northam. EO to liaise with Trish Cook's office to assisting with meeting arrangements for a return trip by all AROC members possible during parliamentary sitting week 24-27 November.
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		14.11.24: On hold. WALGA is seeking funding for Regional Climate Alliances in the 2025 State budget and has updated the Climate Change advocacy position.

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		6.8.24: No further update to that provided 22.7.24: Rebecca Palumbo, Shire of York, met with DWER staff about the Native Vegetation Policy Implementation Roadmap and specifically the Action 4.1 Roadside Vegetation Advice.
Water sustainability	10/05/2021	Avon River health & access to funding.	Ongoing	Northam, York & Toodyay		15.4.24: On hold. No recent action.



Shire of Chittering
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(08) 9576 4600
chatter@chittering.wa.gov
www.chittering.wa.gov.au

Enquiries to: Melinda Prinsloo
Telephone: 9576 4600

21 July 2025

Cr Michael McKeown
Chairperson, Avon Regional Organisation of Councils
15 Fiennes Street
TOODYAY WA 6566
aroc@toodyay.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr McKeown

ALIGNMENT WITH THE AVON REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS

I refer to your letter dated 11 June 2025 inviting the Shire of Chittering to rejoin the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils (AROC). I am pleased to advise that, at its Ordinary Council Meeting held on 16 July 2025, Council unanimously resolved to accept your invitation and formally rejoin AROC.

As per the AROC Memorandum of Understanding, Council has appointed the following representatives to AROC

1. **Delegate** – Cr Aaron King (Shire of Chittering President)
2. **Proxy Delegate** – Cr Mary Angus (Shire of Chittering Deputy President)

We look forward to actively contributing to AROCs collaborative advocacy and regional development initiatives.

Could you please advise on the next steps for processing any administrative requirements, including payment arrangements.

Should you require anything further from our end, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully

Melinda Prinsloo
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Administered by Shire of Northam

Represented by Commonwealth Muni Account



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA WHEATBELT

RDA Wheatbelt Inc | 3 Constable St, Gingin WA 6503

P: (08) 9575 1888 | E: admin@rdawheatbelt.com.au

Website: www.rdawheatbelt.com.au

ABN: 30 580 026 380

August 2025

RDA Wheatbelt Update - Local Government Zone Meetings

Josh Pomykala, Director Regional Development

E: josh.pomykala@rdawheatbelt.com.au | P: 0428 372 179

Director Regional Development

RDA Wheatbelt has a number of projects currently underway to continue development throughout the Wheatbelt region.

RDA Wheatbelt continues to meet with Local Government CEOs and any available Elected Members to discuss projects, opportunities, and challenges within their Shires. RDA Wheatbelt attempts to do this regularly, meeting with representatives to offer any support that we can provide. Whilst we try to attend events as regularly as possible, we are a small team and attempt to fit as many things into our schedules as possible.

I am also available to chat via phone, email or video conference to any CEOs that are seeking support for any initiatives their LG may be undertaking. Alternatively, Chris Evans (Research, Evaluation and Project Officer) is available to provide support for any Project/Community/Economic Development Officers on any proposed projects – chris.evans@rdawheatbelt.com.au.

RDA Wheatbelt Committee

RDA Wheatbelt has recently finished advertising for Committee positions, including Deputy Chair. All positions were declared vacant, to allow staggered terms. The RDAW Chair is responsible for the selection of Committee members and their tenures. The Committee will be selected in the coming weeks, with the first meeting to be held in September.

Additionally, due to unforeseen circumstances, RDAW is seeking the appointment of a Chair. The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts (DITRDCA) is currently advertising this position. The Chair position is a ministerial appointment, and the Department will prepare a summary of all applications received and provide this to the Australian Government Minister for Regional Development.

It is anticipated that this position will be appointed before the September Committee meeting.

Economic Development Training for Local Government

A number of Local Governments have already participated in the Economic Development Training program run by RDAW. Feedback from this training is highly encouraged and can be sent to admin@rdawheatbelt.com.au.

The training is a full day program which provides tailored data and reports for each participating Local Government, along with resources and training available to analyse and understand this information through the lens of economic development. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for Local Governments to strategically align their needs with economic development principles and uses case studies to expand concepts and ideas for participants. Participants can include any LGA staff member and Elected Member who has an interest or works in the area of economic development. RDAW highly encourages Elected Members to utilise this training as the key strategic decision makers of their communities.

The training will continue to run for participating Local Governments until November 2025.

Training for Aboriginal Corporations and NFPs – Governance and Financial Management

RDAW is in the process of developing the next stage. This project aims to provide governance and financial management training in a culturally appropriate context and setting for Aboriginal corporations and not-for-profit organisations. This training is to align with the Australian Government legislative environment, whilst empowering the staff and Board Members of these entities in our local communities. A 'train the trainer' element will also play a vital part, providing the necessary resources and knowledge to build the capacity for local Aboriginal corporations to empower their communities.

The project will begin with a handful of entities as an initial training course, which will then be assessed for developmental purposes and rolled out across the region pending the success of the project.

Research Evaluation – Aboriginal Student Achievement Through Secondary/Primary Schools Cluster Model Approach (Cluster Model)

RDAW is undertaking research work for the Ngala Koolangka Education Foundation Aboriginal Corporation, to provide a comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the School Cluster Model (SCM) approach to Aboriginal Student Education Achievement, through regular Aboriginal language and cultural learning. This work will underpin understandings of how the cluster model may be utilised in the Wheatbelt within the Department of Education framework, and serve as a basis for other initiatives that may be available to strengthen education delivery in the Wheatbelt.

Education in Regional Communities

RDA Wheatbelt continues its work in advocating strongly to the State and Australian Governments for greater support for regional and rural schools. Regional education is vital to the sustainability of regional communities and economic development, having large social and economic impacts throughout the region. Along with various stakeholders, RDA Wheatbelt is taking part in a coordinated approach to ensure the future of regional education is strong throughout the Wheatbelt. We continue to work with relevant policy makers and stakeholders to address the issues regional education faces for the Wheatbelt.

RDA Wheatbelt's recent submissions on the education reviews highlight the current education structure in the Wheatbelt, the challenges faced by regional schools (including students and teachers), and what opportunities/change mechanisms can enhance students' experiences.

Defence Manufacturing Project

Gemma Bovington and Chetan Bhatia have been appointed as Special Project Officer for RDAW's Defence Manufacturing Project. Gemma and Chetan will work to liaise with Wheatbelt businesses and defence contractors, undertake work to identify regional capability and develop new or update existing reports based on the operations of businesses, match requirements and needs of the defence industry and the capabilities of businesses, provide continued support to businesses already engaged in the project, gauge interest from

new Wheatbelt businesses who wish to work with existing defence industry contractors, and organise engagement activities. Additionally, RDAW will be seeking in-principal support from both State and Australian Government levels to leverage legitimacy of the project and relationships with defence contractors. The Office of Defence Industry Support (ODIS) remains a key stakeholder and enabler of the project.

A number of businesses were already engaged in the first iteration of this project, and RDAW will continue to work with them as well as any new businesses. The newly created roles will continue to proactively seek further opportunities that will allow for economic diversification of Wheatbelt businesses.

Housing

RDAW is exploring further opportunities for key worker accommodation throughout the Wheatbelt through Australian Government departments and channels. RDAW understands that Local Governments require appropriate key worker accommodation to fill critical shortages in employment areas, as well as meet demand of large-scale projects set to begin in the region. RDAW is looking at activating any funding opportunities, building relationships with key Government contacts, and speeding up processes to alleviate these pressures on our LGAs. RDAW will also provide support for any funding proposals for housing options, and encourage Local Governments to contact us.

Local Government Funding Support

RDA Wheatbelt has assisted a number of Local Governments with funding opportunities for various projects throughout the region. Our organisation has assisted with connection-building between various industries and LGs, and the lobbying of Australian Government Ministers to access greater support for projects within our region. RDA Wheatbelt encourages Local Governments to contact us regarding:

- Initial proposals – discussion regarding the logistics and requirements of such undertakings to achieve maximum funding opportunities.
- Business cases – to analyse and provide feedback on completed business cases before submission.
- Funding applications – to analyse and provide feedback on funding applications before submission.

Our organisation provides this at no cost to stakeholders and ensures that funding submissions contain all necessary information and elements for assessors. If your Local Government is undertaking any particular project that seeks Government support or funding, please reach out to see how we can provide as much support as possible.

Regional Precincts and Partnership Program (rPPP)

The rPPP will run over 3 years, from 2023/24 to 2025/26. It is primarily focused on a partnership approach, bringing together government bodies and communities to plan and deliver regional precincts, tailored to local needs and create a shared vision in how the precinct connects to the region. Partners can be from government, First Nations groups, community organisations, regional universities, or private enterprise.

Regional precincts or ‘places with a purpose’ are user-defined geographic areas with a specific shared need or theme. Regional precincts may include business districts, neighbourhoods, activity centres, commercial hubs or community and recreational areas. They are located in renewal and growth areas in regional centres, regional corridors, regional cities, as well as smaller town centres that serve as service hubs in more remote communities.

There are two streams of the rPPP which are delivered as two separate grant opportunities:

- Stream One - Precinct development and planning: to activate partnerships and to deliver an investment-ready precinct plan.
- Stream Two - Precinct delivery: to deliver a specified project or projects as part of a precinct.

The objective of Stream One is to activate partnerships to jointly deliver precinct plans. The intended outcomes of Stream One are:

- establish partnerships comprised of relevant government entities, community organisations and businesses that have a shared vision for a regional precinct;
- deliver precinct plans that are tailored to their local contexts and based on community feedback and engagement;
- support precinct plans to become investment ready; and
- contribute to the Australian Government's current policy priorities, including but not limited to Closing the Gap, transition to a net zero economy, Australia's emission reduction goals, social and affordable housing, and National Cultural Policy.

The objective of Stream Two is to work with partners to support the delivery of precincts that will provide targeted benefits related to productivity, equity, and resilience for regional, rural and remote areas across Australia.

The intended outcomes of Stream Two are:

- deliver project(s) that form part of a precinct or foundational infrastructure that activates a precinct;
- develop and deliver regional precincts comprised of multiple infrastructure components, which provide benefits related to productivity, equity and resilience; and
- contribute to the Australian Government's current policy priorities, including but not limited to Closing the Gap, transition to a net zero economy, Australia's emission reduction goals, social and affordable housing, and National Cultural Policy.

Go to this link for guidelines, F&Qs and a recording of the webinar explaining the program.

<https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/regional-australia/regional-and-community-programs/regional-precincts-and-partnerships-program>

RDA Wheatbelt has assisted numerous Local Governments with their intentions to apply for the funding and encourage any other Local Governments to approach us to provide any support.

The first six funded projects can be viewed at <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/territories-regions-cities/regional-australia/regional-and-community-programs/regional-precincts-and-partnerships-program>

Grants

GrantGuru is an aggregation of all online grant portals, it is essentially a one stop shop for funding pathways. Remember to register for free email alerts for when grants open or if they change according to your preferences and profile. Register here <https://rdawa.grantguru.com.au/register/> The free community portal can be embedded on your shire websites to boost support of businesses and community groups access to grant information.

We negotiated a half price subscription for Local Government, \$500 ex GST per year for two years to join the exclusive Local Government portal which collates grant information only available to Local Governments. Please contact Pippa at admin@rdawheatbelt.com.au to renew or sign up.

Study Hubs

RDA Wheatbelt welcomed the Federal Minister for Education, The Hon Jason Clare MP, to attend the official opening of the Ellenbrook Study Hub on 3 June. The Ellenbrook Study Hub currently has close to 300 students who have already registered to use the facility. This study hub captures students from the Wheatbelt's peri-urban Local Government areas and provides access to services where they would otherwise be required to travel into the city.

Additionally, the Northam Study Hub is set to become operational in the very near future, bringing the total number of study hubs operating to service Wheatbelt students to six (Merredin, Narrogin, Northam, Wongan Hills, York – regional study hubs; Ellenbrook – metropolitan study hub).

Joint Local Government Submission

On behalf of

Country Local Governments
Renewables Alliance

*PoweringWA – Draft Guideline on Community
Benefits for Renewable Energy Projects
(Consultation Paper)*

Approved Version - 25 July 2025

Overview

Western Australia has an opportunity to set a nation leading standard for community benefits arrangements that benefits local communities, industry and all Western Australians. Developing a robust, WA oriented framework that benefits from the experiences of more advanced jurisdictions is essential to provide industry and local communities with the certainty and confidence necessary to navigate the renewable energy transition.

Local Government Authorities (LGAs) that have contributed to this submission are supportive of the need for a community benefits Guideline that recognises the diverse characteristics and needs of Western Australia's LGAs. The PoweringWA Draft *Guideline* is a welcome start that requires some targeted improvements and a clear regulatory or state policy standing.

This submission by the undersigned LGAs identifies a series of opportunities to improve the clarity and effectiveness of the Guideline prior to finalisation. These include:

- **A single recommended contribution value**
Improving the Guidance on community benefit contribution values by providing a single contribution value benchmark (based on the NSW Guidelines) instead of the wide ranges in the Draft Guideline. This approach will provide better basis for agreement of mutually acceptable terms between LGAs and industry. It will also improve the transparency of the process and reduce the risks to LGAs involved in negotiations on behalf of the community.
- **Allocation of benefits according to the location of nameplate capacity**
Many projects are located in multiple LGAs. The Guideline should include a recommendation that benefits are allocated according to the nameplate capacity located in each LGA. This will provide a simple and transparent basis for allocating benefit contributions between communities.
- **Including Security of benefits arrangements as a key element in the Guideline**
Including a focus on ensuring the security of benefits arrangements is essential for both communities and industry to have certainty over the operating life of these projects. The addition of Secure principle in the Guideline and an explicit expectation that community benefit contributions will be secured by LGA-developer agreements (and/or network access and planning conditions if future policies allow this to occur).

The future security of contributions is essential for communities who need to make long term planning, financial and other decisions. It also reduces sovereign risk for industry.

LGAs are also engaging with Planning Minister and WPCEO to seek practical changes to planning and network access arrangements that can improve security. We request PoweringWA support in achieving these outcomes.
- **Focussing on the opportunities community benefits provide**
Community benefit arrangements should not be identified as a driver of power prices or project viability by the Guideline and these inferences should be removed. Drawing these links is unnecessarily divisive and not supported by the evidence.

The Guideline should focus on the opportunities community benefit arrangements provide for communities, industry and government which far outweigh the minor additional costs.

- **Removing inconsistencies in the discussion of local rates**
Community benefit arrangements should be consistently recognised as additional to rates within the final Guideline.
- **Investing in LGA capability**
A request for PoweringWA to convene workshops to build LGA negotiating capabilities alongside finalisation of the Guideline.
- **Providing advice on existing projects**
Including clear trigger points for existing projects community benefit arrangements to be brought in line with the Guideline in the future will avoid confusion about whether there need to be changes to arrangements for projects that are built, in construction or have approvals.

These recommended improvements reflect the deep, direct and ongoing experience of LGA leaders in negotiating with renewable developers on behalf of their communities. These negotiations have been undertaken without the support of PoweringWA's guidance. The proposed changes will benefit all parties – communities, State and LGAs and industry - if they are incorporated by PoweringWA into the final guideline.

Local Governments supporting this Submission

This submission has been prepared on behalf and is supported by the following **thirty-six (36)** Local Governments:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Shire of Beverley | • Shire of Moora |
| • Shire of Boddington | • Shire of Mount Marshall |
| • Shire of Bruce Rock | • Shire of Mukinbudin |
| • Shire of Brookton | • Shire of Nannup |
| • Shire of Carnamah | • Shire of Narrogin |
| • Shire of Chapman Valley | • Shire of Northam |
| • Shire of Chittering | • Shire of Northampton |
| • Shire of Coorow | • Shire of Nungarin |
| • Shire of Corrigin | • Shire of Pingelly |
| • Shire of Cunderdin | • Shire of Toodyay |
| • Shire of Cuballing | • Shire of Trayning |
| • Shire of Dandaragan | • Shire of Victoria Plains |
| • Shire of Gingin | • Shire of West Arthur |
| • Shire of Goomalling | • Shire of Westonia |
| • Shire of Kellerberrin | • Shire of Williams |
| • Shire of Kondinin | • Shire of Wongan-Ballidu |
| • Shire of Kulin | • Shire of Woodanilling |
| • Shire Mingenew | • Shire of York |

Key Points of Feedback

1. Replace the Benefit Contribution Ranges with a single recommended contribution and include contribution guidance for BESS projects

The signatories strongly advocate for the adoption of a uniform, fixed-contribution per megawatt (\$/MW) formula for determining community benefit contributions associated with wind energy, solar array, and battery energy storage system (BESS) developments across Western Australia.

In contrast to a variable or range-based contribution model—where proponents negotiate individual outcomes with host local governments—the fixed-contribution model provides clarity, fairness, transparency, and consistency. A **mandated** contribution value would significantly reduce the uncertainty and risks inherent in the current approach proposed under the State's draft guidelines.

The proposed range-based model creates a situation where local governments and their representatives are placed under unreasonable and unsustainable sovereign and political risk. This risk arises from the perception—often shaped during local election cycles or executive reviews—that a council's mayor, president, CEO, or negotiating officers have either failed to secure a 'sufficient' contribution or have been outperformed by other jurisdictions. This dynamic fosters:

- Public mistrust, especially in communities that may compare outcomes across local governments;
- Accusations of incompetence or, worse, corruption, where negotiations fall short of the upper end of the State's recommended range;
- Undue pressure on elected members and executives, which can erode public confidence and destabilise local governance;
- Political weaponisation of contribution outcomes during biennial local government elections, CEO contract renewals, or changes in council leadership.

This is particularly fraught given that local governments are often negotiating with multinational corporations possessing vastly greater resources, legal capacity, and experience. The expectation that volunteer elected members or even seasoned CEOs can reliably negotiate top-tier contributions within a range framework is not only unrealistic—it is systemically inequitable and unsustainable.

In contrast, a statewide fixed-contribution approach, as already implemented successfully in jurisdictions such as New South Wales, provides a level playing field. It ensures:

- Predictability for proponents, streamlining project feasibility and budgeting;
- Certainty and consistency for local governments, avoiding reputational damage from perceived negotiation shortcomings;
- Transparency and fairness for communities, who are assured of equitable treatment regardless of where they live;

- Reduced risk of conflict or regulatory scrutiny, as contribution expectations are clearly established in policy and uniformly applied.

Unless there are extraordinary or site-specific extenuating circumstances, the use of a fixed contribution value per MW is a superior model—one that mitigates sovereign and political risk, fosters public trust, and enhances the integrity of renewable energy planning and delivery in WA.

Accordingly, we strongly recommend that the WA State Government adopt a consistent, mandated community benefits contribution value, aligned with the proven New South Wales model, and resist the implementation of loosely defined or negotiable contribution ranges.

This single recommended contribution values aligned to the NSW Guideline¹ and include a contribution for stand-alone Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) would be:

- \$1,050 per megawatt per annum indexed to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for wind energy development
- \$850 per megawatt per annum indexed to CPI for solar energy development
- \$150 per megawatt hour per annum indexed to CPI for stand-alone battery energy storage systems²

Setting clear contribution value guidance empowers local communities and industry, creating a firm foundation for agreements that can demonstrate the maturity of interactions between the parties and create mutually beneficial outcomes reflecting the local community and project context.

2. Benefit contribution allocations should align to nameplate capacity location for projects that span multiple LGAs

Community benefits should flow to impacted communities. Many renewable energy projects are located within more than one LGA and it is important that there is clarity on how community benefits should be allocated between communities.

The Guideline should include clear guidance that allocation of community benefit contributions should be made on the basis of the proportion of nameplate capacity located in each LGA. For example, if a 10MW project had 4MW in one LGA and 6MW in another then a 40/60 split would be made in the contribution arrangements.

There may be exceptions to this approach for a small number of projects. For example, where significant population areas are located in close proximity to a project but the majority of the project is an adjoining LGA with no nearby towns or more densely settled areas. These exceptions can be resolved by discussion and agreement.

¹ NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure 2024, Benefit-Sharing Guideline: Guidance for large scale energy projects <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-11/benefit-sharing-guideline.pdf>

² The consultation paper argues that there is no industry benchmark for BESS projects. In our view, the NSW Guideline has established an industry benchmark for BESS agreements, and this should be included in the Guideline. Not including a contribution for BESS projects will unnecessarily complicate negotiations, creating risks for both parties.

However, for vast majority of arrangements this simple approach to apportioning benefits funds will provide a clear basis for agreement. Inclusion of this expectation in the Guideline will help to avoid unnecessary conflict, competing expectations or time-consuming negotiations between LGAs.

3. The Guideline should include a focus on ensuring the security of benefits arrangements for communities and industry

The Guideline should include a focus on ensuring the security of community benefit arrangements to increase certainty for both industry and communities.

Security is essential as LGAs, and communities must have confidence that benefit arrangements (and other commitments to supporting local communities) will actually be enforceable and delivered by industry once approvals are in place. This is essential for long-term statutory management, financial and strategic planning.

Without proper security from the outset, these arrangements could be the subject of renegotiation or change at the discretion of the project owner or LGAs. A lack of security therefore introduces risk for both communities and project owners. In our view:

- Relying on the on-going goodwill of industry over 30-year project lifespans and potentially repeated changes in ownership is an excessive and unreasonable risk to communities. If a project ceases payments, there is no way for this to be addressed unless these arrangements are secure.
- There are also sovereign risks for industry without proper security. New Councils or leaders in LGAs could seek to renegotiate for higher benefit arrangements at their discretion unless arrangements are appropriately secure. Renegotiation may also become a local political issue during election campaigns, leading to local division and uncertainty.

The fundamental insecurity of benefit arrangements has been emphasised in recent project approvals. Currently, community benefit arrangements are only recognised within the advice notes of statutory body assessments. The advice notes are not binding which provides very limited to no security for the future.

We note that community benefit agreements are better secured in other jurisdictions. For example, Voluntary Planning Agreements are utilised in NSW, supported by planning conditions. Community Benefit Agreements have also recently been introduced in Queensland as part of legislative changes.

To address this issue in the Guideline it is recommended that **Secure** be added as an additional principle in the guideline in *Principles for community benefit arrangements* section. This could be drafted as:

- **Secure:** the arrangements for community benefits should be appropriately secured via enforceable agreements between LGAs and project owners to provide certainty for communities and industry over the life of the project. These agreements should wherever possible be integrated within planning approvals and network access arrangements where policies provide the basis for these links to be made.

Whilst security can be supported via community benefits being captured in dedicated legal agreements between LGAs and project owners, this approach brings additional costs. Establishing a requirement within network access arrangements with Western Power is a preferred pathway and consistent with approaches in other jurisdictions.

Specifically, agreement of a community benefits contributions consistent with the Guideline should be made a condition for granting and maintaining a network access licence with Western Power. This would also require the granting of any future network access licenses / agreements to be conditional on the new operator committing to the community benefit arrangement.

We note that *State Planning Policy 3.6 Infrastructure Contributions*³ could also provide a pathway for creating a nexus within the existing planning framework. However, the requirements for these processes are onerous and SPP3.6 is not commonly utilised by smaller rural local governments, creating a significant burden on LGAs.

The focus on achieving greater security through network access arrangements mirrors arrangements in NSW such as the Renewable Energy Zone Access Scheme and complements existing considerations in the Commonwealth Capacity Investment scheme. By linking appropriate community benefit arrangements to network access and government support, community benefits are placed at the heart of project arrangements and developers have a significant incentive to agree to proper arrangements with communities.

Whilst we recognise that implementing these changes is beyond the scope of the Guideline and PoweringWA's mandate, PoweringWA can play an important role in realising this security through its advocacy for change within government and we request your support.

The Guideline can also support this by recognising the potential for these future security pathways and creating an expectation that - in the absence of the changes recommended above - developers should enter into binding agreements with Local Governments to provide life-of-project security and certainty for host communities.

4. Remove elements of the Guideline that link community benefit contributions to power prices, project viability and sovereign risk

Community benefit arrangements are an insignificant factor in future power prices, are not a material factor impacting project viability and communities are not creating sovereign risk by seeking reasonable benefit arrangements.

It is also unnecessarily divisive to include these inferences within the Guideline. To do so implies that host communities seeking reasonable community benefits are imposing significant costs and risks for industry and the rest of the Western Australian community. In an environment where renewable energy is already very divisive within communities, it is important

³ https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-09/SPP_3.6_Infrastructure%20Contributions_Guidelines%20april2021_0.pdf

the WA Government seeks to foster unity and maximise benefits for all Western Australians from the energy transition.

Tables 2 and 3 provide a simple evidence-based review of the significance of community benefit contributions to power prices and project viability, supporting the removal of any negative links to power prices, sovereign risk and project viability in the final Guideline.

Table 2: Comparative Factors

Project Type	Indicative annual MWh generation per MW ⁴	2024 average SWIS wholesale price/MWh ⁵	2024 retail electricity charge (\$/MWh) ⁶	Community Benefit Contribution
Onshore wind	3504	\$79.93	\$315.82	\$1,050
Solar	2190	\$79.93	\$315.82	\$850

Table 3: Community Benefit Significance Assessment

Project Type	Indicative Annual Generation Revenue/MW	Community Benefit: cost to project owner (\$/MWh)	Community Benefit: % of annual facility revenue	Community Benefit: % of average annual wholesale price	Community Benefit: % of retail energy price
Onshore wind	\$280,075	0.30	0.37%	0.37%	0.09%
Solar	\$175,047	0.38	0.49%	0.47%	0.12%

This simple indicative analysis is based on industry benchmarks. It identifies community benefit contributions as comprising less than half a percent of potential generation revenue and around 0.1% of retail power prices in 2024. They represent a small, fixed additional cost and will only be incurred once projects are operational and generating revenue.

Compared to major cost factors such as project capital expenditure, financing costs, and supporting transmission capital investment, community benefit contributions cannot reasonably be identified as a significant factor impacting either project viability or future power prices.

More importantly, communities hosting renewable energy are making a significant contribution to the future of the energy system, bearing the direct impacts of this change which is industrialising rural landscapes, and they should be justly recognised for that contribution.

⁴ Derived based on the midpoint of the relevant capacity factor ranges in the CSIRO GenCost report - https://www.csiro.au/-/media/Energy/GenCost/GenCost2024-25ConsultDraft_20241205.pdf

⁵ Sourced from the AEMO Wem data dashboard <https://aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/wholesale-electricity-market-wem/data-wem/data-dashboard>

⁶ Based on 2024 residential electricity tariff, excluding supply charges <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/energy-policy-wa/household-electricity-pricing>

Rather than framing these contributions as a cost, community benefits should be framed in the Guideline as an opportunity to contribute to the future development of regional communities and create a genuine social licence for the energy transition.

The development of a robust and secure basis for negotiating community benefits is also an opportunity to reduce sovereign risk for developers. If this approach also helps to achieve earlier approvals the reductions in capital costs, smoothing of the energy transition and other benefits has the potential to increase project viability and contribute to lower power prices. These positive impacts could well outweigh the modest additional costs imposed on projects.

5. Clarify that community benefit arrangements are additional and are separate to local rates

Community benefit arrangements are necessitated by the limited long-term positive impact the renewable industry will leave for host communities. Unlike other key regional industries such as agriculture, tourism and resources, renewables provide very limited direct economic benefits over their operating life but have on-going material impacts.

Like other State fees, taxes and charges, local rates should be immutably independent of community benefit arrangements. Local rates represent a baseline contribution by all landowners to support community infrastructure and services.

The draft Guideline is inconsistent on this separation and needs clarification.

The statements in first paragraph of Community Benefits section and Role of Rates sections appropriately identify that community benefit payments are additional and separate to any rate obligations. These statements should be retained.

However, the following paragraph in the role of rates section should be removed:

“Nevertheless, communities and Local Governments should consider the cumulative impact of any change in ratings approach along with any independently negotiated community benefits program. This will ensure commerciality is maintained, sovereign risk is reduced, and that additional revenue is split fairly between hosting councils seeking to recover their costs, and communities seeking benefits for hosting new renewable energy projects.”

This paragraph undermines the clarity of earlier statements and introduces inappropriate and inaccurate statements. In particular, conflating the payment of rates with the commerciality of projects is inappropriate. There is no evidence to suggest that these relatively minor fixed costs are a material commercial consideration for developers and they are a cost that any land use in the State must pay.

The charging of rates based on State Government statutes by LGAs does not constitute a sovereign risk issue and this reference is similarly inappropriate.

Finally, this paragraph also infers that community benefit funds are a cost recovery mechanism for LGAs. This is completely at odds with the way in which community benefit funds are defined in the Guideline (see for example the *Communities and The Energy Transition* section). The

intent of these funds to provide additional benefits to host communities beyond what local resources – including rates – can provide.

The reference to rates within the criteria for any benefit contribution should be also removed.

6. Invest in LGA strategy and negotiation capability

The objective of community benefit contributions is to improve the long-term position of LGAs and their communities. This means, the LGAs involved need to produce a clearly thought through strategy to preserve their infrastructure and facilities for the next 20-30 years. Once this wave of development passes, the communities are unlikely to be supported at anything but the most basic level.

The Guideline should encourage long-term LGA strategic thinking, formulation of legacy projects and outcomes, and consideration of how community benefits funds can be applied and maximised to enable communities to position themselves for the future. A strategic view of how the community will absorb and manage both the immediate development pressure and the future beyond the construction period when new economic activity dissipates, and communities are left to reassemble themselves.

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) has recently developed a Renewable Energy Community Benefits and Community Engagement Guide⁷. The Guide provides LGAs with a baseline of practical information and processes to consider their local strategy and priorities, engagement with developers and the community, and development of community benefit schemes that work locally.

PoweringWA should build on this initiative and the Guideline by funding negotiation workshops for LGAs. These workshops would assist local leaders in preparing and presenting their expectations/ask to developers, improving face-to-face meeting conduct, issues management, knowledge, and the overall capacity of LGAs to negotiate successfully with developers. With much of the development occurring in small, under resourced rural LGAs, this capability building approach would greatly assist in lifting skills, avoiding delays and improving community and industry outcomes.

7. Emphasise the importance of early engagement and genuine consultation

The Guideline should emphasise the importance of early engagement with LGAs by developers and genuine engagement with communities as a foundation for agreeing strong community benefits arrangements. This will allow the communication of key issues between both sides and the identification and understanding of how communities can best utilise contributions and create a foundation for future prosperity as energy generating regions. This is currently mentioned in the Guideline but could be more clearly identified as an expectation of the Government and important pathway to success.

⁷ https://walga.asn.au/getmedia/ea947a1a-fc88-460f-966b-7e55f511d3a2/WALGA_Renewable-Energy-Community-Benefits-and-Engagement-Guide.pdf

8. Provide clearer guidance on community benefit arrangements for existing projects

Whilst the Guideline will provide a framework for improved benefit frameworks for new projects, we note that there are many existing projects (completed, under construction or approved) that have community benefit arrangements that do not align to the guidance provided.

It is not reasonable or feasible that these pre-Guideline community benefit arrangements be renegotiated to align to the new standard.

However, the Guide should note clear triggers for project arrangements to be improved to align to the Guideline. These triggers should include:

- if a project is rescoped and an approval significantly modified
- if turbines, panels or batteries are progressively upgraded to higher capacity (name plate),
- project life extensions (repowering),
- changes to operating approvals.

Conclusion

The transition to renewable energy presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver long-term social, economic and environmental benefits to Western Australia's regions. The Draft Guideline represents a strong starting point, but it must be refined to ensure **fair, consistent and secure outcomes** for host communities.

As the tier of government closest to the communities impacted by these projects, Local Governments are uniquely placed to facilitate, administer and advocate for lasting community benefit outcomes. However, this role must be supported by a clear, enforceable policy framework that empowers LGAs and sets a minimum benchmark for industry to meet.

The signatory Local Governments call on PoweringWA to incorporate the recommended improvements outlined in this submission, including adopting a fixed-contribution model, embedding benefit security mechanisms, clarifying and distinguishing the independence of community contributions from rates, and supporting LGA capability building.

These changes will foster trust, reduce risk, and enhance the social licence of renewable energy projects across Western Australia. With the right framework in place, community benefits can become a catalyst for strengthening regional communities and ensuring the energy transition delivers for all.

