



Councillor Information Bulletin

For the Ordinary Council Meeting
held on Thursday 18th April 2024

INDEX

1. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT**
2. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT**
 - Wellbeing Update
 - Tourism Update
 - Hood-Penn Museum Update
3. **COUNCIL INFORMATION**
 - **CONTAINERS FOR CHANGE**
 - Collection Data
 - **DRY KIRKNESS**
 - Audit Timetable
 - **DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
 - Funding and Support Information
 - **GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**
 - Local Government 2024 Determination
 - **WEROC**
 - Request to endorse WEROC approach to GECZ
 - **WALGA**
 - Regional Telecommunications Inquiries



SHIRE OF WESTONIA

April/May 24

Date & Time	What	Where	Who
Monday 15 April	WEROC CEO Meeting	Merredin	CEO
Wednesday 17 April	Museum Inspection	Busselton	Councillors, Senior Staff
Thursday 18 April	Council Meeting	Chambers	Councillors, Senior Staff
Tuesday 23 April	WNESRRG Meeting	Mukinbudin	Cr Geier & CEO
Thursday 25 April	ANZAC Day	Boodalin Soak	Community
Wednesday 8 May	WEROC Board Meeting	Kellerberrin	President and CEO
Monday 13 May	CEACA Board Meeting	Kellerberrin	Deputy President and CEO
Thursday 16 May	Council Meeting	Westonia	Councillors, Senior Staff

CEO'S REPORT

- **GENERAL MATTERS**

- I took 4 days leave over the Easter break.
- Council has received positive news that CBH Grant has contributed \$ 6,000 towards the Old Primary School Leisure Centre Warm Water pool.
- Demolition works of the Old Pool Kiosk and Toilets commenced after Easter with the only hold up being the disconnection of the Western Power line. The site will then be handed over to Famlonga Building to construct the new facility.



- The Western Power Dome has finally been installed at the 26 Jasper Street Fuel Depot site on 10th April 2024 after the initial application being submitted on 16 December 2022.
- Crs Crees, DellaBosca DCEO and myself participated in a Audit Entrance meeting with AOG and Dry Kirkness Auditors via zoom meeting on Wednesday 10 April. The purpose of the meeting was to set out the audit program and process for the forthcoming year.
- Asphalt works at various sites around the townsite will be carried out on 18 & 19 April.
- Councillors and senior staff met with Mia Davies and incumbent Lachlan Hunter National Party at the Wanderers Stadium on Friday 12 April.
- Jaykob Mitchell will be participating in a Workplace Learning Program with the Council for 3 days a fortnight with the town maintenance crew assisting mainly with gardening duties.
- As per Council resolution at the March Council meeting several items of plant surplus to Council needs were advertised for sale by public tender. Numerous tenders were received for the Toyota Hilux Crewcab Utility (Construction Supervisors) with a winning tender being received from a local resident. No offers were received for the remaining items which will continually be advertised for sale.

- **DELEGATED AUTHORITY ACTIONS**

- **ROADCREW**

- The Warralakin Road construction project has been completed.
- The construction crew are gravel carting a section of Leeman and Begley Roads before moving to the south of the Shire.
- The maintenance grader has been in the south of the shire doing drains and batters.

- **TOWN**

- The new carpark shademaster trees have been planted at the Stadium.
- Pruning of street trees has been carried out.

- **Environmental Health Officer - Council Briefing Session Notes – October 2023 – March 2024**

Building Permits

- 14/2022-2023 – 28 Pyrites Street, Westonia 54m2 shed.
- 15/2022-2023 – 51 Diorite Street, Westonia – Bathroom Addition
- 1/2024 – 25 Pyrites Street, Westonia – Shed
- 2/2024 – Demolition of caretakers dwelling – 38 Wolfran Street, Westonia
- 3/2024 – Chemical farm shed- 1635 Burracoppin South, Walgoolan
- 5/2024 – Storage shed – 41 Granite Street, Westonia.

Incomplete Building Applications

- 4/2024 – 28 Pyrites Street, Westonia – Dwelling.
- 6/2024 – 25 Pyrites Street, Westonia – Dwelling.
- 7/2024 – 48 Jasper Street, Westonia – Dwelling

On-site Effluent Disposal Systems – Approvals to Construct

- 25 Pyrites Street, Westonia.
- 28 Pyrites Street, Westonia

Food Businesses Inspections

- Carabin Roadhouse - Hygiene requirements & Food Safety & Food Handler training required as per Food Standards requirements still outstanding - 16/10/2023 & 15/01/2024.
- Westonia Co Op- Food Safety Supervisor & food handler training requirements still outstanding– 16/10/2024.
- Westonia Tavern - Food Safety Supervisor & food handler training requirements still outstanding– 16/10/2024.
- Edna May Kitchen and Dining Room - Food Safety Supervisor & Food Handler training requirements still outstanding– 16/10/2024.

Westonia Swimming Pool

- The microbial results of samples were submitted to Pathwest for testing. The results of the test for the water samples taken monthly from October 2023 till March 2024 were within guidelines.

Stage 5 of the Public Health Act 2016

- Council has two years to complete a Public Health Plan prior to the full implementation of the Public Health Act 2016. It is estimated that an amount of \$15,000 plus GST should be budgeted over the next two financial years to cover the cost of an appropriate consultant to undertake the plan. There will be some extra work required by staff to assist as there will need to be some consultation required with ratepayers and residents to cover their needs for now and into the future. There are several consultants available to provide Public Health Plan which I will discuss with the CEO. The Health Department has produced publication on stage 5 Public Health Act and should anyone require a copy please contact the CEO or log onto www.health2.wa.gov.au and follow the links.

Retiring from EHO Work in Local Government

- I will be retiring from my role as a contract Environmental Health Officer as from the end of this financial year June 2024. I started as a meat inspector in 1980 working for the Health Department. Since then, qualified as an Environmental Health Officer and Builder spending the last 23 years working in small rural Shires which has been the most rewarding time of my career.

- **PLANT HOURS**

The following is a list of plant and vehicle kilometre and hour readings for the period ending 1.4.24.

Item		1.3.24	1.4.24
P1	<i>CAT 140 GRADER</i>	2,360hrs	2,446hrs
P2	<i>CAT 12M GRADER</i>	8,729hrs	8,865hrs
P3	<i>PRIME MOVER (KENWORTH)</i>	9,118kms	13,016kms
P4	<i>ROAD TRAIN (NEW FREIGHTLINER)</i>	114,079kms	115,327kms
P5	<i>JOHN DEERE LOADER</i>	4,937hrs	5,017hrs
P6	<i>CAT ROLLER (SKIP)</i>	1,628hrs	1,667hrs
P7	<i>MINI-EXCAVATOR</i>	1,187hrs	1,201hrs
P8	<i>TELEHANDLER JCB</i>	2,810hrs	2,830hrs
P9	<i>TOYOTA (GRADER UTE)</i>	40,924kms	42,225kms
P10	<i>mitsubishi CANTER</i>	16,974kms	17,778kms
P11	<i>TOYOTA HILUX (GARDENER) WT 35</i>	107,950kms	108,622kms
P12	<i>JOHN DEERE (5100)</i>	2,586hrs	2,588hrs
P14	<i>TOYOTA LANDCRUISER GXL (CEO)</i>	1,100kms	3,211kms
P15	<i>TOYOTA HILUX D/CAB (W/SUPER)</i>	42,450kms	46,115kms
P16	<i>TOYOTA RAV4 (ADMIN)</i>	96,993kms	98,001kms
P17	<i>TOYOTA HILUX DUAL CAB</i>	35,014kms	38,578kms
P19	<i>FAST ATTACK</i>	17,605kms	17,605kms
P20	<i>FIRE TRUCK</i>	7,036kms	7,036kms
P18	<i>WESSY BUS</i>	145,833kms	146,501kms
P22	<i>KUBOTA RIDE ON MOWER (OVAL)</i>	2,069hrs	2,078hrs
P23	<i>TOYOTA MINI-BUS (WT COM V)</i>	41,674kms	43,076kms
P24	<i>CAT ROLLER (LOLA)</i>	1,985hrs	2,058hrs
P25	<i>MICK's BEAUT UTE</i>	168,987kms	170,184kms
P27	<i>TOYOTA PRADO GXL (DCEO)</i>	37,259kms	39,003kms

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING REPORT

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Grant applications & award nominations submitted:

We are currently working on FRRR Small network grant worth up to \$20,000.00 for future community events.

Future grant opportunities & award nominations:

- Department of LG, Sport & Cultural Industries – Active Regional Communities Grants (up to \$5000) categories; Capacity building, Event hosting and Participation. Applications open all year.
- Healthways and Lottery West

WELLBEING REPORT

Age Care

Westonia Home Care Services had a total of 17 clients, one client has just been moved to residential care so as of the end of April we will be back to 16 clients. We have advertised the Community Health & Wellbeing Officer position, this is intended to combine both Kerry Hermon (Wellbeing Officer) and Emilie Menz (Community Health Nurse) when they finish up mid-year with us. Emilie works with our higher care needs clients in the Personal Care area and various other duties required in her role when she leaves it is vital we have someone with a higher level of care training to carry out these tasks. Kerry brings planning and hands on support to our service she visits clients regularly providing social support and completes care plans for clients on a regular basis. We have three people that have signed up with Tafe to take on the Cert 3 in individual support (Ageing). Lite N Easy is proving a good choice for clients that have signed up due to health issues, the piece of mind knowing they have a meal at hand when they are in need is a great relief.

Westonia Home care services continue to work closely with clients and allied health professionals such as Occupational therapist, physio and podiatry, to ensure client needs, equipment and aids are being met and supplied to keep each client safe and assisted in their homes.

Westonia Home Care Services Clients: 17

Staff delivering services: 10

Services: Administration and Package management, Cleaning and Household tasks, Medical, Personal Care, Social Support, Support work, Gardening & Maintenance

Meals on Wheels recommenced 29th January, 9 participants are currently on board, Ramelius Resources will continue to supply meals until the cessation of the mine.

Community activities and resources

2024 Activities/ Events:

Emily has been running regular wellbeing sessions for community members on Mondays and Wednesdays which are very popular and attendance is high with an average of 10 people attending per session. Kerry is back and outings and events are back on the cards, our Day centre/seniors centre is seeing increased numbers due to her active engagement with these community members/groups. Events/workshops for the year are being planned, a car boot sale 20/4/24. We were going to hold a Mascarade Ball in August TBC to recreate a historical event from the 1920's it is also going to be a fundraising opportunity for future events. Wessy Christmas Markets have been locked in on the 26/10/24. Potential dates to hold Wessy on the Green – 26th of April 2025 Anzac Weekend which is both a Public Holiday and the last weekend in the School Holiday's or on the 3rd of May 2025 to get away from School hols and the risk of

people being away over a long weekend?

6/3/24 Use it or Loose it

7/3/24 Bingo

11/3/24 Water Areobics

12/3/24 Scrabble 5 Pax

13/3/24 Use it or Loose it

14/3/24 Bingo

18/3/24 Water Areobics

19/3/24 Scrabble 4Pax

20/3/24 Use it or Loose it

21/3/24 Bingo 9Pax

25/3/24 Water Areobics 3Pax

26/3/24 Scrabble 5Pax, Use it or Loose it 11Pax

27/3/24 Lunch at Commercial Hotel 9Pax

27/3/24 Bingo

WESTONIA TOURIST PARK

The park has had a decent amount of visitors each day with Easter and the school holidays, most opting to stay for at least 2 nights, feedback has been positive with visitors impressed with the cleanliness and appearance of the park and the value for their \$20 per night.

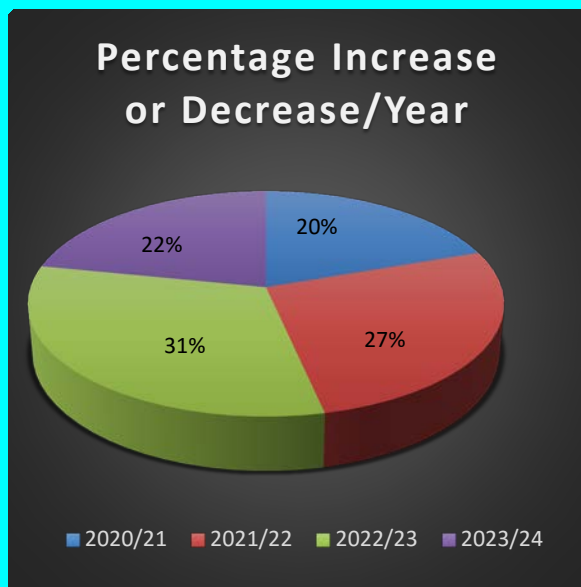
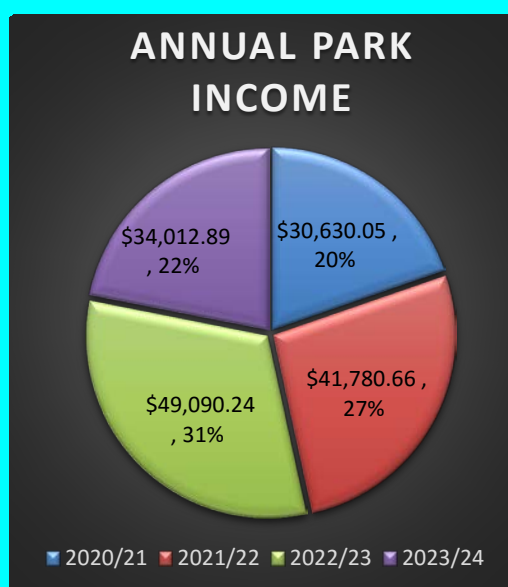
REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

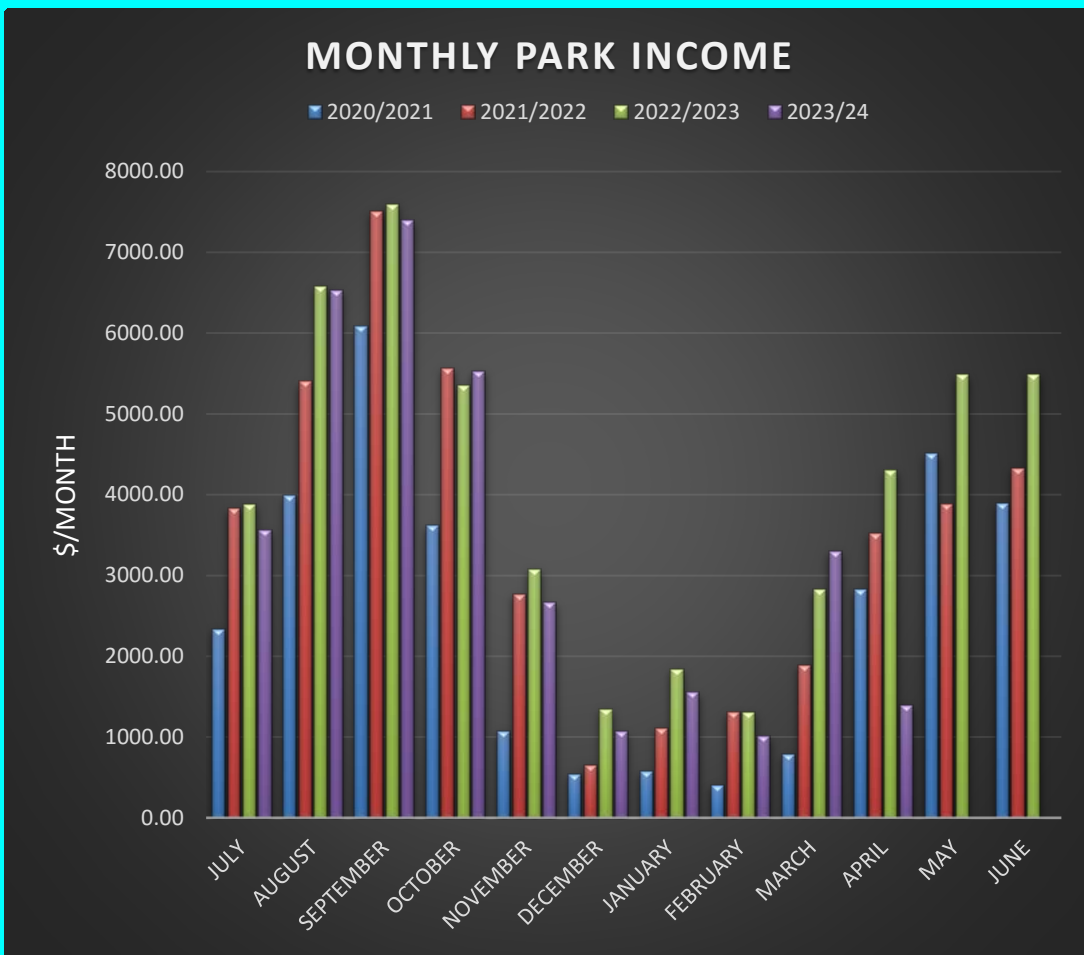
- Various minor repairs and maintenance ongoing. Focal area being bathroom maintenance (fixtures and disabled bathroom upgrade)
- Disabled toilet drainage will need some major work as tree roots have made their way into the pipes.

FUTURE PROJECTS

- Permanent signage required to say "If office is unattended, please ring the caretakers phone or Shire office alternatively you can visit the Shire office during business hours Monday to Friday to complete your booking".
- Overflow – new signs needed for sites and information sign needed to describe who to ring or see to book in and outline that you must un-hook. Defined bays might be a good idea for this area.

STATISTICS





HOOD-PENN MUSEUM

The Museum is now open on weekends for the 2024 tourist season, as always this would not be possible without the support of our local volunteers, who dedicate their time to showcase our museum and share their knowledge about the town and its history. Easter weekend was quite busy and the week days are seeing a steady flow of visitors.

REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

- Various minor repairs and maintenance ongoing

RECENT PROJECTS

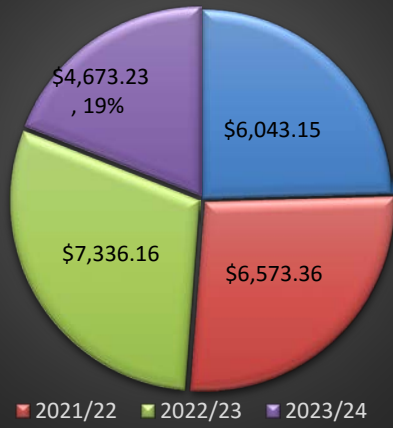
- Old Truck modification for farming scene and Back drop in-place.

FUTURE PROJECTS

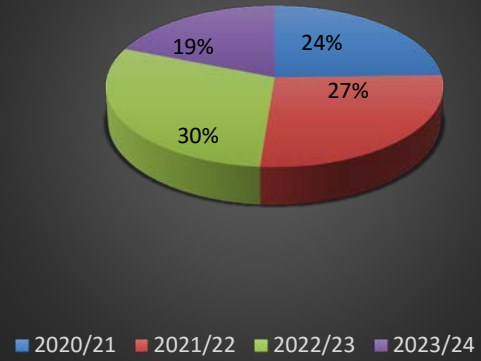
- New scenes to be created in the existing space of the old storage room to tell the stories of our primary industries of which Westonia was founded on.

STATISTICS

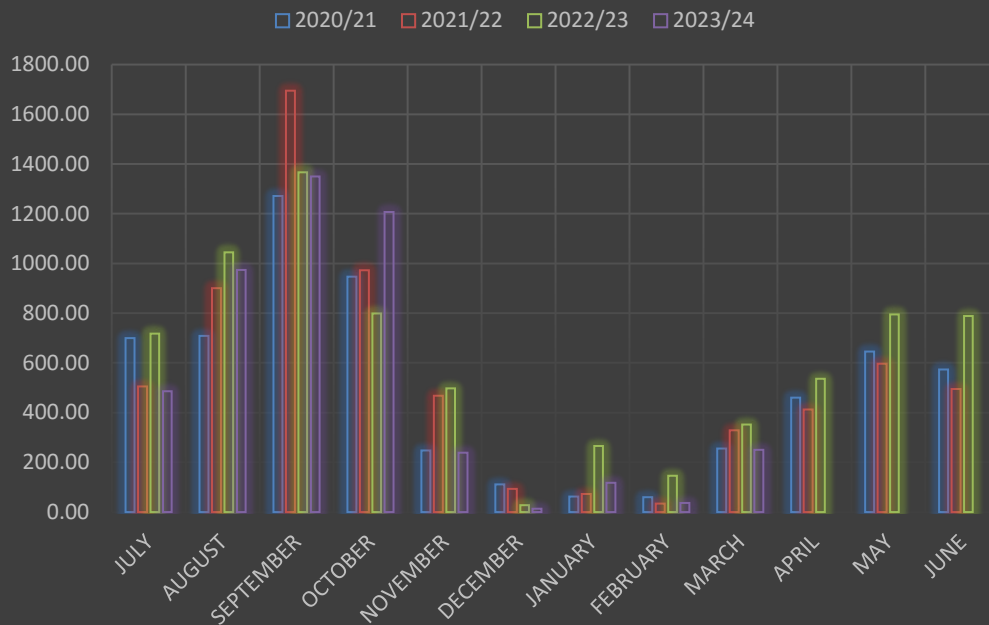
ANNUAL MUSEUM INCOME



Percentage Increase or Decrease/Year



MONTHLY MUSEUM INCOME



Summary for April 9 2024 Collection	
Total Containers Collected:	4,132
Total Value of Refunds:	\$413.20
Total Value of Personal Refunds:	\$341.60
Number of Personal Refunds:	24
Total Value of Donations:	\$71.60
Total Number of Donations:	12
Donated to WPA:	\$63.40
Number of Donations:	9
Donated to Hydrotherapy Pool Fund:	\$8.20
Number of Donations:	3
Number of Residences Collected From:	36
Number of Residences Issued Bins:	69
% of Residences Participated this month: (No allowances made for properties currently unoccupied)	52%
Year to Date % of Residences Participated:	67%

Material Type Summary	
Glass	925
Aluminium	2,551
PET - Clear	422
PET - Colour	46
HDPE	91
LPB	97
Steel	0
Other	0
Total	4,132

Ineligible Containers	13
-----------------------	----

Pauline Guest

Wheatbelt Cash for Containers

3 Benson Road
MERREDIN WA 6415

☎ 0429 467 178

✉ cashforcontainers@outlook.com



WHEATBELT
CASH FOR CONTAINERS

Bill Price
Chief Executive Officer

AUDIT SOW:	Shire of Westonia		
AUDIT AREA:	Audit timetable		
PREPARED BY:	DK	DATE:	08/04/2024

Our audit timetable for the financial year ended 30 June 2024 is as follows:

Key area	Target date	Person responsible
Audit Planning		
Send list of requirements for planning	9 April 2024	DK
Planning information provided to audit	19 April 2024	SOW
Audit Planning and Risk Assessment	22 April 2024	DK
Planning document to OAG for review	8 April 2024	DK
Entrance meeting document provide to SOW for agenda	8 April 2024	DK
Audit Entrance Meeting with Audit Committee Meeting	10 April 2024	DK, OAG
Interim Audit		
Send list of requirements for Interim	12 April 2024	DK
Reconciled financial information ready for audit (up to 31 March 2024) Interim Information provided	18 April 2024	SOW
Interim Audit selections to SOW	19 April 2024	DK
Information and sample ready for audit	29 April 2024	DK
Interim Audit visit	29 April -3 May 2024	DK & SOW
DK Manager Review	13 May 2024	DK
DK Director Review	20 May 2024	DK
OAG Review	30 May 2024	OAG
Issue of Interim Management Letter, if any (upon receipt of management comments)	7 June 2024	OAG
Final Audit		
Bank confirmation letters	1 July 2024	DK & SOW
Final audit list of requirements to SOW	30 August 2024	DK
Reconciled financial information ready for audit - Trial Balance - Balance Sheet Reconciliations Provide information requested by audit	13 September 2024	SOW
Draft Financial Report provided to audit	30 September 2024	SOW
Audit selections to SOW	27 September 2024	DK
Information and sample ready for audit	7 October 2024	SOW
Audit fieldwork visit	7-11 October 2024	DK & SOW
DK Manager Review	21 October 2024	DK
DK Director Review	28 October 2024	DK
File presented to OAG for review	31 October 2024	OAG

AUDIT SOW:	Shire of Westonia		
AUDIT AREA:	Audit timetable		
PREPARED BY:	DK	DATE:	08/04/2024

Key area	Target date	Person responsible
Financial Report		
Draft Audited Financial Report to SOW with OAG comments	8 November 2024	DK & SOW
Draft Audited Financial Report ready for Internal Agenda - Review	13 November 2024	DK & SOW
Approval by the CEO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Annual Financial Report Management Representation Letter 	18 November 2024	SOW
Final package to OAG for signing	18 November 2024	DK
Completion and Exit		
Meeting with Audit Committee or (Audit Exit Meeting)	18 November 2024	DK & SOW & OAG
Issue of Auditor's Report	By 19 November 2024	OAG
Council Meeting to adopt AFR	TBC	SOW

Key:

SOW = Shire of Westonia

DK = Dry Kirkness (Audit) Pty Ltd (Robert Hall (Director) and Team)

OAG = Office of the Auditor General representative (Mikey Fiorucci (Director))



Funding and support information for WA primary producers

This document provides some useful resources and information on grants and funding available to assist growers, pastoralists and industry experiencing hardship in challenging times.

Season information

Season 2024: information for WA farmers and pastoralists - seasonally relevant information and management options in broadacre and south-west agricultural areas and the Southern Rangelands of Western Australia.

Options to investigate

Farm Debt Mediation Scheme

- Available to assist farm and pastoral businesses resolve commercial debt disputes regarding loan agreements with their financial institution. Mediation is conducted by an independent mediator in an impartial and safe environment. For more information visit the [website](#), email ruralbusiness.developmentunit@dpird.wa.gov.au or call 1300 374 731.

Grants and programs

- Farm Business Resilience Program will help farmers identify gaps in their business strategy and provide them with the tools to prepare for, and manage, risk and improve business resilience.
- Future Drought Fund invests in projects to strengthen drought resilience.

A grants and programs finder is available, it is a guided search will help you find grants, funding and support programs from across government. WA specific grants and programs:

- AgBiz Drought Loans provides small businesses located in a drought affected region with loans to help them manage their business during a drought. Small businesses directly linked to the farming sector in drought-affected communities can apply for loans.
- Farm Management Deposits Scheme allows eligible primary production businesses to make cash deposits into a registered deposit institution in high income years and avoid being assessed for income tax on that sum, during that financial year. The deposit can be drawn upon in subsequent lower income years and assessed for taxation in that year.
- Drought loans for farm businesses provide loans to farm businesses to help them prepare for, manage through and recover from drought.

Farm Household Allowance Program provides farming families experiencing financial hardship with assistance through planning and training for long-term financial improvements as well as income support for up to 4 years.

Often funding is not available until a natural disaster is declared.

Support services

- The Regional Mens Health Initiative (RMHI) is a wellbeing and health education project aimed at improving outcomes for men and communities in regional, Western Australia. RMHI enables individuals, groups and communities to be self-sustaining and self-managing of wellbeing challenges. Phone: (08) 6314 1436
- Rural West provides free financial counselling to all primary producers and aims to transition clients through a financial crisis, improve their financial well-being and resilience, and improve business profitability or facilitate a dignified exit. Phone: 1800 612 004
- Rural aid provides critical support to farmers affected by natural disaster through financial, wellbeing and fodder assistance.
- Farmers across borders is a group of farmers and truckies from Western Australia aiming to help farmers by providing animal feed (straw & hay) and moral support to those who have been affected by drought and other natural disasters.
- Other rural support services are available, here is a comprehensive list.
- Drought, disaster and rural support - DAFF (agriculture.gov.au) - provides a list of programs and services to help prepare for, manage and recover from droughts, floods, pests and diseases, and other market disruptions.

Natural disaster assistance

The WA Government website lists support during emergencies caused by floods, droughts, cyclones or major bushfires or other natural disasters.

- Prepare warnings & incidents, recovery - Department of Fire and Emergency Services - provides simple advice and directs you to resources where you can find practical actions to prepare for and cope during a bushfire.
- Farm recovery after fire information and support services for recovery after fire.
- Animal welfare in emergencies - links to animal welfare during bushfires and recovery.
- Disaster recovery funding for WA is listed here when a natural disaster has been declared.
- Disaster Assist lists some arrangements to help with relief and recovery costs such as:
 - Disaster Recovery Payment may be provided as a one-off recovery payment to assist individuals and families that have been significantly affected by a major disaster.
 - Disaster Recovery Allowance a short-term income support payment to assist individuals who can demonstrate that their income has been affected as a direct result of a disaster.

More information

For further information or clarification, please contact:

- Kelly Hill, Manager Regional Intelligence and Adoption (**Albany**)
(08) 9892 8507 or kelly.hill@dpird.wa.gov.au
- Christine Zaicou-Kunesch, Manager Regional Intelligence and Adoption (**Geraldton**)
(0)8 9956 8549 or christine.zaicou-kunesch@dpird.wa.gov.au
- Brendan Nicholas, Manager Regional Intelligence and Adoption (**Esperance**)
(08) 9083 1110 or brendan.nicholas@dpird.wa.gov.au



For information and resources to assist this season, visit the Season 2024 webpage at agric.wa.gov.au/Season2024

From: [Bill Price](#)
To: [Chantelle Pedrotti](#)
Subject: FW: Local Government 2024 Determination
Date: Friday, 12 April 2024 10:50:47 AM

Bulletin

From: Submissions <Submissions@sat.wa.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, April 8, 2024 1:09 PM
Subject: Local Government 2024 Determination

Good Afternoon,

On Friday 05 April 2024, the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal released the 2024 Local Government Chief Executive Officers and Elected Members Determination setting salaries, allowances, fees etc effective 01 July 2024.

Significant changes in this Determination include:

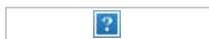
- An increase to the CEO Band 4 remuneration range
- A 4% increase to all CEO and Elected Member Bands
- An additional 0.5% increase to all CEO Bands to reflect the legislated increase to the superannuation guarantee
- A change to the Motor Vehicle section of the Determination (Part 5) for regional Band 3 and 4 Local Governments means any motor vehicle provided to the CEO is not to be considered part of the Total Reward Package. This provides further flexibility in setting the Total Reward Package for a CEO.
- Superannuation has been removed from the guidance notes following consultation with the DLGSC.

The new Determination can be found on the [Tribunal's website](#). If you have any queries, please feel free to contact us on the details below.

Mathew Ayre | Acting Senior Policy Officer
Salaries and Allowances Tribunal | Public Sector Commission
submissions@sat.wa.gov.au
08 6552 8935
Locked Bag 3002, West Perth WA 6872
WA.gov.au

Bill Price
Chief Executive Officer

41 Wolfram Street, WESTONIA WA 6423
Phone: (08) 9046 7063
Fax: (08) 9046 7001
Email: ceo@westonia.wa.gov.au
Website: www.westonia.wa.gov.au



DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this email (including attachments) is intended only for the use of the person(s) to whom it is addressed as it may be confidential and contain legally privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient you are hereby notified that any perusal, use, distribution, copying or disclosure is strictly prohibited. If you have received this email in error, please immediately advise us by return email and delete the email document.

From: [Bill Price](#)
To: [Chantelle Pedrotti](#)
Subject: FW: Request to endorse WEROC approach to GECZ re: land use policy
Date: Friday, 12 April 2024 10:52:31 AM

Bulletin

From: Rebekah Burgess <rebekah@150square.com.au>

Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2024 3:26 PM

To: Bill Price <ceo@westonia.wa.gov.au>; Raymond Griffiths <ceo@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>; 'ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au' <ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au>; 'ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au' <ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Neville Hale (<ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au>) <ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au>; Darren Mollenoyux <darren.mollenoyux@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; Cr Emily Ryan <crryan@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>; Councillor Manning <crmanning@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Mark Crees <cr.crees@westonia.wa.gov.au>; crthomson@tammin.wa.gov.au; Cr Ram Rajagopalan <cr.ram.rajagopalan@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; cr_wdellabosca@yilgarn.wa.gov.au

Subject: RE: Request to endorse WEROC approach to GECZ re: land use policy

Good Afternoon,

As I received a positive response from the majority of Member Shires I have passed on the request to James McGovern who has advised that he will take it to the Zone Executive Committee meeting next Tuesday 2 April with a recommendation that it be included for consideration in the GECZ Agenda for the meeting on Thursday 11 April.

I have been asked by our Chair to make some additional recommendations relating to the same item and so the motion now reads as follows:

That WEROC recommend to GECZ that WALGA;

- 1. In considering Agricultural Land Use, establishes and promotes policy templates to guide Local Governments for their individual adoption to protect and prioritise the preservation of agricultural land against its displacement 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, renewable energy generation and transmission.*
- 3. Investigates potential impacts to local government rates on rural land, that has approved long term tree planting for different purposes, for example but not limited to planting for carbon offsets, planting for clearing offsets, or planting for renewable fuels; and renewable energy investments.*
- 4. Provides advice to local government on what Policies or Special Area Rates should be considered for the land affected.*

Given that the Zone executive are meeting next Tuesday and there are public holidays tomorrow and Monday, I have already sent the revision to James but if there is anyone strongly opposed to these additions please let me know as soon as you are able.

Thank you.

Kind Regards
Rebekah

From: Bill Price <ceo@westonia.wa.gov.au>

Sent: Thursday, March 28, 2024 8:13 AM

To: Raymond Griffiths <ceo@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>; Rebekah Burgess <rebekah@150square.com.au>; 'ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au' <ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au>; 'ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au' <ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Neville Hale (<ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au>) <ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au>; Darren Mollenoyux <darren.mollenoyux@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; Cr Emily Ryan <crryan@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>; Councillor Manning

<crmanning@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Mark Crees <cr.crees@westonia.wa.gov.au>; crthomson@tammin.wa.gov.au; Cr Ram Rajagopalan <cr.ram.rajagopalan@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; cr_wdellabosca@yilgarn.wa.gov.au

Subject: RE: Request to endorse WEROC approach to GECZ re: land use policy

Yep we can go with that

cheers

From: Raymond Griffiths <ceo@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 3:34 PM

To: Bill Price <ceo@westonia.wa.gov.au>; Rebekah Burgess <rebekah@150square.com.au>; 'ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au' <ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au>; 'ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au' <ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Neville Hale (ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au) <ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au>; Darren Mollenoyux

<darren.mollenoyux@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; Cr Emily Ryan <crryan@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>; Councillor Manning

<crmanning@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Mark Crees <cr.crees@westonia.wa.gov.au>; crthomson@tammin.wa.gov.au; Cr

Ram Rajagopalan <cr.ram.rajagopalan@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; cr_wdellabosca@yilgarn.wa.gov.au

Subject: RE: Request to endorse WEROC approach to GECZ re: land use policy

Good Afternoon

After discussion with both Cr Manning and Rebekah would the group consider the below modified wording to the recommendation;

That WEROC recommend to GECZ that WALGA;

- 1. In considering the Agricultural Land Use it 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, renewable energy generation and transmission.*

Raymond Griffiths
Chief Executive Officer
Shire of Kellerberrin
Mobile: 0417 927 637

Kellerberrin Shire Office:
110 Massingham Street (Great Eastern Highway)
KELLERBERRIN WA 6410
Ph: 9045 4006
Email: ceo@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au
Web: www.kellerberrin.wa.gov.au

The Shire of Kellerberrin would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and their continuing connect to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Disclaimer - This email is private and confidential. If you are not the intended recipient, please advise by return email immediately and delete the email, including any attachments without using or disclosing the contents in any way. The views expressed in this email are those of the author and do not represent those of the Shire of Kellerberrin unless this is clearly indicated. You should scan this email and any attachments for viruses. The Shire of Kellerberrin accepts no liability for any direct or indirect damage or loss resulting from the use of any attachments to this email.

From: Bill Price <ceo@westonia.wa.gov.au>

Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 3:01 PM

To: Rebekah Burgess <rebekah@150square.com.au>; 'ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au' <ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au>; 'ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au' <ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Neville Hale (ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au)

<ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au>; Raymond Griffiths <ceo@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>; Darren Mollenoyux <darren.mollenoyux@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; Cr Emily Ryan <crryan@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>; Councillor Manning <crmanning@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Mark Crees <cr.crees@westonia.wa.gov.au>; crthomson@tammin.wa.gov.au; Cr Ram Rajagopalan <cr.ram.rajagopalan@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; cr_wdellabosca@yilgarn.wa.gov.au
Subject: RE: Request to endorse WEROC approach to GECZ re: land use policy

Hey Bek,

Westonia fully supports this recommendation and action

Regards

From: Rebekah Burgess <rebekah@150square.com.au>

Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 2:57 PM

To: Bill Price <ceo@westonia.wa.gov.au>; 'ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au' <ceo@yilgarn.wa.gov.au>; 'ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au' <ceo@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Neville Hale (ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au) <ceo@tammin.wa.gov.au>; Raymond Griffiths <ceo@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>; Darren Mollenoyux <darren.mollenoyux@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; Cr Emily Ryan <crryan@kellerberrin.wa.gov.au>; Councillor Manning <crmanning@merredin.wa.gov.au>; Mark Crees <cr.crees@westonia.wa.gov.au>; crthomson@tammin.wa.gov.au; Cr Ram Rajagopalan <cr.ram.rajagopalan@brucerock.wa.gov.au>; cr_wdellabosca@yilgarn.wa.gov.au

Subject: Request to endorse WEROC approach to GECZ re: land use policy

Dear Board Members,

WEROC Chair, Renee Manning has requested that the Board consider and endorse a motion out of session. The details are as follows:

Background:

In the minutes of the last Great Eastern Country Zone meeting Cr Crees talked to item 9.4.1 where "agricultural land use" is a new strategic priority for the Zone; and noted that there is concern about the impact of large scale land use change (eg trees for carbon offsets). There was however, no resolution requesting WALGA to provide any advice or support to LGAs grappling with this issue.

In the minutes of the Avon-Midland Zone in November, this resolution was moved:

Cr T Lefroy moved and Cr L Stewart seconded – That the Zone recommends to the WA Local Government Association that in considering land use policy WALGA establish policies that provide local governments options 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.

WALGA has thus far only received formal correspondence from the AMZ to act on the issue. If other zones are able to move similar resolutions, it may drive some action at their end.

Recommendation:

That WEROC Inc. write to the Great Eastern Country Zone EO and request that a similar motion be moved at the next meeting.

A draft motion is provided below:

That the GECZ recommends to WALGA in considering land use policy, that WALGA establish policies that guide local government in prioritising or optimising local and regional outcomes when dealing with proponents seeking to change land use that will displace agriculture. This could include land uses such as tree planting for offsets or carbon, renewable energy generation and transmission.

Can you please respond to this email and advise if you are supportive of or against WEROC taking this request to the Zone.

I believe the next GECZ meeting is scheduled for 11 April so in order to get this request through and the motion added to the agenda (assuming that the majority are in favour) I will need responses by early next week at the latest. Thank you!

Kind Regards
Rebekah



Rebekah Burges
Executive Officer
WEROC Inc.
PO Box 5
MECKERING WA 6405
M: 0428 871 202
E: rebekah@150square.com.au

To find out more about WEROC Inc. Visit: www.weroc.com.au

Bill Price

Chief Executive Officer

41 Wolfram Street, WESTONIA WA 6423
Phone: (08) 9046 7063
Fax: (08) 9046 7001
Email: ceo@westonia.wa.gov.au
Website: www.westonia.wa.gov.au

DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this email (including attachments) is intended only for the use of the person(s) to whom it is addressed as it may be confidential and contain legally privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient you are hereby notified that any perusal, use, distribution, copying or disclosure is strictly prohibited. If you have received this email in error, please immediately advise us by return email and delete the email document.

Bill Price

Chief Executive Officer

41 Wolfram Street, WESTONIA WA 6423
Phone: (08) 9046 7063
Fax: (08) 9046 7001
Email: ceo@westonia.wa.gov.au
Website: www.westonia.wa.gov.au

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) is an independent, member-based, not for profit organisation representing and supporting the WA Local Government sector.

Our membership includes all 139 Local Governments in the State. WALGA uses its influence, support and expertise to deliver better outcomes for WA Local Governments and their communities.

We do this through effective advocacy to all levels of Government on behalf of our Members and by the provision of expert advice, services and support to Local Governments.

WALGA's vision is for agile and inclusive Local Governments enhancing community wellbeing and enabling economic prosperity.

Executive Summary

Telecommunications services are of critical importance to Local Governments, enabling delivery of emergency management responsibilities, economic development objectives and community aspirations for safe, attractive, liveable places. This Review is important because the specific needs of rural, regional and remote communities are often overlooked in upgrades to national telecommunications infrastructure.

Local Governments in regional, rural and remote Western Australia report that access to telecommunications services is not equitable across Australia in relation to:

- mobile service coverage;
- choice and therefore cost of mobile service provider;
- speed, capacity and cost of internet services; and
- reliability and resilience of mobile and broadband services.

To reduce the inequity of access to telecommunications services, this submission recommends that the Australian Government:

1. Undertake an effective audit of mobile coverage as soon as possible, identifying the level of service that should be expected at each location.
2. Ensures that the extent of mobile service coverage does not diminish as a result of replacing existing 3G services with 4G and 5G.
3. Continues to co-invest with the telecommunications industry to increase mobile service coverage.
4. Refines Mobile Black Spot Program design to encourage solutions that provide effective coverage without needing multiple SIMS and mobile plans.
5. Requires telecommunications carriers to monitor and report the level of broadband and mobile service and adjust capacity to meet peak demand in areas that have significant changes in population throughout the year.
6. Identify mechanisms to encourage or require telecommunications carriers to identify the most vulnerable parts of the network to power failures and establish plans to greatly increase resilience against power failure.
7. Encourage development and deployment of cost-effective standalone power supply systems at telecommunications facilities including mobile base stations.
8. Evaluate the role of accessible satellite services to provide resilience for mobile and broadband services, particularly during emergencies.
9. Initiate the steps to achieve timely mobile roaming during times of emergency and potentially more broadly.
10. Redefine the Universal Service Obligations in terms of services provided, cost, reliability and resilience. The technology should not be specified, to enable options including satellite to be considered, provided the levels of service are guaranteed.

1. Introduction

Western Australian Local Governments have a general power to provide for the good governance of people in their district. In addition to legislative functions, the executive functions of Local Government includes provision of services and facilities. A Local Government can provide any service or facility that is necessary for the good governance of the people in its district. However, before providing a service or facility, a Local Government must satisfy itself that the service or facility integrates with State or Commonwealth services, does not inappropriately duplicate any State, Commonwealth or private service, and is managed efficiently and effectively. Consequently, Western Australian Local Governments are generally not providers of utility services including water, power or telecommunications.

However, telecommunications services are of critical importance to Local Governments enabling delivery of their:

- emergency management responsibilities;
- economic development objectives; and
- vision to create safe, attractive, liveable places.

Consequently, Local Governments in rural, regional and remote areas are concerned about the inadequacy of telecommunications services and advocate to Federal and State Governments as well as industry for equitable access to those services needed by residents, businesses and visitors to the area.

Local Governments in regional, rural and remote Western Australia report that their access to telecommunications services is not equitable in relation to:

- mobile service coverage;
- choice and therefore cost of mobile service provider;
- speed, capacity and cost of internet services; and
- reliability and resilience of mobile and broadband services.

Despite significant investment and further planned investment in service offerings and increasing the resilience of telecommunications infrastructure to power failures, these issues are the same as those identified in the submission to the 2021 Hartsuyker Review. However, in the past three years low earth orbit satellite services have become available to retail customers and there has been significant changes to the wireless and satellite broadband service offerings. This review provides an opportunity to better identify the role these newer technologies will play in achieving cost effective, resilient, equitable access to telecommunications services that are significant to those living and working outside Australia's major urban centres. If these technologies are to play a significant role, then measures will be required to ensure that these are accessible throughout the community.

2. Mobile Service Coverage

Rural, regional and remote Local Governments acknowledge and value the significant investment by the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with telecommunications companies and the State Government, through the Mobile BlackSpot Program. It is important to highlight that recent investments continue to have a positive impact, including in areas relatively close to Perth and major regional centres. However, significant parts of Western Australia currently have no mobile telephone coverage and can only access the internet and voice communications using satellite based services.

2.1. Accuracy and Relevance of Mobile Coverage Maps

Telecommunications carriers publish coverage maps for 3G, 4G and 5G networks. However, feedback from the community is that these do not provide reliable information at a local scale. The 2022 Federal election commitment to conduct a national audit of mobile coverage is urgently required to better identify mobile coverage Black Spots, providing reliable information to consumers and enabling future investments by governments and industry to be effectively targeted.

It is also important that the level of service that can be expected in a covered area is defined. NBN services typically rely on 4G as a back-up, and consumers switch to mobile services when fixed line services are unavailable. It needs to be clear whether "coverage" includes adequate capacity to utilise data driven services, including websites such as Emergency WA or apps providing news or time critical data (such as Bushfire.io).

2.2. 3G Network Closure

Based on the published mobile network coverage maps as at April 2024, significant lengths of key highways in Western Australia, including the Eyre Highway, Great Northern Highway and North West Coastal Highway, as well as other areas currently have 3G or no mobile service. Prior to closure of the remaining 3G network, urgent action is required to address deficiencies in emergency communication and network connectivity to ensure the safety and well-being of residents and travellers in these regions.

2.3. Mobile Black Spot Program

There remains a need for an on-going program such as the Mobile Black Spot Program, to improve mobile telephone coverage in areas where the commercial outcomes will not support this investment. This includes both peri-urban areas, as well as rural, regional and remote.

While those living and traveling through regional, rural and remote Western Australia desire a choice of service providers, the current reality is that Telstra is the only service provider across large parts of Western Australia. The mobile Black Spot Program design responds to applications from carriers. However, there is a risk that the resultant investment does not deliver integrated service coverage across the region. To illustrate, Figure 1 shows telecommunications sites in the south-east of Western Australia. With funding support, a small number of towers have been installed in remote communities that are unlikely to provide service coverage to those travelling through. Similarly, community residents will be unable to access services while enroute to regional centres such as Kalgoorlie unless they have multiple SIM cards. Solutions that provide neutral host base stations that not only can but do support multi-carrier outcomes are likely to provide a more effective level of service.

The Mobile Black Spot Program continues to seek co-funding from Local Governments. This creates clear inequity, through an expectation that remote Local Governments, which demonstrably have the least financial capacity, are expected to co-fund telecommunications infrastructure that would be funded by industry in urban areas.

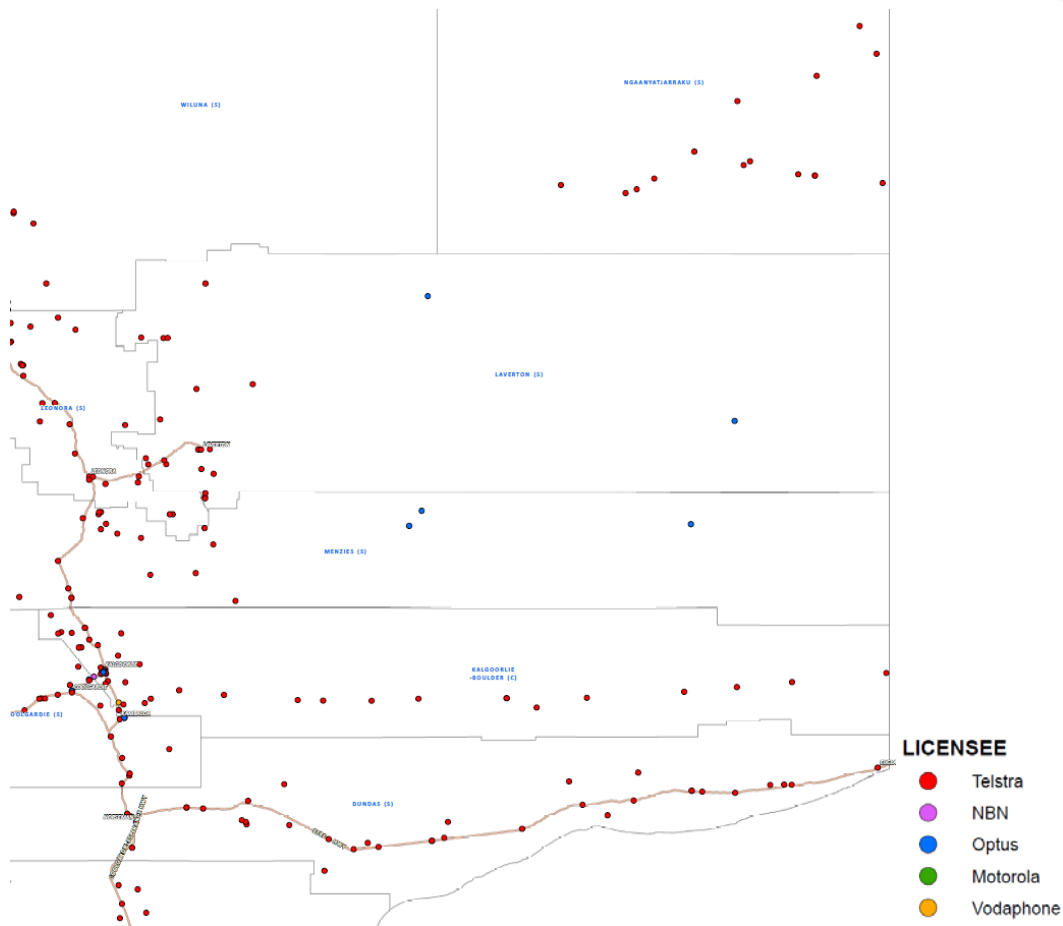


Figure 1: ACMA radio telecommunications sites in south-east Western Australia.

Recommendations

Undertake an effective audit of mobile coverage as soon as possible, identifying the level of service that should be expected at each location.

Ensure that the extent of mobile service coverage does not diminish as a result of replacing existing 3G services with 4G and 5G.

Continue to co-invest with the telecommunications industry to increase mobile service coverage.

Refine Mobile Black Spot Program design to encourage solutions that provide effective coverage without needing multiple SIMS and mobile plans.

3. Speed and Capacity

The lived experience of many in regional and remote Western Australia is poor performance of their mobile and internet services, particularly in areas that experience large seasonal increases in population. During the peak tourist season visitor population in some popular locations, such as Exmouth, can be three (or more) times the resident population. Towns that are not tourist destinations, but service travellers also report that the telecommunications services do not have sufficient capacity during peak periods, to the extent that even eftpos machines are unable to operate on the mobile network.

There is evidence that the level of connectivity literacy may mean that cost effective options are available, particularly for internet services, that people may not be aware of.

Recommendations

Carriers be required to monitor and report the level of broadband and mobile service and adjust capacity to meet peak demand in areas that have significant changes in population throughout the year.

4. Reliability and Resilience

Contemporary telecommunications are dependent on power supply throughout the network, including at the premises, nodes or mobile base stations, exchanges and other facilities. Reliability and resilience of power supplies in rural, regional and remote Western Australia is significantly worse than in urban and CBD areas. Based on data published by Western Power¹, the duration and frequency of power outages in rural areas was four to five times higher than in urban areas during 2022/23, noting that this was the best performance in the more remote rural areas in over a decade as a result of increased powerline maintenance and changes to operating procedures. It should also be highlighted that major (weather) events (two during the year) are excluded from the data. Horizon Power reports², on average slightly lower frequency of power outages than rural areas served by Western Power, with a total duration of outages within the range reported by Western Power for different types of rural customers.

The community, including emergency services, are very heavily dependent on mobile telecommunications. The lack of resilience in the telecommunications network was again recently highlighted in Western Australia in the aftermath of a severe storm that passed through parts of the Perth Hills, and Wheatbelt region on 16 January 2024. Given the extent of damage to the power network it took several days to restore the majority of power services and more than a week to reconnect all customers. Communities highlighted that mobile telephone services and internet access (nbn) failed in many places within hours of the power failures resulting people in a large part of the State being unable to access 000 services, volunteer fire and rescue services unable to communicate with volunteers and people unable to confirm the welfare of family and friends.

The battery back-up provided for telecommunications was demonstrated to be inadequate as was the capacity to quickly deploy and then maintain generators at many sites. Given that the track of the January 2024 storm cell was relatively small, compared with a cyclone for example, this event highlights the vulnerability of communities in rural, and remote areas to prolonged telecommunications outages. Cyclone Seroja, which

¹ Western Power, [Service Standard Performance Report for the year ended 30 June 2023](#) Accessed 10 April 2024

² Horizon Power [Network Quality and Reliability of Supply Code 2021/22 Performance Report](#) Accessed 10 April 2024

struck the Mid West region of Western Australia in April 2021 had a significantly greater, and longer lasting impact on the availability of telecommunications.

Service providers including Western Power and nbn Co monitor their networks and provide information to customers about interruptions and anticipated times for repair. However, these initiatives are ineffective once the telecommunications networks fail.

Recognising that most people rely on their mobile phone to access information, the Western Australian Department of Fire and Emergency Services is investing significantly in upgrading Emergency WA³, to provide the community with accurate timely information about emergencies in their area. This too will be ineffective, without reliable access to mobile telecommunications.

The joint Federal and State Government National Disaster Risk Reduction grants program supported an important project lead by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services with support from WALGA, telecommunications carriers and power utilities during 2022 and 2023 to create a consolidated dataset of mobile phone towers and their interdependency and link to power supply. The aim is to identify and prioritise investments to improve telecommunications availability and reliability. The technical and commercial sensitivities make implementation of this work difficult. However, we remain of the view that it is important to maximise the benefits from investments in improved resilience.

Given the very large number of telecommunications facilities that require uninterrupted power supply in order to provide a resilient network, a suite of solutions is likely required. These are considered in more detail below.

4.1. On-going Investment in new and renewed batteries

The Mobile Network Hardening Program has funded 12-hour battery back-up at 198 mobile sites in Western Australia and generators or other power system improvements at a further 44 locations. However, there are more than 1200 mobile towers in regional Western Australia, as well as other locations that must be powered for the system to operate. On-going, targeted investment in renewing and expanding the back-up power systems remains critical. It is important to ensure that the appropriate incentives and commercial systems are in place to achieve this.

4.2. Standalone Power Supply

Remotely managed, integrated, standalone power supply systems incorporating batteries, solar panels and if necessary diesel generators offer the potential to radically improve the reliability of power supplies to telecommunications facilities at all times, including during times of emergency. These remain costly, but it would appear that the relative cost is falling and opportunities to exploit economies of scale should be pursued.

4.3. Satellite Based Services

Funded through the Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters Program (STAND), satellite enabled wifi services have been installed in 370 Local Government evacuation centres and similar facilities

³ [Local Company to deliver next generation Emergency WA](#)

across the State. These are designed to offer a communications service during emergencies when people have been evacuated.

Satellite based service offerings are developing rapidly, particularly with the introduction of low earth orbit (LEO) satellites and development of the SkyMuster service by nbn Co. While there is only one LEO service provider currently operating in Australia, a further five may provide services within the next three years. This is a critical technology opportunity that needs to be better understood in the context of securing accessible, reliable telecommunications. There are limits to the number of connections per cell, which may limit the applicability of this type of technology, especially in peri-urban areas. A possible model is consumer equipment seamlessly switching between fibre, conventional mobile and satellite systems depending on availability and in so doing, providing two levels of redundancy. This Review provides an opportunity to examine the role satellite based services will play in providing resilience and redundancy for the telecommunications systems and in providing services that are yet to be available in some locations, including peri-urban areas.

4.4. Roaming

Telstra is the dominant provider of mobile telephone services in rural, regional and remote Western Australia. For most people that live and work outside of the urban areas, Telstra is their only viable mobile service provider. However, there remains a strong desire for roaming to be enabled, at least in times of emergency and initiated quickly. This would provide an increased level of security for travellers, as well as an alternative, in some places, should the Telstra network be unavailable. We note that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission concluded that mobile roaming during emergencies was technically feasible⁴ while acknowledging there are issues that network operators and government will need to address in order to implement this capability. Given the reliance of the community and emergency services on the mobile network the government should initiate the steps needed to achieve mobile roaming.

4.5. Other solutions

The \$50 million Telecommunications Disaster Resilience Innovation Program including the Power Resilience Round and Innovation Round announced by the Commonwealth Government in 2023 as part of the Better Connectivity Plan for rural and regional Australia may identify solutions that can be deployed at sufficient scale to deliver a step change in the reliability and resilience of the telecommunications systems in rural and remote Australia.

Recommendations

Identify mechanisms to encourage or require telecommunications carriers to identify the most vulnerable parts of the network to power failures and establish plans to greatly increase resilience against power failure.

Encourage development of cost-effective standalone power supply systems.

Evaluate the role of accessible satellite services to provide resilience for mobile and broadband services, particularly during emergencies.

Initiate the steps to achieve timely mobile roaming during times of emergency and potentially more broadly.

⁴ Australian Competition and Consumer Commission July 2023 [Regional mobile infrastructure Inquiry](#) Accessed 10 April 2024

5. Choice and Cost

New technologies and providers are establishing a presence to provide choices for rural and regional consumers to access the Internet including fibre, wireless (with a range of suppliers), satellite and low earth orbit satellite services. However, for extensive mobile telephone coverage, outside of the urban areas Telstra provides the most extensive coverage in Western Australia.

Wireless internet services have expanded significantly in rural areas and now provide a choice, particularly for businesses with large data needs. Opportunities to effectively expand this offering should continue to be explored.

6. Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion generally refers to the capability of individuals or groups to enjoy the benefits of being online and use technology confidently to improve their day-to-day lives. The connectivity and affordability pillars of the Western Australian Digital Inclusion Blueprint are particularly relevant to rural, regional and remote areas. Digital inclusion offers a potentially useful framework to assess equity of telecommunications services between regional and urban areas

6.1. Essential Service Delivery

Residents and businesses in regional Western Australia are more dependent than ever before on access to the internet to access basic government and business services. The physical presence of businesses and government in regional Western Australia continues to contract. Many regions now have no physical banking presence, with all services delivered online. A wide range of goods and services are accessed using on-line purchasing platforms. Accessible, reliable and capable telecommunications underpin access to all of these services.

7. Universal Service Obligations

Infrastructure Australia notes that while the overall telecommunications industry is competitive and expanding rapidly, the specific needs of rural and remote users are often overlooked in upgrades to national telecommunications infrastructure⁵. There remains a clear need for universal service obligations to drive more equitable access to telecommunications services in rural and remote areas.

⁵ [Infrastructure Australia, Australian Infrastructure Audit 2019 Accessed 12 April 2024](#)

The Universal Service Obligations, including specification of the technology to be provided no longer delivers equitable access to telecommunications services across Australia. Several detailed studies have examined potential changes to the Universal Service Obligations arrangements.

Recommendations

The universal service obligations should be defined in terms of services provided, cost, reliability and resilience. The technology should not be specified, to enable options including satellite to be considered, provided the levels of service are guaranteed.