



## **WBAC Climate Alliance Reference Group Meeting**

**Date:** Friday 14th February 2025

**Location:** Shire of Bridgetown Greenbushes administration office, Council Chambers

**Meeting opened:** 9.27 am

1. Welcome

a) **Acknowledgement to Country**

Cr Alexis Davy acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and paid respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Attendance

Voting:

Cr Alexis Davy SODB (Chair)  
Cr Vicki Hansen SON (Deputy Chair)  
Cr Donelle Buegge SOM  
Cr Tracy Lansdell SOBGB  
Officer Alexa Tunmer SOBGB  
Officer Ann Bentley SOM  
Officer Nicki Jones SOBB

Non-voting:

Matthew Tartaglia

Apologies:

Cr Wendy Eiby SOM  
Cr Mike Christensen SOBGB

Cr Anita Linderman SODB  
Cr Julia Boyle SOBG  
Cr Tim Sly SON  
Officer Clint Coner SON

2. **Declarations of interest – Nil**

3. Confirm minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

**Moved:** *Cr Vicki Hansen*

**Seconded:** *Cr Donelle Buegge*

Matters arising

Introductions from the group to welcome new member Nicki Jones, who is the Manager of Community Services at SOBB.

CARG Terms of Reference Updated

*A) That the WBAC considers amending the Terms of Reference to:*

*A designated local government officer may vote as a proxy when a Councillor is unable to attend*

1. Ensures quorum is met, especially when councillors are unavailable.
2. Proxies can be designated on day of the meeting

*B) A selected community member may serve as a voting member on the committee, replacing one of the two elected Councillors, provided that at least one elected Councillor remains as a voting member.*

1. Allows for greater expertise and engagement from individuals with relevant knowledge.
2. Community members must be pre-nominated to the alliance as voting members before they can act as a voting member

Project Officer went through Actions from previous meeting.

*Attached Below*

#### 4. A) Carbon Offset Projects

- Concerns regarding biodiversity planting projects for carbon credits and commercial plantations are common amongst WBAC members
- Lack of planning policy and consistent consultation guidelines for such projects.
- Concern over food security with farming land being used for non-agricultural purposes.
- Higher fuel loads from carbon offset plantations increasing bushfire risk.
- Shift from working farms to passive land use causes impacts to social fabric of rural communities, absentee landowners also raise concerns regarding pest management.
- 100-year lease agreements make reversion to farmland difficult
- Desire for projects with real biodiversity benefits, not just high tree counts.
- Need for clear local government policy to guide approvals and community engagement.
- An opportunity exists for WBAC to develop common policy and guidelines for proponents to influence better outcomes
- Members are interested to learn more about the draft DCCEEW Integrated farm & land management methodology

***Motion:*** *The CARG to investigate common policy and guidelines for biodiversity and commercial plantation development applications.*

***Moved:*** *Cr Donelle Buegge*

***Second:*** *Cr Vicki Hanson*

***Action:*** *Project Officer to ensure that CARG members are invited to any sessions held by DCCEEW at WBAC level*

#### B) Southern Forest Food Council Regional Carbon Strategy & Pilot Program

- Leading the development of a regional carbon strategy focused on agricultural and forestry land.

- A pilot program is set to begin in March, with funding secured for consultation and development.
- The pilot aims to identify appropriate tools and calculators for carbon accounting, which could be useful for broader applications.
- The SFFC is interested in aligning with WBAC and the CARG to share insights and collaborate,

C) RDA South West is planning a series of face-to-face workshops in 2025 to help SMEs prepare for carbon reporting

- Calculate their carbon footprint and establish baseline emissions
- Prepare for mandatory climate reporting requirements.
- Develop plans to transition to net zero and reduce emissions

**Action:** Project officer to seek additional information on the likely requirements, timelines and thresholds for mandatory carbon or climate related financial risk disclosure reporting

## **5. Lina Peche from Water Corp presented on Waterwise Councils**

- Lina Peche provided an overview of the Waterwise Councils Program and its evolving focus on regional councils.
- The program aims to support councils in developing water-wise policies, strategic planning, and community engagement.
- A key challenge raised was the resource constraints for councils, particularly around data collection and reporting.
- There is interest in case studies from other councils to adopt best practices rather than reinventing strategies.
- Discussion on water security beyond scheme water, particularly for councils reliant on groundwater and rainwater harvesting.
- SON raised concerns about unmonitored groundwater use and its impact on water availability.
- Interest in integrating broader water risk measures into Waterwise Councils reporting, beyond scheme water tracking.
- Water Corp is open to modifying the reporting structure to better fit regional councils' needs.
- Proposal for group sessions where councils can collaborate on action plans and annual reporting together to streamline the process.

**Action:** Project officer to share slides from Waterwise Councils presentation

**Action:** Project Officer to share CARG's Action plan with Lina Peche from Water Corp.

**Action:** Project Officer to follow up with Lina Peche to determine timing for a session where CARG members can discuss their Waterwise action plans and reporting.

## **6. Funding Opportunities**

### **Community Stewardship Grant**

- Supports local conservation and sustainable management projects.
- Small grants: \$1,000 - \$50,000.
- Large grants: \$50,000 - \$450,000.
- Closes: April 7th.
- local governments are eligible to apply, but collaboration with community groups would likely strengthen applications.
- Discussion around whether a joint application across multiple councils could be beneficial.
- There may not be enough time to develop and refine project ideas before the application deadline. Will be worth considering for 2026 to allow for proper project scoping.
- SOM has already secured a grant from an earlier round for Windy Harbour rehabilitation, biodiversity monitoring, and community education, with planting planned for winter 2025.

**Action:** Project officer to check with Executive Officer whether the Alliance qualifies as a non-local government entity for grant eligibility

### **Stronger Communities**

- Eligible projects include greenhouse gas emission reduction measures
- Offers up to \$20,000 for small infrastructure projects that provide social benefits
- Closes: March 28th.
- Local governments must provide 50% funding, but non-profits and community groups can receive 100% funding

**Action:** CARG to consider large grant opportunity for 2026, allowing sufficient time to scope projects, ensure alignment with action plans, and obtain necessary approvals

### **Hamer Family Sprout Fund**

- Funding: Offers up to \$5,000 for projects focused on environmental education, sustainability, and youth leadership.
- Deadline 30 September 2025
- Open to various organisations, but competition is high due to limited total funding (~\$25,000 annually).
- Would be relevant for local community groups or educational initiatives but may not be suitable for large-scale council projects.

**Action:** *Project Officer to align funding opportunities with the action plan in future grant applications to ensure strategic relevance and effective resource allocation*

### **Lotterywest Funding**

- Potential collaboration for funding might be available to support local governments in the South West with tree planting projects.
- Having a verge policy that outlines preferred vegetation types could strengthen funding applications.
- Lottery West offers a wide range of funding opportunities, which could support various climate, sustainability, and community projects.
- WBAC has some Lottery West funding set aside for a large project, but no specific project has been identified yet.
- A climate-related project was suggested as a good fit for this funding

**Action:** *Project Officer to discuss with Executive Officer to clarify the details of the existing Lottery West funding and explore how it can be applied to a regional climate or sustainability project.*

## **7. WALGA Renewable Energy Advocacy**

- A renewable energy forum was held by WALGA in November, targeting local government councillors and CEOs.
- Attendees expressed frustration at the lack of an energy transition strategy and regulatory framework for approvals and community benefit sharing
- Minister Whitby acknowledged issues but provided no clear policy direction.
- fast-tracked approvals may bypass local governments, leaving no structured local benefits from renewable projects despite the impact of large-scale renewable projects on local communities.

- SOM currently developing renewable energy policy

**Motion:** CARG recommends WBAC develop a regional position on renewable energy projects, covering planning approvals, consultation, and community dividends and benefit sharing.

**Moved:** Cr Vicki Hansen

**Second:** Cr Tracy Lansdell

## 8. WALGA Sustainable Energy Project

- Currently evaluating an RFQ for phase two, set to commence in April 2025.
- 48 local governments involved; if 100% opt-in, the rate is more competitive than the fallback position at 65% participation.
- Buildings must consume 500,000 kWh per year to participate.
- 50 local governments involved; if 100% opt-in, the rate is more competitive than the fallback position at 65% participation.
- SOBGB endorsed 100% renewable energy
- SOBGB has included its recreation centre and aquatic centre and requested additional buildings to be included

## 9. Shires Updates/WBAC Updates

### Project Officer

- Grant research
- Waterwise Councils
- Engaged with SFFC about their regional carbon strategy
- Meeting with RDA and Net Zero
- Monitoring updates on Carbon Reporting

### SOBGB

- Community surveys held for strategic community plan
- SAC has changed from an advisory group to a working group
- Plan to apply for Waterwise funding through the Greening scheme
- Possible verge tree program with community opt-in
- Solar and battery backup installed at several shire buildings
- Heat pump installed at the recreation centre
- WasteSorted community education program to turn curb side bins into worm farms.

- School and community workshops on food waste
- Shire covering public liability insurance & venue hire to remove startup barriers for Repair Cafe

#### SOM

- Biodiversity assessments completed for five reserves (50% of total landmass).
- Renewing Conservation Values Report for road vegetation management
- Windy Harbour Coastal Hazard Management Plan going to Council in March after five years of work.
- South coast water has also beat its highest record of 21.5 Celsius
- Working on approval process for wildlife releases in local reserves.
- Western Ringtail Possum rehabilitation under discussion.
- Managing rising power costs due to carbon pricing changes and exploring budget solutions.
- Interest in SOBG's working group and how it might be implemented in SOM
- Exploring battery storage for Pemberton Sports Club to optimise existing solar.

#### SON

- New Sustainable Officer working 3 days a week
- Sustainability Committee to start up again. Seeking new participants.
- Community concern over waste handling and impact on emus scavenging at the site.
- Public outrage over emu welfare and waste practices.
- After years of effort, solar panels and battery backup now provide at the tip to power its operations.
- Exploring better fencing solutions and machinery for waste compression.

#### SOBB

- Pool audit identified leaks.
- Water shut off temporarily on Australia Day due to leaks, workaround found just before opening.
- New Heat pump installed after old one broke
- Weed management survey to gather community feedback on how to prioritise weed control

#### SODB

- Energy Audit Tender bids came in higher than the budget, number of facilities in scope may be reduced
- Election commitment for retrofitting the Recreational Centre with renewables
- The Recreational Centre would then be able to harness mid-day pricing benefits in the WALGA tender process.



- Due to high contamination levels, the Bunbury Harvey Regional Facility is no longer accepting FOGO; alternative solutions are needed.
- Waterwise Council & Sustainability Advisory Committee - proposed elected member's motion in March.

## General Business

### 2025 Calander

- Adjustments to align CARG meetings before WBAC meetings for better coordination.

**Action:** Project Officer to discuss with Executive Officer the budget considerations needed for next year

**Action:** Project Officer to amend calander with updated dates

**Date of next meeting:** 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2025

**Close meeting:** 12.10 pm

Item:	Action:	Progress:
<b>Waterwise Councils</b>	Project Officer to gather information on individual Shires' water management teams.	In Progress
<b>Waterwise Councils</b>	Project Officer to share the SOM council report supporting motion to become Waterwise Council with the group after it is reviewed by Council in March	In Progress
<b>Waterwise Councils</b>	Project officer to share slides from Waterwise Councils presentation	To Do

<b>Waterwise Councils</b>	Project Officer to share CARG's Action plan with Lina Peche from Water Corp.	Done
<b>Waterwise Councils</b>	Project Officer to follow up with Lina Peche to determine timing for a session where CARG members can discuss their Waterwise action plans and reporting.	To Do
<b>Carbon Offset Project</b>	Project Officer to ensure that CARG members are invited to any sessions held by DCCEEW at WBAC level	To Do
<b>Carbon Offset Project</b>	Project officer to seek additional information on the likely requirements, timelines and thresholds for mandatory carbon or climate related financial risk disclosure reporting	To Do
<b>Grant Opportunities</b>	Project officer to check with Executive Officer whether the Alliance qualifies as a non-local government entity for grant eligibility	Done
<b>Grant Opportunities</b>	Project Officer to align funding opportunities with the action plan in future grant applications to ensure strategic relevance and effective resource allocation	In Progress and Ongoing
<b>Grant Opportunities</b>	Project Officer to discuss with Executive Officer to clarify the details of the existing Lottery West funding and explore how it can be applied to a regional climate or sustainability project.	Done
<b>Grant Opportunities</b>	CARG to consider large grant opportunity for 2026, allowing sufficient time to scope projects,	In Progress and Ongoing

	ensure alignment with action plans, and obtain necessary approvals	
<b>Calander</b>	Project Officer to amend Calander with updated dates	In Progress
<b>Calander</b>	Project Officer to discuss with Executive Officer the budget considerations needed for next year	To Do

