



MINUTES

**WARREN BLACKWOOD ALLIANCE OF COUNCILS BOARD MEETING
TUESDAY 3 JUNE 2025, 5PM
HOST: SHIRE OF DONNYBROOK BALINGUP**

Meeting opened: 5.03pm

1. Welcome

Cr Donelle Buegge welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Cr Vivienne MacCarthy to give an Acknowledgement of country.

Attendance:

Voting:

Cr Donelle Buegge SOM (Chair)
Cr Steve Miolin SOM
Cr Richard Walker SOBB
Cr Helen O'Connell SOBB
Cr Tracy Lansdell SOBG
Arthur Kyron SOBG
Cr Vivienne MacCarthy SODB
Cr Alexis Davy SODB
Cr Tony Dean SON
Cr Vicki Hansen SON

Non-voting:

Leonard Long SOBB
Nick O'Connor DODB
Ben Rose SOM
David Taylor SON
Katie McDonnell Executive Officer (EO)

Apologies for absence:

Billy Wellstead (SWDC)

2. Presentations:

a) Boyd Brown, Regional General Manager WA: Telstra Business

Boyd has reviewed the issues we sent for review.

- Shire of Donnybrook Balingup
 - Rural Fire Brigade Communications
 - Local emergency services disruptions, Starlink being used as a workaround.
 - Preston Retirement Village
 - Emergency Devices compromised. Pendants and watches are constantly roaming due to poor network connection

- Devices designed to hold charge for 4-5 days are only lasting a day, requiring overnight charging
- Shire of Bridgetown Greenbushes
 - Telecommunications failure during natural disasters
 - Local emergency services disruptions. Starlink being used as a workaround.
 - Mobile blackspots – lack of signal at:
 - Greenbushes
 - Maranup
 - Brockman Highway between Bridgetown to Nannup
 - Between Manjimup and Bridgetown
 - Sunnyside
 - Kingston
 - Bandwidth congestion in Greenbushes:
 - Talison operations congestion to mobile network in 2024
 - Lack of communication around network upgrades
 - Lack of detail around 3G network closure and 5G implementation
- Telstra VaaN Use Case: Improving emergency response with modern connectivity:
 - LEO Satellite: innovative solution to ensure greater coverage
 - Connectivity:
 - Link bonding and access redundancy
 - Wi-Fi
 - Telstra LANES Services / 5G Slice
 - P25 Radion bridge
 - Mesh: Extending coverage to vehicles and users through mesh networks
 - Smart antenna: Increasing cellular coverage and improving user experience
 - Telstra dedicated networks: Dedicated network slice for upload of video images at stations
 - Dispatch and radio:
 - Interworking function between P25 and hybrid / smart phones
 - MC-PTX push to talk and video on device
- Mobile network hardening program: Automatic transfer unit
 - Bridgetown, Greenbushes exchange, Greenbushes mobile site, Yornup
 - Donnybrook exchange Kirup, Balingup
 - Manjimup west, Middlesex exchange, Northcliffe east, Pemberton exchange, Quinninup, Walpole
 - New STAND portable genset based in Manjimup & power system upgrade end 2024

Benefits of Automatic transfer unit:

- Reduce fuel consumption
- Simplify generator deployment process
- Enables more effective pre-deployment before known events
- Enables community support (as a last resort)
- Improved visibility of asset performance during events
- Around \$25k per box

- Greenbushes:
 - Viewed maps of outside coverage and non-coverage area.

Greenbushes Network upgrades:

- New macro sites:
 - Catterick October 2024 RCP1
 - North Greenbushes March 2025, MBSP5A
 - Talison Lithium
 - Old Mill Small Cell – November 2024
 - New Camp (macro) – August 2024
 - Talison Minesite COW – December 2024
- Network upgrades:
 - Bridgetown (town site):
 - 5G addition - July 2024
 - 4G capacity – upgrade July 2024
 - 12 hour battery upgrade – August 2024
 - Bridgetown (Boyup Brook Road):
 - Capacity upgrade – November 2024
- Maps

Viewed maps of outside coverage and non-coverage areas for:

 - Maranup
 - Brockman Highway between Bridgetown to Nannup
 - Between Manjimup and Bridgetown (Balbarrup March 2025 RCP1)
 - Sunnyside
 - Kingston
- Telstra Starlink satellite to mobile was announced today for text messaging on Samsung S25 when out of range. Phone voice calling and data will come in a year or two. Working with Apple to get iPhone models and other phone brands and models included.
- Cost difference between 2 and 4 sectors per tower is around \$200,000, if tower doesn't need additional structural work to house additional 2 sectors.
 - Some towers are co-investment towers, i.e. Telstra have received federal funding (black spot program) to install the tower.
- Shire of Boyup Brook
 - Mobile coverage deficiencies
 - Residents experiencing unreliable or non-existent mobile coverage, impacting a large number of residents
 - Inadequate 5G
 - The promised benefits of 5G have not materialised and the network is currently less than reliable than the previous network
 - Economic disparity
 - The reliance on Starlink creates an economic burden, unaffordable for low-income community members, limiting their access to essential services
 - Telstra has a disadvantage program that can help people to get a new handset – 'Telstra Access for Everyone'
 - Mobile network power vulnerability
 - Frequent recurring power outages and impact to telecommunications infrastructure unacceptable

- Emergency Communication failure
 - The region is disaster event prone and the state of our network jeopardizes public safety, residents are unable to receive timely emergency alerts or contact emergency services
- Reliance on connectivity
 - Residents rely on the internet for essential services including:
 - Accessing government services
 - Managing finances and online banking
 - Telehealth consultations / isolation
 - Receiving emergency information
- Business impact
 - Local businesses rely on reliable telecommunications, outages impact economic growth
- Lack of communication & action
 - There is a lack of communication with Telstra regarding these issues
- Telecommunications in Northcliffe
 - Poor connectivity during AM/PM periods
 - Connectivity impacts over long weekend and special events
 - Since 3G network closure connectivity issues have increased
- 4G is a lower band than 3G and has similar network coverage. There are odd situations where there is no longer signal.

DPIRD Priority locations:

Location Name	Distance to nearest base station (km)	Existing or Planned Base Station Name	Telstra Coverage from online map
Bridgetown Greenbushes	5.1	South West Hwy Hestor Brook	Existing 4G (Close to edge of coverage)
Bridgetown Greenbushes	5.7	Klaue Road Hestor Brook	Existing 4G (Close to edge of coverage)
Nannup	5.9	Nannup East (Nannup)	No coverage (Pathcy adjacent coverage)
Bridgetown Greenbushes	6.4	Maranup	Existing 4G (Close to edge of coverage)
Bridgetown Greenbushes	7.4	Yornup West	Existing 4G (Close to edge of coverage)
Boyup Brook	9.7	Dinninup – East of Mayanup	No coverage
Nannup	10.2	Nannup South	No coverage
Nannup	12.8	Maranup	No coverage

DPIRD work with the development commissions (with input from LGA's) to develop the priority list.

- iPhone 14 and above - Emergency SOS via satellite
 - You can send an emergency text out via satellite, but can't receive a call
- Event Wi-Fi
 - Telstra can offer Wi-Fi for events

- Cell on wheels (COW) is costed per event – around \$30-\$40k, or between \$10-100K for other solutions.
- They are primarily for the emergency situations but can be used for events.

Discussion

- Overall, the signal has improved significantly over the last 20 years.
- People have higher expectations of the signal now.
- Traffic on the network increases by 20 – 30% each year

Action: Katie circulate Boyd's contact details

Action: Shires to follow up with Boyd about specific issues or locations that have lost signal since 3G has been turned off.

Action: Shires to advise public to lodge a complaint if they are finding areas that now have no signal.

3. Declarations of Interest

- None

4. Correspondence

a) SWDC Value Proposition

- In February, WBAC submitted a formal value proposition to the South West Development Commission (SWDC).
- Cr Donelle Buegge and Ben Rose subsequently met with SWDC CEO Cate Brooks to discuss the proposal.
- Following this, WBAC received confirmation from SWDC that their annual contribution will increase from \$2,500 to \$6,000, effective from 1 July 2025.
- There are options to increase contribution but 'ticking off boxes' of actions they want to achieve that align with our regional growth plan.

b) Update on Warren-Blackwood Regional Water Supply Scheme

- As climate change continues to impact the availability of surface water, Water Corporation are planning to ensure communities continue to have reliable access to drinking water supplies in the future.
- The Water Corporation recently completed a comprehensive review of water source options to support the areas' water supply.
- Based on this review, they have identified the Yarragadee aquifer groundwater as our preferred option, in addition to infrastructure upgrades and operational improvements.
- Over the coming years, they will upgrade their scheme's infrastructure including construction of a new groundwater treatment plant, standby bore, tanks and pipework.
- They've applied to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) to increase their groundwater allocation from the Yarragadee aquifer - the application is currently being assessed.

Discussion

- Discussed proposal at Climate Alliance and they have requested more information about allocations.
- Until review is finished in 2029, there will be no further allocations for subdivisions that require water allocation. Current applications will be allowed to continue.

c) **Minister Dawson**

- Following the launch of the WBAC promotional video, Katie circulated an update on the Alliance's current initiatives to all WA Ministers, including a link to the new WBAC video.
- Minister Stephen Dawson, Minister for Regional Development, responded with a letter acknowledging the valuable work of the WBAC and expressed his intention to work collaboratively with the Alliance throughout his term.

5. **Minutes of last meeting & matters arising**

a) Minutes of meeting 01.04.2025

As Cr Sean Mahoney has missed six consecutive board meetings and has not attended since June 2024, the Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes is requested to nominate an alternative councillor to represent the Shire on the WBAC board.

Minutes of WBAC board meeting on 01.04.2025 are confirmed as true and correct.

Moved: Cr Helen O'Connell

Seconded: Cr Alexis Davy

Carried 10/0

Action: Katie to send correspondence to Shire of Bridgetown Greenbushes

6. **Staff Contracts**

An in-camera session has held by the board to discuss staff contracts.

Action: CEOs to continue liaising with contractors to finalise staff contracts.

7. **Finance**

a) 2024 – 2025 financial report

The WBAC year to date financial report for the 2024 – 2025 financial year is confirmed as true and correct.

Moved: Cr Richard Walker

Seconded: Cr Steve Miolin

Carried 10/0

Budget noted by all members.

b) Ratios of WBAC income

The income ratio breakdown for WBAC was included in the board papers. Katie provided an overview of how the ratios were developed.

- Generic expenses are split evenly across all member shires.
- Project costs are allocated according to the agreed ratio for each project, as outlined below:

	WBAC project	Tourism	Climate Alliance	Trails Development	WBSR
Percentage Split					
SOBB	8	10	20	20	
SOBG	22	23	20	20	33.3
SODB	24	9	20	20	
SOM	31	45	20	20	33.3
SON	15	13	20	20	33.3

c) 2025 – 2026 Budget

The proposed budget for 2025 – 2026 was circulated:

- Increased contribution for each member local government, noting that contributions have not increased for 3 years.
- Increased expenditure for:
 - SF&V website hosting and development costs / Meetings, storage and postage / Miscellaneous - adjusted to reflect actual spending in the current year.
 - Social media & Image Library platforms - to streamline processes and transition to more efficient tools.
 - Marketing - increased allocation to strengthen regional promotion efforts.
- Provision for Staff:
 - Executive Officer contact – proposed increase
 - Project Officer Trails & Tourism: upgrade current Project Support Officer role to 18 hours per week at \$42/hour.
 - New Project Support Officer: proposed role at 10 hours per week at \$32/hour.

WBAC receive the draft budget. CEO advice will be sought regarding staff contracts before circulating the final 2025–2026 budget for formal approval.

Moved: Cr Alexis Davy
Seconded: Cr Steve Miolin

Carried 10/0

Action: Katie circulate 2025 proposed staff structure for consideration of the additional staff member

Action: Katie circulate the budget excel spreadsheet to the board

8. WBAC Climate Alliance

a) Climate Alliance Project Officer: Work Update

Climate Alliance Project Officer work report was circulated with the board paper which details progress with:

- Firewise Demonstration Garden Project
- Sustainable Schools Challenge Project
- Stormwater Harvesting Project (Northcliffe Oval)
- Summary Tracker for Shire Action Plans
- Carbon and Reporting Readiness

Report noted by all members

b) Reference Group

Reference Group meeting was held on Friday 30th May and minutes were circulated to the board.

Discussion

- Individually, shires are doing good work
- Hoping to see bigger collaborative projects through the Climate Alliance
- Climate Alliance will present at a future WBAC meeting on their progress
- Need two new nominations from Shire of Donnybrook Balingup and Shire of Boyup Brook for the group.

9. WBAC Tourism: Southern Forests & Valleys

a) SF&V Project update

A comprehensive report on the Southern Forests & Valleys project was included in the board papers. Any questions regarding the project should be directed to Katie.

- In May, the Southern Forests & Valleys website recorded 280,099 visits, bringing the total number of visits since launch to 2,588,851

i. Social Media Guide

Created a Social Media Post Guide to support brand alignment across Shires and Visitor Centres. This will be distributed to all stakeholders for optional use in their own marketing.

ii. Marketing Packages

Developed the Southern Forests & Valleys Marketing Package, available for purchase by events and operators to enhance promotional reach through SF&V channels.

Report noted by all members

b) SF&V Heritage Festival

A total of 134 experiences were curated and promoted across the Southern Forests & Valleys region through a fully digital festival booklet and webpage.

Mixed feedback received from Shires:

- The two who received grants provided strong support and were actively engaged.

- Others demonstrated initial positivity, including ongoing communication during the event, but expressed negative feedback during the post-event review.
- One Shire indicated intentions to be more actively involved in future years.
- All member Shires, with the exception of Nannup, have indicated their intention to apply for funding to participate in the 2026 festival.

c) UCI event (10th & 11th October 2026 with G7 3rd – 9th October)

i. Verbal report of SEVEN event in Nannup (Cr Buegge & D. Taylor)

A verbal report was provided on the SEVEN gravel cycling event held in Nannup. The event was described as exceptionally well organised, with a professional set-up and seamless logistics throughout the day. Everyone who attended commended the level of planning, volunteer coordination, and community engagement evident on the ground.

If the UCI Gravel World Series event delivers to a similar standard, it is expected to be a world-class experience that will showcase the region at its best. The SEVEN event has set a strong benchmark and provides valuable insights into what is possible for future large-scale events in the region.

ii. WBAC Stakeholder Group

1. Minute of meetings 15.04.2025 & 14.05.2025

Update given by meeting chairs, Cr Vivienne MacCarthy and Nick O'Connor:

- A significant number of actions were identified during the initial in person meeting on 15 April, all of which have been captured in the formal action plan.
- Since that meeting, Phase 1 of the project is well underway, with key deliverables either completed or on track.
- WBAC-led actions are progressing effectively, demonstrating strong coordination and momentum across stakeholders.
- The second online meeting on 14 May focused on refining responsibilities, confirming timelines, and progressing planning for community activation.

2. WBAC Event Timeline & Action Plan

The WBAC Event Timeline & Action Plan was circulated with the board papers. This document outlines key milestones, deliverables, and responsibilities for both WBAC and the member Shires in the lead-up to the 2026 UCI Gravel World Series event. Ongoing coordination and regular updates will be managed through the UCI Working Group and WBAC Executive Officer.

3. Agenda for June meeting

Aim of June's meeting is to confirm

- Shire stakeholder groups and their progress
- All G7 events in the region and the logistics around these
- Fan zones and viewing areas
- School and community involvement
- Marketing focuses for SF&V and content needed
- SF&V signage across whole event
- Experience passport concept

iii. UCI Stakeholder meeting

WBAC is part of the WBAC working group, along with members from Cycling Eventures, Tourism WA, SWDC, MRTBA, Westcycle, Shire of Nannup and other key stakeholders.

- Katie, David Taylor and Kristi attended first meeting on 10th April 2025.
- Cr Vivienne MacCarthy, Katie and David Taylor attended second meeting on 27th June.

iv. SWDC Events x Tourism Working Group

WBAC has been invited to participate in the South West Development Commission's (SWDC) Events x Tourism Working Group, which brings together regional stakeholders to collaboratively plan and align tourism and event strategies across the South West.

The first meeting of the group was held on 29 May 2025, with the following representatives in attendance:

- Cr Donelle Buegge, representing WBAC
- Katie McDonnell, representing WBAC
- David Taylor, representing the Shire of Nannup
- Arthur Kyron, representing the Shire of Bridgetown–Greenbushes

d) Opportunities

- i. World Trails Conference, 19th-22nd October 2026 in Perth
 1. Pre-event bookable conference tour in our region (close 1st August)
 - This presents a valuable chance to showcase the region's trail offerings.
 - WBAC will engage with member Shires and local Visitor Centres to explore whether a collaborative regional experience can be developed that is bookable.
 - Discussions will focus on identifying trail-ready products, accommodation providers, and potential local guides or operators that could be part of a curated experience.
 2. Sponsor conference
 - WBAC has requested information about sponsoring an element of the conference to increase our profile.
- ii. 2026 Australian Regional Tourism Convention in Busselton
 - WBAC has requested information about sponsoring an element of the conference to increase our profile.

10. Warren Blackwood Stock Route

a) Project update

Project update was circulated with the board paper which details progress with:

- Trail Road Inventory
- Contractor Management – Maintenance & Audit
- Signage
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Rider Support & Public Enquiries
- Documentation & Marketing
- Future Development

- During discussion with Lenore Lyons regarding William Bay Regional Trail Master Plan to explore cross-regional alignment in trail development and destination management, the possibility to include a spur of the WBSR was discussed:
 - Look at possibility of adding a spur from Broke Inlet to Walpole to link up to the Denmark to Nornalup Heritage Rail Trail which is 48km by road.
 - Bush tracks 15km from Camfield at Broke Inlet to Crysall Spring and 25km from Crysall Springs to Start of Rail trail

Report noted by all members

b) WA Horse Trails Management Guidelines

- WA Horse Trails Management Guidelines were released at the end of May,
- WBAC are now reviewing and updating all our documents to alignment with the Guidelines:
 - 1. Governance & Agreements
 - 1. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*
 - 1. B Operational Guidelines*
 - 1. C Trail Management Plan*
 - 2. Maintenance & Monitoring
 - 2. A Maintenance, Monitoring & Reporting Plan*
 - 2. B Trail Inventory & Infrastructure Register
 - 2. C Trail Closure Protocols*
 - 3. Community & Stakeholder Engagement
 - 3. A Community & Volunteer Engagement Plan*
 - 3. B Marketing & Communications Plan
 - 3. C Pioneer Farming Families Integration Plan
 - 4. User Experience & Safety
 - 4. A User Guidelines*
 - 4. B Rider Code of Conduct

*Waiting on DBCA until we can finalise

11. Warren Blackwood Futures Forum: Tuesday, 6th May 2025

a) WBAC video - <https://vimeo.com/1084843361/1b4c371b1f>

- If you haven't already watched the video, please take a moment to view it and share it through your networks to help spread the message.

b) Event review

- 33 attendees including Minister Don Punch, Chris Hossen (WALGA), Bevan Eatts (Member for Warren Blackwood), Cate Brooks and Pip Kirby (SWDC), Scott Robinson and Vicki Walker (RDA), Shire councillors and senior staff.
- A very successful event, informative and engaging speakers, valuable insights, and excellent networking opportunities.

12. Regional Trails Strategy

WBAC applied to the DLGSCI Community Trail Planning Grants Program for a regional trails strategy, we should hear back by August if we are successful.

- Total project cost: \$101,680
 - Grant requested: \$49,690
 - WBAC in kind: \$27,320
 - WBAC Cash: \$51,990
- WBAC has \$10,000 from 2024.25 and 2025.26 budget if we are successful. This leaves \$41,990 to be split between the 5 shires.
- WBAC will ask for updated quotes

13. Meeting with Amanda Hutton, Group Executive for Telstra Business

a) Tuesday 24th June, 2pm – 3pm in Bunbury

- Purpose:
 - Strengthen the relationship with Telstra
 - Advocate for regional priorities and improved services
 - Provide constructive feedback
 - Explore opportunities to align with DPIRD and secure support for regional connectivity

Action: Katie to circulate meeting details and confirm attendance.

Action: CEOs forward any additional issues or feedback to Katie.

14. Future meeting schedule

- Thank you to all who completed the survey regarding future meeting dates. Based on responses, Tuesdays during the day work for all member Shires except Bridgetown-Greenbushes.
- Board members expressed a preference to be able to join meetings online and vote virtually. Katie advised that this requires a Special General Meeting to amend the Constitution, which can be held prior to the next Board meeting.
- It was agreed that, moving forward, Board meetings will commence earlier at 3:00pm.

WBAC to hold a Special general meeting on 12.08.2025 to amend the constitution for the purpose of amending the Constitution to permit online attendance and voting at Board and General Meetings.

Moved: Cr Tracy Lansdell

Seconded: Cr Alexis Davy

Carried 10/0

Action: Katie to arrange Special General Meeting

15. Dates of future meetings:

- a) Tuesday 12th August 2025, Shire of Bridgetown Greenbushes (3pm)
- b) Tuesday 7th October 2025, Shire of Nannup
- c) AGM: Tuesday 2nd December 2025, Shire of Boyup Brook
- d) Tuesday 3rd February 2026, Shire of Manjimup
- e) Tuesday 7th April 2026, Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.

Close meeting: 7.51pm