

# ANNUAL REPORT

Supporting the Wheatbelt East to  
Grow & Prosper

2024

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# Chairs Report



I am pleased to present the Chairperson's report for the Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils Inc for the 2023-2024 financial year. We have had a busy year, engaging in robust discussions amongst ourselves and with stakeholders on key issues, progressing and reshaping legacy projects, and commencing new pieces of work that align with emerging pressures on our economy and community, all helping us progress towards the WEROC vision of a growing and prosperous Wheatbelt East.

I was fortunate to have chaired WEROC for a little under 12 months as the Shire of Merredin representative. This year, the organisation experienced a turnover in Board Membership, and at the AGM in October 2023 Emily Ryan (Kellerberrin) vacated the Chair after two years in the position. We farewelled Tony Crooks (Bruce Rock), Glenice Batchelor (Tammin) and Mark McKenzie (Merredin), and welcomed new members, Ram Rajagopalan and Charmain Thomson.

Throughout the 2023-24 financial year we also said goodbye to a few of our CEO's. Lisa Clack (Merredin), Joanne Soderlund (Tammin) and Darren Mollenoyux (Bruce Rock) left and we have welcomed Craig Watts (Merredin) and have had John Merrick on the Board for most of the year while he was acting in CEO's positions at Kellerberrin, Merredin and Bruce Rock.

We commenced the year with the first in a series of sessions looking at the Wheatbelt East's economic future. This identified some focus areas for the coming years, including an initiative to progress operational efficiency and effectiveness across the six Shires, with commencement of a comprehensive review and assessment process to identify a cross WEROC Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

# Chairs

## Report Cont.



Robust discussions were had on the emerging challenges around land use change driven by decarbonisation and the provision of housing to support economic growth and service delivery, laying the foundation for ongoing areas of work.

WEROC progressed projects aligned with our strategic plan, including the Corella Management project with Wheatbelt NRM, CBH and AROC; the Town Team Partnership; the development of the Eastern Wheatbelt self-drive trail, that saw an active campaign to lift the profile of the region's tourism assets; and our Shires played host again to students participating in the Wheatbelt Medical Student Immersion Program.

WEROC hosted two McCusker Centre Interns in June 2024. One looking at social impacts and community benefit sharing frameworks and models for large scale developments in the region and the other working toward the development of a public health plan for the WEROC Shires.

WEROC remains a committed advocate on issues of importance to our region's communities and economy and prepared written submissions on inquiries into Local Government sustainability and the Export Control Amendment (Ending Live Sheep Exports by Sea) Bill. WEROC also drove a resolution at the Great Eastern Country Zone seeking WALGA support for LGAs grappling with large scale agricultural land use change associated with carbon farming and renewable energy projects. This has facilitated WEROC Shires in having a voice for our communities' interests with relevant policy and decision makers in government. This is a space to watch in coming years, as WEROC strives to ensure positive outcomes are maximised for our region as a result of economic decarbonisation.

Due to perceptions of conflict with my day-to-day work role, I made the difficult decision to step off the WEROC Board. I would like to thank WEROC Members for their support this year, and their engagement in robust discussion that is moving our region forward. I would especially like acknowledge the effort of our Executive Officer Rebekah Burges, who continues to provide an exceptional level of support to the Board.

I look forward to seeing WEROC continue to be a strong voice for the Wheatbelt East region.

Renee Manning  
Chair WEROC Inc.



# BOARD MEMBERS

The WEROC Inc. board is comprised of two representatives from each of the six member councils. Our Board Members in 2023-24 were:



**DARREN MOLLENOYUX**  
Chief Executive Officer

**CR. RAMESH RAJAGOPALAN**  
President



**RAYMOND GRIFFITHS**  
Chief Executive Officer

**CR. EMILY RYAN**  
Deputy President



**CRAIG WATTS**  
Chief Executive Officer

**CR. RENEE MANNING**  
Deputy President  
Chair of WEROC Inc.



**JOANNE SODERLUND**  
Chief Executive Officer

**CR. CHARMAIN THOMSON**  
President  
Deputy Chair of WEROC Inc.



**BILL PRICE**  
Chief Executive Officer

**CR. MARK CREES**  
President



**NIC WARREN**  
Chief Executive Officer

**CR. WAYNE DELLA BOSCA**  
President

# Vision & Mission



## VISION

Our vision is for the Wheatbelt East to grow and prosper.

## MISSION

Working together to enhance the regions sustainability through investment and innovation.

## OUR VALUES

- **Commitment to our Region:** We will ensure that in everything we do, we consider the best interests of the people that live and work in or visit the communities of the Eastern Wheatbelt.
- **Collaboration:** We will work together as a united group to prioritise and address important issues impacting on our region, and to achieve outcomes that cannot be accomplished individually.
- **Regional Leadership:** We will be a strong partner and voice representing our region.
- **Integrity:** We will act with integrity, building lasting partnerships based on honesty and trust.
- **Accountability:** We are committed to good governance and accountability in delivering outcomes for our region. We will ensure our stakeholders have genuine involvement in decision making and that we communicate openly, accurately, and effectively with all those who are impacted by the decisions or actions that we take.
- **Innovation & Excellence:** We value innovation and strive for continuous improvement in delivering positive outcomes for our region.



# Strategic Priorities

In early 2024 WEROC Local Governments participated in a succession of focused discussions to identify major social, economic and operational constraints and challenges and opportunities for collective action to address these challenges

The outcome of this rigorous discussion was an agreement on the following future focus areas for WEROC:

## Operational Priorities

### **Local Government employees transitioning from Federal to State**

**Award:** All contracts and policies need to be compliant with the Award conditions.

**Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Systems:** Escalating costs are necessitating a market review to identify appropriate and cost effective system providers. There is also a desire for consistency in the platform used to enable information and resource sharing across Shire's.

## Economic Priorities

**Social Impact & Community Benefit from renewable and extractable developments:** In Western Australia there are no frameworks that provide a consistent approach to how proponents of major energy and mining projects consult with and share benefits with local communities. With the growing interest in the region, particularly from renewable energy companies, there is a need for a policy or framework to guide negotiations between developers and Local Governments.

**Housing:** Housing supply shortages are a nationwide issue. WEROC Shires recognize the need to actively pursue avenues to increase the supply and diversity of housing in the region.

**Tourism:** Increasing visitation to the WEROC communities through promotion of the Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive trail.



# Operational Highlights



## Corella Management

On 1 July 2023, a Corella Management Program led by Wheatbelt NRM in partnership with CBH, the Avon Regional Organisation of Councils and WEROC, commenced.

The intent behind this project was to facilitate a coordinated approach to corella management across the Local Governments within the AROC and WEROC regions. Recognizing the significant economic impact Corella's have in the region, WEROC co-invested in the program to enable the engagement of a project coordinator who would be responsible for identifying management options

This was to be a three-year partnership, but WEROC made the decision to withdraw from the project in July 2024.

## Town Team Movement

The Town Team Movement is a social enterprise aimed at building a network of people and teams that are focused on improving their own local area. One of the four main activities that the Town Team Movement deliver is to inspire, support, connect and promote Town Teams.

In January 2024, WEROC entered into a 12-month partnership with the Town Team Movement to engage a WEROC Town-Team Builder. The primary purpose of this partnership was to introduce the Town Team concept into WEROC communities and support the formation or continuation of Town Teams in interested communities.

The WEROC Town Team Builder delivered information sessions in Bruce Rock, Southern Cross, Tammin, Kellerberrin and Merredin and supported the Bruce Rock Supermarket Community Mural with \$3,000 via FRRR funding. Guidance has been provided to support the establishment of new town teams and to reinvigorate and inspire existing ones.

## Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive Trail

In September to November 2024, WEROC developed a new self-drive itinerary to encourage visitation to the major attractions and communities within the WEROC Local Governments. The Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive Trail, which features 18 key sites, provides a suggested journey through Tammin, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock, Merredin, Westonia, and Southern Cross.

## Regional Promotion & Marketing

Regional promotion and marketing continue to be a focus for WEROC. Our aim is to leverage the regions natural and built assets to drive increased visitation to the Eastern Wheatbelt.

In 2024 WEROC:

- Contributed to the Wheatbelt local tourism group co-funding campaign in conjunction with Australia's Golden Outback (AGO), Roe Tourism, NEW Travel and Pioneers Pathway.
- Supported the Wheatbelt Weekends campaign led by AGO, which is aimed at increasing interest in the region amongst the Perth metro market. This included a spring campaign in July and August 2023 and an autumn/winter campaign in February – May 2024.
- Co-Contributed to a Wheatbelt stand at the 2024 Perth Caravan and Camping Show
- Co-Contributed to a central wheatbelt self-drives advertisement in the 2024 AGO Road Trip Holiday Planner







## Wheatbelt Medical Student Immersion Program 2024

Each year WEROC in collaboration with Rural Health West, the Rural Clinical School, and the University of Notre Dame, host a Wheatbelt Medical Student Immersion Program (WMSIP).

In 2024 the program took place during the week of 12 to 15 March. Approximately 115 students from the University of Notre Dame were billeted by local families across seven Wheatbelt communities including the WEROC communities of Bruce Rock, Kellerberrin, Merredin, Westonia, and Southern Cross.

The program is designed to expose students to the various aspects of living and working regionally. The 2024 program included visits to local schools, visits to a working farm to learn firsthand about farm practices and safety considerations, visits to local attractions and facilities (e.g., museums, recreation centres, swimming pools, etc.), discussions with local health care providers (GP's, allied health professionals, etc.) and on-country learning with the local Aboriginal community. The program concluded with a community thank you dinner prepared by the students.







## Regional Advocacy

WEROC as the collective voice of its six Member Shires aims to educate and influence decision makers on matters that have the potential to significantly impact across the communities and businesses of the Eastern Wheatbelt.

In the 2023 - 2024 financial year, WEROC prepared written submissions to:

1. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport Inquiry into Local Government Sustainability, highlighting challenges for WEROC Local Governments in four key areas – funding, workforce, community expectations and assets.
2. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture Inquiry into Export Control Amendment (ending live sheep export by Sea) Bill 2024, outlining the imperative of maintaining the live sheep export industry for the economic and social wellbeing of our communities.

Recognizing the increasing interest in the Wheatbelt region for renewable energy and tree farming projects, WEROC submitted a request for motion to the Great Eastern Country Zone for assistance from WALGA in developing policy templates and providing advice to assist local government in their discussions with proponents of tree farms and renewable energy projects.

# 2023-24 Finance Report

## Statement of Financial Position

The cash balance of the WEROC Inc. Community Solutions One account held with Westpac Bank, on 1 July 2023 was \$181,084 and the closing balance on 30 June 2023 was \$69,785. A Term Deposit account was established in September 2023. The closing balance of this account on 30 June 2024 was \$100,000.

As per Rule 17.3 of the WEROC Inc. Constitution, the Board must prepare and approve an annual budget at least 1 month prior to the end of the financial year. The annual budget for the 2024-25 financial year was adopted at a General Meeting held on 9 May 2024. The income and expenditure commitments for WEROC Inc. for the next financial year are estimated to be \$ \$90,247 and \$ \$127,517 respectively, resulting in a cash balance in the operating account, of \$27,000 on 30 June 2025.

## Statement of Income & Expenditure

The summary of financial activity (refer to profit and loss statement below) for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, shows an income of \$72,000 and expenditure of \$82,061, resulting in a net loss of \$10,061.

The only source of Income for WEROC Inc. in the 2022-23 financial year was the annual financial contribution made by the Member Councils.

## Profit and Loss

Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils Inc  
For the year ended 30 June 2024  
Cash Basis

	2024	2023
<b>Trading Income</b>		
General Subscriptions	72,000	72,000
<b>Total Trading Income</b>	<b>72,000</b>	<b>72,000</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>72,000</b>	<b>72,000</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>		
-Accounting Fees	886	1,749
-Executive officer - Travel & accomodation	1,712	1,007
-Executive officer-Professional Services	33,365	29,576
-Financial Services:Audit fees	982	-
Consultants Fees	38,205	16,056
Executive Services	(68)	2,352
Meeting expenses	341	-
WE-ROC App Development & Maintenance	685	680
WE-ROC Insurance	5,954	5,939
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>82,061</b>	<b>57,359</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>(10,061)</b>	<b>14,641</b>





# Future Focus

In the 2024-25 financial year WEROC will:

- 1) Deliver the 2025 Wheatbelt Medical Student Immersion Program in conjunction with the University of Notre Dame, Rural Health West, and the Rural Clinical School.
- 2) Complete a WEROC HR project to update Shire policy documents, position descriptions and contracts to ensure compliance with the State award.
- 3) Continue to promote the region and in particular the Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive trail through the development of a marketing plan, investment in paid social media coverage and co-investment in the Wheatbelt co-operative marketing group.
- 4) Work with the McCusker Centre Internship Program to provide students studying at the University of Western Australia with opportunities to experience living and working in our region.
- 5) Conduct a comprehensive review and assessment process to identify an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system that could be applied across all six WEROC Shires.