

Annual Report

2025-26

WEROC | Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils Inc

www.weroc.com.au



Board Members

The WEROC Inc. board is comprised of two representatives from each of the seven member councils. Our Board Members in 2025-26 were:

MARK FURR
Chief Executive Officer

CR. RAMESH RAJAGOPALAN
President

RAYMOND GRIFFITHS
Chief Executive Officer

CR. EMILY RYAN
Deputy President

CRAIG WATTS
Chief Executive Officer

CR. LISA O'NEILL
Councillor

ANDREW MALONE
Chief Executive Officer

CR. CHARMAIN THOMSON
President
Chair of WEROC Inc.

BILL PRICE
Chief Executive Officer

CR. MARK CREES
President
Deputy Chair of WEROC Inc.

NIC WARREN & BEN FORBES
Chief Executive Officer

CR. BRYAN CLOSE
President

STUART HOBLEY
Chief Executive Officer

CR. ALISON HARRIS
President

Our Strategic Priorities

Vision & Mission

Vision

For the Wheatbelt East to grow and prosper

Mission

Working together to enhance the regions sustainability through investment and innovation

Priorities 2025-26

In early 2026, the WEROC Board reviewed the strategic priorities set in 2025 and confirmed five focus areas for the year ahead:

Housing: Addressing the critical housing shortage by increasing both the supply and diversity of housing options across the region.

Tourism: Growing visitation to WEROC communities through continued promotion of the **Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive Trail.**

Water: Securing a sustainable water supply for WEROC communities by improving water capture, storage and reuse.

Waste management: Working towards consolidated, cost-effective regional waste infrastructure, as set out in the WEROC Strategic Waste Management Plan, and lifting recycling rates through better use of facilities and community education.

Roads: Advocating for safe, well-maintained **roads and** efficient freight links, including **investment in the Great Eastern Highway as** the region's key east-west transport corridor, and fair, sustainable funding for the local road networks that keep our communities moving.

Chairs Report

We have had a very productive and positive year, making meaningful progress towards our vision and moving forward with many projects. Some have been successful, while others have presented challenges or haven't worked out as we had hoped. Nevertheless, every experience has provided valuable lessons and opportunities for growth. We remain optimistic, focused on our goals, and committed to moving forward with positivity, determination, and hope for an even brighter future.



WEROC was successful in obtaining a grant through the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), Community Water Supply Program, to undertake water audits and develop water strategies for our seven member Councils.

WEROC have been advocating for funding to address a number of collaborative projects and has submitted applications to the Disaster Ready Fund for a regional generator network and DWER for a regional waste education campaign. The outcome of these applications is pending.

WEROC also submitted an application to the Regional Housing Support Fund for key worker accommodation, which while unsuccessful has set the groundwork for future collaboration on housing projects.

WEROC co-funded and co-hosted the Made in the Eastern Wheatbelt Forum held in Perth in February. This brought together around 100 stakeholders from across local government, state government and industry to discuss our key priorities and shared vision for the eastern Wheatbelt.

Chairs Report

WEROC continued to promote the Eastern Wheatbelt Self Drive trail through co-operative marketing activities with Australia's Golden Outback, Wheatbelt Way, Pioneers Pathway, Central Wheatbelt Visitors Centre and Pathways to Wave Rock.

It is wonderful to welcome the Shire of Quairading to WEROC in October 2026. We look forward to their input, ideas, and suggestions as we continue working collaboratively towards our shared goals. Their involvement will bring fresh perspectives and new opportunities to strengthen our regional partnerships and achieve positive outcomes for all member councils and the wider community.

I would like to sincerely thank our Executive Officer Rebekah Burges for her professionalism, extensive knowledge, dedication, and ongoing commitment to WEROC. Rebekah is exceptional at what she does, and her expertise, reliability, and positive approach make such a valuable contribution to the organisation. Her ability to support, coordinate, and keep things moving forward is greatly appreciated. WEROC is fortunate to have someone of her ability, and I would like to acknowledge and thank her for the outstanding work she does and the difference she makes to our organisation.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all our member shires for their ongoing support, cooperation, and commitment to WEROC. WEROC could not be the success it is without each Shire contributing their knowledge, and concept ideas, working together only makes us stronger. WEROC will continue to strive forward and deliver positive outcomes for our communities. Thank you all for the time, effort, and commitment you bring to the WEROC.

Char Thomson
Chair
Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils Inc



Operational Highlights

In 2025-26, WEROC continued to deliver regional projects, build partnerships and advocate for the needs of its member Councils. The key highlights are outlined over the following pages.

Funding Applications at a Glance

Funding program	Project	Outcome
DWER Community Water Supply Program	Water audits and strategies for seven member Councils	Successful
Regional Housing Support Fund	Key worker accommodation	Unsuccessful
Disaster Ready Fund	Regional emergency generator network	Pending
WasteSorted Community Education Grants	Regional waste education campaign	Pending



Operational Highlights

Made in the Eastern Wheatbelt Forum

In February 2026, WEROC joined the North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils (NEWROC) and the Roe Regional Organisation of Councils (RoeROC) to deliver the Made in the Eastern Wheatbelt Forum: Shaping the Future Together, held in Perth.
Hosted by Lachlan Hunter MLA, the forum was a short, sharp and practical discussion with Members of Parliament, senior State Government representatives and regional partners. It told the story of the Eastern Wheatbelt and made the case for the foundations the region needs to keep contributing to the State's economy and to thrive towards 2050: land and housing supply, workforce attraction and retention, reliable power, and safe and efficient freight links.

Joint ROC Works and Services Staff Development Day

On 13 May 2026, WEROC, NEWROC and RoeROC held the first Eastern Wheatbelt Joint ROC Works and Services Staff Development Day, designed specifically for local government outdoor crews, leading hands, supervisors and works managers.

The day drew 86 attendees from 13 Shires, and 96% of those who completed the survey said they would attend again. The program included a water catchment tour, a workmate-to-leader forum, a patching truck demonstration, and sessions on playground inspections and safety, health and wellbeing, and work health and safety



Operational Highlights

Disaster Readiness

Across the region, the facilities used to coordinate emergency evacuation and response cannot currently maintain power during grid outages, leaving a serious gap in emergency response capability.

To address this, WEROC's member Councils have jointly applied to the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund to establish a distributed network of emergency backup power across the Eastern Wheatbelt. The outcome is pending.

Wheatbelt Medical Student Immersion Program

Each year, WEROC partners with Rural Health West, the Rural Clinical School and the University of Notre Dame to deliver the Wheatbelt Medical Student Immersion Program.

From 10 to 13 March 2026, 109 Notre Dame medical students spent three nights in the region, hosted by families in Bruce Rock, Cunderdin, Kellerberrin, Merredin, Southern Cross and Westonia.

The program gives students a first-hand understanding of rural living and healthcare. Students visited local schools, working farms (to learn about agriculture and farm safety), museums, recreation centres and swimming pools, and met with local GPs and allied health professionals. Where possible, they also took part in on-country learning with the local Aboriginal community.



Operational Highlights

Sustainable Water Supply Planning

With funding from DWER's Community Water Supply Program, WEROC developed a tailored water strategy for each of its seven member Councils, with the aim of securing a long-term, sustainable water supply for the communities of the Eastern Wheatbelt.

The project established baseline data to project future water demand and audited existing supplies to identify their capacity and any risks to their reliability. Each Shire now has its own plan with a prioritised list of actionable projects, giving Councils a clear basis for investing in water infrastructure over the short, medium and long term.

Advocacy

WEROC continued to advocate on the issues that matter most to its member Councils. During the year, WEROC:

- Made a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Regional Development, Infrastructure and Transport's Inquiry into Local Government Funding and Fiscal Sustainability. The submission highlighted the growing role of local government and the need for funding arrangements that are more equitable, more predictable and better aligned with the realities of delivering services in regional areas.
- Wrote to the Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport, the Hon Rita Saffioti MLA, calling for urgent investment in the Great Eastern Highway. The letter highlighted the highway's strategic importance as the State's main east-west road transport corridor, its deteriorating condition and its lack of overtaking opportunities. WEROC has since met with Main Roads WA several times to reinforce the case for funding.



Operational Highlights

Waste Management

WEROC continued to progress the actions in its 2022 Strategic Waste Management Plan. While many of these actions are long term, member Councils are taking practical steps towards the shared goal of consolidated regional waste infrastructure.

In early 2026, WEROC met with the Managing Director of Avon Waste, who gave detailed feedback on each Shire's waste facilities and suggested improvements, particularly to lift recycling rates. A community education campaign was recommended.

With guidance from DWER, WEROC has developed a regional waste education campaign and applied for funding through the WasteSorted Community Education Grants program. The outcome was pending at the time this report was prepared.

Regional Marketing and Promotion

Promoting the region remains a key focus for WEROC, drawing on the Eastern Wheatbelt's natural and built attractions to increase visitation. In 2025-26, WEROC:

- Co-funded the Wheatbelt local tourism group's cooperative wildflower campaign with Australia's Golden Outback (AGO), Roe Tourism, NEW Travel and Pioneers Pathway. This campaign ran from the end of July to mid-October 2025. The campaign aimed to increase visitation to wildflower hotspots.
- Supported AGO's For the Road Trippers campaign, launched in February 2026 ahead of the Perth Caravan and Camping Show. The campaign featured drive trail information on its landing page, editorial in the Sunday Times Explore Your WAy lift-out, paid social media advertising and AGO member emails.
- Co-funded a Wheatbelt stand at the Perth Caravan and Camping Show, held from 19 to 22 March 2026.
- Engaged the Central Wheatbelt Visitors Centre to manage the social media platforms for the Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive Trail.



Operational Highlights

Workforce Housing

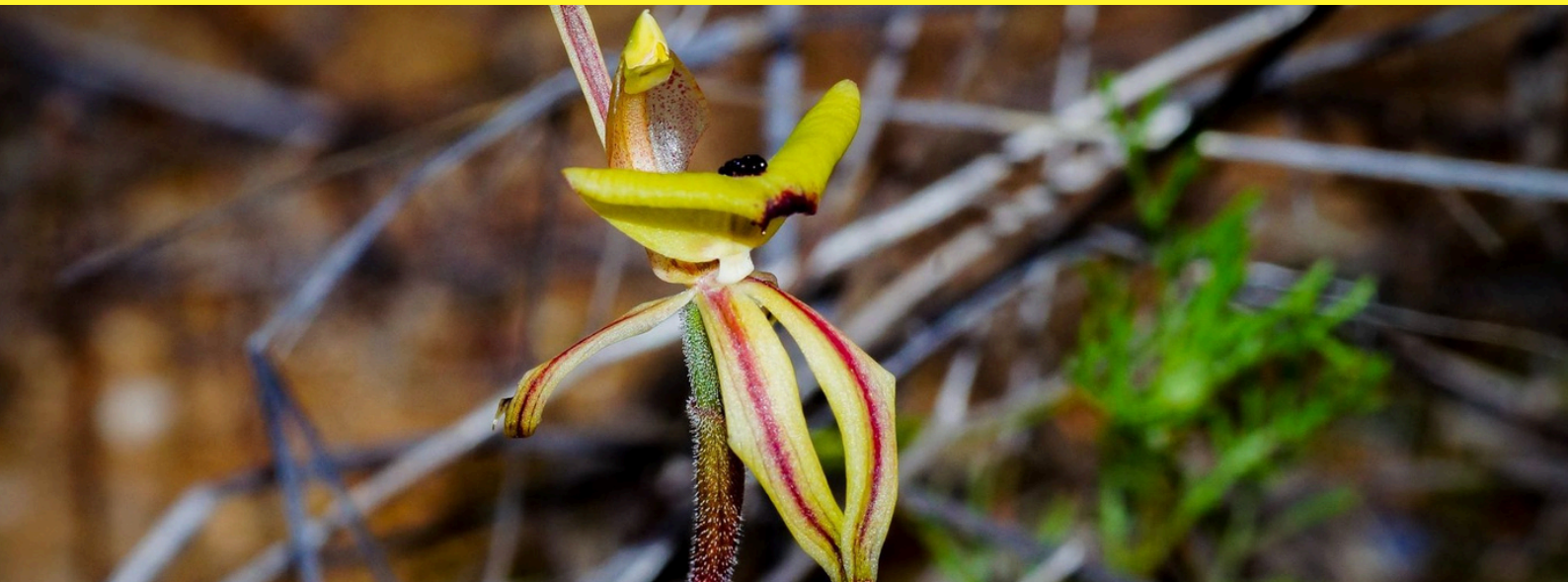
In 2025, with support from the Wheatbelt Development Commission, WEROC began a detailed investigation into workforce housing needs across its member Shires. The work included a housing needs assessment, feasibility testing of the most promising residential development sites in each Shire, a preliminary business case and cost benefit analysis, and a town action plan for each Shire.

This evidence base underpinned WEROC's application to the State Government's Regional Housing Support Fund. Although the application was unsuccessful, the work leaves member Councils well placed for future funding opportunities, and WEROC continues to pursue other avenues to deliver much-needed housing.

What's Next?

In 2026-27, WEROC will:

1. Deliver the 2027 Wheatbelt Medical Student Immersion Program with the University of Notre Dame and Rural Health West.
2. Continue to advocate and seek funding for housing, including through a joint application with NEWROC and RoeROC to the Housing Support Program Local Infrastructure Fund.
3. Continue to promote the region, particularly the Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive Trail, through social media, content creation and co-investment in the Wheatbelt cooperative marketing group.
4. Deliver a waste education campaign to improve recycling across the region.
5. Continue to advocate for investment in the Great Eastern Highway and the wider regional road network.



Finance Report

Under Rule 16.2 of the WEROC Inc. Constitution, the Executive Officer acts as Secretary and Treasurer of WEROC Inc. The Executive Officer in their capacity as Treasurer presents the finanical report.

Statement of Fianncial Position

WEROC Inc. holds a Westpac operating account and a term deposit (established September 2023):

Account	Balance
Westpac Community Solutions One account, 1 July 2025	$99,971.03
Westpac Community Solutions One account, 30 June 2026	$104,652.25
Term deposit, 30 June 2026	$100,000.00
Total funds held, 30 June 2026	**$204,652.25**

Statement of Income and Expenditure

WEROC Inc. recorded a surplus of $9,047 for 2025-26. Income came mainly from grants and the annual contributions of member Councils, with additional income from interest earned on the term deposit.

1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026	Amount
Income	$173,392
Expenditure	$164,346
Net surplus	**$9,047**

2026-27 Budget

The 2026-27 budget was adopted at a General Meeting on 8 May 2026, meeting the requirement under Rule 17.3 of the Constitution to approve a budget at least one month before the end of the financial year. It estimates income of $102,871.52 and expenditure of $156,786.21, leaving a forecast operating account balance of $27,772.38 at 30 June 2027.