

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-25



CHAIRS REPORT

The 2024–25 year has been another productive one for WEROC, with strong progress made across several key projects that align with our strategic priorities.

A major highlight was the development of the Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive Trail Itinerary, featuring 21 local sites across our seven member shires. This project celebrates the unique attractions of our region and supports our goal of boosting visitation and strengthening local economies. We also continued to promote the Eastern Wheatbelt through our financial contributions to the Wheatbelt Local Tourism Group co-funding campaigns ensuring our communities remain visible and inviting to visitors.

Housing and workforce challenges have remained front of mind. The WEROC Workforce Housing Investigation, supported by the Wheatbelt Development Commission, has moved forward with the completion of a workforce housing needs analysis. Work is now underway on site feasibility assessments to help address housing shortages and support local workforce attraction and retention.

Health and education partnerships have also been a focus. WEROC worked with the University of Notre Dame and Rural Health West to deliver the 2025 Wheatbelt Medical Student Immersion Program in March, giving students hands-on experience in our region and encouraging future rural health professionals. On the advocacy front, we made submissions to the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries on CEO KPIs and Online Registers, and to the Department of Education WA regarding the draft Regional Education Strategy ensuring the Eastern Wheatbelt perspective is well represented.

In November 2024, we welcomed two McCusker Centre for Citizenship interns from UWA. One explored ways to add value to tourism experiences across WEROC communities, while the other gathered data to assist public health planning. We also completed a HR and Industrial Relations project, auditing policies, contracts, and position descriptions across member shires to ensure compliance with Local Government Awards.

CHAIRS REPORT

A particularly pleasing milestone this year was welcoming the Shire of Cunderdin as a new WEROC member in April 2025, further strengthening our collaboration and regional voice.

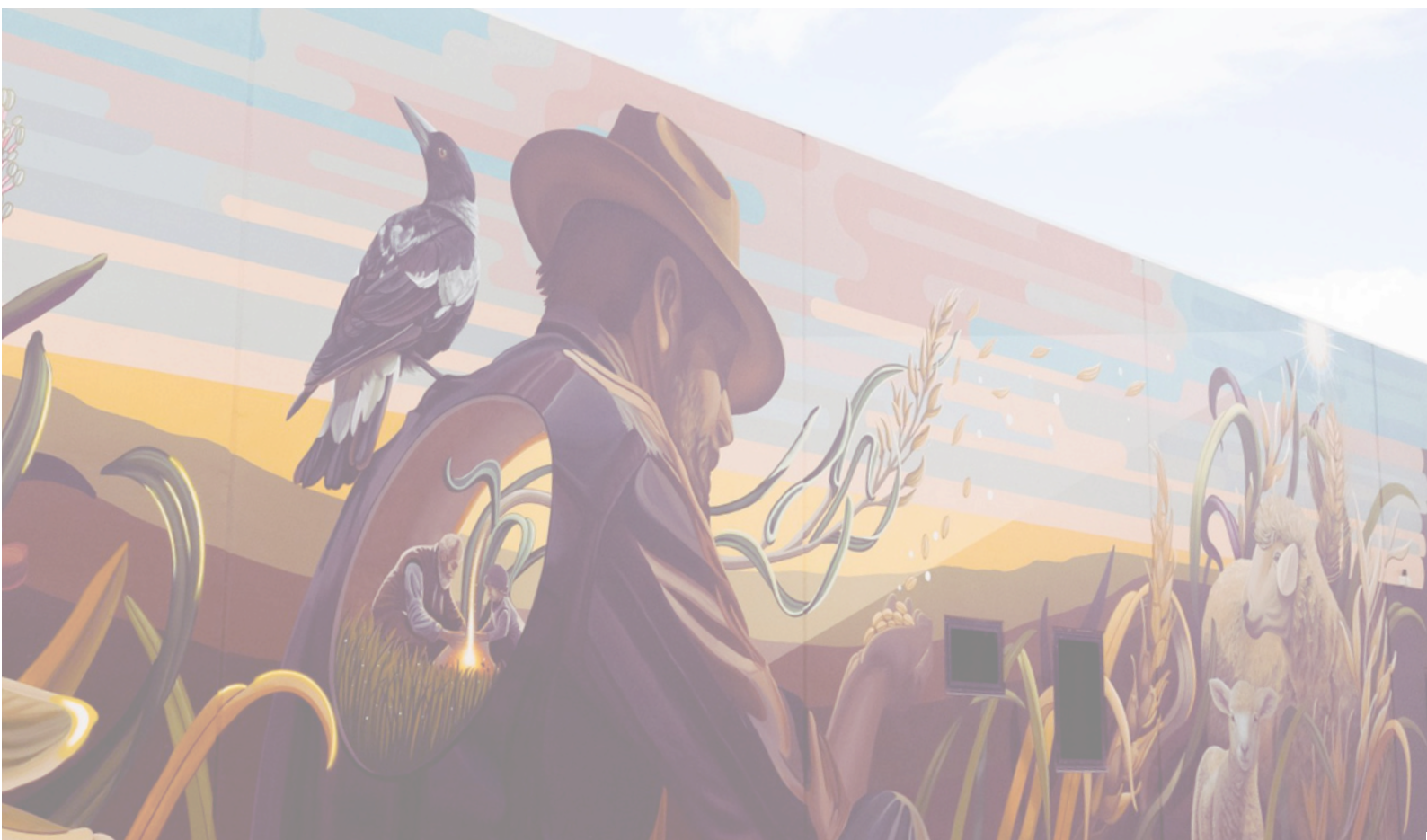
I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our Executive Officer, Rebekah Burges, for her ongoing dedication, professionalism, and the significant time and effort she invests in WEROC's success. Her attention to detail and commitment to delivering outcomes continue to strengthen the organisation and support our member shires.

Thank you also to our member Shires for their continued collaboration and support as Board Members. The commitment, insight, and willingness of each Shire to work together on shared priorities is what allows WEROC to achieve meaningful results for our communities. The strength of this partnership remains one of our greatest assets.

I look forward to another strong year ahead.

Lisa O'Neill

Chair Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils Inc



VISION

For the Wheatbelt East to grow and prosper

PRIORITIES

In early 2025, the WEROC Board reviewed the strategic priorities established in 2024 and confirmed key focus areas moving forward.

The current priorities for WEROC include:

01

Ensuring WEROC communities’ benefit from renewable energy and extractive industry developments in the Eastern Wheatbelt.

02

Addressing the critical housing shortage by actively working to increase both the supply and diversity of housing options.

03

Boosting visitation to WEROC communities through the continued promotion of the Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive Trail.

04

Securing a sustainable water supply for WEROC communities by exploring opportunities to enhance water capture, storage, and reuse.



BOARD MEMBERS

The WEROC Inc. board is comprised of two representatives from each of the seven member councils. Our Board Members in 2024-25 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

Chair of WEROC Inc.



ANDREW MALONE

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



STUART HOBLEY

Chief Executive Officer

CR. ALISON HARRIS

President

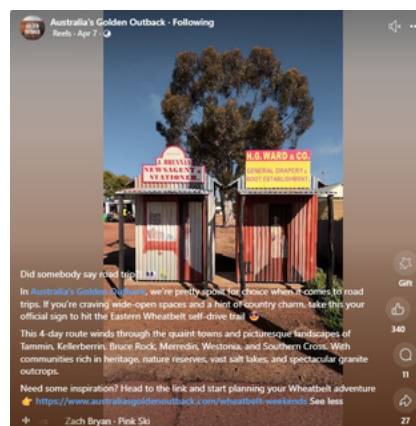
OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

SHIRE OF CUNDERDIN JOINS WEROC

At a Special General Meeting held on 15 April 2025, the WEROC Inc. Board unanimously resolved to welcome the Shire of Cunderdin as a new Member of the Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils Inc. WEROC are delighted to have the Shire of Cunderdin on board and look forward to their contribution to the collective work of the group.

EASTERN WHEATBELT SELF-DRIVE TRAIL

Between September and November 2024, WEROC developed a new self-drive itinerary aimed at promoting visitation to key attractions and communities across the WEROC Local Government areas. In June 2025, the Eastern Wheatbelt Self-Drive Trail was updated to incorporate sites within the Shire of Cunderdin. The trail now features 21 sites, with a suggested route beginning in Meckering (Shire of Cunderdin) and ending in Southern Cross.



MCCUSKER CENTRE INTERNS

In November 2024, WEROC hosted two interns from the University of Western Australia's McCusker Centre for Citizenship. The interns were based in Merredin and travelled to other WEROC communities during their two-week placement. The Tourism Intern assisted in identifying opportunities to activate the Eastern Wheatbelt self-drive trail, while the Public Health Planning Intern supported the collection and collation of data to assist WEROC Shires with the development of their Public Health Plans. The placement concluded with a presentation to the WEROC Board in late November.

OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

WORKFORCE HOUSING INVESTIGATION

In early 2025, WEROC, with support from the Wheatbelt Development Commission, commenced a comprehensive investigation into workforce housing needs across its member local government areas. The project involves direct engagement with local businesses and government agencies to assess current demand and establish a baseline for future modelling, site-specific feasibility analysis to understand development costs, and the preparation of a business case and cost-benefit analysis. The findings will provide WEROC member councils with a robust evidence base to support future funding applications for land development and housing construction.

WEROC HR PROJECT

In September 2024, WEROC engaged an Industrial Relations/Human Resources consultant to review and update employment contracts, policies and procedures for WEROC Councils to ensure compliance with relevant Awards and legislation. This work was completed by the end of December 2024 with a full suite of employment contracts and policy templates rolled out.

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.

In March 2025, 108 Notre Dame medical students were billeted for three nights with families across Cunderdin, Bruce Rock, Kellerberrin, Merredin, Westonia and Southern Cross.

The program provides a broad exposure to regional living and healthcare through visits to schools, working farms, regional facilities and attractions, meetings with local GPs and allied health workers, and on-country learning with the local Aboriginal community.



OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

REGIONAL MARKETING & PROMOTION

Regional promotion and marketing remain a key focus for WEROC, with the aim of leveraging the region's natural and built assets to increase visitation to the Eastern Wheatbelt. In 2024-25, 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 autumn campaign, which ran from 22 March to 28 April 2024 and included the development of road-trip reels featuring must visit locations along the eastern wheatbelt self-drive trail.
- WEROC engaged social media travel influencer *Taylormadefortravel* to drive the Eastern Wheatbelt Trail and promote the experience across her platforms. In total, she shared 45 stories along with several reels and posts.
- Co-Contributed to a Wheatbelt stand at the Perth Caravan and Camping Show which took place from 20 to 23 March 2025.
- Placed a full-page advertisement for the eastern wheatbelt self-drive trail in the updated version of the Eastern Wheatbelt Visitors Guide.

ADVOCACY

WEROC prepared written submissions to:

1. The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries consultation on CEO KPI's and Online Registers. WEROC expressed support for initiatives aimed at improving transparency across all levels of government, while also urging caution around the introduction of regulations that place disproportionate scrutiny and responsibility on local government leaders compared to their counterparts in other areas of the public sector. WEROC also advocated for a reconsideration of retrospective reporting requirements for online registers.
2. The Department of Education WA consultation on the draft Regional Education Strategy. WEROC supported the development of a strategy aimed at improving educational access and opportunities for regional and remote students. However, concerns were raised regarding the strategy's broad scope and the absence of clear, measurable actions and outcomes, which may limit its overall effectiveness.

FINANCE REPORT

Statement of Financial Position

The cash balance of the WEROC Inc. Community Solutions One account held with Westpac Bank, on 1 July 2024 was \$69,785 and the closing balance on 30 June 2025 was \$99,971.

A Term Deposit account was established in September 2023 and was renewed in September 2024 for an 11-month term. The closing balance of this account on 30 June 2025 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 2025-26 financial year was adopted at a General Meeting held on 7 May 2025. The income and expenditure commitments for WEROC Inc. for the next financial year are estimated to be \$103,191.33 and \$146,786.71 respectively, resulting in a cash balance in the operating account of \$50,716.74 on 30 June 2026.

Statement of Income & Expenditure

For the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, WEROC had an income of \$147,763 and expenditure of \$123,319, resulting in a net profit of \$24,417.

The primary source of income for WEROC Inc. in the 2024-25 financial year was the annual financial contributions made by the Member Councils. Additional income was generated through contributions toward the consultancy and projects reserve, which was used for the WEROC housing investigation, and interest received on the Term Deposit account.

