

FEBRUARY 2026

Welcome to Bunuru. The hottest weather with little to no rainfall.

THIS MONTH...

A message from our
Shire President
and CEO

Gravel Roads

Basketball for Youth



Full issue can be found on our website www.gnowangerup.wa.gov.au
Council > News and Information > [Gnowangerup Shire Newsletter](#)



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Shire President - Kate O'Keeffe Monthly Message



As I write this newsletter, school children across our Shire have returned to school today, and on what is no doubt a very warm start to the year. I wish all students within the Shire of Gnowangerup, along with their teachers and school staff, a rewarding and successful 2026. For those families who have farewelled children heading off to school further afield, I hope they settle well and thrive in the year ahead.

While local government is formally in recess during January, the work of Council certainly does not stop. One highlight over the past month was the visit from Western Australia's Minister for Health, Meredith Hammat, who met with the Regional Health Alliance to discuss the ongoing challenges faced by local governments when ratepayer funds are used to support GP services in rural Western Australia. We are hopeful that this conversation will prove productive. One of the key requests we have made is for General Practitioners to be included in the list of frontline

workers eligible to access State Government housing, which would be a meaningful step forward for regional communities such as ours.

On 28 January, Council and the Shire's Executive Team met in Katanning to identify our strategic objectives for 2026. I am pleased to announce that Council has prioritised our road network and the development of a long-term strategic road plan as our number one priority. The condition of our roads, and the need for a contemporary and effective strategy, has been raised consistently by community members throughout 2025. We have heard this feedback clearly and have responded by making roads our highest priority for the year ahead.

Our second priority is waste management. As many of you are aware, we have experienced a number of issues over the past year relating to misuse of waste facilities, supervision, signage and opening hours. Council will be reviewing the long-term viability of operating three waste facilities across the Shire, considering the most effective management models, and ensuring that supervision of these sites is treated as a priority moving forward.



Shire President Kate O'Keeffe with Minister Hammat



Pictured right, Shire President Kate O'Keeffe, Local Borden Resident and artist Phoebe Milne, Kojonup Shire President Roger Bilney, Katanning Shire President Kristy D'Aprille and Patricia Ryder

Shire President - Kate O'Keeffe Monthly Message cont.

Our third major priority for 2026 is the continued delivery of residential and industrial land across Borden, Gnowangerup and Ongerup. The recent release of land by the State Government, and the speed at which it was purchased, clearly demonstrates the strong demand for housing and land within our Shire. Council will continue to work hard to unlock further opportunities in this space.

While roads, rubbish and land have been identified as our top three priorities, we will of course continue our work on other important matters, including advocacy for GP funding and broader community needs.

Today we held our Annual Electors' Meeting in Gnowangerup. This year we trialled a lunchtime meeting in an effort to increase attendance, and I am pleased to report that it was our best-attended electors' meeting in my six years on Council. Thank you to everyone who took the time to attend, and a sincere thank you to our CEO for his comprehensive presentation outlining what Council has achieved over the past 12 to 24 months, as well as our focus for the next 12 to 24 months.

Finally, I would like to remind community members that nominations for Council positions open tomorrow, Tuesday 3 February. I strongly encourage anyone with an interest in contributing to our community to consider nominating. Serving on Council is a rewarding and valuable experience, and we work as a supportive team to ensure the demands of the role are manageable. If you would like to know more about what being on Council involves, please do not hesitate to contact myself, the CEO, or any of the current elected members.

As 2026 gains momentum, I would like to once again remind everyone that Council is here to represent you — your family, your business, and your interests. If you have something you would like to discuss, question or suggest, please reach out to one of your elected members. Our ordinary Council meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of every month at 3:30 pm and are open to the public. Public question time is included, and community attendance is always welcome.

Best wishes for a positive and productive 2026.

Warm regards,
Kate O'Keeffe JP
Shire President

Pictured right, Councillor Creagh, Deputy Shire President Rebecca O'Meehan, Shire President Kate O'Keeffe, Tony Brown - Local Government Inspector, , Councillor Robbie Miniter, Councillor Rebecca Kiddle, Councillor Callaghan and Shire CEO David Nicholson.



Update from the Chief Executive Officer - David Nicholson



The Shire of Gnowangerup is facing some real and well-understood challenges. Residents have told us they are concerned about the condition of roads, the future of waste and recycling facilities, the lack of land for residential and industrial use, and rising costs and rates.

These are important concerns — and they are exactly why Council has taken a long-term, strategic approach to planning for the future.

Why a long-term approach matters

The Shire manages a large network of roads and community assets with a relatively small and slowly declining population base. At the same time, construction, compliance, and operating costs continue to rise.

If we continue to try to do everything in the same way we always have, the result would likely be higher and less predictable rate increases, ageing infrastructure and fewer options over time. This is not a sustainable path.

Making careful, deliberate choices

Council's strategy focuses on protecting essential services while living within the community's means. This includes:

- **Prioritising critical infrastructure**, particularly roads that support safety, economic activity and community connection. To this end we are currently undertaking a road network audit to develop a ten-year renewal plan, as well as a strategic gravel resource plan. This will result in a clearly funded appropriately prioritised road renewal plan and whole of life asset management plan.
- **Planning for the long-term future of waste and recycling**, including exploring regional solutions that may be more sustainable and cost-effective. To this end we are in the process of developing a strategic waste plan that will result in a fully funded waste management programme.
- **Releasing land, to encourage industry and new residents**. This will result in improved livability, employment and population growth, and economic activity.
- **Improving financial sustainability**, so rate increases can be more stable and closer to CPI over time, rather than driven by sudden cost pressures.

This approach is about planning ahead — not reacting when choices become more limited and more expensive.

Update from the Chief Executive Officer - David Nicholson cont.



Understanding the trade-offs

Planning for the future involves trade-offs. It may mean:

- Some lower-use roads are maintained at different service levels.
- Not every facility can be upgraded or replaced in its current form.
- New assets are only taken on where their full life-cycle costs can be supported.

These decisions are not about reducing services for the sake of it. They are about ensuring the Shire can continue to deliver the services that matter most, without placing an unsustainable burden on ratepayers.

Supporting a sustainable community

A stable population is critical to the Shire's long-term future. Council is therefore focusing investment where it supports livability, economic activity and people choosing to stay or move to Gnowangerup. By focusing our efforts, rather than spreading limited resources too thinly, we can make a more meaningful and lasting impact.

Our commitment

The Shire is committed to being transparent about decisions, listening to community feedback and explaining how today's choices help protect tomorrow's services.

Careful, forward-looking planning gives us the best chance of maintaining essential infrastructure, managing costs responsibly and securing a positive future for our Shire.



Unsealed Roads - What are the challenges on our 838 kilometres of unsealed road network....

What is an Unsealed Road?

If a road is unsealed, it means that it is not covered with a hard material like concrete or asphalt or bitumen. Unsealed roads are typically made of loose material like gravel or dirt or sand. Some regional roads may be sealed but, still have gravel or dirt edges(shoulders). Conditions on unsealed roads can change quickly or deteriorate due to weather, the number of vehicles on it, and types of vehicles using the road. We have all seen how road conditions can change quickly with high use such as during harvest.

About Unsealed Road Maintenance

The Shire is responsible for approximately 836km of unsealed roads. Unsealed roads are maintained by periodic maintenance grading undertaken throughout the year. The Shire has three (3) graders and the shire is split into 3 zones (Ongerup, Gnowangerup and Borden). Each grader generally works in a circuit for each zone to make best use of grader time on the roads. We will be reviewing our practices to see how we can improve grader time on the road network. Generally, as a guide we would utilise a Road Grading Hierarchy to determine the level of service suitable for a particular road type, which depends on factors such as traffic volumes and type of use. However, as we are made aware of urgent locations, we will divert from our circuit to address priority safety concerns. The condition of unsealed roads can change quickly, with the biggest contributing factor being weather conditions and existing gravel pavement thicknesses.

Weather Challenges

Unsealed roads need moisture to bind the materials together. The dryer the weather conditions, the quicker surface materials become loose and displace (causing corrugations), and excessive dust forms. If a road becomes too dry, grading it could make the condition worse. During hot and dry summers, we will often see a number of roads deteriorating at the same time. To slow down the deterioration we recommend drivers to slow down and enjoy the view, this will help. Shire Officers carry out inspections to prioritise works on roads that are most heavily used and in the worst condition.



Alternatively, heavy or constant rain can cause erosion or damage to gravel roads, especially during significant storm events where drain infrastructure becomes inundated with water and debris. The excess water also softens the roads, making it more likely for potholes to form. Additionally, fallen trees and wildlife can also pose an unexpected hazard to drivers all year round.

Due to the factors above, it is important that road users remain vigilant and drive to conditions. Unlike sealed roads, permanent speed limit signs are not used on unsealed roads because the condition of the roads cannot be assured, and vehicles must always be driven to suit the conditions.

Gravel Road Upgrades & Resheeting

Unsealed roads lose gravel over time and require additional gravel to be placed - this process is called resheeting. Gravel resheeting works are considered as reconstruction works (not a maintenance practice), which needs to be considered as part of our Annual Capital Works Program.

Requesting a Road to be Graded

The Shire has a Maintenance Grading Program that outlines a routine that is followed to maintain our unsealed roads. However, from time to time, a request to grade a road is received. The road in question will be inspected and if required, the road will be scheduled for grading with consideration to the Shire's Maintenance Grading Program.

If you believe a road near you needs grading you can make a report request additional maintenance, using request forms on our website, downloading the phone app, 'Snap Send Solve' or contact the shire office on 9827 1007.

Advice of Works: February 2026

- **Gravel Resheeting program beginning first week of February comprising on Old Ongerup Road, Cowalellup Rd, Oakdale Rd, Magitup Rd, Sandalwood Rd, Nightwell Rd and Tie Line Rd;**
- **Gravel Pushing, screening and crushing at various locations for gravel resheet program to be completed;**
- **Park Street pedestrian bridge (Mineral Springs) – Old bridge removed and new bridge installed**
- **Magitup Dam – Catchment renewal – grading, vegetation removal**

Works operations typically take place on weekdays, and will be clearly signed when occurring on or near a public road. We request that you follow all directional signage as required and drive safely to the road conditions when travelling near or through worksites. Delays are expected to be minimal. For enquires please contact the office on 9827 1007

Basketball Clinics a Slam Dunk for Local Youth

A series of basketball clinics hosted by former Perth Wildcats players and Basketball Olympians Damian Martin and Greg Hire has delivered positive outcomes for young people across Ongerup, Borden and Gnowangerup.

The clinics formed part of a Shire-led youth engagement initiative developed after local police raised concerns about youth boredom within the community. Recognising the need to act early and positively, the Shire brought together a local working group made up of people directly involved in youth wellbeing and engagement.



The group included representatives from the local school, sporting complex, community resource centre, youth services, the Shire's Community Development team, a local Aboriginal corporation and a local Filipino community representative. The aim was to listen, collaborate and identify activities that would genuinely resonate with local young people.

Basketball was identified as a strong option, with local police officer Todd DeSouza able to connect the group with former Perth Wildcats players. Funding was then secured from the WA Government to support the delivery of the broader youth engagement plan, including the basketball clinics.

Across five 1.5-hour clinics — one in Ongerup, one in Borden and three in Gnowangerup — 70 children and young people aged between 5 and 21 took part. Sessions were adapted on the day to suit different age groups, ensuring everyone felt included and engaged.

Damian and Greg's energy, humour and teamwork created a welcoming environment, while their personal stories reinforced messages about resilience, perseverance and not letting regional living limit future opportunities.

Following each clinic, participants had the opportunity to ask questions, take photos and connect with the players.

Community connection extended beyond the court, with an open mic night held in Gnowangerup on Thursday evening and a casual community barbecue in Borden on Friday night.

A special thank you goes to Roast & Brew Café for supplying food for the Gnowangerup evening and generously donating all proceeds to St John Ambulance Gnowangerup, raising \$810 for the local sub-centre.

Proudly supported by the WA Government.





Public Events coming up



Fields & Fortunes Regional Business Forum | Thursday 19 February

The 2026 Fields and Fortunes event is set to be held at the Gnowangerup Sporting Complex with a theme around technology - Smart Business, Strong Communities. Tickets are open on Humanitix now. Trade booth spots are available.



Dandjoo Day | Friday 13 March

NOTE CHANGE OF DATE

Dandjoo (meaning 'together') day will be held at the Borden Pavilion. It is an opportunity for the Shire to show appreciation for everyone who volunteers in our Shire. Volunteer of the year nominations are open via the website and presentations will be held on the night.



Council Meetings | Fourth Wednesday of each month

Ordinary Council Meetings are where decisions are made on local projects, services and spending that directly affect the community. Attending gives residents a clear view of how decisions are reached and helps build trust and transparency



Weir Park Consultation | February date TBC

In February the Community Development team will head to Ongerup to consult with the community about what they want to see happen at Weir park. Dates and advertising will be posted in the new year.



Wild Gravel 2026 | Saturday 24 October

WA's most spectacular gravel cycling and running event returns in 2026. With the World Champs set to be held in Nannup in October preparations for our Wild Gravel event are well under way.



Shire refuse sites

All steel needs to be separated from general waste and placed in the scrap metal collection area.

Green waste and building rubble also have dedicated areas for disposal and are not to be placed in the general household waste trench.

Chemical shuttles (IBCs) are prohibited. They must be returned to the supplier.

Tyres are not accepted at any of the Shire refuse sites and must be taken to an authorised tyre dealer for recycling.

Items **not** accepted at any Shire refuse sites

- Animal Carcasses
- Bio Waste
- Fuels
- Paints
- Lithium Batteries
- Gas Cylinders
- Asbestos
- Hazardous Materials
- Oils
- Chemicals (including empty chemical containers e.g. IBC's).



REMINDER

www.gnowangerup.wa.gov.au

Community ➡ Waste and Effluent Information



Fields & Fortunes

Regional Business Forum

Connect, learn and explore how technology is shaping the next chapter of regional business



THURSDAY 19TH
FEBUARY 2026



9am - 4:30pm



GNOWANGERUP
SPORTING COMPLEX



CATERING PROVIDED



TICKETS AVAILABLE ON
HUMANITIX

\$50 per ticket | \$200 per trade booth | Not for profit free - get in touch for a discount code

Smart Business. Strong Communities



FIELDS & FORTUNES REGIONAL BUSINESS FORUM

Shire of 
GNOWANGERUP
BORDEN • GNOWANGERUP • ONGERUP
Heart of the Stirlings



KEY NOTE
SPEAKER

Julian Moore

CHIEF AI CONSULTANT
STRATEGIC MEMBERSHIP
SOLUTIONS



SPEAKER

Bethany Findlay

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND ENGAGEMENT
MANAGER
NBN



SPEAKER

Renu Kannu

NATIONAL ROBOTICS
AND INNOVATION LEAD

AUSTRALIAN
AUTOMATION AND
ROBOTICS PRECINCT
CORE INNOVATION HUB



LOCAL CASE
STUDY

Burke Perry

OWNER
BP IMPORTS



SPEAKER

Jason McFarlane

DIRECTOR
THE GREENTECH HUB



SPEAKER

Helge Janicke

DIRECTOR
CYBERWEST HUB



SPEAKER

Mat Lewis

DIRECTOR
CREATIVE AND TECH
VILLAGE



MC

Caroline Robinson

150 SQUARE

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register your trade booth

Smart Business. Strong Communities



Dandjoo Day Community Celebration

 **Friday 13 March** • **Borden Pavilion**

Dandjoo means “together” in Noongar language, reflecting the spirit of the evening

Dandjoo Day is a community celebration recognising the people and groups who go the extra mile to support and strengthen their community. On the night, four awards will be presented:

- Community Citizen of the Year
- Young Citizen of the Year
- Senior Citizen of the Year
- Community Group or Event of the Year

This event is an opportunity to pause, come together, and acknowledge the effort, care and commitment that make the community a great place to live. It is a chance for the Shire and Council to formally say thank you to those who quietly contribute their time, energy and leadership for the benefit of others.

Who Can Be Nominated?

Community members, young people (under 25yrs), seniors (over 65yrs), or local groups and events that have made a positive impact through volunteering, leadership, kindness or community involvement.

How to Nominate

Community members are encouraged to submit a nomination for someone who deserves recognition. Nomination details and forms are available through the Shire’s website. Visit www.gnowangerup.wa.gov.au and click on Community - Our Community - Dandjoo.

Everyone is invited to attend and be part of an evening that celebrates community, connection and the people who make a difference — together.

Buses will be running from Ongerup and Gnowangerup return.

Please RSVP to gnpshire@gnowangerup.wa.gov.au by March 6 for catering purposes

Enhancing network resilience against pole top fires

Western Power is continuing its comprehensive program of work to increase the network's resilience against weather events including mitigating the risk of pole top fires.

Head of Asset Performance Archana Viswanathan said Western Power's pole top fire mitigation program was on track to treat or replace insulators in more than 100,000 locations by mid-2027.

"We're currently treating around 19,000 poles across the Midwest and Wheatbelt, due to be complete by mid-year. Once complete, more than 60,000 poles will have been treated since September 2023," she said.

"In regional areas we've found an innovative way to apply silicone to insulators using helicopters – this boosts pole top fire mitigation reducing potential unplanned power outages for communities.

"Additionally, where an insulator is due for replacement, we're proactively installing silicone insulators which are less prone to dust and pollution build up. Since July 2022, we've replaced more than 11,500 insulators and crossarms across the network.

"As helicopter operations are restricted in the metro area, we've replaced insulators rather than treating them with silicone.

"We also began a trial in the cities of Cockburn, Rockingham and Swan to test the viability of treating insulators with silicone via elevated work platform in metro areas. This trial along with community feedback will help inform the potential broader rollout in the future.

"The roll out of our underground power programs in the metro area is reducing the number of poles that are susceptible to weather related damage including pole top fires.

"We're always exploring new technologies and techniques to help reduce the risk of pole top fires and to ensure continued safe and reliable power supply to the community.

"Pole top fires will continue to be a challenge, particularly with the scale of the network and increased unseasonal weather, but we're doing what they can to mitigate them."

Pole top fires can occur where dust and airborne pollutants accumulate on insulators - particularly following harvest season or in coastal areas due to dust and salt build up. When combined with light rain or humid conditions, this can cause 'tracking' - where electricity flows across the surface of the insulator potentially causing pole-top fires.

When planning these mitigation programs, Western Power prioritises treatments based on bushfire risk which considers terrain and climate.

END

