

JANUARY 2026

Welcome to Birak representing the 'first summer,' characterized by heat, fire, and the preparation of the land for new growth.

THIS MONTH...

A message from our
Shire President
and CEO

Fields & Fortunes

Bushfire
preparedness



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



I trust you all enjoyed a relaxing festive season, spent with family and friends, and that many of you are able to enjoy a well-earned break over the coming months.

December was a particularly busy month for Council, with meetings held across three consecutive weeks as we worked to finalise outstanding matters and progress as much work as possible prior to the January recess. This commitment reflects Council's determination to continue delivering outcomes for our community.

There continues to be strong activity across the Shire in relation to land development, with the blocks released by the State Government proving very popular with both businesses and households. It is encouraging to see this level of interest and growth within our communities.

I would like to take a moment to sincerely acknowledge the incredible work of our bushfire fighters, particularly during last month's fire. Their professionalism, courage and commitment were exceptional. We also acknowledge, with deep sadness, the tragic loss of our community member, bush fire brigade member and friend to many, Jaxon Peakall. Our thoughts and prayers remain with his family and loved ones during this incredibly difficult time. In response, the Shire has established a support network to ensure our bushfire fighters and their families can access free counselling services if required. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you need support — this offer remains ongoing.

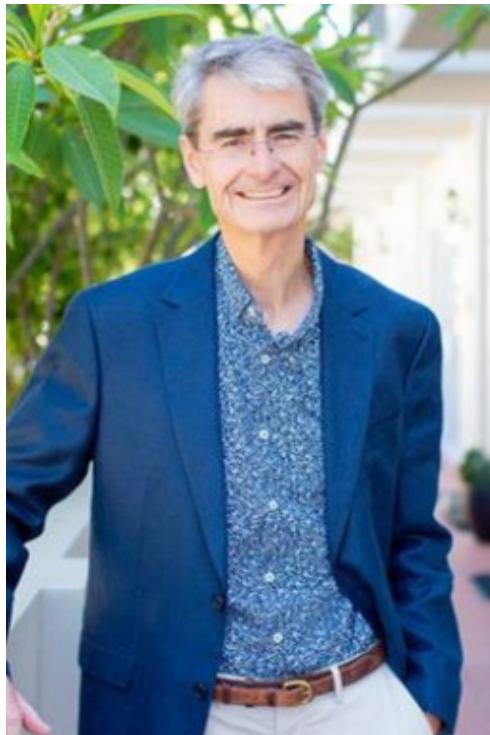
We continue to experience challenges with community behaviour at our waste management facilities. While improving surveillance at all tips has been explored, the cost of doing so is significant and would ultimately be borne by ratepayers. The most effective solution is for all community members to make responsible decisions when disposing of household and farm waste. We are one of the few local governments that provides waste facilities in each town across the Shire, and this service comes at a considerable cost. Poor disposal practices increase these costs further. Waste management within the Shire will be under review this year, and I strongly encourage everyone to do the right thing and to remind others to do the same.

Later this month, Council will be holding a strategic planning workshop to set our priorities and goals for 2026 and ensure they align clearly with our strategic plan. I encourage anyone with suggestions or ideas to reach out to a Councillor, the CEO, or myself.

As this newsletter reaches you, our incredible aquatic centre is also delivering swimming lessons for our community. I hope all participating children enjoy their lessons and make the most of this fantastic facility.

I look forward to a productive and rewarding 2026 working alongside you all. As always, I welcome your comments, feedback and suggestions and encourage you to get in touch at any time as we continue working to serve our community as best we can.

Update from the Chief Executive Officer - David Nicholson



While last year is now well and truly in the rear vision mirror it's worth taking a moment to remind ourselves of some of our 2025 achievements before launching into 2026.

Driven by community expectations and aspirations which are documented in the Shire's Council Plan 2025-2035, the focus for 2025 was on rebuilding those foundational basics (roads, rubbish and rates), while concurrently working on those strategic issues that have long lead times but will position our community for long term success.

Long term success is enunciated in the Shire's Vision which Council ratified early last year being a community where people Stay, Grow and Thrive. That is, our community is a place where people want to live, and the community provides opportunities for people, families and businesses to grow and thrive in the process.

So what have we been doing on our journey to deliver against this Vision?

Let's talk basics - Roads, Rubbish and Rates.

Roads

I've been told more than once that our Shire has the worst roads in the State. This saddens me as I can assure residents we don't set out each year with the view of seeing how bad a job we can do on the roads. Despite our best endeavors I recognise the road network is our Achilles heel and to address we've tried to go back to basics.

Over the past 12 months we've rebuilt the depot management team and to help attract more depot staff we've improved the depot team's conditions of employment. In addition, we've been proactively working with the Regional Road Group (RRG) to increase our share of State grants. This has resulted in RRG grants increasing from \$114k in 2025/26 to \$530k in 2026/27.

We also worked hard to get the 2025/26 budget approved early; for 2025 this being approved on 30 July. Early approval allowed us to go to the market sooner than normal, meaning we were better placed to get a more competitive price and commence road works earlier. For 2026/27 we're aiming to have the budget approved no later than June, which will put us in an even better position.



Update from the Chief Executive Officer - David Nicholson

Rubbish

In recent months rubbish has been a big problem. The Shire has three rubbish tips and to keep costs down these are unmanned, with the Shire only undertaking weekly tidy-up work. In other words, the condition of the tips is a direct reflection on how the community uses these tips. If you have a green wheelie bin, as part of your annual Rates you pay for this to be emptied each week. This is the direct cost the Shire pays the contractor. Residents also contribute towards Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery (WARR).

Rates

For 2025/26 the Shire increased its Rates by 9.0%. Clearly this was well above CPI and the increment from previous years. Whilst the Councillors were most concerned about the impact this would have on the community, they recognised the need for services to improve and for us to start addressing some of the strategic challenges e.g. housing, youth and economic development, roads and infrastructure.

Council also acknowledged that regulatory requirements and State cost shifting has meant the business of local government is now far more complex and onerous. This includes the cost the community is bearing for emergency management and fire mitigation work. The fact is the bare-bones local government operating model of yesteryear is no longer an option.

Let's talk the Strategic issues.

Cost of the Shire's GP.

We've been banging on about this for over two years and knocking on the door of politicians and bureaucrats, in Perth and in Canberra. The fact is our Shire and many other Shire's just like us must pay to have a GP. For us this is about \$350k per annum (or 7% of your Rates). This is unfair and inequitable and the State and Federal Governments are abrogating their responsibilities (and cost shifting!).

The Shire is part of an alliance that are lobbying for change. This has resulted in a Federal Government budget submission, as well as submissions to the National Rural Health Alliance, the Federal Health Department, and the WA Country Health Service.

Help Keep Our Waste Facility Sites Safe and Open

Doing the right thing protects our community, our environment, and keeps waste facilities open for everyone.

Update from the Chief Executive Officer - David Nicholson

Housing

The Shire purchased land in 2022 to build some houses in Gnowangerup. Primarily for State Government employees as well as Shire staff, this will be a complex of up to 13 houses / units. We've made substantial progress towards this project including preparation of architectural plans, quantity survey costings, and a business case. We're now in the process of trying to obtain funds and will be applying for a grant early in the new year.

As part of the 2025/26 budget Council approved building three houses in Whitehead Road, Gnowangerup. These will be for Shire staff and allow us to fill some of those long-term vacant positions.

Land, infrastructure, roads, waste and drought resilience

While the Shire doesn't have a large portfolio of land, Council have approved the sale of selected lots which includes the old Kindy in Gnowangerup, and number 2 Garnett Street Gnowangerup. Last year Lot 75 Lamont Street on Ongerup was also sold. Council is also supporting community members in the purchase of Crown land and we advocated with Development WA for the release of land in John Street Borden, and Quinn Street / Corbett Street in Gnowangerup.

In addition industrial land has been released in Cuneo Close Gnowangerup, and we're working with the relevant State government departments to allow the release of land in Buncle Street Ongerup.

Over the past 24 months the Shire has been working with Joyce-Air to facilitate the construction of a hangar at the Gnowangerup aerodrome. We are expecting construction of this hangar to commence early in 2026.

Included in the 2025/26 budget is the development of a Strategic Gravel Resource Plan, a ten year Road Network Audit, and preparation of a drought resilience and infrastructure plan.



Update from the Chief Executive Officer - David Nicholson

Community facilities and Youth engagement

A significant amount of work has gone into the development of a recreation precinct in Yougenup Road Gnowangerup. This includes extensive community and stakeholder consultation and the development of plans. If the project is successful this will see the creation of a facility for children and young adults incorporating a pump track, skate track, and hard courts.

Weir Park in Ongerup is now a focal point and with community input we'll be working towards significantly improving this facility.

The Shire was successful in obtaining a \$50,000 grant for the Department of Creative Industries, Tourism and Sport. This grant is for the provision of structured sport and recreation programmes which will include basketball, volleyball, water activities, pickleball, yoga, Pilates, gymnastics, golf, martial arts, dancing, rollerblading, skating and BMX riding.

The Future

I am incredibly optimistic about the future and believe we're on the right track to not only meet community expectations, but to exceed these. The fact is, the Shire of Gnowangerup has an incredibly committed community and an incredibly committed Council and staff, and while the journey will not be easy or quick, having a singular focus on where we're heading and working collaboratively, I'm confident the future of our Shire is bright.



**Perth Wildcats
Damien Martin and
Greg Hire are coming
to Gnowangerup this
January!!!!**

With Sincere Thanks and Respect – Response to the Mindarabin Fire

On behalf of the Shire of Gnowangerup, Council and the wider community, we extend our profound thanks to all bushfire volunteers and emergency services personnel who responded to the Mindarabin fire on Tuesday in the Shire of Gnowangerup, near the town of Ongerup.

This was an exceptionally challenging and confronting incident. The scale, intensity and evolving nature of the fire required a sustained and coordinated response, and the professionalism, courage and commitment demonstrated by all responding agencies and individuals was evident.

It is with deep sadness that we acknowledge the loss of one of our bushfire volunteers during this incident. This tragic loss has profoundly affected our community, our volunteer brigades and the broader emergency services family. We honour their service, dedication and selflessness and extend our deepest sympathies to their family, friends and colleagues.

Throughout the response, every contribution—whether on the fireground, in support roles, managing logistics, coordinating resources, providing welfare support or assisting in any other capacity—played an important role. The willingness of so many to step forward under difficult and emotionally demanding conditions reflects the strength, compassion and resilience of those who serve our community.

The Shire of Gnowangerup acknowledges the emotional impact that incidents such as this can have on those involved. Support and counselling services have been arranged and are available to volunteers. Anyone wishing to access this support or obtain further information is encouraged to contact the Shire, where details will be provided confidentially.

Events such as this serve as a sobering reminder of the risks faced by emergency service personnel and volunteers. The Shire is deeply grateful to all who attended the Mindarabin fire, regardless of the size or nature of their contribution. Your efforts, care for one another and dedication to community safety will not be forgotten.

The Shire of Gnowangerup again extends its sincere thanks and appreciation to all involved and offers its ongoing support to those affected by this tragic incident.

Yours sincerely,

David Nicholson
Chief Executive Officer

JARVIS, Robert (Bob)

Deepest sympathy to the Jarvis family on the passing of Bob, our former Chief Executive Officer, who served the Shire of Gnowangerup with dedication and distinction.

Our thoughts are with you during this difficult time.
Past and present Councillors and staff of the Shire of Gnowangerup

Vale Bob Jarvis FLLP



Bob's contribution to local government was profound and enduring, and his legacy will continue through the many people and communities he supported.

Public Events coming up



Annual Electors' Meeting | Monday 2 February

The Annual Electors' Meeting is a chance for locals to hear about the Shire's financial position and activities over the past year, and to ask questions or raise matters directly with Council.



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 27 March

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.**



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
FEBRUARY 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

TOPIC :

Smart Business, Strong Communities

 THURSDAY 19TH
FEBRUARY 2026

 9am - 4:30pm

 GNOWANGERUP
SPORTING COMPLEX

 CATERING PROVIDED



KEY NOTE
SPEAKER
Julian Moore
CHIEF AI CONSULTANT
STRATEGIC MEMBERSHIP
SOLUTIONS



SPEAKER
Mat Lewis
DIRECTOR
CREATIVE AND TECH
VILLAGE



SPEAKER
Jason McFarlane
DIRECTOR
THE GREENTECH HUB



SPEAKER
Renu Kannu
NATIONAL ROBOTICS
AND INNOVATION LEAD

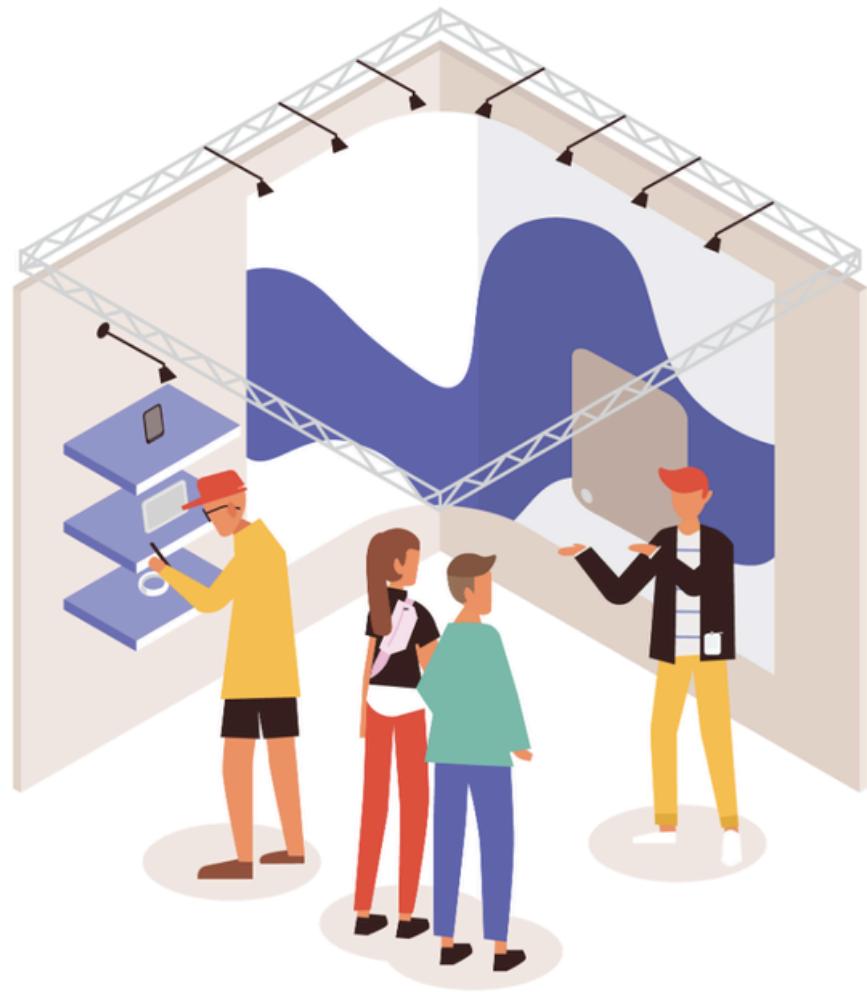


SPEAKER
Bethany Findlay
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND ENGAGEMENT
MANAGER
NBN





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Have you seen the
exciting things
happening in our
shire lately?
Would you like
the opportunity
to be
involved?

Contact

stuart.drummond@gnowangerup.wa.gov.au
for more information

Bushfire Reality Check

Bushfires don't wait for you to be ready. They can start suddenly and move fast, sometimes with little or no warning.

Bushfires are a constant threat across Western Australia. More than 90% of the State is officially designated as bushfire prone.

To make planning easier DFES has launched a new multi-hazard emergency planning tool in the Emergency WA app and website, allowing Western Australians to create one plan for bushfire, flood, storm and cyclone. This feature replaces the My Bushfire Plan app and it can also prompt you to follow your plan when an emergency impacts your area, helping you act quickly during fast-moving hazards.

Bushfire Reality Check - are you really ready?

Ask yourself: Am I at risk?

Take a moment to consider if your home, workplace, or regular destinations are in bushfire-prone areas.

Think about your surroundings: Is your home close to bushland, parks, or open fields? Homes near natural vegetation are at higher risk, especially if there's only one road in or out.

Remember: Even if you haven't experienced a bushfire before, conditions can change quickly, don't assume you're safe.

Don't have a bushfire plan? Now is the time to make one via the Emergency WA website or app.

2. Test your plan: will it stand up to a real emergency?

If you already have a plan, do a quick "reality check":

Is it up to date for your current household, pets, and property?

Does everyone know what to do if a bushfire warning is issued?

Does everyone in your household have a role and know what it is?

3. Inspect your property: would it stand up to embers and flames?

Walk around your home and look for risks:

Are gutters clear leaves and debris?

Are trees trimmed so branches don't overhang the roof?

Is dry vegetation or flammable material close to the house?

Are hoses and water sources ready and working?

Are wood piles, outdoor furniture, or fuel containers stored away from the house?



Let's take action this month!

Do your Bushfire Reality Check: Walk around your home, talk with your family, and see where you can make improvements - no action is too small.

Update or create your bushfire plan: Use the Emergency WA app to make sure your plan is ready for this season. Share it with everyone in your household.

Connect with your community: Share these tips with neighbours, friends, and local groups. The more people who are prepared, the safer everyone will be.

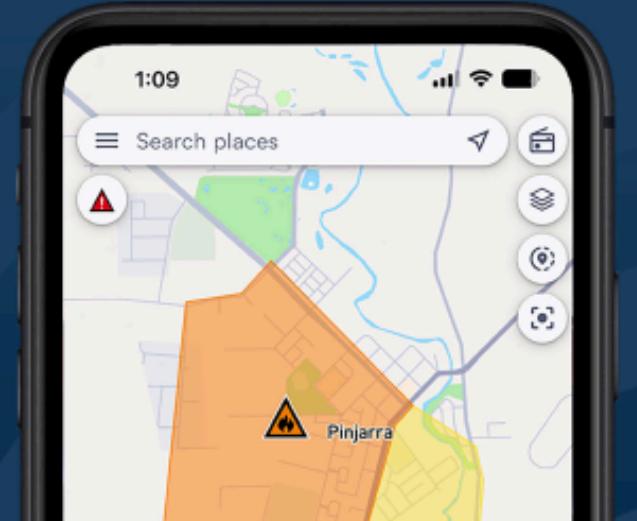
Stay informed: Keep an eye on fire danger ratings and local alerts. Sign up for notifications on your Emergency WA app so you're always up to date.

Reach out for support: If you need help or resources, contact your local Community Preparedness Advisor or the DFES Community Preparedness Directorate.



DOWNLOAD THE EMERGENCY WA APP

Set a watch zone to
get instant alerts and
warnings for your area.





⚠ Biosecurity alert: Pokeweed

(Phytolacca americana)

The pest and its impacts

Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) is a large, perennial shrub that is toxic to livestock, humans and can contaminate agricultural produce. It is a declared pest, prohibited in Western Australia (WA) with a control category of C1 (Exclusion) and must be eradicated if found.

Pokeweed has recently been found in Perth and several locations in the south-west of WA, including Balingup, Bridgetown and Pemberton. A collaborative program to eradicate this weed is now underway with government and industry working together. The aim is to control all pokeweed plants prior to them setting seed during summer.

This plant is toxic to both humans and livestock and can contaminate agricultural produce.

Pokeweed characteristics:

- Pokeweed is found in disturbed areas, along roadsides and in gardens.
- Seedlings are often found under roosting trees as birds eat the berries and are unaffected by the natural chemicals.
- Seeds can be transported in soil.





LOOK for this pest

- large perennial shrub up to 2.5 metres
- large bright green leaves (up to 40 cm long) on a smooth purplish stem
- white to magenta flowers in elongated clusters that hang from the branches
- deep purple – black berries form in summer and are the most distinctive characteristic

Pokeweed is similar to inkweed (*Phytolacca octandra*), which is a widespread weed in the southwest of WA. Pokeweed is taller, has larger leaves, and the berry stalks hang down.



Pokeweed



Inkweed



REPORT suspected sightings

- Be aware of any new or unusual plants
- Prompt action is necessary to assist in eradication
- Note the date, time and location of the pest
- Take photographs, if possible

Report your observations



MyPestGuide® Reporter
via app or online
mypestguide.dpird.wa.gov.au

Pest and Disease Information Service
08 9368 3080
padis@dpird.wa.gov.au

Important disclaimer

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