

City of Greater Geraldton

Extract from Ordinary Meeting of Council Minutes – 27 January 2026 [D-26-011949]

CEO140 ECONOMIC REGULATION AUTHORITY – AA6 SUBMISSION

AGENDA REFERENCE:	D-25-156982
AUTHOR:	R McKim, Chief Executive Officer
EXECUTIVE:	R McKim, Chief Executive Officer
DATE OF REPORT:	5 January 2025
FILE REFERENCE:	GO/6/0029-002
ATTACHMENTS:	Yes (x2) A. ERA Issues Paper B. City of Greater Geraldton Submission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) conducts periodic reviews of Western Power's Access Arrangement (AA), which sets out the terms for using the electricity network, including pricing, service standards, and investment plans. The sixth access arrangement (AA6) will cover the period July 2028 to June 2032. Western Power is scheduled to submit its AA6 proposal in February 2027, and the ERA will publish its final decision by March 2028.

The AA6 process begins with the Framework and Approach stage, which is currently underway. An issues paper was released on 1 December 2025, inviting stakeholder submissions by 6 February 2026. This stage determines which services will be regulated and the incentive mechanisms that will apply. The framework will be finalized by July 2026, providing clarity for Western Power's proposal development. Key challenges flagged for AA6 include maintaining network reliability under climate pressures, integrating renewable energy under the South West Interconnected System (SWIS) Transmission Plan, and managing cost pressures to keep electricity affordable.

The purpose of this report is for the Council to consider lodging a submission in response to the ERA's issues paper (Attachment No. CEO140A)

EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDATION:

That Council by Simple Majority pursuant to Section 5.20 of the *Local Government Act 1995* RESOLVES to:

1. APPROVE Attachment No. CEO140B as the City of Greater Geraldton's submission to the Economic Regulation Authority's AA6 issues paper, and;
2. DIRECT the Chief Executive Officer to provide the submission to the local Federal and State members for their consideration.

PROPOSER:

The proponent is the City of Greater Geraldton (the City).

BACKGROUND:

The South West Interconnected System (SWIS) is Western Australia's main electricity network, serving over one million customers across the south west region. Its operation involves several key entities, each with distinct responsibilities.

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The Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) Western Australia's independent economic regulator. With respect to the electricity industry, the ERA ensures electricity services are delivered in the long term interests of consumers. It sets and enforces the regulatory framework for network access under the Electricity Networks Access Code, approves Western Power's five year Access Arrangements, and monitors compliance with service standards and pricing.

PoweringWA is a State Government initiative established to coordinate the delivery of new electricity infrastructure required to decarbonise and future proof the SWIS. Its focus is on planning and implementing transmission upgrades to connect renewable energy sources to homes, businesses, and industry. PoweringWA works closely with government agencies and industry stakeholders to ensure the grid can accommodate the transition to low emission energy and meet growing demand.

Synergy is the State owned electricity retailer and generator for the SWIS. It purchases electricity from generators (including its own power stations) and sells it to residential and business customers. Synergy also manages billing and customer service, and its retail tariffs for most customers are set by the State Government. In addition to retailing, Synergy operates major generation assets and increasingly invests in renewable energy projects to support WA's energy transition.

Western Power is the State owned network operator responsible for building, maintaining, and operating the SWIS transmission and distribution infrastructure. This includes powerlines, substations, and control systems that transport electricity from generators to end users. Western Power also manages network reliability, undertakes upgrades, and implements innovations such as undergrounding and standalone power systems to improve resilience. Its revenue and investment plans are regulated by the ERA through periodic Access Arrangement reviews. In summary:

- Synergy generates and buys electricity and sells it to customers.
- Western Power transports electricity across its network to homes and businesses.
- The ERA sets the rules for network access, pricing, and service standards, ensuring fairness and accountability.
- PoweringWA coordinates infrastructure upgrades to integrate renewable energy and meet future demand.

The fifth access arrangement (AA5), which runs from July 2022 to June 2027, set ambitious targets for reliability, safety, and investment. The ERA monitors Western Power's performance annually and publishes progress reports. Updates on progress toward the AA5 targets are available on the ERA's website.

The City of Greater Geraldton's draft submission to the Economic Regulation Authority (ERA) for the AA6 review emphasises the critical need for improved electricity infrastructure and service delivery across the Mid West region. The submission (CEO140B) advocates for Enhanced Regional Power Reliability; Reduced Western Power Response Times on Development projects, Extension of the 330kV SWIS Transmission Line from Three Springs to Geraldton; Modernised Local Power Solutions and Islanding capacity; and Improved Street Lighting Services.

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The City acknowledges that some issues raised may fall outside the strict scope of the AA6 review. However, as an advocacy piece, highlighting these regional concerns is critical.

CONNECTED, LIVEABLE, THRIVING, LEADING ISSUES:

Connected:

The ERA's AA6 review provides an opportunity to advocate for improved regional power reliability and faster Western Power response times for new connections. These measures directly support the City's goal of being a well connected community, both physically and digitally. Reliable electricity infrastructure underpins essential services, transport systems, and emerging technologies such as electric vehicle charging and smart lighting. By prioritising the extension of the 330kV SWIS transmission line to Geraldton, the City ensures stronger integration with the State's energy network, reducing outages and supporting seamless connectivity for residents and businesses.

Liveable:

Energy reliability and resilience are fundamental to liveability. The AA6 review process allows the City to advocate for infrastructure that supports safe, sustainable communities such as improved street lighting and backup generation for towns like Mullewa. These initiatives enhance public safety, reduce vulnerability during extreme weather events, and enable the adoption of renewable energy solutions. A dependable power supply also supports housing developments and urban design improvements, which are central to creating vibrant, attractive neighbourhoods that align with community aspirations for a protected and enhanced environment.

Thriving:

Economic growth in Geraldton depends on reliable energy to underpin industry, tourism, and emerging sectors. By engaging in the AA6 review, the City can influence investment in infrastructure that unlocks the Mid West's economic potential, including support for local businesses and major projects such as the Geraldton Port and airport. Addressing curtailment issues and planning for future energy demand ensures that businesses can operate efficiently, attracting investment and creating jobs. This aligns with the City's vision for a diverse and prosperous economy while maintaining its coastal lifestyle.

Leading:

Participation in the AA6 review positions the City as a proactive regional leader advocating for equitable service delivery and long term sustainability. By highlighting gaps in agency coordination and pushing for clearer delineation of responsibilities between Western Power, Synergy, and PoweringWA, the City demonstrates leadership in policy engagement and strategic planning. This approach not only benefits Geraldton but sets a precedent for other regional communities.

Disclosure of Interest:

No Officer involved in the preparation of this report has a declarable interest in this matter.

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RELEVANT PRECEDENTS:

The City of Greater Geraldton regularly participates in Australian Government and State Government consultation processes. The proposed submission to the 2026 Federal review into local government's financial sustainability submission on this current agenda is an example.

COMMUNITY/COUNCIL MEMBER CONSULTATION:

No direct community consultation has occurred in creating this report. However, the recent bushfire emergency provided good insight into the local community's concerns associated with electricity reliability in the Mid West. Copies of the attached submission were provided to Council Members via email with their views incorporated in the attached submission.

LEGISLATIVE/POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

It is hoped that the Economic Regulation Authority will consider this submission and develop a framework for Western Power that improves energy reliability in the regions and creates a power network that supports regional growth.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial or resource implications resulting from the preparation of this submission.

INTEGRATED PLANNING LINKS:

Strategic Theme: Liveable	A protected and enhanced natural environment with facilities and services to support community health and wellbeing.
Goal 6	Support the community by advocating to State and Federal Government for better access to programs and services that improve community health and wellbeing.
Strategic Theme: Thriving	An economically diverse and prosperous City, driving sustainable growth while preserving our local spirit.
Goal 1	Support existing businesses and attract new investment, contributing to a vibrant CBD and other key activity centres.
Goal 3	Plan for the sustainable growth of the City, balancing the needs of current and future populations.
Strategic Theme: Leading	A progressive City where informed decisions, strong advocacy and an enabling culture drives sustainable regional growth.
Goal 4	Continued focus on strong advocacy to ensure that Federal and State projects, programs and funding are aligned with our community's priorities.

RISK MANAGEMENT:

By not lodging a submission, the Council risks reputational damage through not advocating for the region on a very important issue that will impact the region's future growth and wellbeing.

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REGIONAL OUTCOMES:

The entire Mid West is suffering from unreliable energy and from a system at its limits. By making a submission, it is hoped that the State will recognise the region's concerns and accelerate action to address them.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED BY CITY OFFICERS:

The Council may determine to not provide a submission or determine to submit an amended submission.

COUNCIL DECISION

MOVED CR VAN STYN, SECONDED CR COLLIVER

That Council by Simple Majority pursuant to Section 5.20 of the Local Government Act 1995 RESOLVES to:

1. **APPROVE Attachment No. CEO140B as the City of Greater Geraldton's submission to the Economic Regulation Authority's AA6 issues paper, and;**
2. **DIRECT the Chief Executive Officer to provide the submission to the local Federal and State members for their consideration.**

CARRIED 9/0

In accordance with Section 9.3 (2) of the City of Greater Geraldton's Meeting Procedures Local Law 2011 as amended, the motion was passed unopposed.