



SHIRE OF
COOROW
ALWAYS IN SEASON

URGENT REPORTS AGENDA

FOR THE

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING

TO BE HELD ON

WEDNESDAY 20 MAY 2026

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING DISCLAIMER BEFORE PROCEEDING

Members of the public are cautioned against taking any action on Council decisions, on items in this Agenda in which they may have an interest, until such times as they have been advised in writing by Shire staff

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13 NEW BUSINESS OF URGENT NATURE**13.1 PROPOSED REPORT TO NORTHERN COUNTRY ZONE MEETING - TRAIN AND PASSIVE RAIL CROSSING LIGHTING**

Reporting Officer:	M Maxfield, Chief Executive Officer
Responsible Executive:	M Maxfield, Chief Executive Officer
File Reference:	
Disclosure of Interest:	Nil
Voting Requirement:	Simple Majority

COUNCIL'S ROLE:

Advocacy: When Council advocates on its own behalf or on behalf of its community to another level of government/body/agency.

REPORT PURPOSE

For Council to endorse the submission "Train & Passive Rail Crossing Lighting" to the WALGA Northern Country Zone and a letter to Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffiotti.

BACKGROUND

This report provides a brief overview of the triple fatality that occurred near Jennacubbine, Western Australia, on 8 July 2000, when a four-wheel drive was struck by a loaded grain train at the Yarramony Road level crossing.

Available public accounts indicate the crossing was unlit and protected only by roadside signage at the time of the collision. Subsequent reporting and parliamentary discussion have pointed to findings that train visibility, limited crossing protection and the surrounding conditions were key safety issues. The event remains a significant case study in discussions about level crossing risk management in regional Western Australia.

Subsequent coronial and public commentary has focused on whether the train was sufficiently visible to approaching motorists and whether additional warning infrastructure could have reduced the likelihood of the collision. Since the fatality, family members and advocates have undertaken sustained lobbying for stronger train lighting standards, including auxiliary lighting, rotating beacon lights and improved visibility measures on locomotives and rolling stock. Public parliamentary debate and media reporting have continued to link the Jennacubbine tragedy to calls for reform in regional level crossing safety and train conspicuity.

COMMENT

The Jennacubbine triple fatality remains a serious reminder of the risks associated with passive rail crossings in rural areas. From a governance and public safety perspective, the incident highlights the importance of clear visibility, effective warning systems, appropriate signage, roadside maintenance, and ongoing review of crossing treatments where traffic and rail movements intersect.

It also illustrates the need for agencies and operators to respond promptly to known hazards and prior incidents. A significant aspect of the public response has been long-running lobbying by affected families and supporters for trains, including locomotives and associated rolling stock, to carry more effective visibility measures such as auxiliary lighting and rotating or beacon-style lights. In that context, the case supports continued advocacy for improved train lighting, active warning systems where justified, and regular safety audits of regional crossings.

A significant ongoing safety concern in Western Australia is the continued prevalence of passive rail crossings without active warning systems or adequate lighting. Hundreds of such crossings remain across the state, with approximately 491 sites identified as still requiring safety upgrades or further attention. These crossings are typically controlled only by signage and lack both illumination and active warning devices such as flashing lights or boom gates, increasing the risk to motorists, particularly in low-light conditions and regional environments.

The absence of lighting at many of these passive crossings represents a material risk factor, particularly at dusk, night, or in poor visibility conditions. In the context of the Jennacubbine fatality, concerns about the visibility of trains and the crossing environment are directly relevant to this broader systemic issue. Limited ambient lighting can significantly reduce a driver's ability to detect an approaching train, especially where train conspicuity measures are also limited.

The identification of approximately 491 crossings still requiring attention highlights the scale of the challenge for rail and road authorities in Western Australia. It reinforces the need for a prioritised, risk-based program of upgrades, including the installation of active warning systems, improved signage, vegetation management, and, where feasible, the introduction of crossing illumination. Addressing these deficiencies is critical to reducing the likelihood of future incidents at passive regional crossings.

This report is based on publicly available reporting and is intended as a concise overview rather than a legal or investigative finding.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Lara Jensen, Advocate

Shire President Guy Sims

Hon Sandra Carr MLA

STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Act 1995

Rail Safety National Law (WA) Act 2015

Rail Safety National Law (WA) Regulations 2015

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

1.1 Connected, friendly and safe communities

2.3 Safe and efficient transport network

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Nil

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

RISK IMPLICATIONS

Nil

ATTACHMENTS**1. Train and passive Rail Crossing Lighting** [↓](#)**OFFICER RECOMMENDATION**

That Council support the position and request to advocate for legislative change to train and passive rail crossing lighting and endorse the CEO to submit the attached agenda item to WALGA Northern Country Zone executive officer for inclusion in the next agenda and endorse the CEO to write to the Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti MLA.

Train and Passive Rail Crossing Lighting

By Shire of Coorow

BACKGROUND

This report provides a brief overview of the triple fatality that occurred near Jennacubbine, Western Australia, on 8 July 2000, when a four-wheel drive was struck by a loaded grain train at the Yarramony Road level crossing. The incident has continued to be referenced in public discussion about rail safety, particularly the visibility of trains and the adequacy of safety controls at passive regional level crossings.

Available public accounts indicate the crossing was unlit and protected only by roadside signage at the time of the collision. Subsequent reporting and parliamentary discussion have pointed to findings that train visibility, limited crossing protection and the surrounding conditions were key safety issues.

Subsequent coronial and public commentary has focused on whether the train was sufficiently visible to approaching motorists and whether additional warning infrastructure could have reduced the likelihood of the collision. Since the fatality, family members and advocates have undertaken sustained lobbying for stronger train lighting standards, including auxiliary lighting, rotating beacon lights and improved visibility measures on locomotives and rolling stock. Public parliamentary debate and media reporting have continued to link the Jennacubbine tragedy to calls for reform in regional level crossing safety and train conspicuity.

There is an urgent and unquestionable need for legislative reform to compel rail operators to install adequate lighting across all train carriages, not just locomotives. The current regulatory gap allows long sections of freight rolling stock to remain effectively invisible in low-light conditions, creating an unacceptable and avoidable hazard for motorists at passive crossings. Voluntary compliance and piecemeal improvements have demonstrably failed to deliver consistent safety outcomes, and it is no longer tenable to leave such a critical risk factor to operator discretion. Mandatory, enforceable standards must be introduced to require continuous, high-visibility lighting along the full length of trains, ensuring they can be clearly detected in all conditions. Without decisive legislative intervention, the industry will continue to fall short of basic community safety expectations, and preventable incidents will remain an ongoing and foreseeable consequence.

[Add comment said to Ben Mcnamara here](#)

The identification of approximately 491 crossings still requiring attention is not simply indicative of a challenge—it represents a clear and ongoing failure to address known and preventable safety risks across Western Australia's rail network. The continued reliance on passive crossings without adequate lighting or active warning systems is unacceptable, particularly given the well-documented dangers in low-light regional environments. A decisive, prioritised, and adequately funded program of upgrades is urgently required, including the installation of active warning systems, improved signage, vegetation management, and the mandatory introduction of crossing illumination. Without immediate and sustained action, these deficiencies will continue to expose motorists to avoidable harm and increase the likelihood of further serious incidents or fatalities at passive regional crossings.

This avoidable tragedy remains a significant case study in discussions about level crossing risk management in regional Western Australia.

RECOMMENDATION

That WALGA through the State Council;

1. Call on the State Government to urgently amend **relevant rail safety legislation** to mandate that all rail operators install and maintain high-visibility beacon lighting and continuous illumination along the full length of trains, including all freight carriages.
2. Call on the State Government to commit to a **time-bound, fully funded program** to address the estimated 491 passive rail crossings that remain without adequate safety controls. The continued existence of such crossings—many lacking both active warning systems and basic lighting—represents an unacceptable and avoidable public safety risk.

For your reference only and will be removed prior to submission

Previous motion put forward

The Infrastructure Policy Team considered this matter and resolved that WALGA:

1. Advocate to relevant State and Federal authorities and rail industry bodies to improve safety lighting on trains.
2. Consider progress of a motion to the ALGA National General Assembly in preparing a proposed advocacy position for consideration at the July State Council meeting.
3. Advise the Murchison Zone that the Policy Team supports the need to improve visibility of trains at night.

June
2022

The WALGA President met with and subsequently wrote to the Director General of the Department of Transport urging him to raise the need for adequate safety lighting on trains directly with the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator.

Looks like there was also an ALGA motion.

15 The Shire Yalgoo WA

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to work with state and territories to immediately introduce legislation through the rail safety national law to improve safety lighting on trains and fund low-cost solar powered warning systems at passive level crossings.

Carried

SECRETARIAT COMMENT

This section will be completed by WALGA after the item is submitted for inclusion on the Agenda.