

WHEATBELT BLUEPRINT

a vision for a vibrant future



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The Wheatbelt Development Commission (WDC) acknowledges the considerable input into the Wheatbelt Regional Investment Blueprint by the Region's 43 local governments, government agencies and trading enterprises at a regional and central level.

We acknowledge and thank the Department of Planning of Western Australia and Regional Development Australia (RDA) Wheatbelt Inc for their ongoing partnerships in developing a range of documents underpinning this Blueprint, including the Wheatbelt Strategic Framework, the Wheatbelt Regional Infrastructure Framework, The Wheatbelt Regional Plan 2013-2018 and The Wheatbelt Digital Action Plan. Similarly, WA Country Health Service, RDA Wheatbelt and local governments have invested significantly with the Commission to deliver the Wheatbelt Aged Care Solutions Report.

Key evidence supporting this Blueprint has been provided by RPS Consulting, through their work in developing the five Wheatbelt Sub-regional Economic Strategies. LandCorp has been a key partner in delivering the Growth Plans for regional centres. These have been collaborative processes with the Commission, and again, input from local government and community business leaders has been critical in their development.

The staff of the WDC have travelled thousands of kilometres across the Region to develop this Blueprint. Their efforts illustrate their passion for the Wheatbelt.

The development of this Blueprint is funded by Royalties for Regions.



**ROYALTIES
FOR REGIONS**

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared using a range of evidence to provide key stakeholders with a clear indication of the Wheatbelt Development Commission's thinking on priority actions to ensure a strong and vibrant future for the Region. All information is provided to the best of our ability and within the limits of our knowledge and resources.

It is anticipated that elements of this inaugural Wheatbelt Regional Investment Blueprint may be at odds with stated government priorities at a Local, State and Federal level. Over time, with ongoing engagement, data collection and analysis, it is hoped that greater alignment is achieved between stakeholders.

All proposals resulting from this document will be further detailed and agreed to by relevant parties.



Say *Hello* to the Wheatbelt

In 2050, Wheatbelt residents enjoy time for family, friends and community. Their work is creative, rewarding and empowering. Life is affordable. Services are there when you need them and technology is a powerful enabler of innovation.

#wheatbeltblueprint

Foreword

"I have lived a very good life, it has been very rich and full. I have been very fortunate and I am thrilled by it when I look back."

-- A. B. (Albert) FACEY, A Fortunate Life

In the era in which this Wheatbelt Regional Investment Blueprint (the Blueprint) has been developed, we are in a fortunate place. In the year 2050, we hope that the foundations laid in this plan will enable future generations to claim, like Albert Facey, "I am thrilled when I look back".

2015 sees the Wheatbelt of Western Australia well positioned to seize the opportunities offered by the new century. Our proximity to the Perth Region and Asia, our landscape, our people and our infrastructure represent significant capacity and opportunity, to both grow the Region, and contribute significantly to the State's economic and population growth. There are also challenges shared across regional Western Australia, and unique to this Region, which, if not managed, will inhibit this growth.

This Blueprint takes us on a journey of identifying:

- The desired future state of the Wheatbelt;
- The Wheatbelt's potential to grow and prosper in the global village in which we function;
- The Region's human, economic, social and environmental capacity, and gaps in that capacity; and
- The priority actions needed to maximise the existing capacity, minimise the gaps and thus transform the Region from a 'business as usual' scenario to achieve aspirational population and economic growth goals.

By working extensively with stakeholders within and external to the Region, the process of developing this Blueprint has strengthened existing partnerships and forged new ones. The result is a shared vision and agreed goals and priorities for action. Key stakeholders will work individually and collectively in order to achieve them.

As this Blueprint is developed, we already see the benefit of this partnership approach:

- Groups of local government working together on agreed priority projects and developing innovative governance structures to ensure viability into the future;
- Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt and the Wheatbelt Development Commission working together on agreed priorities, advocating for policy, program and funding settings to meet regional need;

- Agencies within and external to the Region keen to work in an integrated way to achieve better outcomes;
- Regional organisations, industry and business all committed to collaborative ways of working; and
- Better decisions made through improved access to information.

We look forward to continuing to work with you all to bring our shared vision to fruition.



Tim Shackleton
Chair, Wheatbelt Development Commission

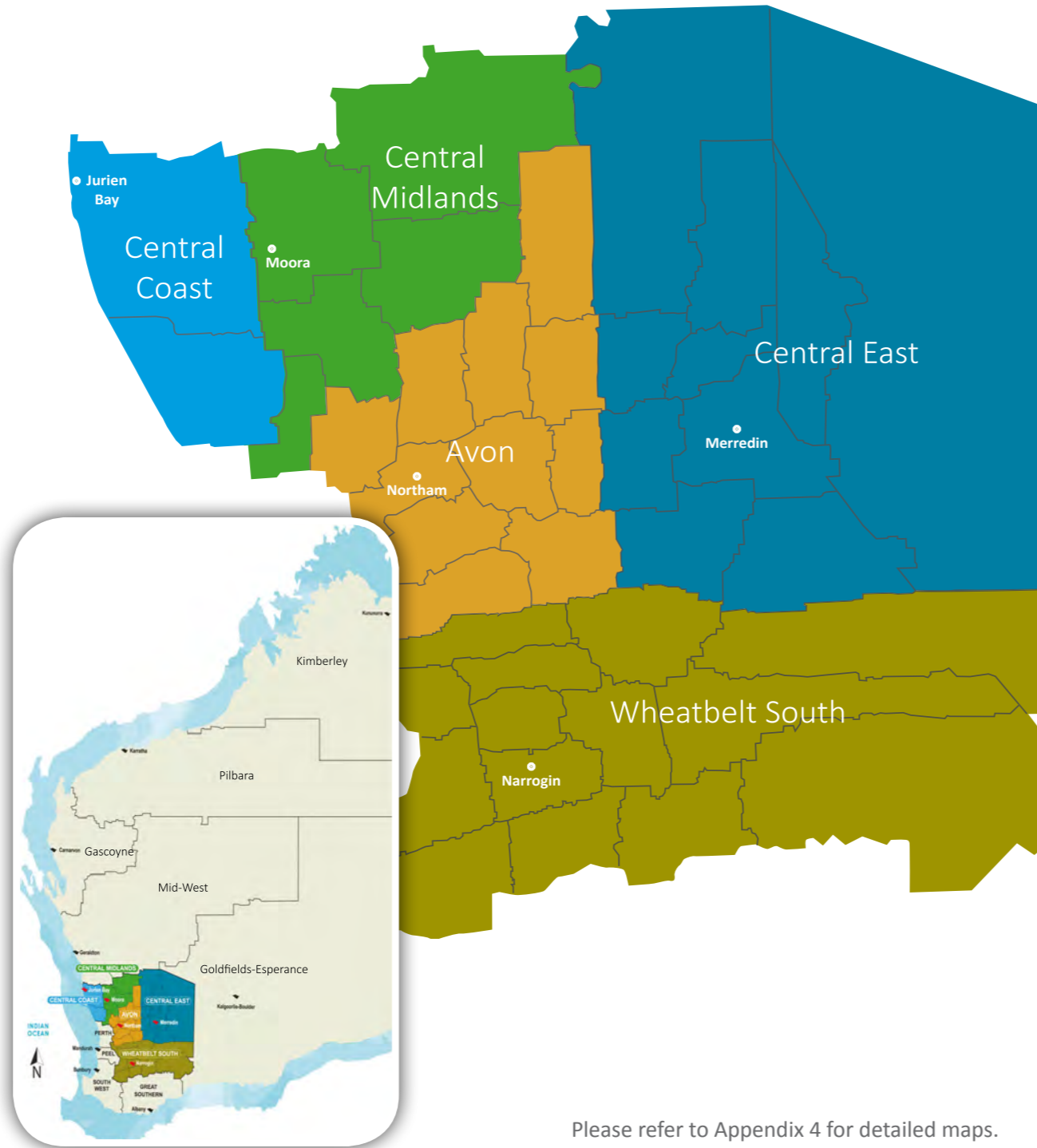
February 2015

Executive Summary

The Wheatbelt is a region of enormous opportunity. Its proximity to markets, diverse productive landscapes, strong economic base, its people and their strong sense of community are all foundations for growth which contribute to the State's prosperity.

The drivers of this regional growth are diverse. As the State's largest agriculture producer and with a mining sector experiencing growth, the Wheatbelt has an export oriented economy. The Region has five distinct sub-regions, consisting of multiple small communities accommodating a population of 75,000 people. Current perceptions of the Region underestimate its diverse economic, human, social and environmental assets and potential.

The Wheatbelt's diversity requires customised solutions to achieve sustained growth. The service models and infrastructure created in the past need transforming to enable the Wheatbelt to achieve its potential and build on its significant contribution to the State's prosperity. The Wheatbelt Regional Investment Blueprint (the Blueprint) identifies these priorities.



Please refer to Appendix 4 for detailed maps.



What is the Blueprint?

The Blueprint is the road map that will assist the Region deliver on its potential. Section 1 outlines what the Blueprint sets out to achieve and how it was developed. Section 2 articulates a vision for the Region and Section 3 identifies the global context in which it operates and the opportunities these global drivers present for investment and growth.

Section 4 of the Blueprint provides analysis of the Wheatbelt's capacity for growth. The Wheatbelt Strategic Framework is used to provide a robust analysis of the Region. The analysis occurs under the themes of Vibrant Economy, Clever People, Connected Communities, Valued Natural Amenity, Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities and Effective Partnerships.

The Blueprint Structure



This analysis has been undertaken within the context of Federal and State planning. It is underpinned by comprehensive economic planning within each of the five sub-regions and a 'stock take' of existing infrastructure and services in terms of their capacity to accommodate future growth targets.

Following this analysis, Section 5 identifies the key growth targets and actions required to optimise global drivers and build on the Region's comparative advantages.

Vision for the Future

The Wheatbelt is a key contributor to Western Australia's prosperity. The Region's prime location, diverse economy, clever people, vibrant communities and unique natural environment offer a high quality of life and will attract global innovators and investors.

Blueprint Aspirations and Targets



Global Drivers

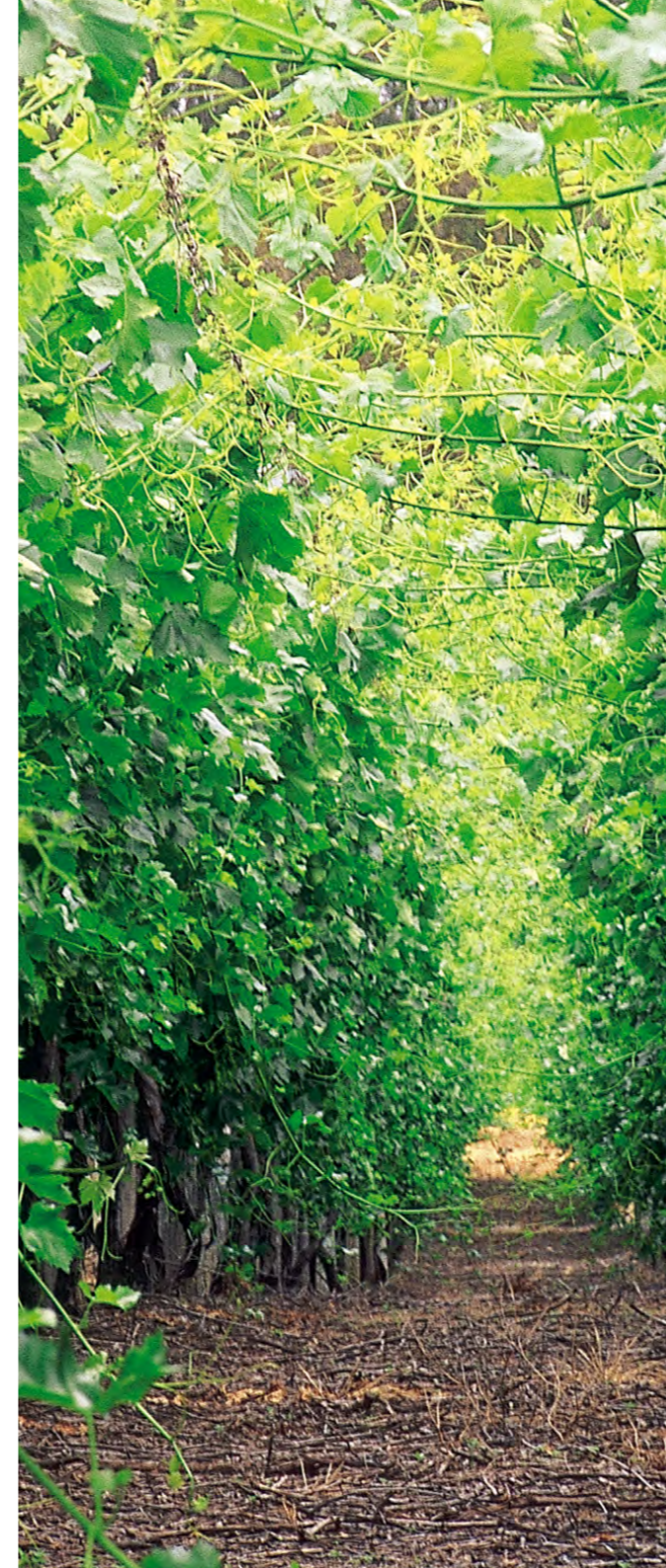
Increased globalisation of world economies, growing affluence in Asian markets and associated demand for food and population services present opportunities for economic development in the Wheatbelt, given the Region's comparative advantages.

The globally connected knowledge economy, underpinned by private and public investment in technology and innovation, will drive long term sustained growth. The Region's world class food production is just one opportunity to grow the Wheatbelt's knowledge economy.

The global population is growing, ageing and becoming urbanised. The Wheatbelt has the necessary assets to double its current population, providing a solution to the State population growth challenges. This includes the increasing proportion of the ageing cohort.

Climate change, water availability and the environmental impacts of economic development are putting pressure on global food production. Renewable energy is increasingly being relied upon to supply growing demands. Land stewardship is mitigating climate impact and the Wheatbelt's natural environment offers a variety of renewable energy opportunities. Tourism growth will also occur as a result of increasingly affluent populations wishing to engage with the natural environment.

A full analysis of global drivers impacting the Wheatbelt can be found at Section 3 of the Blueprint.



Harnessing the Wheatbelt's Capacity for Growth

'Business as usual' is not an option if the aspirations identified in the Blueprint are to be achieved. For sustainable growth across the Region transformation solutions are required.

Given the global opportunities, the Wheatbelt's comparative advantages and barriers to growth outlined in Section 4, there exists considerable opportunity to grow the Region's economy and population by developing six key pillars for growth.

Vibrant Economy

With a diversified economic base growing at an annual average rate of 8.2% over the last 10 years, the Wheatbelt is in a strong position to contribute to the State's continued economic prosperity. Such growth will require:

- Emerging Industry Development - Supporting growth of emerging industry sectors to consolidate the Region's diversified economy. Pursuit of more intensive industry matched to comparative advantages and global opportunities will ensure more jobs for a growing population.
- Transforming Agriculture - Increasing productivity of existing industry through pursuit of opportunity along the supply chain and increased application of innovation and technology and developing intensive agriculture opportunities.
- Business Development - Supporting the Region's 10,000 small businesses so that they can grow and prosper in the global market place.

- Skilled Workers – The Wheatbelt has one of the lowest regional unemployment rates after the Pilbara and Goldfields-Esperance. However there is a significant out-migration of the 15-29 year old cohort. Attraction of workforce aged population is critical to support economic growth.
- Key Infrastructure - Investing in strategic infrastructure assets including transport and digital infrastructure, land development and housing will underpin growth opportunities.

Maximum growth can be achieved by looking at job intensive industry development and building on the following areas of comparative advantage:

- Producing and processing:
 - commodity and niche foods through dry land broadacre agriculture; intensive agriculture (horticulture) and aquaculture.
 - commodity and niche natural resources such as minerals and renewable energy.
- Population services that have the dual purpose of providing amenity for existing and future residents and offering employment. Areas of comparative advantage for the Wheatbelt include: aged care, aviation, renewable energy, tourism, culture and the arts, education and training services, health, retail and well-being and leisure.
- Strengthening the Region's knowledge economy by undertaking research and development in these sectors and sharing that knowledge with the world.

Clever People

To achieve population growth, there is a need to address the out-migration of 15-29 year olds.

The higher than State proportion of the 0-4 and 65+ cohorts and this out migration result in a 'reversed' population bell.

Population attraction strategies need to aim at normalising this population profile. High workforce participation and low unemployment mean that workforce attraction must be a key element of any population growth strategy.

Innovation, leadership and volunteerism will drive productivity and community vibrancy. Life long learning will ensure skills meet the Region's need and employment opportunities are maximised for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Wheatbelt residents.

Liveable Communities

The Wheatbelt offers multiple liveability options across 200 communities. Residents highly value where they live, appreciating the Region's safety and strong sense of community. Considerable social infrastructure exists across these communities, with a need to plan for enhanced amenity in high growth areas. Connecting settlements through the development of strong 'hubs' will result in more effective economic development and efficient service delivery.



Service delivery reform will result in innovative service models across the highly disbursed area and better match services to the population profiles of the Region.

Investment in Community amenity will ensure continued community vibrancy and the attraction and retention of population.

Valued Natural Amenity

The Wheatbelt has a permanently altered landscape that will continue to benefit from strong land stewardship. The natural landscape offers considerable social and economic benefit and is being impacted by climate variation. This landscape, the water within it and climate change need to be effectively managed to mitigate risk.

Already producing 60% of the State's renewable energy and benefiting from high visitor numbers to natural attractions, the Wheatbelt is well placed to continue deriving benefit from this landscape provided possible conflicts between productivity, biodiversity and land use are effectively managed.

Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities

Key to optimising the opportunities for the Wheatbelt are changing perceptions of the Region. The Region is often portrayed in terms of population, economic and environmental decline. This Blueprint provides evidence of a different Wheatbelt, a region of growth and opportunity.

Family, business, industry and government decision makers who better understand the diversity and opportunities are more likely to invest. Strategies that market Wheatbelt opportunities to key decision makers will be critical to the Region achieving its growth potential.

Effective Partnerships

In a region with high numbers of organisations (local government, business, community) more effective planning, project implementation and investment will result from communities, organisations and groups working together. Collaborative approaches already found in the Region have resulted in more cost effective and efficient project and service delivery across communities. Support for such innovation is required on an ongoing basis.

Wheatbelt Road Map for Growth

Shared commitment to the implementation of transformational strategies is required to deliver on the Region's vision and achieve the stated aspirations and targets.

The Blueprint analysis has identified the following key areas for action, and outlines them within the


themes of the Wheatbelt Strategic Framework (2012) which was developed collaboratively by regional stakeholders.

A full list of actions to drive development are outlined in Appendix 3. However, focused effort is required in the short to mid term, so key actions that will drive significant growth in the short term are can be found in Section 5.

The following pages provide an overview of the Region's aspirations and targets. Outcomes, focus areas and priority actions required to deliver the stated targets are indentified.

<p>Vibrant Economy </p> <p>Industry Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging Industries Transforming Agriculture <p>Business Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitally and Asia ready <p>Skilled Workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Attraction Cross Industry Employment <p>Key Infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to Markets: road, rail, air and ports; digital capacity Land Assembly: Land, power, water and sewerage Housing 	<p>Clever People </p> <p>Lifelong Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation and Achievement Pathways to Employment Aboriginal Enterprise <p>Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation Networks Building R&D Capacity <p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative Governance Leadership and Civic Engagement Volunteers 	<p>Liveable Communities </p> <p>Connected Settlements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong and Connected Sub-regional Centres and Hinterlands Public Transport <p>Service Delivery Reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ageing Children's Services Family Services Health and Well-being Safety Services to Growth Areas <p>Community Amenity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture and the Arts Heritage Housing Sport and Recreation 	<p>Valued Natural Amenity </p> <p>Water, Landscape and Climate Change Management</p> <p>Nature Based Industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewable Energy Nature Based Tourism
<p>Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted Marketing Influencing Key Decision Makers 			
<p>Effective Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure Co-ordination Agency Co-ordination Local Government Collaboration Supporting Proponents 			


Vibrant Economy

Aspirations & Targets	Outcomes	Focus Areas	Priority Actions
 <p><i>A diversified and adaptive economic base building on the Regions assets and aligned with State, National and International opportunity</i></p> <p>Target 2050: <i>Average Annual Compound GRP Growth Rate of 7%</i></p>	1.1: Diverse and innovative business and industry grow the Wheatbelt's global market share	Industry Development Business Development	Develop emerging industry strategies for intensive agriculture, transport and logistics, renewable energy, aviation and population services (aged care, health, education and tourism) Agricultural investment through 'Seizing the Opportunity' Develop sub-regional business alliances for collaborative market development Implement 'Growing the Digital Wheatbelt' Strategy Support Heartlands WA to market job, investment and visitation opportunity
	1.2: Skilled workers are attracted and retained to meet the needs of the Region and the State	Workforce Attraction	Support Heartlands WA to market job, investment and visitation opportunity Support CY O'Connor and Muresk Institutes to deliver cross industry training Support the Wheatbelt Workforce Alliance to promote pathways to employment
	1.3: Key strategic infrastructure is identified and invested in	Key Infrastructure Enhance access to markets and services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic transport network • digital capacity • housing 	Implement the Wheatbelt Digital Action Plan, including ongoing investment in new mobile towers and building broadband capacity Develop an Integrated Transport Plan for the Wheatbelt and invest in identified priorities Conduct residential and industrial land audits and invest in identified priorities Invest in innovative end of grid power and water solutions Action findings of the Wheatbelt Housing Audit and support innovative investment vehicles and universally designed housing Conduct a Waste Site Identification feasibility


Clever People

Aspirations & Targets	Outcomes	Focus Areas	Priority Actions
 <p><i>Lifelong learning - innovation and leadership drive economic growth and community vibrancy</i></p> <p>Target 2050: <i>Workforce of 109,800</i></p>	2.1: Education and life-long learning drives productivity and thus economic growth	Enhance Participation and Achievement Improve Pathways to Employment Support Aboriginal Enterprise	Design and invest in new service delivery models to ensure early intervention and enhanced participation and achievement Implement the Wheatbelt Children's Services Plan Support the Wheatbelt Workforce Alliance to establish business, education and training partnerships that increase training and employment participation Support Aboriginal Elders Groups develop and implement initiatives relevant to local need
	2.2: Innovation drives economic, social and environmental outcomes	Develop Innovation Networks Build R& D Capacity	Support Heartlands WA to profile Wheatbelt innovation Maintain strong links to the University sector
	2.3: Leadership harnesses diverse capacity that delivers benefit at a local, sub regional and regional level	Foster Innovative Governance Foster Leadership and Civic Engagement Support Volunteers	Promote Infrastructure Trusts as a mechanism for cross community investment Support groups of local government to invest in regional priorities Encourage Community Resource Centres to take a lead role on volunteer support and co-ordination

Connected Communities

Aspirations & Targets	Outcomes	Focus Areas	Priority Actions
 <p><i>Diverse, safe, healthy and resilient communities where services and infrastructure reflect the needs and aspirations of current and future residents</i></p> <p>Target 2050: <i>Population of 180,000</i></p>	3.1: Connected settlements support economic growth and offer multiple liveability options	Connect Communities	Implement Growth Plans for 5 sub-regional centres Develop Growth Plans for high growth areas
	3.2: Service delivery reform ensures health, education, aged, youth and children's services reflect the needs of current and future Wheatbelt residents in an efficient and cost effective way	Service Reform	Design and deliver integrated sub-regional services in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged Care Health Education (k-tertiary) Family, youth and children's services Public transport
	3.3: Community amenity contributes to community well-being and liveability and creates economic opportunity	Culture and the Arts Heritage Sport and Recreation	Support effective governance and delivery structure across communities for each sector Support innovative design and management of multipurpose, multi user community facilities in small towns

Valued Natural Amenity

Aspirations & Targets	Outcomes	Focus Areas	Priority Actions
 <p><i>The Wheatbelt's unique natural amenity is valued as an asset for social, cultural and economic development for current and future generations</i></p> <p>Target 2050: <i>30 Wheatbelt communities have off grid power and water solutions.</i></p>	4.1: Climate change risks are minimised	Climate Mitigation	Invest in R&D and technology application to mitigate climate impact including dry climate and frost tolerant plant breeds Assist coastal communities to plan for impact of shore line shift
	4.2: Landscape Management protects biodiversity and ensures compatible and profitable land use	Landscape Management	Invest in R&D and technology application to improve soil health Support Wheatbelt NRM foster 'best practice' land management
	4.3: Water management is improved for the benefit of community amenity and industry development	Water Security	Undertake integrated water planning Invest in water harvesting and re-use Implement pilot project: desalination of water using renewable energy
	4.4: Nature based industry utilises the Wheatbelt's natural assets	Tourism Alternative Energy	Develop an tourism strategy that includes nature based tourism and identifies infrastructure priorities Partner with Western Power and Universities to develop innovative alternative energy solution for end of grid situations

Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities

Aspirations & Targets



The Wheatbelt value proposition is clear to investors in government and private enterprise and families wishing to live and visit

Target 2050:

105,000 new residents and new investment creates 64,000 jobs

Outcomes

5.1: Workers, businesses, visitors, and investors are attracted to the Region

Focus Areas

Targeted Marketing
Influencing Key Decision Makers

Priority Actions

Implement targeted marketing for workforce and visitor attraction

Attract private investment through the development of industry prospectuses for emerging industry identified in Sub-regional Economic Strategies

Effective Partnerships

Aspirations & Targets



Cost effective investment occurs as a result of proponent partnerships, good information, quality project management and leveraged investment

Target 2050:

Sub-regional governance and investment structures drive growth and effective service delivery

Outcomes

6.1: High impact, cost effective Investment drives growth

Focus Areas

Infrastructure Co-ordination
Agency Co-ordination
Local Government Collaboration
Proponent Support

Priority Actions

Initiate the Wheatbelt Infrastructure Co-ordinating Group

Support cross community investment trusts to drive sustainable investment

Support groups of local governments to deliver regionally significant projects locally

Blueprint Governance and Implementation

While the Wheatbelt Development Commission (WDC) is the lead agency in the development of this Blueprint, its effective implementation requires ownership and commitment from a range of stakeholders.

In addition to the high level priority actions identified, a pipeline of strategies and projects is required for effective implementation. Aligned to set targets, these projects will achieve population growth and economic diversity and growth. A prioritisation tool will be used to determine which strategies and projects will best deliver growth aspirations.

The Blueprint will have high level and ongoing oversight from the Boards of the Wheatbelt Development Commission and Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt. In addition to this high level oversight, collaboration and co-ordination of initiatives will be delivered through the following mechanisms:

- Wheatbelt Infrastructure Co-ordinating Group;
- ongoing federal and state agency engagement and collaboration at both a central and regional level; and
- ongoing support for project proponents, including groups of local governments, private investors and not for profit groups.

A full description of the implementation process can be found in Section 6 of the Blueprint.

The success of the Blueprint will be determined by its acceptance and use by stakeholders.

Success of implementation will be measured by:

1. The perception of the Blueprint and the Commission. This will be measured through the WDC annual stakeholder survey; and
2. The knowledge, acceptance and use of the Blueprint and its contributing plans, measured through:

- number of times the Blueprint is referred to in stakeholder publications;
- number of specific priority actions that are implemented in any one year; and
- evidence of positive progress in achieving stated targets.

Blueprint Development & Review



Planning for our future



1.0 Introduction

The Wheatbelt Regional Investment Blueprint (the Blueprint) articulates a vision and growth targets for the Region, and provides a framework to guide future growth.

1.1 Purpose of the Blueprint

The specific purpose of the Blueprint is to:

- gain alignment with a range of stakeholders on the Wheatbelt vision, aspirations, targets and priority actions;
- provide robust analysis of the global drivers impacting the Wheatbelt, and how the Region can continue to contribute to the State's prosperity by using its comparative advantages to seize the opportunities these drivers present;
- identify the actions required to transform the Wheatbelt from its current status and position to achieve the vision and meet sustainable growth targets;
- inform both public and private investors of the opportunities the Region offers; and
- establish a monitoring and review framework to ensure targets are met.

'Business as usual' is not an option if the aspirations identified in the Blueprint are to be achieved. For sustainable economic growth across this diverse region, transformational solutions are required.

1.2 Blueprint Development Process

The Wheatbelt Development Commission (WDC) has been working with stakeholders in the Region for some time to arrive at a shared vision and aspirations for the Region. The development of the *Wheatbelt Strategic Framework (2012)* with Regional Development Australia (RDA) Wheatbelt and Wheatbelt local governments was the starting point. In addition, an infrastructure planning process was undertaken with local governments as part of the Country Local Government Regional Planning initiative. This process identified agreed infrastructure development priorities across the Region.

The Commission has also undertaken extensive research and data analysis including:

- Sub-regional economic planning;
- Regional Centres Development Planning (SuperTowns) and sub-regional centre growth planning.

Complementing this work, 'Wheatbelt Snapshots' have been taken of key infrastructure, services and industry sectors. These were used to consult stakeholders to confirm priority developmental issues.

Figure 1.1 summarises the process and the range of information used to develop the Blueprint.



Figure 1.1 Process For Blueprint Development

Determine the Facts

- Wheatbelt Snapshot Series - the current state of play in each portfolio, identifying the key development issues in each
- Sub-regional Economic and Growth Plans x 5 - Sub-regional economic assessment to deliver evidence based guidance to assist in investment and decision making
- Desktop Research to utilise existing information

Collate and Align Planning Activity

Local, Regional, State and Federal Plans

Refer to Figure 1.4

Stakeholder Engagement

Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders within the Region (LGA's, businesses, NGO's) and external to the Region (Agencies)

Blueprint Implementation

- Endorsed by the WDC Board and Minister for Regional Development
- Partner with proponents to bring Blueprint to fruition
- Ongoing engagement, implementation and review

1.3 Stakeholder Engagement

While the WDC is the lead agency developing this Blueprint, its effective implementation requires ownership and commitment from key stakeholders within and external to the Region.

Stakeholder engagement has been a critical underpinning of a range of initiatives of the WDC. In a region of over 200 communities, 43 local governments and low agency presence, creative consultative methodologies are required. Figure 1.2 outlines the key engagement that has occurred and will continue to occur, to gain this commitment.



Figure 1.2 Stakeholder Engagement

	Wheatbelt Strategic Framework	Towards a Wheatbelt Infrastructure Plan	Wheatbelt Snapshot Series	Sub-regional Economic Planning	Regional Centre Growth Planning	Aged Care Planning	Wheatbelt Health Planning	Wheatbelt Infrastructure Framework
Community				●	●	●	●	●
Local Government	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Business and Industry				●	●	●		
State Government	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
Federal Government	●	●				●		●

1.4 The Blueprint Structure

The Blueprint begins by stating a vision for the Wheatbelt, describing what the Region looks like in the year 2050. It then identifies the global drivers and regional capacity that impact on achieving this vision. The Blueprint culminates in articulating the actions that will deliver the transformation required to meet identified targets.

Documentation developed as part of the Blueprint process, such as the Sub-regional Economic Strategies provide the source data for both specific project development and prospectuses for industry and investment attraction.

Figure 1.3 The Blueprint Structure



1.5 Gaining Alignment

The Blueprint seeks to identify new possibilities for the future growth of the Wheatbelt through analysis of global trends, statistical evidence and local knowledge. In this formative stage, it is inevitable that some aspects of the Blueprint may not be aligned with contemporary government policies and priorities at a local, state and federal level.

With ongoing engagement and further analysis, the WDC is confident that there will be strong alignment between all stakeholders that will result in greater economic and social returns on private and public investment.

The Blueprint has strong alignment to the Wheatbelt Infrastructure Framework (2014). While the Infrastructure Framework focuses on infrastructure needs of the Region, the Blueprint is

more aspirational, forecasting enablers of growth. The Blueprint is also strongly aligned to the State Planning Strategy 2050. It delivers directly on its principle of Regional Development and Strategic Goals of Global Competitiveness, Strong and Resilient Region's, Sustainable Communities, Infrastructure Planning and Coordination and Conservation.

The Blueprint is also consistent with the Royalties for Regions Act (2009) which was established to:

- (a) provide infrastructure and services in regional Western Australia;
- (b) develop and broaden the economic base of regional Western Australia; and
- (c) maximise job creation and improve career opportunities in Western Australia.

Figure 1.4 Planning Alignment





Building on *strong* foundations

2.0 Vision 2050

What will the Wheatbelt look like in 2050? What are the possibilities given:

- global trends;
- the many assets of the Region; and
- the aspirations of its residents and leaders?

This section of the Blueprint articulates that vision for the future and describes what the Region looks like in 2050.

Wheatbelt Vision and Aspirations

The Wheatbelt is a key contributor to Western Australia's prosperity. The Region's prime location, diverse economy, clever people, vibrant communities and unique natural environment offer a high quality of life and will attract global innovators and investors.

The aspirations underpinning this vision are:

Vibrant Economy: A diversified and adaptive economic base building on the Region's assets

and aligned to state, national and international opportunity.

Clever people: Lifelong learning, highly skilled labour, innovation and leadership drive economic growth and community vibrancy.

Liveable Communities: Diverse, safe, healthy and resilient communities where services and infrastructure reflect the needs and aspirations of residents.

Valued Natural Amenity: The Wheatbelt's unique natural amenity is valued as an asset for social, cultural and economic development for current and future generations.

Specifically, the Wheatbelt has set the following targets:

- Population growth from 75,000 in 2013 to 180,000 by 2050.
- Economic growth at 7% per annum, resulting in the Wheatbelt's Gross Regional Product increasing from \$6.4B in 2013, to \$183.7B by 2050.

The assumptions behind these targets and the interventions that will achieve them are outlined in Section 5 of this Blueprint.

What Success Looks Like

In the year 2050, we hope to look back and see how targeted intervention delivered well-managed population and economic growth in regional WA and the Wheatbelt. The following pages describe what the Wheatbelt looks like in 2050 if these interventions succeed.



Vibrant Economy 2050

Economic growth has resulted from harnessing the assets of the diverse sub-regions of the Wheatbelt.

The **Avon** sub-region is home to 75,000 people (43% of the Wheatbelt's population) spread across multiple interconnected communities. Agricultural production and processing form a strong economic base, while transport and logistics, niche manufacturing and population services are the dominant industries. Adventure, heritage and events tourism continue to attract visitors to the Sub-region.

The **Central Coast** sub-region continues to be a lifestyle and tourism destination with a pristine coastal environment and a population of 23,500, representing 13% of the Wheatbelt's population. Major economic activity includes population services and adventure tourism. Well-managed horticulture, aquaculture and fisheries sectors supports strong export industries and inland industrial sites provide diverse employment opportunities.

The **Central East** sub-region has re-invented itself in response to climate change using the comparative advantages of local innovators, its natural landscape and proximity to major infrastructure. While it has experienced slower population growth than other sub-regions, it is home to 17,000 people or 9% of the Region's population. Agriculture is transformed, to focus on farming for bio-fuel, protein production and carbon farming markets. Niche manufacturing and education services are supporting mining, agricultural processing and renewable energy. Tourism activity has increased significantly as people seek re-engagement with the natural landscape.

The **Central Midlands** sub-region is home to 18% of the Wheatbelt's population totalling 32,500. Horticultural production and processing, along with export livestock and feed, are experiencing strong growth. The provision of services to mining and gas production activity in the north continue to grow. Visitors continue to be attracted to the Sub-region's historic tourism sites and unique wildflowers.

The **Wheatbelt South** sub-region's agricultural industry has seen significant growth of high value crop and livestock production. The Sub-region's natural amenity and mild climate make it a desired residential location supporting 17% of the Region's population, a total of 32,000 people. A long history of excellence in education has seen this area develop a reputation for lifelong learning in all educational sectors, with innovation from this strong education ethos nurturing diverse niche business opportunities.

Appendix 2 outlines the economic opportunities that will deliver these outcomes for each sub-region.

In 2050, the Wheatbelt has built on its comparative advantages of:

- diverse and growing food and resources production, processing and services sectors;
- niche manufacturing servicing these sectors;
- transport logistics and digital capacity within the Wheatbelt linking the States products to the global market place;
- population services that meet the needs of an ageing population and the aspirations of growing populations seeking enhanced lifestyles;
- renewable energy generation and local distribution; and
- specialised communities with common interests.

The Wheatbelt is a region that offers a range of lifestyle, business and employment options. Interconnected urban hubs and rural and coastal living are all within three hours of the Perth Region and milli-seconds from the rest of the world. People of all ages are attracted, seeking a return to strong community values, safe communities and engagement with the environment.

High value micro businesses allow freedom to balance lifestyle with economic prosperity. Linked globally, these businesses succeed because they are highly innovative and know their market. They are supported by world class transport and technology systems.

Large-scale grain, forage, livestock and horticultural businesses continue to thrive. Production and processing based on quality, food safety, reliability and traceability ensure high market value. The integration of Wheatbelt products into global supply chains and international collaboration on supply chain management sees the Region add value to products and increase the economic value of these industries.

Experiential tourism continues to attract both domestic and international visitors. Activities such as recreational aviation, camping and caravanning, gourmet food experiences and diverse events (equestrian, motorsports, arts and music) attract visitors throughout the year.

Partnerships between Wheatbelt and global businesses provide diverse finance and distribution opportunities. The utilisation of best practice local knowledge in production, especially in land based activities such as agriculture and horticulture, offer the opportunity to develop a new knowledge economy.

Niche manufacturing and service industries work seamlessly to deliver products to a diverse range of sectors.

The Wheatbelt continues to offer innovative energy solutions (solar, wind, tidal, geothermal, biomass and micro-biotic) to address growth in energy demand. Local distribution technology provides energy to industry and residential clusters within the Region. Significant local infrastructure continues to provide for energy needs beyond the Wheatbelt.

Clever People 2050

As the benefits of living in the Wheatbelt have become more widely recognised, labour shortages have been overcome. Business leaders and workers are attracted to the Region because of diverse liveability options, innovative housing solutions and world class population servicing. These workers are highly flexible, working across industry.

Education networks within and across communities and regions provide lifelong learning opportunities. The Wheatbelt continues to build its world class knowledge networks in dry-land agriculture, fishing and aquaculture, horticulture, mining, transport, logistics, niche manufacturing, renewable energy and population services.

These networks have become key drivers of economic activity, increasing productivity and selling

knowledge to the world. Muresk Institute is a pre-eminent campus for regional development, education, research and knowledge sharing.

The South West Native Title Settlement (known as the Single Noongar Claim) has seen the growth of diverse Aboriginal enterprise and the strengthening of culture and community and in the words of Andrew Forrest the "racism of low expectations" has been eliminated.



Liveable Communities 2050

Service delivery reform in education, health, aged care, Aboriginal development, family and childcare services, public transport and police and justice has resulted in service models that are widely regarded as international best practice. These highly integrated services, with strong hubs in regional centres with strong connection to outlying communities, meet the unique needs of a dispersed population.

Networks of technology and transport connect communities within and external to the Region. Because they are community driven, these reforms continue to have strong local investment resulting in considerable 'value-add' to standard services.

Local government, communities and businesses continue to collaborate and invest across administrative boundaries to seize global opportunities.

International culture and arts enterprises have grown to achieve world acclaim. Many engaging, inspiring and innovative new age enterprises exist across the Region.

Aboriginal residents continue to celebrate and share their culture, and use that capacity to care for their people and their land. Economic independence is achieved by local development of realistic and relevant pathways to employment and enterprise.

Valued Natural Amenity 2050



The use of technology and innovation has halted land degradation, utilised saline water and developed local energy solutions. Research and development has resulted in continued improvements in sustainable use and management of agricultural land and enhanced management of national parks, waterways and other natural resources.

In 2050, Wheatbelt residents enjoy time for family, friends and community. A vibrant economy attracts individuals and businesses. Work is creative, rewarding and empowering. Life is affordable. Services are there when you need them and technology is a powerful enabler of innovation.



Leading *balanced* lifestyles

3.0 Local and Global Impacts on Growth

This section of the Blueprint provides a brief overview of the Wheatbelt and then identifies a range of global drivers that will impact on the Region’s growth.

3.1 The Wheatbelt’s role in the State’s Development

The State’s population is forecast to increase to 5.4 million in 2056¹, with a proportion of this increase expected to occur in regional WA. The Wheatbelt is ideally placed to accommodate some of this increase.

The Wheatbelt:

- surrounds two sides of the metropolitan area (north, east) and has proximity to growing demand for food, resources and population services in Asia;
- is a world leading producer of export commodities (grain, livestock and, increasingly resources) with considerable potential to ‘value add’ this production and knowledge base;

- has significant affordable freehold land;
- possesses significant fundamental infrastructure (power, water, telecommunications, community);
- has a developed transport network (road, rail, air) that includes key State and National infrastructure;
- has a natural amenity which is ideal for renewable energy generation and is attractive to visitors for nature based, adventure and aviation tourism; and
- has a strong sense of place which promotes community values and considerable investment of social capital.

The Wheatbelt consists of five sub-regions: Avon, Central Coast, Central East, Central Midlands and Wheatbelt South. Each sub-region is serviced by a sub-regional centre (Northam, Jurien Bay, Merredin, Moora and Narrogin) and has unique economic and population drivers. (See Appendix 2).

With a population of 75,000, the Wheatbelt is the third most populous region in the State. This population is highly dispersed with over 200 towns and settlements spread across 155,256 square kilometres. The Region is governed by 43 local governments, with no single dominant regional centre (See Figure 3.1).

With an average annual compound economic growth rate of 8.2% and a diverse economic base, the Wheatbelt is well positioned to make significant contribution to the State and Nation’s growth.



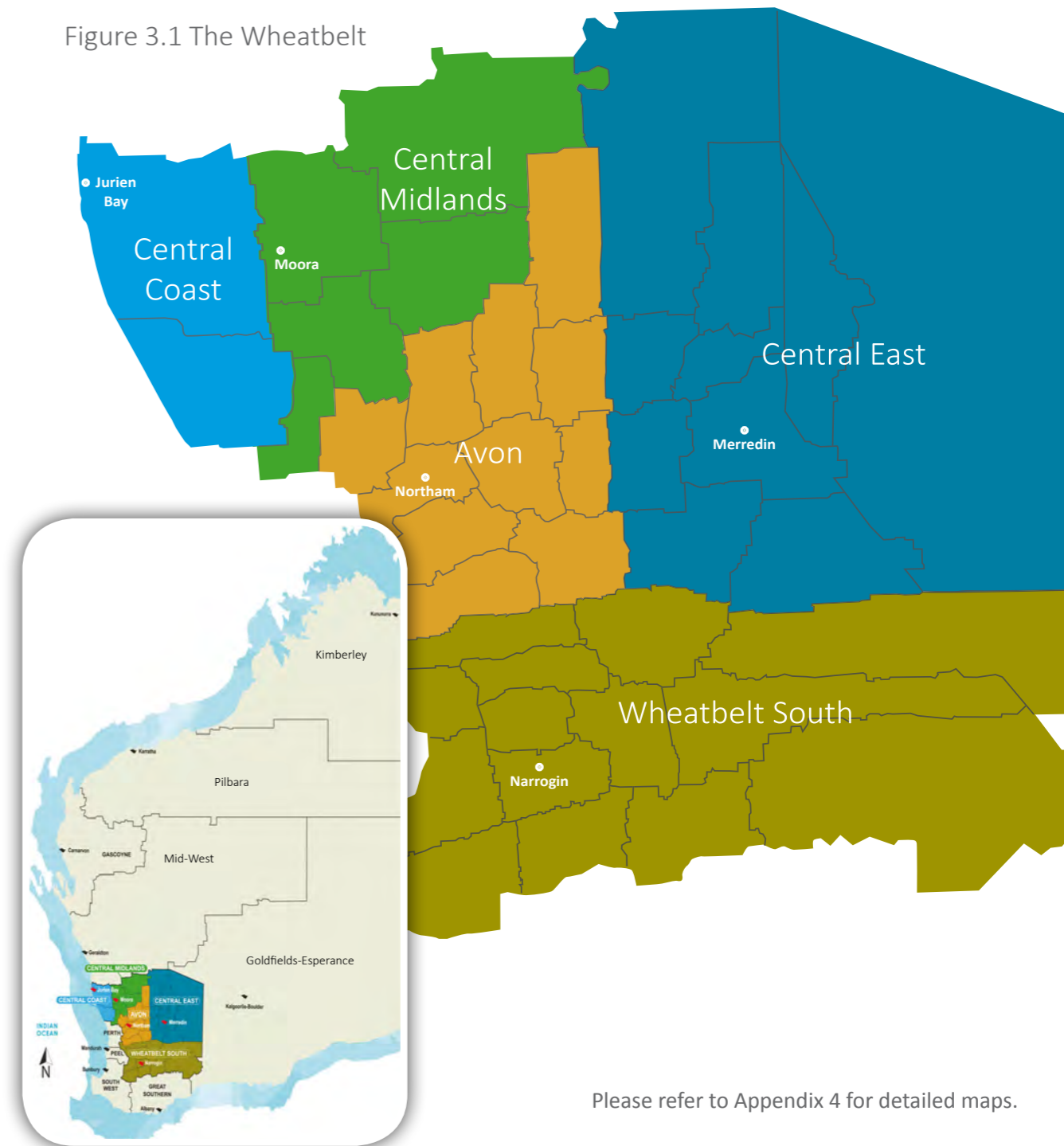
The Wheatbelt Advantage

With targeted investment, the Wheatbelt can develop substantially and assist in driving the State’s economic and population growth.

The Wheatbelt has significant economic, human, social and environmental capital to drive this growth (see in Section 4).

Given underutilised infrastructure, proximity to the Perth Region and connections to the Nation, the Wheatbelt offers a cost effective way to accommodate some of the State’s population growth.

Figure 3.1 The Wheatbelt



Please refer to Appendix 4 for detailed maps.

3.2 Global Trends Impacting the Wheatbelt's Growth

Overview

The Region's attributes see it well placed to seize opportunities from global drivers, including:

- globalisation and economic growth in Asia;
- feeding the world's increasing demand for food (particularly protein);
- the application of new knowledge and technology across global networks; and
- increased population and prosperity.

The Wheatbelt will play a key role as Western Australia continues to service and capitalise on growth in Asia and takes advantage of its common time zone with some of the world's fastest growing economies.

Global challenges are also impacting on the Wheatbelt and these include:

- urbanisation;
- an ageing population;
- climate change and demand for water; and
- the impact of development.

3.2.1. Vibrant Economy

Globalisation and the economic growth of Asia

Along with global economic growth, there is a shift in the centre of economic gravity from west to east and north to south. China and India increasingly drive the new world economy. The

annual economic growth rate for the developing Asia region is projected to be 8% compared to growth in developed countries of 2-3%². By 2030 the bulk of global Gross Domestic Product will be generated by non Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries³.

Technology will continue to fundamentally change the way we live, work, buy and access services. Its use will drive productivity gains domestically and accelerate globalisation.

Greater consensus across governments favouring free trade and democratisation of free markets contribute to the increasingly global marketplace. Despite anti-globalisation sentiment in parts of the developed world and the establishment of regional trade blocs, this trend will increasingly favour globally networked individuals and businesses working together, regardless of location.

New opportunities will emerge in the global marketplace based on increased demand as living standards rise in the developing world.

Opportunities for the Wheatbelt include:

- *servicing the Asian markets as their population grows and becomes more affluent;*
- *proximity and similar time zone to Asian markets – transport infrastructure provides good access to these markets;*
- *as supply chain partnerships occur, there will be increased opportunity for direct foreign investment; and*
- *increased global exposure for its export oriented economy.*

Feeding the world – value chain management

The Food and Agriculture Organisation forecasts that global food production projected to increase by 70% by the year 2050⁴.

Parallel with this growth, the cost of the 'product' component of food will reduce as a proportion of total cost. This is due to fuel costs, income growth and climate variability.

Increasing cost pressures at the production end of the chain will result in a need to focus on supply chain management.

Diminishing global availability of land for food production due to expanding urbanisation and competition with other land uses will compound these issues.

Increasing use of technology (online commerce), to create global platforms for value chain management, will see a parallel increase in integrated logistics, a sector growing annually by 6.5%⁵.

Opportunities for the Wheatbelt include:

- *ability to harness technology to drive productivity;*
- *integration with global supply chains to increase product value;*
- *increasing foreign investment in supply chain management;*
- *capacity to increase production scale and profits; and*
- *utilisation of less arable land for bio-fuel production and carbon farming.*



Knowledge-based economic growth

In a modern economy, capital investment alone will not promote growth. Knowledge is also required. Well-educated, self-motivated, innovative and globally networked individuals increasingly drive the knowledge economy. The more knowledge that is embedded in goods and services, the more valuable (and profitable) they become. Thus investment in education and lifelong learning become more important than ever.

Opportunities for the Wheatbelt include:

- *exporting knowledge products in areas of existing competitive advantage such as dry land agriculture, horticulture, specialised engineering and environmental management.*

Key Economic Opportunities:

- **Given proximity to growth markets, the Wheatbelt's comparative advantage is aligned to addressing global trends in food production, specialist manufacturing and population services.**
- **The knowledge economy, underpinned by technology and innovation will drive long term sustained growth.**

3.2.2 Clever People

Global population growth

The global population is expected to reach 9 billion by 2043⁶, with 80% of the growth occurring in developing countries. Increased pressure on resources (land, water, building materials, energy and human services) will generate conflicts between competing or neighbouring groups, increase numbers of economic refugees and create a need for flexible and creative solutions to population servicing.

Opportunities for the Wheatbelt include:

- *workforce attraction through targeted migration; and*
- *exporting knowledge of servicing small communities (especially in governance, energy, water, health, education and housing).*

Ageing population

The proportion of the world's population aged over 65 is growing and forecast to grow from 11.2% in 2011 to 22% by 2050⁷. Asia will become home to 53% of this older population.

People are living longer and having fewer children. There will only be 2.7 people of working age to support every Australian over 65 by 2050 (compared to 5 in 2010)⁸.

The cost of servicing the elderly population grows exponentially with increasing expectations of longevity and social and medical servicing. This burden falls on a diminishing number of



Image: Kirstin Sawyer

taxpayers, although the cost of increased lifestyle related illness is being offset by increased investment in healthy living. The overall cost burden to the health system will rise.

As such, the retirement savings gap in Australia, estimated to be \$836b (\$79,000 per person) as of June 2011⁹, will result in people staying longer in the workforce.

Baby Boomers retiring in increasing numbers create new issues and opportunities including significant expenditure on lifestyle pursuits. Pressures of urbanisation and rising property prices limit opportunities for retirees in metropolitan centres.

Opportunities for the Wheatbelt include:

- *greater demand for population services including health, wellness, recreation, tourist and aged care services;*
- *changing lifestyles, resulting in new food, goods and service markets;*
- *innovative and cost effective aged care, health and residential solutions can be packaged and exported in the knowledge economy; and*
- *training and immigration to assist in servicing the ageing population.*

3.2.3 Liveable Communities

By 2050 it is estimated that 64% of people in developing countries and 86% in developed countries will live in cities and the number of large cities (more than 10 million people) will double to about 30 cities¹⁰. Some of the negative impacts of this trend will be:

- increased pressure on infrastructure and resources in cities;
- detrimental social effects, and the loss of critical mass of services in regions as migration to cities reduces population;
- political focus on heavily populated urban areas at the expense of the regions;
- increasing urban-rural social disconnection; and
- activities and industries pushed out of urbanising areas because of land use conflict and affordability drivers.

In response to these impacts, a certain percentage of the population will look for alternative lifestyle options and sustainable developments beyond the metropolitan limits.

Sparsely populated by world standards, the Wheatbelt has significant infrastructure across many liveability options and can readily absorb activities that require space (market gardens, medium to large manufacturing industry, retirement and lifestyle villages, space-hungry or noisy recreational pursuits). Although peri-urban pressures will impact on those parts of the Wheatbelt bordering the Perth Region, proactive planning will maximise the opportunities created.



Opportunities for the Wheatbelt include:

- *highly desirable locations to tele-work or tele-commute. People will be attracted by lack of congestion and crime, and an abundance of space and community life;*
- *the large number of communities with special amenity attract people with a special interest (e.g. equestrian, trains, music, sustainable living, organic food production);*
- *urban Australia as a ready market for the Wheatbelt's goods and services, including both high value and high volume products;*
- *activities pushed out of the metropolitan area by spreading urbanisation will find space in the Wheatbelt; and*
- *affordable retirement and lifestyle villages within easy distance of the metropolitan area.*

Key Social Opportunities:

- **Population restructuring policies will be required to reduce global trends of urbanisation.**
- **Underutilised social infrastructure and the regional social capital are Wheatbelt assets that provide government with a cost effective way to manage population growth.**
- **People from diverse backgrounds engaged in civic activity and leadership roles will improve the Wheatbelt's ability to operate in a global economy.**
- **The Region's proximity to the Perth Region creates distinct opportunity for access to markets and services and offers multiple liveability options within three hours of the metropolitan area.**

3.2.4 Valued Natural Amenity

Climate change and water

Regardless of the cause, climate change will affect the environment. Dry seasons and extreme weather events are becoming more prevalent, altering conditions for plant and animal production. The Wheatbelt will require adaptability and the embracing of new technologies to minimise the negative impacts of these changes.

Emission trading schemes have been developed, but are not yet globally effective. As these schemes become more widely enacted, the opportunities for carbon farming and offset schemes will evolve.

Demand for water will increase in response to both population pressures and climate change. Total water consumption in Australia is forecast to rise by 42% by the year 2026, and 76% by 2056, compared to 2009 levels¹¹.

Opportunities for the Wheatbelt include:

- *local underground water reserves and treated salt affected water could meet local, domestic and industrial demand, reducing distribution costs.*

Environmental impact of economic development

It is estimated that the world loses 12 million hectares of productive agricultural land each year to land degradation¹². In this context, the value of large-scale agricultural land, such as that of the Wheatbelt, will increase in the future as a response to growing scarcity.

Government policy increasingly reflects community expectation to balance economic development with social and environmental responsibility, particularly where environments are considered valuable.

Land stewardship is becoming increasingly important as the Wheatbelt's landscape has been considerably altered and requires innovative solutions.

Opportunities for the Wheatbelt include:

- *unique landscapes that offer economic opportunities for tourism, agriculture (broadacre and intensive) and aquaculture; and*
- *world class research on conservation and rehabilitation of land and waterways, both agricultural and natural, which can be marketed to the world.*

Renewable energy

Global energy consumption is projected to grow by 56% between 2010 and 2040¹³. The share of renewable energy is projected to increase from 5% of total primary energy consumption in 2008–09 to 9% in 2034–35.

This implies an average annual growth rate of 3.4%, with the most significant growth occurring in wind energy¹⁴.

Along with the Northern Territory and Queensland, Western Australia is expected to exhibit the highest growth in primary energy consumption¹⁵. At the same time, international agreements and community pressure will require governments to develop alternative sources of energy.

Opportunities for the Wheatbelt include:

- *utilising its considerable renewable energy resources: sunshine, wind, wave and biomass to grow renewable energy options; and*
- *export world-class research and technologies in efficient, sustainable energy practices.*

Key Environmental Opportunities:

- **While being significantly impacted by climate change, the Region's adaptation (land stewardship and use of technology) can underpin the Region's knowledge economy.**
- **The Region's natural environment offers considerable economic opportunity.**



Growth from opportunity

4.0 The Wheatbelt's Capacity for Growth

The growth of the Wheatbelt will be determined by its ability to adapt to constantly changing domestic and international economics and sociology.

The mobility of capital, people and technology, global shifts in food demand and Asia's economic future will be as much an influence on the Wheatbelt's growth as changes in local population demographics, urbanisation and climate. Growth will arise from the Wheatbelt's capacity to seize the opportunities arising from these simultaneous, complex changes.

This section of the Blueprint analyses the opportunities for growth in the Wheatbelt



and identifies what barriers may inhibit this growth. These enablers and inhibitors of growth are discussed under the key pillars for growth identified in the Wheatbelt Strategic Framework (2012):

- Vibrant Economy
- Clever People
- Liveable Communities
- Valued Natural Amenity
- Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities
- Effective Partnerships

4.1 Vibrant Economy

Fast Facts:

- **8.2% average annual compound GRP growth rate over the last ten years¹⁶.**
- **Diversified economic value across agriculture (18%), mining (27%), construction (11%), transport and logistics (10%), other (34%)¹⁷.**
- **Largest agricultural producing region in the State - \$3.5b or 46% of the States production in 2011/12¹⁸.**
- **Mining growth of 221% in the last 5 years¹⁹.**
- **Wheatbelt produces 60% of the State's renewable energy²⁰.**
- **Second most visited region after South West (average of 605,700 visitors annually resulting in a turnover of estimated \$246 million)²¹.**
- **Low unemployment (2.5%) and high participation rates (62%)²².**
- **Over 10,000 small businesses²³.**
- **40,000 additional homes needed by 2050 to house 180,000 people.**

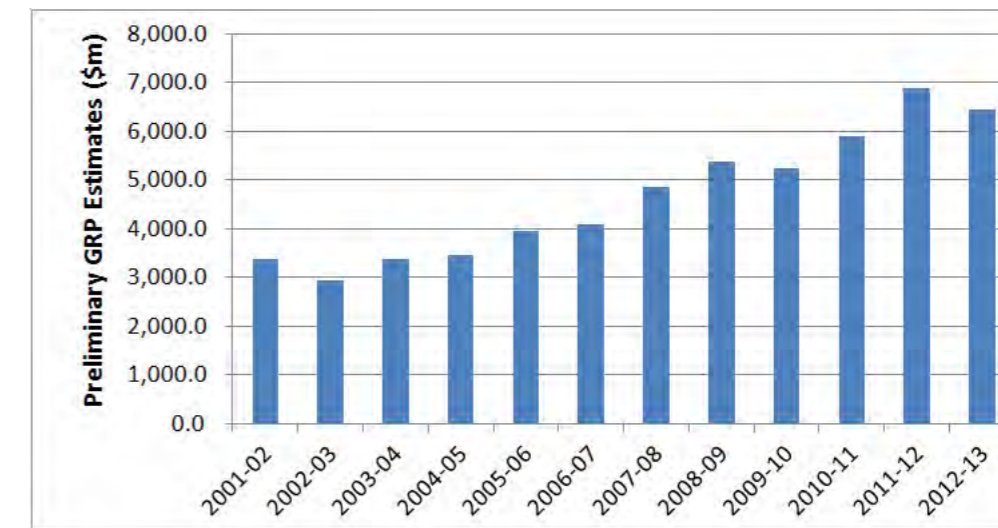
The Wheatbelt has displayed strong economic growth over the past 10 years of 8.2% Average Annual Compound Growth Rate (Figure 4.1). This demonstrates its competitiveness and opportunity for continued growth. This growth (Figure 4.2) has occurred across an increasingly diverse economic base with expansion in the mining, transport and logistics, manufacturing and construction sectors (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.1 Economic Growth Rates

Average Annual Growth Rate (2002/03 – 2012/13)	
Wheatbelt - GRP	8.2% ²⁴
Western Australian - GSP	10.8% ²⁵
Australia – GDP	3.0% ²⁶

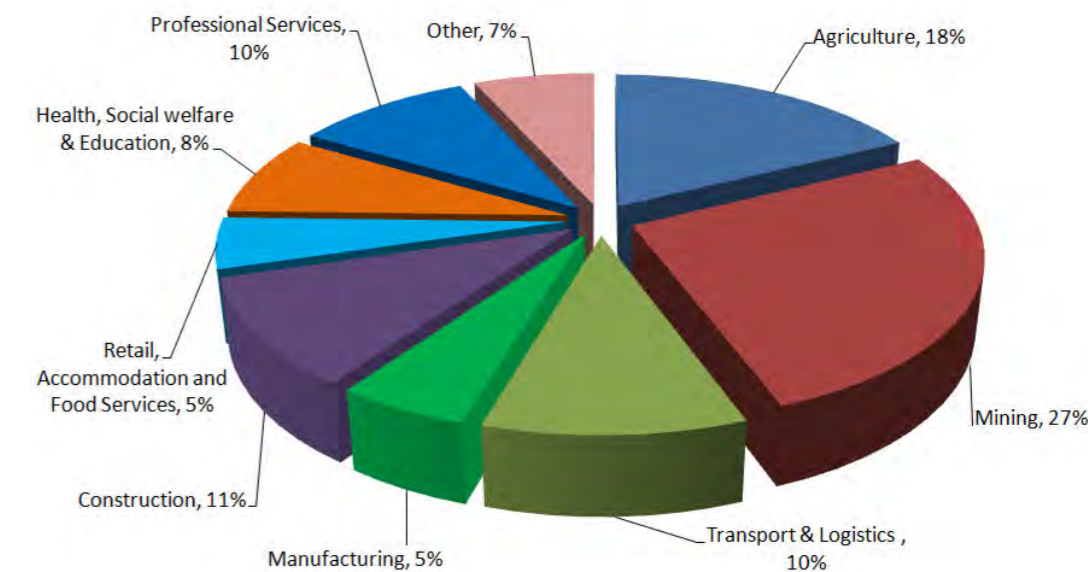
Source: DRD and ABS Australian National Accounts State Accounts 5220.00, 2012-13

Figure 4.2 Wheatbelt Gross Regional Product



Source: BREE 2011, Australian energy projections to 2034–35, BREE report prepared for the Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism, Canberra

Figure 4.3 Industry Sector Value Add* 2011/12

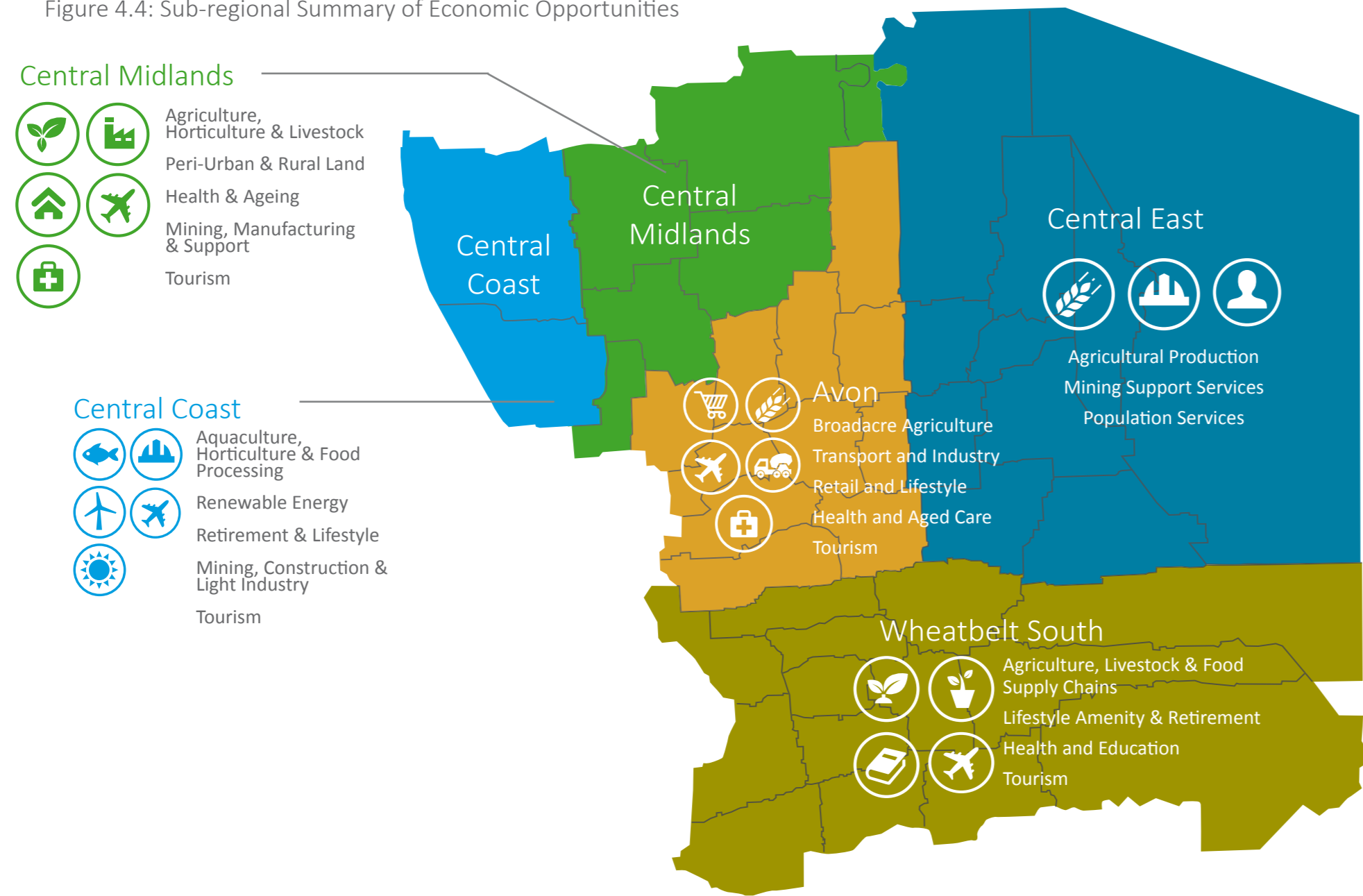


Source: RPS (2012), RPS Economics Gross Regional Product Model, RPS, Gold Coast

*Industry Value Add represents the component of GRP associated with production and value added by businesses and industries within the economy excluding inputs from other regions.

Figure 4.4 provides a summary of each sub-region's opportunities for economic growth as identified in sub-regional economic planning strategies. See Appendix 2 for detail of sub-regional economic opportunity.

Figure 4.4: Sub-regional Summary of Economic Opportunities



4.1.1 Industry

4.1.1.1 Agriculture and Fisheries

The Wheatbelt is a world-leading producer of agricultural exports, and is by far the largest producing region in the State. The Region produced a gross value of almost \$3.5 billion, or 46% of Western Australia's total value of agricultural production in 2011/12²⁷, and the sector contributed 18% of the Region's industry value add.

While the Wheatbelt's agriculture and horticulture sectors are already of a high standard internationally, opportunities exist for further investment, diversification and value adding. It is estimated that global food production levels, including meat and cereals need to increase 70% by the year 2050 to meet demand²⁸. As a key producer of grains and livestock, this increasing demand presents opportunities for Wheatbelt producers.

Agricultural activity differs across the Region. Broadacre cropping is dominant across much of the Region, with more mixed farming (grain/livestock/fodder) occurring in the Wheatbelt South and increasing fodder and horticultural activity in the Central Midlands and Central Coast.

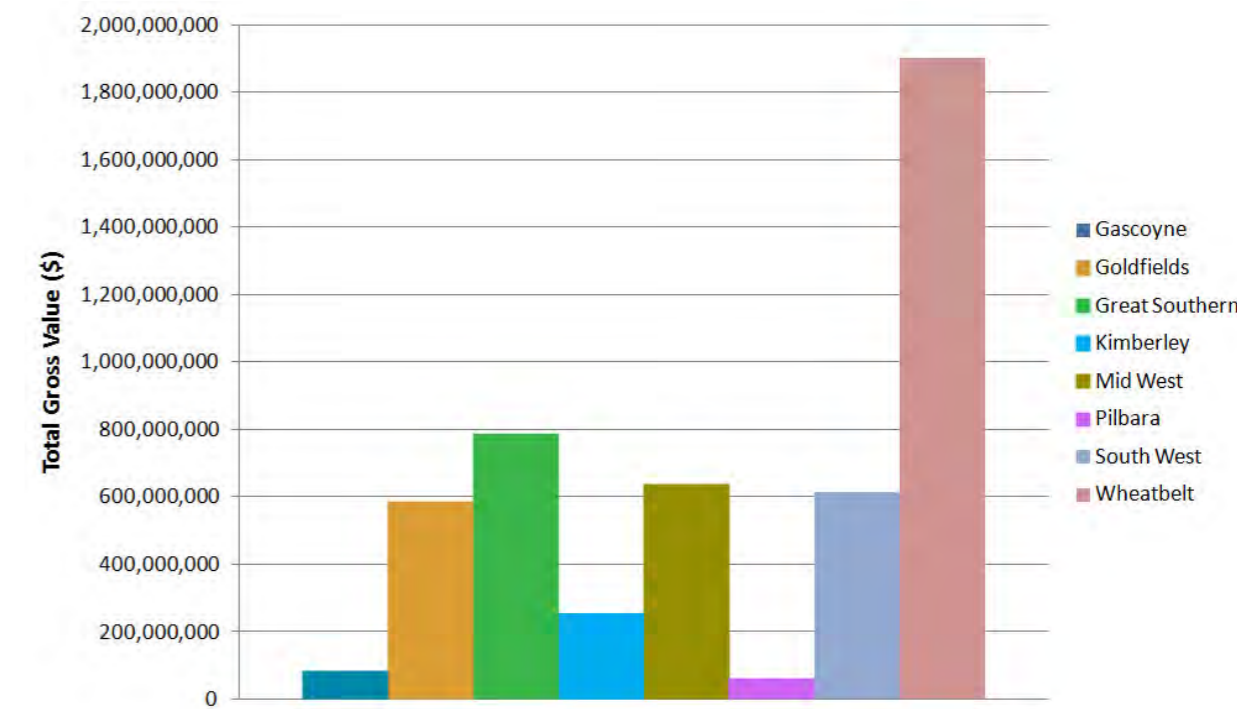
As global demand for food grows, Wheatbelt agricultural land will become increasingly valuable. Land and water resources which support existing and potential intensive agricultural enterprises within the Wheatbelt are of State significance and policies to protect these resources for agricultural use remain important.

Mitigation of the impact of climate change will also be critical and is discussed in more detail in Section 4.4.

In August 2013, the State Government announced the \$295m "Seizing the Opportunity" initiative. Funded through Royalties for Regions, this package will position the agricultural sector to capitalise on the growing global demand for food and agricultural products. It will help to promote local products and attract new investment in agriculture, as well as build business skills, research and development and create efficient supply chains. It is critical that this investment is used to capitalise on opportunities to grow agriculture in the Wheatbelt.

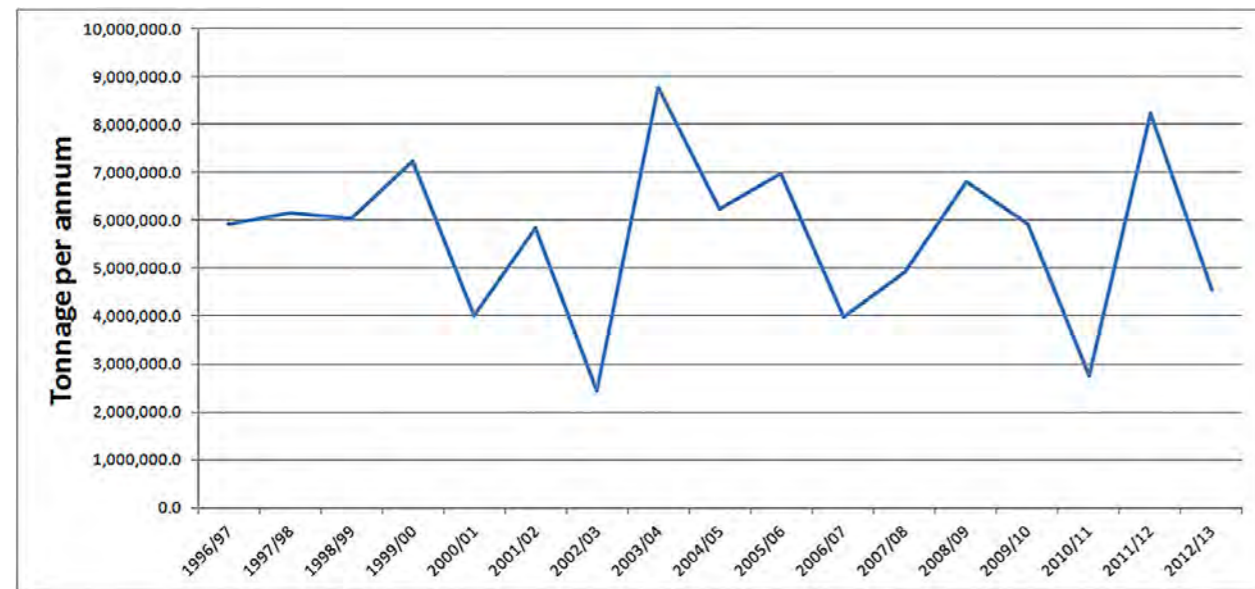
The Department of Agriculture and Food WA has produced two key documents outlining priorities for development of the Industry: Agrifood 2025+: The Future WAy and its 2014-17 Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan identifies priority investments required in: Business and Supply Chain Development, Transformational Development, Boosting Biosecurity and Sustaining Natural Resources.

Figure 4.5 Western Australia's Value of Agricultural Commodities by Region 2011/12



Source: DRD (2014), Wheatbelt: A Region in Profile 2014, Department of Regional Development, Perth

Figure 4.6 Annual Coarse Grains Production, Wheatbelt



Source: CBH Unpublished Data 2013

4.1.1.1.1 Broadacre

In 2011/12 the Wheatbelt produced \$2.7 billion worth of grains, over 50% of the State's grain production²⁹. Wheat makes up the bulk of this production however barley, canola, triticale and oats are also grown in the Region. Broadacre farms in the east of the Region are experiencing increased variability of seasons which, coupled with declining terms of trade and increasing market variability, has affected the viability of some farming operations. Despite this, the sector overall has delivered increased production levels with the State wide harvest in 2013/14 totalling a record 15.9 million tonnes³⁰.

4.1.1.1.2 Livestock

The Wheatbelt has 50% of the State's sheep stock generating a value of \$563 million in wool and

meat in 2011/12³¹. Western Australian sheep numbers have declined significantly over the last decade but have begun to grow since 2010. While the Wheatbelt South sub-region holds the majority of the Region's flock, all sub-regions have significant stock numbers.

The Region also has a significant poultry industry, contributing 51% of the State's egg production in 2010/11³². The majority of this production is in the Central Coast sub-region with opportunities to expand production in other peri-urban locations.

4.1.1.1.3 Horticulture

The Wheatbelt also contributes significantly to the State's horticultural production, producing more than 88% of the State's olives, 64% oranges, 57% limes and 58% lettuce³³. Increasing intensive horticultural activity in the Central Midlands and



Central Coast contributes significantly to Western Australia's production of a number of niche products.

4.1.1.1.4 Fishing and Aquaculture

Seafood is a major component of global food consumption and is particularly favoured in many emerging Asian economies³⁴. There is significant potential for the development of both mariculture (on the Central Coast) and an inland aquaculture industry in the Wheatbelt. Aquaculture in Western Australia has not yet progressed beyond the boutique industry stage.

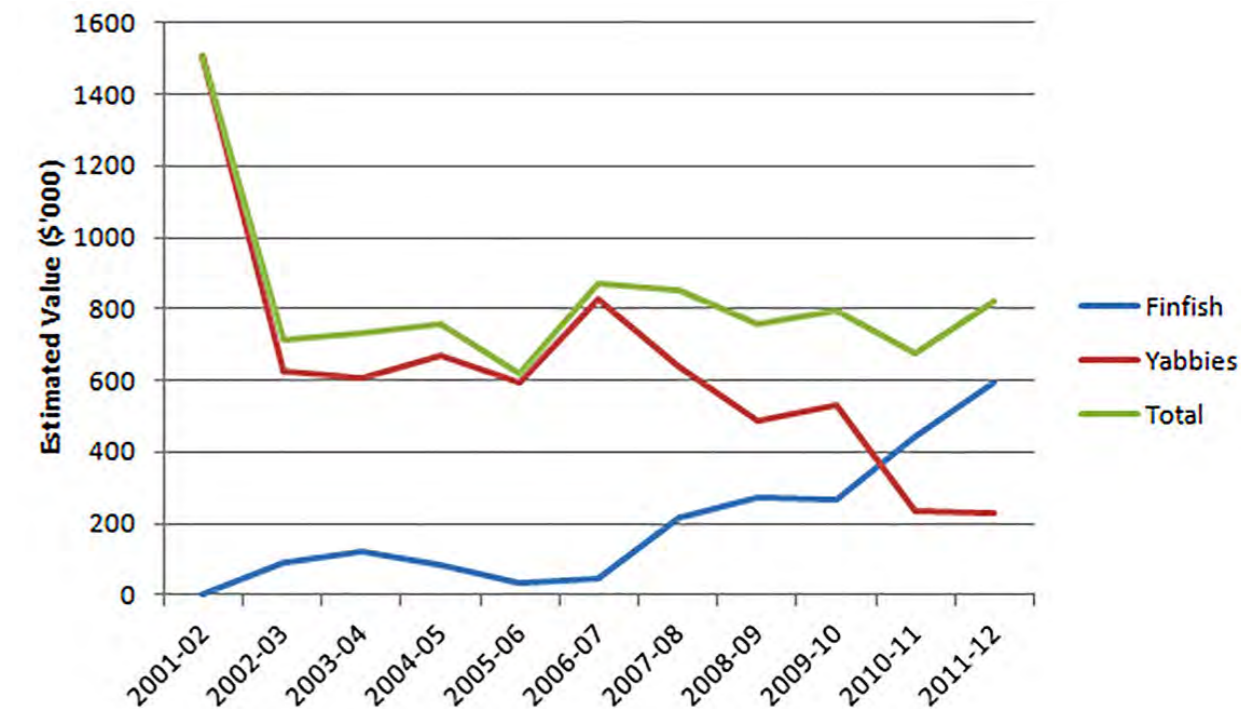
In 2011/12, fishing in the Wheatbelt generated over \$58 million³⁵. The industry has been decreasing in value since 2006/07, reflecting the reduction in the State's fisheries. This is largely related to the rise in the Australian dollar and the restructuring of the Western Rock Lobster fishery, the State's most valuable fisheries' product. The Rock Lobster industry remains the highest value fishing industry in the Wheatbelt, generating \$57 million, 34% of the State's total catch³⁶.

In 2011/12, aquaculture generated \$818,000 in the Wheatbelt from the production of finfish and yabbies³⁷. The last ten years has seen a reduction in production of yabbies and an increase in finfish, resulting in growth of the sector since 2006/07, as shown in Figure 4.7. Previous attempts to establish aquaculture product on the Central Coast have failed for a number of commercial and operational reasons, namely inadequate availability of working capital and higher exposure to stock health risks³⁸.

Growing consumer demand for certainty of supply and source will encourage a move from wild capture-based industry to farmed aquaculture/mariculture³⁹.

Significant infrastructure exists in the Wheatbelt (jetties, marinas, processing facilities) to support this industry growth.

Figure 4.7 Estimated Value of the Wheatbelt's Aquaculture Industry



Source: Department of Fisheries



Continued growth of productivity and profitability in the agricultural sector in the Wheatbelt can be achieved through:

Growing markets

- developing industry strategies for emerging sectors including horticulture, fishing and aquaculture and intensive livestock; and
- profiling the industry to grow markets and attract investment.

Growing capacity

- enhancing farm management practices to manage effects of the altered landscape and climate change;
- development of drought, heat and frost tolerant grains and pastures;
- undertaking R&D to identify emerging market needs, diversify crop mix, develop livestock opportunities and improve soil health;
- building innovation networks to enhance productivity and profitability; and
- using technology to drive productivity.

Adding value along the supply chain

- strengthening links along the supply chain to key markets;
- increasing fodder production for feed lots;
- increasing horticultural operations in the Central Coast and Central Midlands sub-regions and investing in value added processing facilities such as centralised packaging and distribution facilities; and

- development of dedicated multipurpose food processing precincts.
- Addressing policy inhibitors
- managing land use conflict to safeguard prime agricultural land.

4.1.1.2 Mining

In 2012/13, the Wheatbelt generated approximately \$2.5 billion in mineral production⁴⁰. The value of mining in the Region has risen significantly since 2006/07, with a 221% increase. This activity is focused in the local government areas of Dandaragan (\$0.5 billion), Kondinin (\$0.5 billion), and Yilgarn (\$1.5 billion). The Shire of Westonia has also experienced an increase in value of mining production since the reopening of the Edna May Gold Mine in 2010 (\$138 million in 2012/13).

The Region produces a variety of minerals with iron ore the dominate commodity by value, as shown in Figure 4.8. In addition to these higher value commodities, the Region also contains basic raw material (BRM) resources, including clay, gravel and limestone which are significant for the development of the State.

Figure 4.8: Value of Minerals and Petroleum by Commodity

Wheatbelt Region	2013 Value
Iron Ore	\$1,756,264,189
Gypsum and Heavy Mineral Sands	\$395,892,744
Nickel, Copper and Salt	\$320,306,844
Gold, Silver Condensate and Natural Gas	\$123,628,707
Other	\$17,306,696
Total	\$2,613,399,180

Source: DRD (2014), DRD Analysis of Department of Minerals and Petroleum Data (Unpublished), Department of Regional Development, Perth

Considerable potential for bauxite mining is evident, particularly in the western parts of the Region⁴¹. Conflicting land, water and lifestyle amenity issues will require ongoing management.

Continued growth of the global economy has led to investment and revenue growth in the mining industry. This investment has resulted in increasing global supply of commodities and therefore declining commodity prices throughout 2014. "As supply growth slows in response to reduced investment and the closure of high-cost operations, projected consumption growth will begin to soak up the surplus supply and support higher prices in the medium term"⁴². Development of the Wheatbelt's mining sector will be market driven in the context of these changing commodity prices and global demand for resources.

Continuous improvement in State infrastructure, such as the Oakajee, Esperance Port Multi User Iron Ore Facility and Portlink projects, will play an important part in realising the value of mining opportunities in the northern and eastern parts of the Wheatbelt.

An integrated transport strategy that links these key assets will further enhance access to markets.



Image: Cliffs Resources

4.1.1.3 Emerging Industries

4.1.1.3.1 Transport, logistics and manufacturing

The Wheatbelt's centrality to major mineral resources, agricultural and population regions and access to significant national and state transport infrastructure, is resulting in growth of the transport, logistics and manufacturing sectors. This sector contributed 15% of the Wheatbelt's Industry Value Add in 2011/12⁴³. Employment in the sector has grown from 13% in 2001 to 14.2% of the Region's labour force in 2011.

There is a strong presence in the Region of niche manufacturing businesses, traditionally focussed on products for agriculture. They are now applying that innovation to other industry sectors including mining and renewable energy.

The Region's large land parcels can accommodate manufacturing industries that are experiencing increasing pressure from residential development in the Perth Region, while allowing them to retain connectivity with the State's population centre and economic activity zones.

Increased availability of serviced industrial land and marketing this opportunity through an industry development strategy would assist to grow this sector.

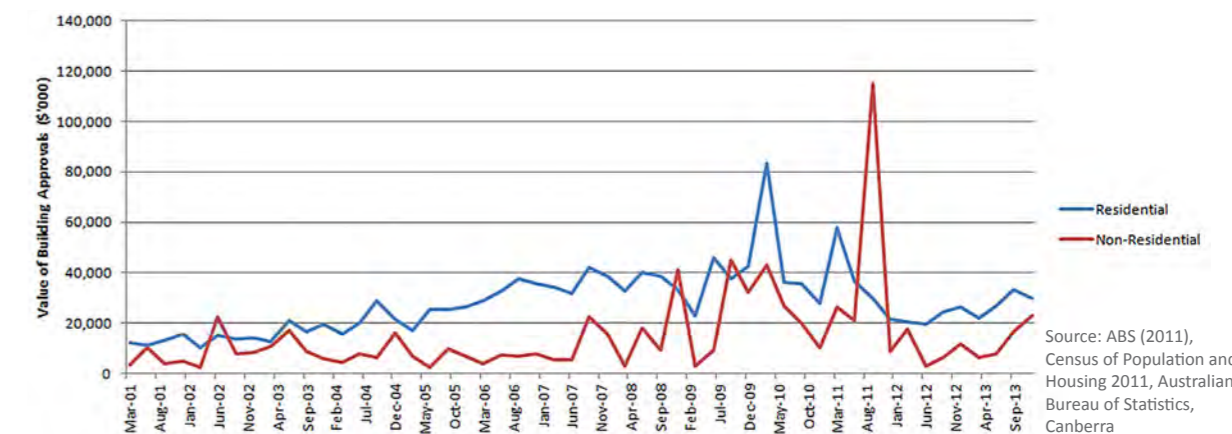
4.1.1.3.2 Construction

Projected population and economic growth in the Wheatbelt will underpin demand for construction related activity. The Wheatbelt's construction industry has experienced upwards trends in activity in recent years, reflecting increasing investment in industrial and residential developments. This is reflected in the building approvals data shown at Figure 4.9. The sector contributed 11% to the Region's Industry Sector Value Add in 2011-12⁴⁴.

The industry, as reflected in percentages of workforce employed, is strongest in mining areas (Yilgarn 17%), peri-urban areas (Chittering 13%, Gingin 12% and Toodyay 11%) and coastal areas (Dandaragan 11%).

The economic and population growth forecasts for the Region will require an increased construction workforce. An industry development strategy is required for this industry.

Figure 4.9: Wheatbelt Building Approvals

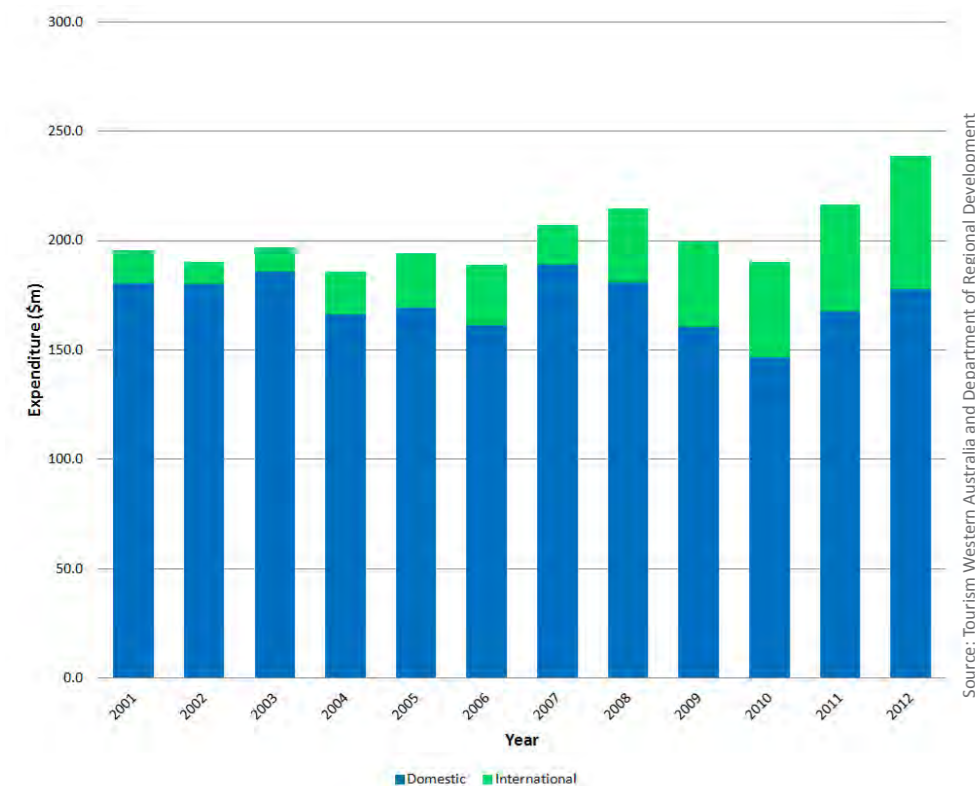


4.1.1.3.3 Tourism

As the second most visited region in the State after the South West⁴⁵, the Wheatbelt's tourism industry is significant. There was an average of 605,700 visitors annually to the Wheatbelt between 2010 and 2012 producing an annual turnover of \$245⁴⁶ million per annum.

Domestic travellers dominate the Region's tourism market making up 94% of the visitors⁴⁷. While domestic visitor numbers fluctuate, international visitor numbers appear more stable and expenditure is increasing. International visitors generate a greater portion of regional income as shown in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10: Estimated Wheatbelt tourism expenditure showing increased international spend



The Region has significant tourism assets including:

- Pinnacles and the coast;
- Avon and Chittering Valleys;
- Wave Rock;
- food and agricultural tourism;
- Great Western Woodlands; and
- other significant natural attractions including astronomy, wildflowers, native animals, rock formations, national parks and native reserves.

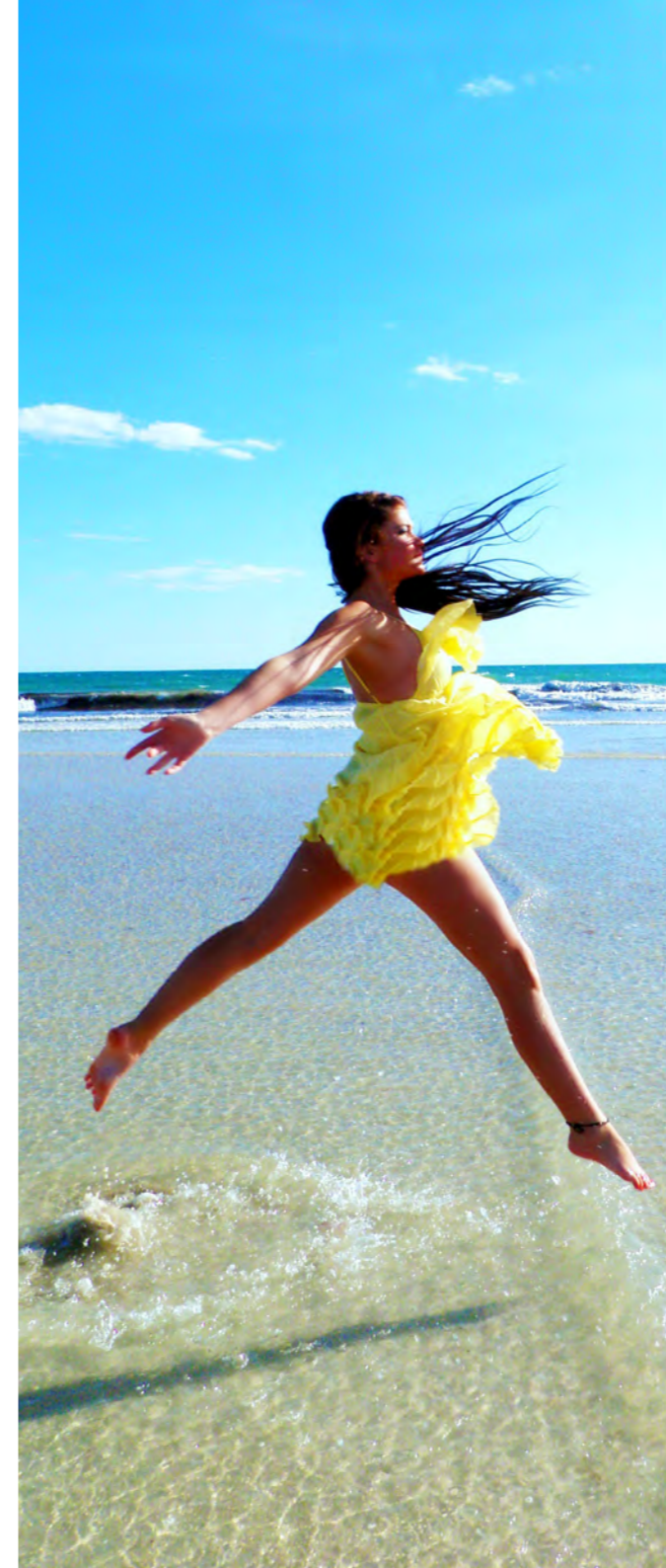
'Grey Nomad' visitation, domestic day trip activity and international tourism are expected to grow in the future⁴⁸. Opportunities exist to expand the range of visitor attractions beyond the coastal areas of the Wheatbelt, especially in relation to cultural, heritage and 'experience' tourism.

While tourism is a small contributor to the Wheatbelt economy, it provides secondary economic benefits to local communities by:

- supporting increased use of existing infrastructure and amenity;
- increasing the turnover of retail and service businesses that are essential to service local residents⁴⁹; and
- profiling communities and industry sectors.

The highly fragmented nature of this industry is a constraint. With three Tourism regions, at least six tourism groups and a multitude of micro business operators across the Region, developing a comprehensive industry development strategy has been a challenge. Work in the Avon and Central East has proven that building product and capacity and joint marketing across communities leads to success. Effort is required to develop a whole of region approach to developing this industry.

A whole of region tourism strategy is required to focus investment, build capability and product and market this.



4.1.1.3.4 Health and Aged Care

The Wheatbelt currently has an older population, with 16% of the population aged 65+ (well above State levels of 12.3%)⁵⁰. This sector of the population is predicted to increase due to both improved health outcomes and the in-migration of retirees into the Region due to affordability pressures being experienced in the metropolitan area.

The population of Australia is projected to age over the next several decades, with the share of residents aged 65+ to increase from one in eight in 2010 to one in five in 2040⁵¹. The ageing of the population presents economic opportunities in health care and social service sectors. Health recently outperformed retail as the largest employing sector in the WA economy, generating tertiary qualified and knowledge intensive employment opportunities in primary, general and acute health care and social service delivery⁵².

Because of considerable existing social infrastructure and the safety of communities, an opportunity exists for the Wheatbelt to play a role in meeting the State's future needs for retirement living and aged care.

Contemporary government policy focuses on 'ageing in place', reiterated in aged care service planning undertaken in the Wheatbelt. Employment in the Health and Aged Care sector has grown from 6% of the Region's workforce in 2001, to 8% in 2011⁵³, reflecting the growing demand for health care services.

The Wheatbelt Aged Care Solutions Report (2014) offers a clear implementation plan to achieve ageing in place, for both current and

future residents of the Region. Key solutions include:

- **development of age friendly infrastructure;**
- **quality universal design housing;**
- **enhanced delivery of home care services; and**
- **residential facilities which include dementia and respite care.**

4.1.1.3.5 Education

Education demand is expected to continue to grow in Australia. Strong economic growth in the Wheatbelt in the medium to long term will intensify the need for skilled workers. This will drive demand for expanded local and regional tertiary education facilities, effective transition of students from secondary to tertiary education and effect integration with growing industry skills need. The Wheatbelt's comparative advantage in areas such as dry land agriculture, land management, services to primary industries and population services provide an opportunity to 'on-sell' considerable knowledge in these areas.

Muresk Institute is an ideal entity to foster growth of the Region's knowledge industry

4.1.1.3.6 Renewable Energy

The Wheatbelt supplies 60% of the State's renewable energy, generating more than 280MW from wind power⁵⁴ and there are opportunities for the growth of this sector. With significant renewable energy generation resources by way of wind, solar, geothermal and biomass opportunities, the Wheatbelt could become self-sufficient or indeed a net exporter of energy.

A large number of additional generation facilities utilising a variety of energy sources are in planning stages. Some Wheatbelt businesses are investigating the use of renewable energy for on-site generation to reduce costs and improve profitability. These trials could deliver feasible alternatives for energy generation and supply that negate the requirement for businesses to connect to the South West Interconnected System. Business collaboration on these initiatives would potentially achieve economies of scale and deliver self-sufficient industrial and residential developments.

There is also a natural fit in this agricultural region to pursue bio-fuel energy options. Global experience dictates that this needs to be managed so that food production is not compromised.

The development of a renewable energy industry prospectus could realise this potential and grow the industry.

4.1.2 Business

The Wheatbelt has a high representation of small businesses (employing 0-19 persons) relative to its share of the State's population. 5.2% or close to 10,000 of the State's small businesses are located in the Region⁵⁵. The majority of these businesses are in the agriculture and service sectors with the transport, logistics and manufacturing and construction sectors both making up more than 10% of the Region's businesses⁵⁶.

Small businesses account for 94% of all businesses in the Wheatbelt. Non-employing and micro businesses makeup 86% of the Region's businesses⁵⁷. Only 45.1% of Wheatbelt small businesses have a corporate website with only half of these generating sales from online activity⁵⁸.

The Region has a limited number of Chambers of Commerce which operate mainly in the regional centres (e.g. Northam, Narrogin, Moora, Merredin). The Small Business Development Corporation operates five Small Business Centres in the Region. The development of networks for small business to collaboratively access markets, develop skills and advocate to government will assist business viability across the Region.

The Wheatbelt Business Network Inc., established in 2011, has introduced a new model of business networking. The Network's success has seen it expand to have a presence in seven local government areas in the Central East. The Wheatbelt Business Network is delivering the Small Business Centres' services in the Wheatbelt South, integrating its flexible model into the government funded small business support structures.

Improving business linkages and networks, both within and external to the Region, will improve businesses' ability to compete in an increasingly globalised economy. While the Wheatbelt has an export oriented economy, as a whole it lacks any formal global business linkages.

There are niche businesses that export directly and manage a greater portion of the supply chain, but they tend to operate in isolation.

The Region's diversity makes the development of a single regional brand and whole of region marketing a necessity.

Growth in the small business sector will occur with the following interventions:

- **enhanced digital capacity to achieve success in local, national and global markets;**
- **assistance to strengthen business alliances within and external to the Region to seize opportunities along the supply chain within these markets;**
- **Heartlands WA (which exists to promote the Region as a place to live, work and invest) remains supported to develop the regional brand and use it to promote the Region;**
- **development of international relationships through trade missions, 'sister city or provinces'; and**
- **strengthening participation in international business organisations.**



4.1.3 Skilled Workers

4.1.3.1 Labour Force

The Wheatbelt's consistently low unemployment rate (2.5%)⁵⁹ (Figure 4.11) and high participation rate (62%)⁶⁰ mean that the attraction and retention of labour force is critical for economic development. The Region's unemployment rate is the third lowest rate of regional unemployment, only slightly above the two major mining regions. There are variations across the Region, with 14 local government areas of 43 having an unemployment rate higher than the State average, indicating pockets of labour force availability.

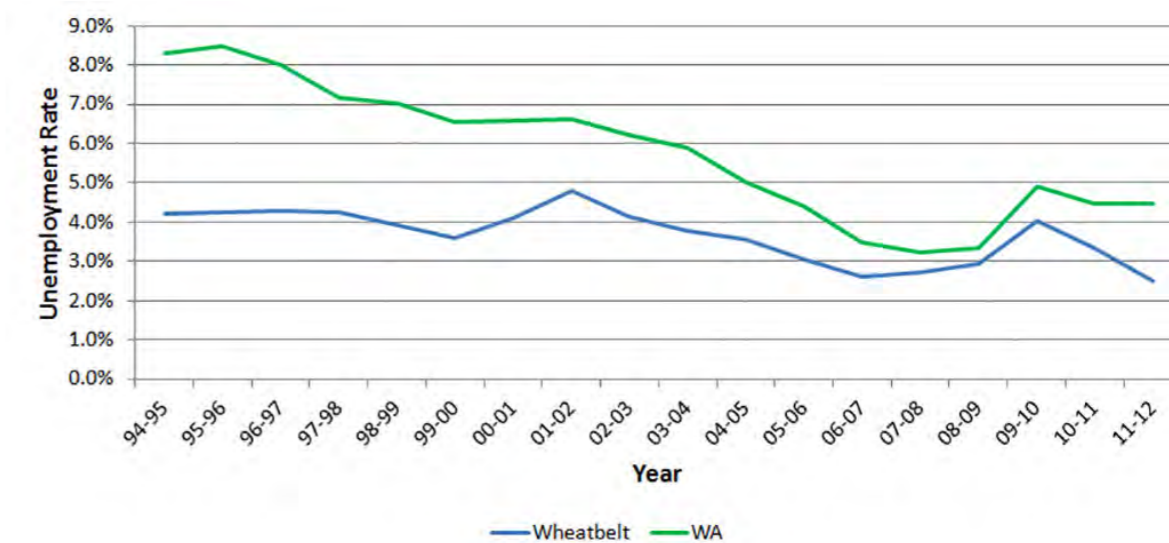
The Wheatbelt's working population (ages 15-64) makes up 63% of the total population and has increased by 10.7% in the last 10 years (since 2002)⁶¹.

Unemployment rates for Aboriginal people in the Region are also significantly higher (26.2%)⁶² and labour force participation rates lower (45.2%)⁶³. Improving employment opportunities for Aboriginal residents will benefit both the individuals and the Wheatbelt economy.

As shown in Figure 4.12 employment self-sufficiency rates in the Region demonstrate the need to attract workers to fill current employment opportunities. This is particularly apparent in the Central East where the ratio of local jobs to local workforce is 107%. This is most likely attributable to the fly in, fly out workforce in the Yilgarn mining operations.

Anecdotally, the Region is experiencing increasing numbers of drive-in, drive-out workers. Further analysis is required to determine the scope and develop mitigation strategies.

Figure 4.11 Unemployment Rate 1994-2011



Source: ABS (2011), Census of Population and Housing 2011, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

Figure 4.12 Employment Self Sufficiency

Sub-region	Rate
Avon	81%
Central Coast	78%
Central East	107%
Central Midlands	80%
Wheatbelt South	90%

Source: RPS (2014) Avon, Central Coast, Central Midlands, Central East and Wheatbelt South Sub-regional Economic Plans 2013,2014 RPS

Strategies are required to attract workers to the Region. These strategies include:

- **targeted marketing of employment opportunities in the Region;**
- **training and intern opportunities within the Region;**
- **subsidised tuition or bonded worker scholarships for jobs that require education and training external to the Region;**
- **targeted industry development in specific sub-regions to address higher unemployment levels; and**
- **the development of worker accommodation.**

4.1.3.2 Industry Skill Needs

Within a tight labour market, the industry skills needs of the Region are broad and varied.

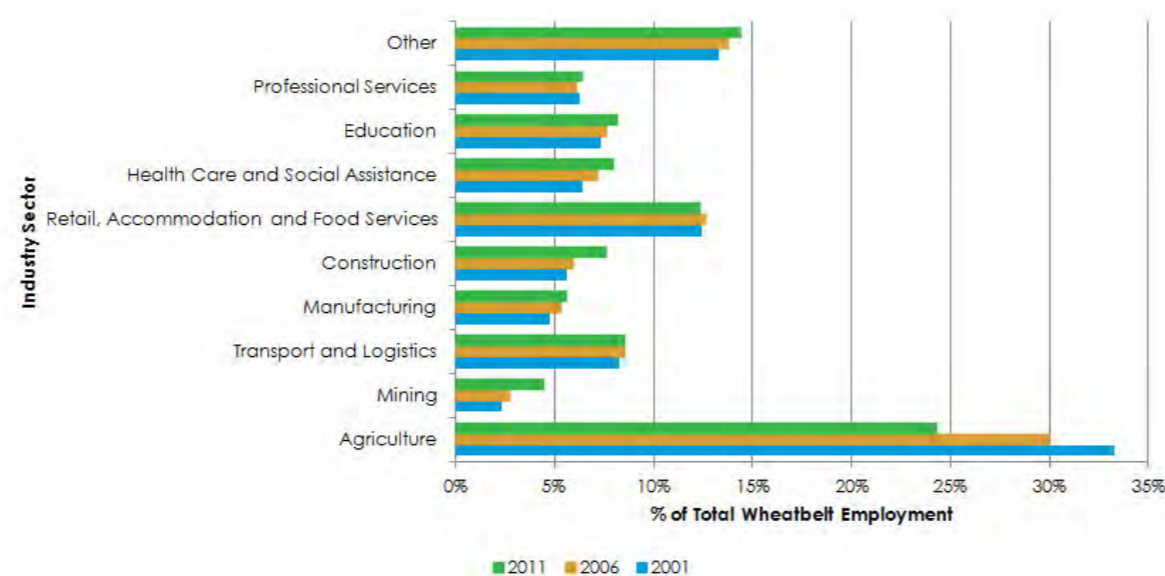
Agriculture, fishing and forestry remain the Region's largest employer. Increasing farm size and automation has seen employment in the sector decrease with the exception of the Shire of Gingin, reflecting its growing horticultural activity. The seasonality of broadacre agriculture results in a heavy reliance on casual workers, especially during peak periods. Synergies between required skill sets present opportunities for cross industry workforce development for the agricultural and mining industries.

The Shires of Chittering, Northam, Toodyay, Merredin, and the Town of Narrogin have an employment distribution less reliant on the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector (less than 20% of total labour force). In these locations, the retail sector plays a significant role, reflecting industry diversification and a regional service role. Employment in the retail sector has remained steady over the last 10 years.

Government and social services (education and training, health care and social services, public administration and safety) are also significant and growing employers in the Wheatbelt (a total of 23%).

Sectors which are particularly variable across the Region include the construction industry (concentrated in peri-urban areas), accommodation and food services (concentrated in the Central Coast sub-region), the manufacturing sector (in the Central Coast and Avon) and the mining sector (concentrated in the Shires of Westonia, Yilgarn and Kondinin).

Figure 4.13 Wheatbelt Employment by Sector



Source: ABS (2011), Census of Population and Housing 2011, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

Sub-regional economic planning⁶⁴ in the Wheatbelt indicates that the following sectors are likely to continue to be integral sectors of the Region's economy and will therefore demand skills.

- Agriculture Fishing and Forestry;
- Transport, Logistics and Manufacturing;
- Mining and Mines Servicing;
- Health and Aged Care;
- Population Services;
- Tourism; and
- Renewable Energy

In high growth scenarios an increased construction workforce will be critical.

The growth of the Wheatbelt economy and changing employment trends will require:

- **lifelong learning and training opportunities at secondary, TAFE and university level to encourage skills development and pathways to employment within the Region, particularly for Aboriginal residents;**
- **workforce training that enables workers to develop skills that are transferrable across industry and meet seasonal fluctuations in labour demand; and**
- **development of the Muresk Institute as a cross industry education and training facility in areas of identified regional need.**



4.1.4 Key Infrastructure

The Wheatbelt has a comprehensive infrastructure base to provide access to markets and services – roads, rail, aviation, telecommunications and social infrastructure. To ensure ongoing productivity gains and enhanced liveability to attract the required workforce, prioritised investment will be paramount. Key enabling infrastructure exists outside the Region, including ports and airports.

The globalisation of the world economy, continued population growth and increased prosperity in the developing world is expected to significantly increase the international flow of goods and people⁶⁵. The proximity of Australia, in particular Western Australia and the Wheatbelt, to the developing economies of East Asia means that comparative transport costs, relative to other major trading partners (Europe, USA, South America), provides Australia with a comparative advantage. This is further enhanced by the fact that Western Australia shares a time zone with much of that region⁶⁶.

While current infrastructure provides a sound base for development, ongoing investment is required to consolidate transport and telecommunication networks to seize emerging global opportunities.

4.1.4.1 Land Transport

The Wheatbelt has extensive land transport linkages with the metropolitan area and other parts of the State, delivering good access to international, national and regional markets through six ports (Esperance, Albany, Bunbury, Kwinana, Fremantle and Geraldton) and Perth Airport. Continuing investment in a strategic network of road and rail infrastructure in the

Region will deliver productivity and efficiency benefits to both the Wheatbelt and other regions.

The Eastern Goldfields Rail, which traverses the Wheatbelt, is the State's key freight link to the Eastern States. It carries 80% of all freight from the Eastern States into Western Australia, including over 16 million tonnes of interstate and intrastate freight⁶⁷.

The Region's largest exports by tonnage are iron ore (15 million tonnes per annum) and grain (ranging between 3-8 million tonnes annually). With access to the Eastern Goldfields Rail, ore tonnages are hauled to Esperance or Kwinana port by rail.

Some 90% of the Region's grain harvest⁶⁸ is exported through Kwinana, Albany, Geraldton and Esperance ports. Historically, rail transport has moved around 60% of grain to port. This share has declined in recent years, with greater road haulage consolidating tonnage from smaller sites into larger facilities and direct to port.

The grain rail network consists of 2,300 kilometres of narrow gauge lines managed by Brookfield Rail, under a lease agreement with the State Government. The 2009 Strategic Grain Freight Network Report recommended the closure of a number of lines in the Region, known as the Tier 3 lines, and this has since occurred. This has led to increased road usage, particularly on local roads that are not fit for purpose. Upgrades and maintenance will require significant investment.

Increasing grain production levels, coupled with the deregulation of the grains market, is resulting in additional players in both the marketing and logistics sectors of the industry. This will increase pressure on both rail and road transport from the Region to port. Increasing port capacity at Albany and Bunbury will change the flow of grain to port and increase pressure on the road network in the south.

Growth in the mining sector in the Pilbara, Mid West and Goldfields-Esperance has resulted in growth of traffic volumes, heavy vehicles and high wide loads on the National roads through the Region (Great Northern and Great Eastern Highways). Traffic volumes of the Great Northern Highway have grown by 10% per annum (compound) over the past five years, with the proportion of heavy vehicles growing from 25% to 40% over the same time⁶⁹.

Lime sand haulage, transport of basic raw materials and metropolitan waste are also impacting on road networks across the Region.

Increased heavy haulage on roads that are not constructed or maintained to manage the freight task will increase the safety risk to all road users and result in inefficiencies in the transport network. With the Wheatbelt already recording the State's worst ratio of fatal and serious injury rates at 28.7 per 100,000 people, compared to WA rate of 10.7⁷⁰, increased safety risk is not acceptable to the community.

While a significant percentage of Wheatbelt accidents are single vehicle accidents (68% in 2012)⁷¹ and therefore not attributable to increased truck movements, the impact on road surfaces as a result of increased volumes and loads should not be ignored.

Increased transport and logistics activity is providing economic opportunity in the Region and the State. Land transport investments in the Wheatbelt will also deliver benefits beyond the Region in terms of minimising metropolitan congestion, improving linkages to the other regions and increasing the export capacity of regional WA.

Key areas for investment in land transport infrastructure in the Wheatbelt include:

- **an outer metropolitan ring road and associated intermodal terminals;**
- **Great Northern Highway (upgrades);**
- **Great Eastern Highway (upgrades);**
- **strategic town heavy haulage bypasses; and**
- **a mitigation plan for increased heavy vehicles on roads. This should include a review of the road management hierarchy to identify the changing nature of road use, where local roads are increasingly becoming of State significance.**



4.1.4.2 Aviation

Wheatbelt air space, airports and airstrips present a solid infrastructure base on which to develop the aviation industry in the Region, with the majority of facilities currently underutilised. There are more than 54 airports and airstrips in the Wheatbelt. The quality of these facilities varies greatly, however the majority of strips meet a minimum standard suitable for Royal Flying Doctor Service access. Airstrips are mostly owned, operated and maintained by local government.

These airstrips support a large number of aviation pursuits including:

- flight training;
- recreational and adventure aviation, including aero clubs, gliding, skydiving, ballooning;
- emergency services;
- agricultural spraying; and
- aircraft servicing.

China Southern Flying College WA has been operating at the Merredin airstrip since the late 1990s. The College specialises in training pilots with no flying experience to the standard of multi-engine instrument-rated jet pilots for China Southern Airlines.

There has been significant investment in recent years at Cunderdin, Narrogin, Northam, Wagin, Wongan Hills and Wyalkatchem airfields improving airstrip quality and developing industrial lots alongside airstrips. Further opportunity for investment exists in key locations identified in the sub-regional economic planning process.

In line with the recommendations of the Draft WA State Aviation Strategy to “encourage private sector investment in, and management of, regional airports to improve their effectiveness and efficiency”⁷², ongoing investment to develop facilities should be encouraged.

To grow the Wheatbelt aviation industry, opportunities include:

- **marketing the Region's aviation assets to increase the role of the Wheatbelt in the State's general aviation space and to attract private investment in commercial developments; and**
- **continuing programs to support the maintenance of small airstrips for emergency services.**

4.1.4.3 Communications and the Digital Capacity

Improved digital connectivity throughout the Wheatbelt will deliver economic growth, enhanced service delivery and social engagement. Continued upgrades to telecommunications infrastructure and maximising the reach of the National Broadband Network (NBN) are critical to ensuring Wheatbelt digital connectivity is world class.

The agricultural sector has a high take up of telecommunications to drive productivity. However, the dispersed settlement patterns of the Wheatbelt and its geography, in some parts, present challenges for digital connectivity. Distances and low population densities make terrestrial solutions uneconomic and geography can make radio signals ineffective. Satellite solutions make some level of service available to most people, but these solutions are generally slower and unreliable.

Digital technology in the Wheatbelt suffers the paradox that high uptake is required to create demand for the service, however a lack of reliability in service limits demand.

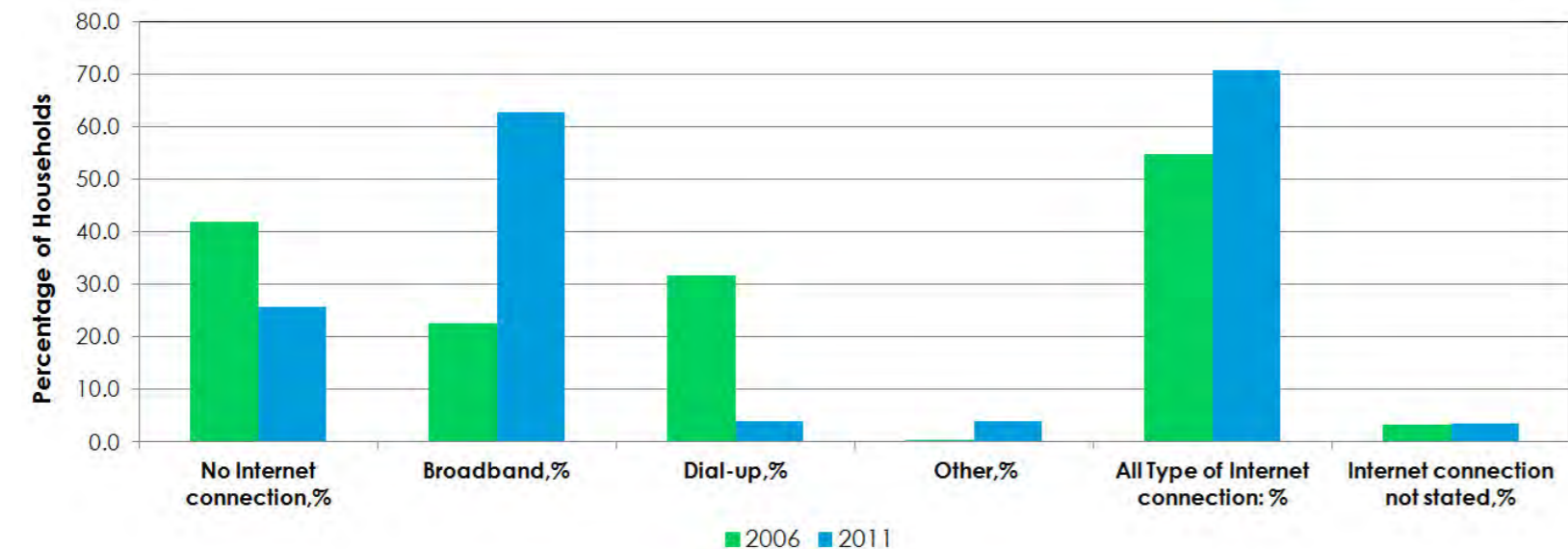
Mobile telephone coverage in the Region is highly variable in terms of both reliability and stability of signal. The State Government's Regional Mobile Communications Project (RMCP) has resulted in improved coverage for the Region through 17 new towers, however there are still significant gaps. Growing use of hand held mobile devices to access internet services is increasing the importance of improved coverage for the Region.

In 2011, 26% of Wheatbelt households had no internet connection⁷³, well above State figures that show 18% of households without a connection. Wheatbelt small businesses have low corporate website presence (46%, compared to 71% in the Perth Region⁷⁴) and only 25% of Wheatbelt small businesses utilise social media for online marketing. Increased use of digital technology to engage with markets can provide the Region's 10,000 small businesses with new market opportunities.

While lack of access to reliable services is in part responsible for the Region's slow uptake of digital technology, the capacity of individuals and businesses to use the available technology is also a factor.

The Wheatbelt Digital Action Plan (RDA Wheatbelt, 2013) highlights the actions required to increase the usage of digital technology for both business and personal purposes delivering economic and social benefits for the Wheatbelt.

Figure 4.14 Wheatbelt Households Internet Connection



Source: ABS (2011), Census of Population and Housing 2011, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

To grow the Wheatbelt's digital capacity, the following actions are required:

- improved connectivity and access (ongoing improvement to the mobile tower network throughout the Region and continued improved access to quality broadband services to enhance internet speeds and reliability);
- building online communities and services; and
- building digital innovation, which includes enhancing the digital skills of small business, internet marketing, delivery of education and health services through digital means.

4.1.4.4 Land Assembly: Land, power, water and sewerage

(a) Industrial Land

The Wheatbelt is a large land mass (154,862 square kilometres), which is sparsely populated and has the ability to provide large parcels of industrial land for businesses that require a larger footprint. The majority of land in the Region is held in freehold title.

The development of industrial land in the Wheatbelt is constrained by the cost of connection to utilities. These costs are partly attributable to the need to upgrade infrastructure points of weakness back through the network and are most problematic for electricity connections. Innovative local off grid power and water solutions would reduce the reliance on ageing and expensive networks, especially in end-of-grid situations.

Serviced industrial land for medium to large sized businesses is available at the Avon Industrial Park, just east of Northam on the Great Eastern Highway. Planning for the proposed Muchea Employment Node is well advanced. This development is of State significance and is strategically located at the intersection of Brand and Great Northern Highways.

Zoned light industrial lots are available in a number of communities throughout the Region, but there remains a shortage of serviced industrial land in some areas.

Availability of serviced industrial lots would attract new industries to the Region, assisting with economic growth and generation of new employment opportunities. The relocation of large scale manufacturers from the metropolitan area would deliver benefits of freed up land for other development and a reduction of heavy freight traffic in the metropolitan area.



The development of 'self-contained' industrial land packages aligned with locational comparative advantages would assist to reduce development costs.

Aligning power upgrades and water supply with sub-regional need and moving from single proponent development to grouped development will allow development costs to be shared across industry.

Targeted sub-regional marketing strategies to attract business to existing lots can increase local economic output.

(b) Residential Land

There is significant unmet demand for housing throughout the Wheatbelt⁷⁵ compounded by the lack of available, construction-ready (serviced) residential land. The majority of approved development-ready lots are located in the peri-urban and coastal areas of the Region. However, the demand for housing is more widespread throughout the Wheatbelt.

Availability of water and lack of reticulated sewerage is limiting development in some communities, including peri-urban areas experiencing growth pressures. In other areas, the cost of housing development exceeds the market value of completed or established properties, resulting in an inability to finance development through traditional structures.

Improved access to water and reticulated sewerage could deliver availability and diversity of residential land across the Region and therefore assist in the attraction of population and thus labour force.

Planned development of rural residential land to meet growth demands will ensure appropriate population servicing keeps pace with development growth. The challenge will be to ensure land use conflicts are well managed.

- as with industrial land, greater alignment of infrastructure investment with sub-regional needs will allow more cost effective investment for service providers and developers;
- collaborative investment models will attract public and private investment and generate economies of scale; and
- the establishment of a Wheatbelt Infrastructure Co-ordinating Group will create opportunities for collaboration with the aim of reducing cost of land assembly for both residential and industrial developments.

(c) Energy

There is an opportunity to re-think energy solutions for the Wheatbelt. High cost of connection, inflexible regulatory structures and 'edge of grid' reliability issues affect the operation and expansion of the Region's businesses and the attraction of new industry. Capacity constraints of the South West Interconnected System (SWIS) present an inability to cope with new 'block' loads without excessive cost impediments. Western Power's regulatory structures mean that new business developments are considered on a case-by-case basis resulting in the transfer of significant development costs to individual businesses.

The size and age of the SWIS cause some reliability and supply issues, particularly in localities that are at the end of long feeder lines ('edge of grid'). An opportunity exists to provide innovative energy solutions at both end of grid and full capacity locations.

Improved network planning at a sub-regional level that considers economic development opportunities could assist to reduce connection and network upgrade costs to individual businesses, making relocation to the Wheatbelt more attractive.

Distributed generation and the use of renewable energy creation, distribution and transmission, particularly in 'edge of grid' and 'at capacity' localities would deliver improved reliability of supply and potentially the ability to upscale and accommodate 'block' loads to supply new business developments.

The Wheatbelt has the assets to address energy issues within and external to the Region including:

- **renewable energy options;**
- **'edge of grid' solutions; and**
- **multi-proponent investment.**

(d) Water

Growth pressures in peri-urban areas and the increasing development of intensive horticulture in these same sub-regions is presenting conflicting demands for water resources for a range of uses. Ageing infrastructure in other parts of the Region is presenting challenges in relation to water availability and pressure, particularly at the end of long pipelines.

The Wheatbelt is a net importer of potable water, with the majority of communities supplied through the Water Corporation's Integrated Water Supply Scheme (IWSS). There are 16 Wheatbelt towns not supplied by an integrated scheme. Future water resources legislation and/or policy should provide for high security of water for these towns now and future growth.

The Water Corporation and Department of Water manage supply to the majority of Central Midlands and Central Coast communities from localised groundwater. Groundwater sources in these sub-regions are experiencing increasing utilisation for residential and industrial use, both locally and in the metropolitan area. The full allocation of some sources within the Gingin groundwater area has created barriers to the expansion of residential land within the townsite of Bindoon.

Planning undertaken by the Water Corporation indicates an increasing reliance on groundwater

and desalination to supply the State's water resource. This will increase the importance of managing demand and waste water recycling.

Improved security of water supply can be achieved by:

- **total system water planning for the State that assures security of supply for Wheatbelt communities and industry;**
- **total system water planning for Wheatbelt communities to capitalise on opportunities for recycling, re-use and reduced demand;**
- **improvements to aged infrastructure within the IWSS;**
- **investment and policy changes to enable water harvesting and re-use for community and industrial use; and**
- **pilot systems utilising renewable energy to process and provide groundwater.**

(e) Waste water

The Water Corporation is responsible for most of the waste water treatment and disposal systems in the Wheatbelt, although a number of local governments operate their own waste water systems. Some communities have no waste water treatment facilities and rely on septic tank systems for disposal. Septic tanks disposal systems can be problematic in some parts of the Region, due to clay and granite based soils.

The Water Corporation has recently completed construction of a trial Septic Tank Effluent Disposal (STED) system in Hyden. This is one example of innovative sewerage solutions that have broader applicability throughout the Region.

Better access to reticulated sewerage would enable the development of infill residential lots in peri-urban communities and lead to improved housing diversity.

Introduction of alternative methods of treatment and more flexible regulatory structures could improve water recycling in communities and allow the development of increased housing density. Current regulations restrict the transfer of water across property boundaries except by licensed water providers. This limits the ability to introduce small scale waste water treatment, even for non-potable use.

Innovative sewerage solutions include:

- **replication of the STED system in other Wheatbelt towns; and**
- **implementation of an infill sewerage program with a focus on peri urban growth areas.**

(f) Waste Management

The Wheatbelt's proximity to the Perth Region and low population density provide opportunities for landfill development and waste management as an alternative to locating putrescible landfills on the Swan Coastal Plain. A number of recent proposals for waste management developments in the Shires of Gingin, Toodyay, Wandering and York demonstrate the waste industry's interest in the Region. A key strategic



objective of the Western Australia Waste Management Strategy is to "initiate and maintain long-term planning for waste and recycling processing and enable access to suitably located land with buffers sufficient to cater for the State's waste management needs"⁷⁶. The Wheatbelt remains a viable location for such metropolitan waste processing. Development of waste sites needs to be managed to avoid land use conflict, especially in high value lifestyle amenity and environmentally sensitive areas.

A feasibility study needs to be conducted to identify the best state significant waste sites in the Wheatbelt.

(g) Housing

Housing demand and need varies across the Wheatbelt. The Regional Housing Needs Study – Wheatbelt commissioned by the Department of Housing in 2014, found that there were considerable housing shortages in the Avon, Central Midlands and Wheatbelt South markets and minor undersupply in the Central East⁷⁷. The Central Coast is the only market with an oversupply of housing. However, strong projected population growth for the Central Coast will see this oversupply consumed in the near future.

Shortages of housing suitable for workers, aged, short stay and low income earners have been identified across the Region. This accommodation type is characterised by smaller dwellings with 'lock and leave' characteristics. The need for accommodation

suitable for the Region's older demographic has been identified and the gaps quantified through the Central East Aged Care Alliance and Wheatbelt Integrated Aged Support and Care plans. Local governments in the Region have commenced planning projects to address this gap and additional construction will be required to meet future demand.

Figure 4.15 Dwelling Structure

	% of Total Dwellings	
	WA	Wheatbelt
Separate house	77.9	91.3
Semi-detached row, terrace or townhouse	10.8	2.5
Flat, unit or apartment	8.8	2.5
Other	2.1	2.8
Not stated or applicable	0.4	0.8
Total	100	100

Source: 2011 Census of Population and Housing

Attraction of new workforce entrants from outside the Region is imperative to the growth of the Wheatbelt economy. The development of more diverse housing options is critical to achieving this in-migration.

Traditional family homes (typically 3 bedroom x 1 bathroom) dominate the housing stock in the Region, with separate houses making up 91% of the Region's housing stock. This is in contrast to separate houses making up only 78% of the WA housing stock. This housing type is mismatched with the Region's household composition (Figure 4.16). A more diverse housing stock is required in the Wheatbelt.

Figure 4.16 Household Composition

Number of persons usually resident	Wheatbelt Households (%)	Western Australia (%)	Variance
One	26.42	23.77	2.65
Two	39.58	34.49	5.08
Three	12.69	15.94	-3.25
Four	12.08	16.07	-3.99
Five	6.10	6.64	-0.54
Six or more	3.13	3.09	0.04

Source: ABS (2011), Census of Population and Housing 2011, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

Housing affordability varies markedly across the Region. There is a minimal shortfall of social housing in the Wheatbelt as a whole, and a surplus in a couple of Wheatbelt local government areas. The Department of Housing considers the demand for social housing to be modest in the Wheatbelt, except for very high needs in Northam, Chittering and Toodyay and high needs in Narrogin and York⁷⁸. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there are cases of misalignment between family needs and the services available in some locations, resulting in poor outcomes for families and social disruption for some communities.

The Wheatbelt's land development and housing construction market is generally characterised by small-scale developers. Anecdotally, the residential construction sector is constrained by financial institution lending models that require high deposits in the absence of mortgage

insurance. Small real residential construction numbers make the scope of this issue difficult to quantify.

A population of 180,000 will require approximately 40,000 additional dwellings by 2050. In order to accommodate and sustain the level of land and housing development required to support this growth, strategies that increase the capacity of the housing industry across the Region will be critical.

Innovative solutions to deliver diverse housing stock are required, including:

- strategies to address market failure;
- collaborative investment vehicles; and
- universally designed housing that is flexible to meet the needs of workers, tourists and the elderly.



4.2 Clever People

Fast Facts:

- **Third most populous region after Peel and South West⁷⁹**
- **Significant out-migration of 15-29 year old cohort**
- **0-4 and 65+ cohorts growing faster than the State⁸⁰**
- **Some locations have high levels of early developmental vulnerability**
- **73 primary schools, 29 secondary school options (DHS's, SHS's, Agricultural Colleges, K-12 campuses)**
- **High volunteering rates**

The key to future economic development and productivity gains lies in matching education and skills development to the needs of the evolving economy. For the Wheatbelt this means ensuring people from all age groups have access to lifelong learning opportunities that are relevant to the State economy and community, delivered in contemporary facilities, using technologies to overcome the challenges of distance and sparse population density.

In the new economy, capital investment alone will not drive productivity. Economic growth will be underpinned by the knowledge economy driving innovation and adaptation of new technology. Vibrant communities are also developed through entrepreneurship and innovation. A diverse leadership base connected across and outside

the Region is required to drive innovation and transformation.

The nurturing and development of the Region's human capital is therefore a critical element of any strategy aimed at fostering economic growth and driving community vibrancy. One of the challenges of the demography of the Wheatbelt is outmigration of the 15-29 age cohort and the under participation of minority groups in employment (e.g. Aboriginal residents, women and people with disabilities). This represents a loss of potential workforce and broader regional capacity.

4.2.1 Lifelong Learning

4.2.1.1 Early Education and Child Care

The Region's high percentage of population in the early years presents strong demand for child care services. New innovative service delivery methods are required to deliver services to a dispersed population and overcome the challenges that the sector is currently facing, including the cost of capital upgrades and access to skilled staff.

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) measures five key domains and is a population measure of childhood development. In 2011, a number of Wheatbelt areas had children who were developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains of the AEDI. High vulnerability is seen in



Toodyay (52.5%), Moora (46.4%) and Northam (40.3%) with nearly half of the children ranked in the bottom 10%. Areas such as Gingin (10%) and Merredin (11.4%) have a lower proportion of children who are developmentally vulnerable.

Improved access to parental support services and early childhood development programs will assist to reduce the instance of developmentally vulnerable children in the Region.

To deliver improved outcomes for Wheatbelt children, the following interventions are required:

- **Parenting Centres that are co-located with primary schools in those areas showing higher levels of vulnerability; and**
- **Implementation of the Wheatbelt Regional Children's Services Plan, aimed at developing a strategic long-term approach to supporting sustainable models of education and care services in the Wheatbelt.**

4.2.1.2 Primary Schools

The Wheatbelt is well serviced for primary education with 73 schools delivering primary curriculum. Ageing infrastructure is a concern in some schools, as is the attraction and retention of teaching staff.

Changing policy around primary schooling, such as moving Year 7 students into secondary school, will affect services in the Region. This is of most concern in areas of population decline where decreasing school numbers are threatening reduced staffing numbers, school closures or reclassification of school levels.

4.2.1.3 Secondary Schools

Achievement levels of enrolled secondary students are comparable to State levels with 95% of enrolled students completing secondary school and obtaining a senior certificate⁸¹. The Wheatbelt Youth Strategy (2012) indicates that 15% of the population in this age bracket are not enrolled at school and are therefore at risk of not attaining a WA Certificate of Education. The Strategy sites a "lack of work experience opportunities near where the young people live, the lack of mentors and/or positive role models" as the major reasons for this.

There are 29 schools across the Wheatbelt providing secondary schooling options (District High Schools, Senior High Schools, K-12 campuses and Agricultural Colleges). Limited student numbers and the associated ability to provide curriculum diversity affects some schools and increases the impetus to move to larger centres for secondary schooling.

Anecdotal evidence suggests the Wheatbelt currently loses approximately 50% of its high

school aged population to metropolitan schools because of a perceived lack of education options, quality and curriculum choice. While this perception and tradition has influenced choice for secondary schooling, changing population demographics and recent education reform means that this choice is becoming unaffordable for some families and enrolments in regional secondary schools are expected to increase.

Significant numbers of students from peri-urban and coastal areas currently commute daily to metropolitan schools and in some cases, these journeys can be a daily round trip of three hours. Significant population growth projected for the coastal Shires of Chittering, Gingin and Dandaragan will require additional education facilities to provide local education options for these students.

There are two WA College of Agriculture campuses in the Region at Cunderdin and Narrogin and a Catholic Agricultural College at Bindoon. These colleges offer education and training to secondary students from both within and outside the Wheatbelt and have been recognised as top providers of VET in WA over the past five years.



4.2.1.4 Vocational Education and Training, and Higher Education

There is limited access to tertiary training and education options within the Wheatbelt. The Region's post compulsory education participation rates at between 2-4% compare poorly with State levels of 7-8%. Northam (5-6%), and Toodyay and Moora (4-5%) have the highest rates of participation in the Region⁸². C.Y. O'Connor Institute is the primary provider of post compulsory education. The four campuses (Merredin, Moora, Narrogin, Northam) offer a range of courses, including apprenticeships, awards, certificates, diplomas, pre-apprenticeships, short courses and traineeships.

Having commenced delivery of an Agribusiness Degree course (auspiced through Charles Sturt University) at Muresk Institute campus, C.Y. O'Connor Institute is investigating the possibility of delivering other courses through similar arrangements with universities. Increasingly, C.Y. O'Connor is focused on flexible, mobile and digital delivery that is capable of supporting learning communities across disciplines, regardless of student location. The fact that C.Y. O'Connor delivers programs beyond the Wheatbelt, is evidence of this.

The increasing global trend towards the provision of online tertiary education will require increased support for students undertaking this form of study. The Muresk Institute campus has existing hard and soft infrastructure that could be utilised to meet this need and would result in better tertiary education engagement and outcomes for the Wheatbelt.

Interventions that increase participation and attainment in education and life long learning are a priority for the Wheatbelt. Such interventions require networked infrastructure and services within and across communities, specifically:

- **the ability to share bricks and mortar (within communities), and telecommunications and knowledge resources across sectors will result in a more efficient and effective service delivery in a dispersed population context;**
- **addressing service shortfalls in growth areas;**
- **enhanced training and higher education offerings to retain the 15-29 age cohort; and**
- **marketing the Region's attractiveness, jobs and business opportunities to attract this age group to the Region.**

4.2.2.1 Leadership

Leadership across the Region occurs through formal and informal structures. The dominant formal leadership structure occurs in local government and is fragmented, with 43 local governments across the Region, operating in three WA Local Government Associations (WALGA) Zones with 10 Voluntary Regional Organisations of Councils (VROCS). There is a lack of gender, cultural and age diversity within formal leadership structures in the Region.

At a local level, structures outside local government include progress associations, business associations, tourism associations, sporting bodies and community foundations. Some of these groups also work at a sub-regional level. The Avon Community Development Foundation is one such group and achieves positive stakeholder partnership, leadership and builds community economic and social infrastructure across the Avon.

Formal structures, with representation at a whole of region level, include the Wheatbelt Development Commission, Regional Development Australia (RDA) Wheatbelt, C.Y. O'Connor Institute, Directions Workforce Solutions Inc., Wheatbelt NRM, The Wheatbelt GP Network, the Wheatbelt Health MOU Group and Heartlands WA Inc.

For Aboriginal residents, the South West Native Title Settlement has the potential to drive leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship. Strong engagement with Wheatbelt Aboriginal residents is required to achieve this.

Measures to improve leadership and governance in the Region should include:

- **decentralisation of State public service structures as outlined in "Putting the Public First";**
- **strategies to increase diversity in leadership roles;**
- **better support and resourcing to community not for profit groups;**
- **support for cross community initiatives;**
- **the development of knowledge networks that connect research development, innovation and leadership; and**
- **growing the Region's links to the University sector.**



4.2.2.2 Volunteerism

Volunteering rates in the Wheatbelt are the highest in the State, particularly in the south eastern Wheatbelt⁸³.

Volunteer contributions are integral to the operation of a range of organisations, including Fire and Emergency Services, St John's Ambulance, environmental management groups, Country Women's Association, Men's Shed groups, culture and arts groups and sporting clubs and associations. The Wheatbelt's increasingly aged population is likely to influence the levels of volunteering in the Region.

Changing generational values mean that different methodologies are required to attract and retain tomorrow's volunteers and leaders. Improved support structures and reduction of red tape associated with some volunteer roles will encourage increased participation and allow people to continue to give to their communities.

Continued high levels of volunteerism in the Wheatbelt should be encouraged through:

- **increased co-ordination, support and investment in capacity building for key volunteer services;**
- **ensuring that emergency services are only called upon in the case of true emergency, and are not utilised to support routine service delivery; and**
- **measuring and reporting the economic**

benefits of volunteerism (including income to government) which could provide a basis for targeted incentives through the tax system for community members who volunteer (commensurate with the economic benefits to society and government).



Image: Kirstin Sivyer

4.3 Liveable Communities

Fast Facts:

- **200 communities offering diverse lifestyles**
- **70% of communities within two hours of Perth**
- **Underutilised social infrastructure**
- **Mismatch between family and housing profiles**
- **Low crime rates**
- **2013 Living in the Regions Report: Wheatbelt respondents rated highly: safety and lifestyle, general well-being and happiness**

4.3.1 Connected Settlements

The Wheatbelt's strength is its multiple liveability options. Having vibrant communities with high liveability achieved through access to quality services and availability of affordable, quality housing is key to attracting and retaining population. For government, considerable existing and at times underutilised infrastructure across many communities, presents a cost effective opportunity to grow population.

Planning has shown that communities across the Wheatbelt are strongly interconnected by economic and social activity. Serviced by five distinct sub-regional centres, future growth in the Wheatbelt needs to account for both the interconnectivity between these centres and their hinterlands and the unique differences and comparative advantages from one sub-region to another.

As well as SuperTowns Jurien Bay and Northam; Merredin, Narrogin and Moora are also key service centres. A growth plan has been prepared for each. In the case of Moora, because of patterns of economic and social connectedness, Wongan Hills and Dalwallinu have been included. The Greater Narrogin Growth Plan accounts for interconnected activity across the Town and Shire of Narrogin and the Shire of Cuballing. Growth planning is also required for high population growth areas such as the Shires of Gingin and Chittering. An alliance between the high growth local governments of Chittering, Dandaragan and Gingin will be an important mechanism for addressing pressures and opportunities arising from Perth's northern growth.

For the Avon Sub-region, a concept being developed is the notion of 'Avon City'. This planning process identifies projects required to deliver growth across the Avon Sub-region and recognises how the comparative advantage of each community contributes to overall growth of the Sub-region. Similar to the notion of a CBD and its connectedness with its surrounding suburbs, planning for interlinked communities and growing a sub-region as a single entity has merit in the Wheatbelt context. This delivers effective planning and investment and while it leads to cross community outcomes, local government amalgamations are not required to achieve the desired outcomes.

4.3.1.1 Population Projections

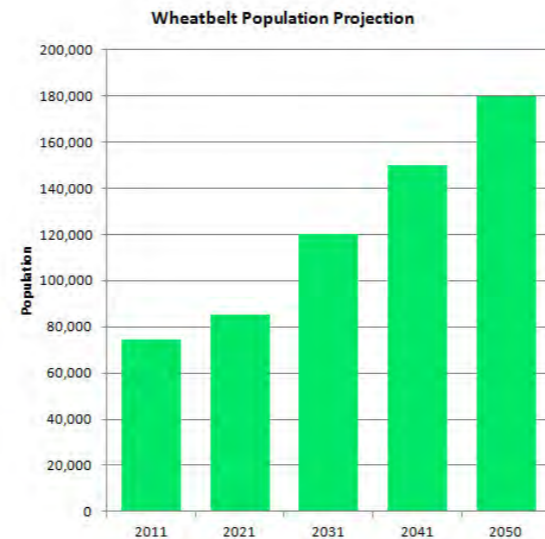
ABS population projections suggest that Western Australia's population will increase to at least 4.8 million people by 2050⁸⁴. If the Wheatbelt maintains its current percentage of the State's population, there will be 154,000 people living in the Region by 2050. With State Government

policies aimed at increasing the percentage of the State's population living in regional WA, the Wheatbelt's proximity to the Perth region and the potential for further spread of the urban footprint, it is anticipated that the Region will increase its share of population growth, resulting in a growth scenario of 180,000 people by 2050 (Figure 4.17).

The 180,000 population target means that the Wheatbelt as a percentage of the State's population will grow from 3.15% to 3.75%, and from 11.85% to 13.39% of the regional WA population. Given the assumptions stated above and recent economic planning, this is not an overly ambitious target.

A detailed rationale behind these population projections can be found at Appendix 1.

Figure 4.17 Wheatbelt Population Forecasts



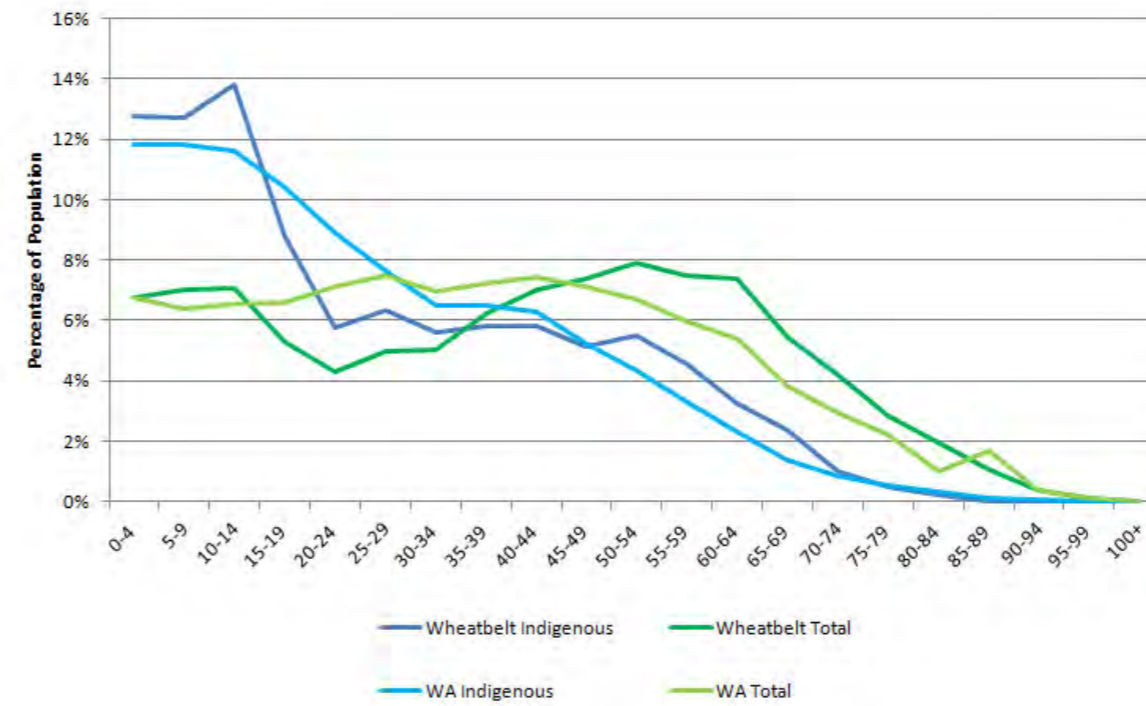
Source: Appendix One - WDC Population Projections

4.3.1.2 Population Profile

The Wheatbelt is the State's third most populous region with a population of 75,000 in 2013⁸⁵ spread over some 200 towns and settlements. Although recent population growth has been steady, this is not uniform across the Region, with some sub-regions experiencing strong growth and others experiencing stagnation or decline. This variation is in line with global urbanisation trends. The Wheatbelt's population, as compared

to the State population, is characterised by over representation of the 0-14 and 45+ age cohorts and under-representation of 14-44 age cohort (Figure 4.18)⁸⁶. This illustrates the out-migration to seek secondary and tertiary education and employment opportunities.

Figure 4.18 Wheatbelt age profile showing under-representation of 14-44 cohort



Source: 2011 Census of Population and Housing



The Region experiences relatively low levels of immigration and lesser cultural diversity than State levels⁸⁷. Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders have a higher representation in the Wheatbelt than State levels. The 0-14 cohort make up 39% of the Region's Aboriginal population⁸⁸. The Region has a high percentage of low-income earners (income below \$21,000) in comparison to the State⁸⁹.

Improved access to secondary and tertiary education options in the Region is a significant factor in addressing the out-migration of the 15-29 cohorts. The affordability of living in the metropolitan area while studying is a key concern for this cohort. The benefits of having this group remain in the Region to study would add considerable value to regional economic output.

Implications of the high representation of the 45+ demographic include a need to develop quality aged care service structures to allow ageing in place. There is also potential to attract additional population in this age bracket with quality services in safe communities. This is further explored in Section 4.2.2 as an economic opportunity for the Region.

Development of improved early childhood care and education services will also support the Region's 0-14 demographic and young families, and allow increased workforce participation to meet labour shortages.

Appendix 1 provides information on sub-regional variation within these demographic characteristics.

To meet the needs of the Region's changing demographics, infrastructure and services are required for:

- **0-4 year olds, particularly those who are developmentally vulnerable;**
- **education and employment pathways for 15-44 year olds; and**
- **aged care services for the 70+ cohort.**

4.3.2 Service Delivery

4.3.2.1 Aged Care

There is a growing demand for services and infrastructure to accommodate the Wheatbelt's ageing population. The Wheatbelt's aged population is predicted to continue to grow at faster rates than WA. It is predicated that "the 70+ population of 7,646 will have increased to 13,400 by 2027, moving from 10.4% of the total population to around 17%."⁹⁰

The availability of suitable housing and access to services will support the retention of the ageing population in the Region. The growth of an aged care servicing and support industry in the Region will deliver on the contemporary ageing policies of both the Federal and State Governments



which support 'Ageing in Place'. The Wheatbelt Aged Support and Care Solutions Report (2014) investigates an integrated approach to aged care service delivery that fits the Wheatbelt context.

The solutions proposed in the Wheatbelt Aged Support and Care Solutions Report (2014) recommends:

- **Support for planning and investing in Age Friendly Communities;**
- **Development of universally designed housing to facilitate home based care;**
- **Flexible models of home care; and**
- **Enhanced residential care to meet demand.**

4.3.2.2 Social Services

Delivery of social services in the Wheatbelt is a challenge due to the Region's dispersed population and lack of a principal regional centre.

Many of the Department of Human Services (DHS) (Centrelink and Medicare) services are delivered through agencies which have shortened hours and minimal staffing due to funding constraints. While most sub-regional centres have a DHS agency, smaller communities are serviced by access points in Community Resource Centres. This can affect the quality of and accessibility to these essential government services.

The Region has a higher percentage of low-income earners (30%) than State levels (26%)⁹¹. This is demonstrated in the growing demand from the Region for assistance through the Hardship Utility Grants Scheme that provides assistance to maintain connection to essential services. Demand for this assistance has grown in the Region since 2008 from 48 applications to 410 applications in 2012⁹².

ABS estimates that there are 411 homeless persons in the Wheatbelt and an additional 514 persons living in inadequate or crowded conditions. This represents 1.2% of the Region's population⁹³.

An estimated 3.5% of the Wheatbelt population has a disability, slightly higher than the State rate at 3.1%⁹⁴. The Disability Services Commission (DSC) reports a higher rate of disabled people accessing DSC Local Area Co-ordinators.

There is limited respite care for disability services available in the Region. The recent development of a respite centre operated by the Wheatbelt Individual and Family Support Association in York

will assist some Wheatbelt residents to access this service.

Improved resourcing of and collaboration between agencies would assist to improve service delivery and overcome the challenges posed by the geographic spread of population. Limiting the number of services delivered from metropolitan area or a single point in the Region while consolidating and co-locating services in key centres across the Region would help to achieve economies of scale, reduce duplication and develop strong service hubs.

Improved service delivery will result from:

- **better collaboration across agencies and at all levels of government;**
- **limiting the number of services delivered from metropolitan area or a single point in the Region while consolidating and co-locating services in key centres across the Region; and**
- **better supporting the not-for-profit sector to deliver relevant and co-ordinated services at point of need.**



4.3.2.3 Health and Well-being

The Wheatbelt's changing demographics, including health profiles, ageing population and rapid population growth along the Central Coast and peri-urban areas of the Region require differing solutions to address health and well-being outcomes.

Health infrastructure varies across the Region, but the majority of facilities are over 50 years of age and not designed for modern health service delivery. Infrastructure and services are provided by the Department of Health (WA Country Health Service) and a number of not-for-profit organisations, including Wheatbelt GP Network, Silver Chain, Royal Flying Doctor Service and St John's Ambulance.

The Wheatbelt Health Region is made up of four districts. Each district has an Integrated District Health Service and a Primary Healthcare Unit. There are also 20 small hospitals and two mental health services servicing the Region. The Region has fourteen healthcare nursing posts, six of which are operated by the Silver Chain.

Royalties for Regions has funded a number of projects that have and will continue to deliver improvements in health and aged care infrastructure and services in the Region. These include the Southern Inland



Health Initiative (SIHI) (\$565m over five years), Regional Men's Health (\$2.79m over four years), Royal Flying Doctor Service medical jet service (\$30m over three years) and Housing for Workers.

Two public mental health services are provided in the Region, operating out of Narrogin (Great Southern Mental Health) and Northam (Wheatbelt Mental Health). Services are also offered by the not-for-profit Wheatbelt GP Network. Care and support programs such as Regional Men's Health and Onelife also provide mental health awareness and educational programs to the Region. While there are over 100 services for Wheatbelt residents, the majority are located outside the Region via on line or phone access. These resources are thinly spread and unco-ordinated, resulting in a confusing offering to Wheatbelt residents. With the high rate of suicide relative to State figures, this situation is untenable.

The Region's health profile is characterised by a:

- lower hospitalisation rate for Wheatbelt residents than that of the State, yet similar trends in causes of hospitalisation⁹⁵;
- significantly higher rate of potential preventable hospitalisations (PPH) accounting for 12% of hospitalisations, a rate of three times more than the State average reflecting a lack of access to primary health care⁹⁶;
- high percentage

(72%) of emergency department presentation classified as semi-urgent or non-urgent⁹⁷, demonstrating the shortage of General Practitioners;

- low "self-sufficiency" rating (28%)⁹⁸, reflecting the need to access higher order treatments outside the Wheatbelt (i.e. Perth Region);
- declining trend in hospital separations and bed days despite an increasing population⁹⁹, indicating a propensity to seek medical treatment in the metropolitan area; and
- much lower rate of GP attendance (2,975 per 1,000 people) than the State (3,858 per 1,000 people)¹⁰⁰.

When compared to the State averages, the trends for Wheatbelt residents include higher rates of teenage pregnancies, male youth suicide, prostate cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and arthritis in men, lower rates of breast cancer and sexually transmitted diseases.

Improved health and well-being can be achieved for the Wheatbelt through:

- continued health planning and investment that ensures better alignment between health profiles and service delivery;
- investment in infrastructure and services to growth areas;
- enhanced health education and co-ordination initiatives guiding people about which level of health service to access; and
- ongoing partnerships, such as the Wheatbelt Health MOU Group which bring together community, funders and providers.

4.3.2.4 Public Transport

The Wheatbelt has limited access to public transport, both intra and inter-regional. The Avon Link and Prospector passenger rail services operate on the East West line, providing a daily service. TransWA also provides bus services to some areas of the Region. These services are infrequent with some sites only receiving one service per week. Recent cancellation of services has left some Wheatbelt communities with no public transport access.

While significant transport infrastructure exists (roads, community buses, school buses etc), a lack of co-ordination and flexibility of service delivery results in poor public transport access. The importance of access to public transport for the Region's elderly residents, youth and disadvantaged residents without vehicles or drivers licences, should not be underestimated.

To improve access to services and amenity for Wheatbelt residents, a Wheatbelt Public Transport Plan and investment strategy is required.

4.3.2.5 Crime and Justice

Crime rates in the Wheatbelt are significantly lower than State levels, particularly in terms of property crime, making the Region an attractive place to live¹⁰¹. Investment will be required in state of the art facilities to deliver an efficient, effective police and justice service to the Region, particularly in peri-urban and coastal growth areas. These facilities should result in integrated cross-agency initiatives to effectively support vulnerable families.

Figure 4.19 Crime rate for Wheatbelt Police District

Year	Category	Wheatbelt District (per 1,000 people)	Western Australia (per 1,000 people)
2006	Property Crimes	46.9	88.6
	Crimes against a person	13.8	17.5
2011	Property Crimes	35.7	71.6
	Crimes against a person	12.3	14.3

Source: WA Police Service – Annual Crime Statistics (NB: Wheatbelt Police District is not aligned to the Regional Development boundaries)

Changing community expectations and policing methods means that the Region's current police and justice infrastructure is not contributing to enhanced efficiency and service delivery levels. For example, Northam is the only centre in the Wheatbelt Police District with facilities adequate to retain a person in custody. Transfer of offenders to Northam from outlying parts of the Region is time consuming and costly.

There is no District Court in the Wheatbelt, however there are Magistrate's Courts in the regional centres of Merredin, Moora, Narrogin and Northam dealing with less serious civil and criminal matters.

Major social disruptions are managed in a reactive manner, often utilising resources from outside the Region which is costly and inefficient. Regionally based resources and governance

should be utilised to deliver proactive services to communities to prevent such situations reaching crisis levels. Additional resourcing to allow cross-agency engagement with families and groups to address causal factors prior to crisis would present better outcomes for individuals and communities.

A proactive approach is required, including:

- regionally based resources and governance to deliver proactive services to communities;
- integrated resourcing to allow cross-agency engagement with families and groups;
- increased police resources in areas of population growth; and
- state of the art facilities to deliver an efficient, effective police and justice service to the Region. These facilities should enable integrated cross-agency initiatives to deal with vulnerable families effectively.

4.3.3 Community Amenity

4.3.3.1 Culture and the Arts

The Region's culture and the arts sectors offer opportunities for growth, both as an industry and as a creative outlet for residents. There is significant art and cultural activity in the Region, including fine art groups, theatre groups, museum collections, contemporary music groups, craft groups, photography clubs, book clubs and more.

While the majority of activity is undertaken as a hobby or for personal reasons, there are a growing number of people deriving an income through the creative industries, represented by 0.5% of the Region's population in arts or recreation employment¹⁰². There are a number of growing hubs of artistic activity in the Region.

The Region has over 25 museums and galleries presenting a range of historical and cultural topics, including visual arts and sculpture, wildflowers, toy soldiers, war and pioneering heritage. Most of these are privately or local government owned and many are staffed by volunteers.

The Cummins Theatre (Merredin) and the Moora Performing Arts Centre are a part of a network of professionally managed regional WA venues known as Circuitwest. There are also a large number of smaller venues



throughout the Region including town halls, school performing arts centres, sound shells, and amphitheatres.

There are numerous small theatre groups in the Wheatbelt. Activity levels differ across groups, but they present a valuable outlet for local talent and entertainment for communities.

In recent years there has been considerable engagement with the WA Music (WAM) to support the growth of contemporary musical talent in the Region. Touring circuits combining WA talent with local artists have successfully provided development opportunities for locals and increased recognition of State artists.

Development of the culture and the arts sector will enhance the Region's vibrancy and deliver employment opportunities.

Initiatives to foster arts and culture in the Region should include measures such as:

- **increased market development opportunities for professional and developing artists in the Region;**
- **support for collaborative networks to assist artists to share resources and ideas;**
- **support for localised activities for community engagement, and entertainment;**
- **continued development of contemporary music in the Region through support for touring circuits and networks for local musicians;**

- **support for artistic programming and key staffing of cultural venues to ensure maximum usage and development; and**
- **development of an integrated annual arts and cultural events calendar with activities spread across the Wheatbelt, promoting both the Wheatbelt and the individual locations of each event.**

4.3.3.2 Heritage

Heritage in the Wheatbelt captures pioneering, aboriginal, motoring, rail and convict aspects of Western Australian history. Planning for the sustainability of the Wheatbelt's key built heritage is essential in providing an insight into the past, creating community amenity and providing tourism opportunities.

Key heritage sites in the Wheatbelt such as The Monastic Town of New Norcia, Newcastle Goal and Police Station complex (Toodyay), Cummins Theatre, Narrogin Town Hall, Northam, York and Toodyay townsites all present excellent tourism opportunities. New Norcia, in particular, is a nationally recognised destination for domestic and international tourists. Heritage in its built form is increasingly being recognised and utilised as important community gathering places and venues for inside and outside events.

To maintain the Wheatbelt's heritage and maximise opportunity, the following actions are required:

- **construction of bypass in New Norcia and York to remove heavy traffic from close proximity to heritage buildings;**
- **engagement between Wheatbelt Local Governments and historical groups with the State Heritage Council on the sustainability of the identified state heritage sites; and**
- **creation of linkages between places of heritage value and existing and future tourism activities.**



4.3.3.3 Sport and Recreation

Sport and recreation plays a significant role in Wheatbelt communities. It provides opportunities to network, socialise and helps create a sense of belonging. Sports clubs and community organisations are important conduits for developing social capital and are good barometers of community strength. Relative to State averages, the Wheatbelt has a significantly lower percentage of population that participate in a sufficient level of physical activity and significantly higher levels of obese adults (Figure 4.20).

The majority of Wheatbelt communities have excellent sporting and recreational facilities managed by the local government authorities. The sustainability of these facilities is challenging, with changing community expectations around quality of facilities and cost of access. While infrastructure upgrades are funded, in part by the Department of Sport and Recreation, the ongoing cost of operation and maintenance is the responsibility of local governments.

Figure 4.20 WA Health and Well-being Surveillance System, 2006-2011

Category	Wheatbelt	WA	Variance
Adults who participate in a sufficient level of physical activity	46.7%	53.6%	-6.9%
Proportion of adults normal weight (BMI categories)	25.6%	33.4%	-7.8%
Proportion of adults overweight (BMI categories)	38.3%	39.6%	-1.3%
Proportion of adults obese (BMI categories)	35.8%	26.3%	+9.5%

Source: Department of Health (2006-2011). 2006-2011 WA Health and Well-being Surveillance System, Perth, Western Australia: Western Australian Government.

More sustainable models are required to maximise the benefit of the Region's considerable local and regional assets. Such models need to account for:

- ongoing operation and maintenance of facilities;
- capacity building within local sporting clubs to improve administration, coaching and development in the Region;
- an increased focus on inclusion; and
- building and amenity design that delivers multi-user, multi-purpose functions, achieves sound water management and encourages more active lifestyles.



4.4 Valued Natural Amenity

Fast Facts:

- Landscape icons include the Pinnacles, Wave Rock, Great Western Woodlands
- 13.2% remnant vegetation¹⁰³
- Climate variability impacting agricultural productivity
- 60% of the State's renewable energy produced in the Wheatbelt¹⁰⁴

4.4.1 Water, Landscape and Climate Change Management

The majority of the Wheatbelt's landscapes have been altered through clearing of native vegetation. This practice has led to significant land and water management issues, including rising groundwater levels, salinity, eutrophication of waterways and loss of biodiversity. Only 13.2% of the landscape retains its original vegetation cover¹⁰⁵. Improving land management practices will continue to deliver productivity gains for the agricultural industry.

There are a significant number of national and conservation parks across the Region. It also forms part of the area across the south west of Western Australia identified as one of 25 internationally significant biodiversity 'hotspots', due to its high level of species diversity under threat from human disturbance. This natural environment presents opportunities for the development of nature based tourism ventures, and native fauna and flora conservation programs.

4.4.1.1 Dry Land Salinity

Dry land salinity threatens agricultural production and built infrastructure, particularly in areas located in or adjacent to valley floors. More than one million hectares of agricultural land in the south-west of WA is severely salt-affected and the opportunity cost of lost agricultural production is estimated to be at least \$344 million per year¹⁰⁶. Five of the ten WA local governments experiencing the most salinity, are in the Wheatbelt.

Salinity is a complex issue, needing integrated responses at farm, townsite and catchment level to manage both ground and surface water¹⁰⁷.

Salinity solutions include, but are not limited to:

- salt tolerant species development;
- engineering; and
- landscape management through re-vegetation.

4.4.1.2 Soil Health

It is estimated that more than 14.25 million hectares of Wheatbelt soils are acidic, or are at risk of becoming acidic¹⁰⁸. Acidity impacts significantly on crop production (estimated annual cost of \$498 million), and limits crop choice. Reduced crop growth can lead to erosion and nutrient leaching. If not managed, acidic drainage has the potential to seriously impact wetlands and river systems. The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and Natural Heritage Trust Program 2003-2009 Final Report¹⁰⁹ cites soil acidity as a major threat to the degradation of soils.

In addition to acidity, soil erosion, compaction, water repellence and nutrient export all need to be managed.

Agricultural soil management practices are increasingly focused on soil health and improving productivity to deliver economic and environmental benefits.

Further development of skills and knowledge in soil health and production benefits, including demonstration of best practice soil monitoring, management and nutrient planning will assist to combat soil degradation and improve crop production.

4.4.1.3 Water

Availability and provision of water is a key enabler for economic, social and environmental development. With reduced rainfall and water storage capacity, strategies are required to develop and secure water resources. Climate change has negatively impacted on run off and groundwater discharge and since European settlement, water quality within Wheatbelt catchments has altered, resulting in near fresh waterways becoming saline, affecting wildlife habitat, farming productivity and community amenity.

Water in the Wheatbelt lies predominantly within the Avon River Basin, which extends 500 kms to the east of the Perth Region. The remainder is in the Moore Hill Basin to the north, and the Blackwood, Murray and Collie River Basin to the south. The Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia lists nine wetlands in the Wheatbelt.

The zone of ancient drainage located east of the Meckering Line, has extensive regional aquifers. Water quality across aquifers is variable, from salty to fresh. Groundwater is believed to be available in a narrow strip between the Meckering Line and the Darling Scarp, and again, its quality is variable.

Gingin and Jurien groundwater areas provide water for public use, mining, agriculture and horticulture. The Jurien groundwater area has



approximately 64.4 gigalitres (GL) available for new users¹¹⁰. The Gingin groundwater area is either at full allocation or approaching full allocation in some sub areas, with allocation to some agricultural and horticultural users already reduced. Water entitlement transactions and increasing water use efficiency or development of new sources are options required to meet increased demand.

Water planning is required in the following areas:

- local and metropolitan use, to address both demand issues and protect wetlands; and
- the exploration of new water sources, including water treatment, to create sources for domestic and industrial use.

4.4.1.4 Climate

Changing climatic conditions in the Wheatbelt will affect agriculture and aquaculture production, town and coastal planning, asset management and impact on human health. This issue will be State-wide and not limited to the Wheatbelt. The Wheatbelt's climate features mild wet winters and hot dry summers. Most rain falls between May and September and until recently, has had low variability. Long-term records show the climate becoming hotter (Figure 4.21), drier (Figure 4.22) and more variable. CSIRO predictions indicate that the Region can expect higher temperatures by 1-2 degrees, changes to seasonality and amount

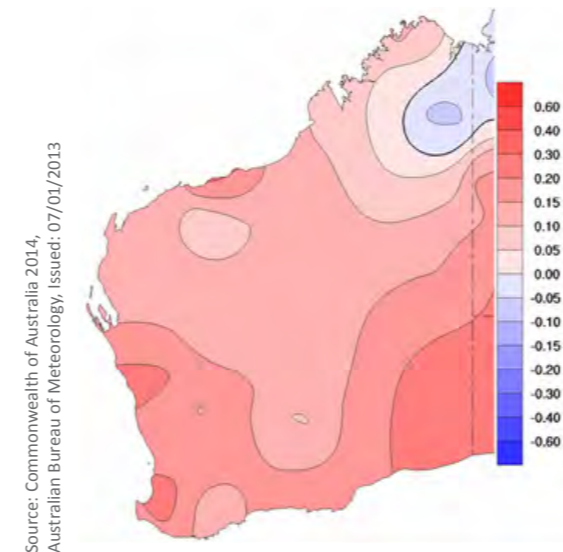
of annual rainfall, increased evaporation rates, more frequent extreme weather, storm surges and shoreline movements affecting coastlines.

In this context, water security is a critical issue. Research and development into alternative crops, and drought resistant grain varieties are delivering options for the agricultural industry to deal with climate variation.

Climate mitigation strategies are required to underpin industry, business and community planning. Specifically:

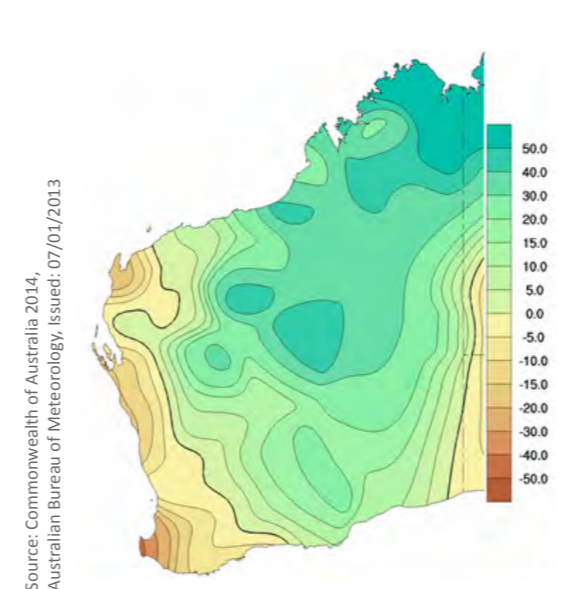
- town planning in coastal communities needs to account for sea level rise and the inevitable shoreline shift;
- infrastructure and emergency service plans need to account for increased numbers of extreme weather events; and
- R&D into production activity and water management that is adaptive to climate change.

Figure 4.21 Trend in Mean Temperature (Annual 1970-2013 (0C/10yr)



Source: Commonwealth of Australia 2014, Australian Bureau of Meteorology, issued: 07/01/2013

Figure 4.22 Trend in Annual Total Rainfall 1970-2012 (mm/10yr)



Source: Commonwealth of Australia 2014, Australian Bureau of Meteorology, issued: 07/01/2013

4.4.2 Nature Based Industry

4.4.2.1 Renewable Energy

Section 4.1.1.3.6 outlines the renewable energy opportunities that can be derived from the Region's landscape. Wind, solar, geo-thermal and biomass production could lead to energy self-sufficiency in the Region.

4.4.2.2 Nature Based Tourism

As identified in Section 4.2.2, tourism presents opportunity for the Region. A number of national and conservation parks, nature reserves, granite outcrops and iconic locations, such as the Pinnacles and Wave Rock, offer a multitude of nature based tourism opportunities.



4.5 Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities

Fast Facts:

- **Wheatbelt residents highly value safety and a strong sense of community¹¹**

The Wheatbelt is a region of growth, diversity and opportunity. Land and house values, safety and a strong sense of community are drivers for in-migration.

The name “Wheatbelt” and the ongoing representation of it as a drought and salt affected agricultural producing region in decline does little to accurately portray this.

To attract investment, workers and visitors, a targeted strategy linked to specific opportunity, is required. Heartlands WA Inc. exists to promote the Region and ongoing support is required for it to establish a strong regional brand, connect community, business, investment and job opportunities and market them effectively.

The five Sub-regional Economic Strategies provide a strong foundation for marketing economic opportunity. Strategies and prospectuses for emerging industries identified in this planning is an important starting point. These Economic Strategies also form a strong foundation for influencing public and private investment decisions.

To change perceptions and maximise investment, workforce attraction and tourism opportunities:

- **ongoing support to Heartlands WA Inc. is required to ensure strong and consistent messages about Wheatbelt opportunities reach appropriate markets; and**
- **implementation of the five Sub-regional Economic Strategies is required to assist in public and private investment decisions.**



4.6 Effective Partnerships

Fast Facts:

- **43 local governments**
- **Five distinct sub-regions and five sub-regional centres (no one regional centre)**

In a region consisting of 43 local governments, 200 communities, five distinct sub-regions with five sub-regional centres and nearly 10,000 small businesses, mechanisms that link activity, resources and investment within the Wheatbelt are critical to achieving effective development outcomes.

Similarly, mechanisms that facilitate attracting activity, resources and investment from outside the regional are required. In both cases, co-ordination and collaboration will result in better outcomes.

Across the Region, there are examples of such thinking and action at a regional and sub-regional level. These include:

- partnerships between the peak economic development agencies of the Region - the Wheatbelt Development Commission and RDA Wheatbelt;
- Senior Managers’ Group – Wheatbelt senior managers of key regional agencies;
- alliances such as the Wheatbelt Health MOU Group, which brings together local, regional, state and federal representation to advocate for health services across the Region;
- not-for-profit groups such as Heartlands WA Inc. (marketing the Region), Wheatbelt NRM

(land management), Wheatbelt Business Network Inc (business development) and Directions Workforce Solutions Inc (workforce development); and

- sporting associations.

Sub-regional mechanisms include:

- Voluntary Regional Organisations of Councils (VROCs) and Local Government Zones;
- community based organisations such as Avon Community Development Foundation;
- local health advisory groups;
- tourism groups; and
- Small Business Development Centres.

Innovative mechanisms being developed to foster collaborative action, include business alliances and investment trusts.

Across industry, community and government sectors, strategies are required that bring together individuals and groups to facilitate collaboration and co-ordination that results in effective investment and outcomes.



Photo courtesy CANWA

4.7 Harnessing the Wheatbelt's Capacity for Growth

Given the global opportunities, the Wheatbelt's comparative advantages and barriers to growth outlined in this Section, there exists considerable opportunity to grow the Region's economy and population by developing six key pillars for growth.

4.7.1 Vibrant Economy

With a diversified economic base growing at an annual average rate of 8.2%¹¹² over the last 10 years, the Wheatbelt is in a strong position to contribute to the State's continued economic prosperity. Such growth will require:

- Emerging Industry Development - Supporting growth of emerging industry sectors to consolidate the Region's diversified economy. Pursuit of more intensive industry matched to comparative advantages and global opportunities will ensure more jobs for a growing population.
- Transformation of Agriculture - Increasing productivity of existing industry through pursuit of opportunity along the supply chain and application of innovation and technology and developing intensive agriculture opportunities.
- Business Development - Supporting the Region's 10,000 of small businesses so that they can grow and prosper in the global market place.
- Skilled Workers – The Wheatbelt has one of the lowest unemployment rates after the Pilbara and Goldfields-Esperance and there is

a significant out-migration of the 15-29 year old cohort. Workforce attraction is critical to support economic growth.

- Key Infrastructure - Investing in strategic infrastructure assets including enhancing transport and digital infrastructure, land development and housing will underpin growth opportunities.

Maximum growth can be achieved by looking at job intensive industry development and building on the following areas of comparative advantage:

- Producing and processing:
 - commodity and niche foods through dry land broadacre agriculture; intensive agriculture (horticulture) and aquaculture.
 - commodity and niche natural resources such as minerals and renewable energy.
- Population services that have the dual purpose of providing amenity for existing and future residents and offering employment. Areas of comparative advantage for the Wheatbelt include: aged care, aviation, renewable energy, tourism, culture and the arts, education and training services, health, retail and well-being and leisure.
- Strengthening the Region's knowledge economy by undertaking research and development in these sectors and sharing that knowledge with the world.

4.7.2 Clever People

To achieve population growth, there is a need to address the out-migration of 15-29 year olds, the higher than State proportion of the Region's population in the 0-4 cohort and high growth rate of the 65+ cohort. Population attraction strategies need to aim at normalising this population profile. High workforce participation and low unemployment mean that workforce attraction must be a key element of any population growth strategy.

Innovation, leadership and volunteerism will drive productivity and community vibrancy. Life long learning will ensure skills meet the Region's need and employment opportunities are maximised for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Wheatbelt residents.

4.7.3 Liveable Communities

The Wheatbelt offers multiple liveability options across 200 communities. Residents highly value where they live, appreciating the Region's safety and strong sense of community. Considerable social infrastructure exists across these communities, with a need to plan for enhanced amenity in high growth areas. Connecting settlements through the development of strong 'hubs' will result in more effective economic development and efficient service delivery

Service delivery reform will result in innovative service models across the highly dispersed area and better match services to the population profiles of the Region.

Investment in community amenity will ensure the attraction and retention of population.

4.7.4 Valued Natural Amenity

The Wheatbelt has a permanently altered landscape that will continue to benefit from strong land stewardship. The natural landscape offers considerable social and economic benefit and is being impacted by climate variation. This landscape, the water within it and climate change need to be effectively managed to mitigate risk.

Already producing 60% of the State's renewable energy and benefiting from high visitor numbers to natural attractions, the Wheatbelt is well placed to continue to derive benefit from this landscape, as long as possible conflicts between productivity, biodiversity and land use are effectively managed.

4.7.5 Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities

Key to optimising the opportunities for the Wheatbelt will be changing perceptions of the Region. The Region is often portrayed in terms of population, economic and environmental decline. This Blueprint provides evidence of a different Wheatbelt, a region of growth and opportunity.

Family, business, industry and government decision makers who better understand the diversity and opportunities are more likely to invest. Strategies that market Wheatbelt opportunities to key decision makers will be critical to the Region achieving its growth potential.

4.7.6 Effective Partnerships

In a region with high numbers of organisations (local government, business, community) more effective planning, project implementation and investment will result from communities, organisations and groups working together. Collaborative approaches already found in the Region have resulted in more cost effective and efficient project and service delivery across communities. Support for such innovation is required on an ongoing basis.

Section 5 of the Blueprint provides details of the desired outcomes and targets to be achieved and the priority actions required within these six pillars to deliver continued economic and population growth to the Wheatbelt and the State.



5.0 Transforming the Wheatbelt

Having identified the vision for the Wheatbelt (Section 2), analysed the global drivers (Section 3) and regional capacity that will enable or inhibit growth (Section 4), this section of the Blueprint outlines the specific outcomes and targets to be achieved, the assumptions behind the economic, population and workforce growth projections and the priority actions required to deliver these.

5.1 Vision, Aspirations and Targets



5.2 Wheatbelt Growth Assumptions

The Wheatbelt will play an important role in accommodating some of the State's predicted population growth because of its proximity to the Perth region. Growth to the north and east of Perth will continue to impact on growth in the Wheatbelt in terms of both population and the economy. Population growth needs to be supported by economic activity which results in jobs growth. Figure 5.1 outlines the current and aspirational targets for the economy, population and workforce.

The target of 7% average annual growth rate (AAGR) for the economy is conservative given the 8.2% AAGR for the last 10 years. This approach has been taken on the assumption that the significant growth of the mining sector (221% over the last 5 years) will not be sustained at this level. Growth in all industry sectors is expected to continue, given historical trends.

Low unemployment and high participation mean that workforce attraction is required now to meet job demand. Economic growth and new jobs will be created through:

- the development of emerging industries with relatively high job need and in line with the Region's comparative advantage. Such industries include:
 - intensive agriculture and food processing;
 - construction;
 - transport and logistics;
 - niche manufacturing;
 - aged care and other population services. (1.6 aged care workers for every 70+ person =

- 9,760 new jobs by 2026, and 14,000 jobs by 2050);
 - tourism;
 - renewable energy; and
 - aviation.
 - diversifying primary industries along the supply chain, increasing both product value and employment requirements;
 - growth of business and industry. 10,000 businesses currently employ 21,140 people. 20,000 new businesses by 2050 will employ a further 42,000 people.
 - attracting private investment which in turn brings new business and industry to the Region;
 - minimising out-migration of 15-29 year olds by developing strong pathways from education to employment; and
 - attracting workforce age population to fill current and future jobs by marketing these jobs and the liveability of Wheatbelt communities.
- These actions will result in a shift from business as usual to transformational change that delivers on the Wheatbelt's potential and achieves stated targets.

Figure 5.1 Key Wheatbelt Targets

	Current	2050
Economy	GDP \$6.4b 10 Year AAGR 8.2%	GDP \$183.7b 7% AAGR
Population	75,000 (3.15% of the State's population) (11.85% of regional WA's population)	180,000 (3.75% of the State's population) (13.39% of regional WA's population)
Workforce	47,250 (63.7% of population) Growth of 10% over last 10 years	109,800 (64,000 new jobs)

These population and economic growth targets can only be achieved if the Region has:

- a clear economic strategy to ensure a Vibrant Economy;
- clever people to enhance productivity and community vibrancy;
- liveable communities that attract and retain workers; and

- a valued natural amenity that is effectively managed to mitigate risk and maximise economic and social benefit.

In addition to these four pillars, the unique circumstance of the Wheatbelt requires enhanced perceptions of the Region to promote opportunities for investment, employment, lifestyle and visitation. *Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities* in a targeted way will achieve this.

In addition, the multiple stakeholders within and external to the Region need to be brought together to create *Effective Partnerships* that maximise investment identification and delivery.

The Wheatbelt Road Map for Growth provides the framework for these six pillars for growth.

Figure 5.2 Wheatbelt Road Map for Growth



Embracing *exciting* new opportunities

5.3 Delivering the Wheatbelt's Growth Potential

To achieve the stated population and economic growth targets, long term and comprehensive action is required. The full range of actions to achieve growth targets are outlined in detail in Appendix 3. With over 130 actions identified, this is an ambitious agenda. To deliver high impact results, some actions take precedence in the short to mid-term.

Outlined below is a summary of the aspiration for each priority area, a description of what the outcome looks like if the aspiration is to be achieved, the current issues inhibiting and enabling their achievement, the solutions and priority actions required to achieve stated targets.

5.3.1 Vibrant Economy

Aspiration: A diversified and adaptive economic base building on the Regions assets and aligned with state, national and international opportunity

Current: Average Annual Compound GRP Growth Rate 8.2%

Target 2050: Average Annual Compound GRP Growth Rate of 7%

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>1.1: Diverse and innovative business and industry grow the Wheatbelt's global market share</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging industries diversify the economy and create new jobs Transformed agriculture remains globally competitive Businesses are networked, digital and Asia ready 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing global demand for food and population services Strong export economy Diverse economic base with the opportunity for this to grow <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broadacre agriculture = population decline Primary industry (agriculture and mining) highly volatile and cyclical 10,000 small businesses need enhanced digital capacity and links to global markets 	<p>Industry Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop emerging industries, especially those aligned to Wheatbelt comparative advantage and with high employment ratios Focus on intensive agriculture and transform broad acre supply chain management <p>Business Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect small business to grow digital and global capacity Enhance links to growing Asian markets 	<p>Develop emerging industry strategies for intensive agriculture, transport and logistics, renewable energy, aviation and population services (aged care, health, education and tourism)</p> <p>Agricultural investment through 'Seizing the Opportunity'</p> <p>Develop sub-regional business alliances for collaborative market development</p> <p>Implement Wheatbelt Digital Action Plan</p>

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>1.2: Skilled workers are attracted and retained to meet the needs of the Region and the State</p>	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low unemployment rates High workforce participation rates <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant out-migration of 15-29 years Inaccurate perceptions of the Region 	<p>Workforce Attraction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted marketing to address key industry need and promote Wheatbelt liveability Improved education and training services with applicability across industries Enhance education, training and pathways to employment Enhance housing stock 	<p>Support Heartlands WA to market job, investment and visitation opportunity</p> <p>Support C.Y. O'Connor and Muresk Institutes to deliver cross industry training</p> <p>Support the Wheatbelt Workforce Alliance to promote pathways to employment</p>

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>1.3: Key strategic infrastructure is identified and invested in</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated transport and digital capacity improves access to markets Land supply meets economic and population growth requirements Housing stock is diverse and of quality, matching household composition 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing transport network links east-west, north south, linked to six ports. Existing social/community infrastructure <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market failure in land assembly Lack of diverse quality housing 'Blackspots' of digital infrastructure 	<p>Key Infrastructure</p> <p>Invest in key infrastructure to enhance access to markets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> strategic transport network digital capacity <p>Invest in key infrastructure to accommodate growth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> land assembly housing 	<p>Implement the Wheatbelt Digital Action Plan, including ongoing investment in new mobile towers and building broadband capacity</p> <p>Develop an Integrated Transport Plan for the Wheatbelt and invest in identified priorities</p> <p>Conduct residential and industrial land audits and invest in identified priorities</p> <p>Invest in innovative end of grid power and water solutions</p> <p>Action findings of the Wheatbelt Housing Audit and support innovative investment vehicles and universally designed housing development</p> <p>Conduct a Waste Site Identification feasibility</p>

5.3.2 Clever People

Aspiration: Lifelong learning - innovation and leadership drive economic growth and community vibrancy

Current: Workforce of 47,250

Target 2050: Workforce of 109,800

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>2.1: Education and lifelong learning drives productivity and thus economic growth</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation and achievement enhances productivity Pathways to employment drive economic growth Aboriginal Enterprise creates financial independence 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sound primary and secondary school results Extensive infrastructure across communities <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant out-migration of 15-29 year olds due to perceived lack of education and job opportunities Low SEIFA and early childhood index scores Outdated delivery models Poor post compulsory education participation (traineeships, apprenticeships, higher education) Unclear career pathways Poor Aboriginal participation and achievement in education and employment 	<p>Enhance Participation and Achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in and promote reformed education and training services that meet the needs of a highly dispersed population <p>Improve Pathways to Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and support partnerships between education, training and business to increase training participation. <p>Support Aboriginal Enterprise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise opportunities emerging from the South West Land and Sea Council native title 	<p>Design and invest in new service delivery models to ensure early intervention and enhanced participation and achievement.</p> <p>Implement the Wheatbelt Children's Services Plan</p> <p>Support the Wheatbelt Workforce Alliance to establish business, education and training partnerships that increase training and employment participation</p> <p>Support Aboriginal Elders Groups develop and implement initiatives relevant to local need</p>

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>2.2: Innovation drives economic, social and environmental outcomes</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovation networks and R&D drive productivity and community vibrancy 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well connected to the higher education sector Strong industry investment in R&D <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of innovation 'brand' for the Region Lack of formal innovation networks and strategies 	<p>Develop Innovation Networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop globally linked networks and profile innovation activity in the Region. <p>Build R&D Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen and promote university links. 	<p>Support Heartlands WA to profile Wheatbelt innovation</p> <p>Maintain strong links to the university sector</p>

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>2.3: Leadership harnesses diverse capacity that delivers benefit at a local, sub-regional and regional level</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative governance creates efficiency and effectiveness across communities Leadership and civic engagement underpins vibrant communities Volunteers deliver critical social capital 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong volunteer base Multiple formal leadership structures in which to develop leadership capacity <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of diversity in leadership Multiple organisations, thinly stretched 	<p>Foster Innovative Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support innovative cross community entities Foster Leadership and Civic Engagement Support collaboration across communities Establish and support leadership networks <p>Support Volunteers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support strategies that foster volunteer engagement and delivery of services across community activity (emergency services, health and well-being) 	<p>Promote Infrastructure Trusts as a mechanism for cross community investment</p> <p>Support groups of local government to invest in regional priorities</p> <p>Encourage Community Resource Centres to take a lead role on volunteer support and co-ordination</p>

5.3.3 Liveable Communities

Aspiration: Diverse, safe, healthy and resilient communities where services and infrastructure reflect the needs and aspirations of current residents and future residents

Current: Population of 75,000

Target 2050: Population of 180,000

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>3.1: Connected settlements support economic growth and offer multiple liveability options</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Centres with strong connections with their hinterlands result in strong connected communities Public Transport enhances access to services 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple liveability across many small communities Patterns of economic and social activity across communities Critical role of regional centres <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmented governance and service delivery leads to inefficiencies High growth pressures north of Perth and across the Avon Arc 	<p>Connect Communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support cross community models of investment and services Support community comparative advantage. (Not every community can have 'it' but across neighbouring communities you will find it) 	<p>Implement Growth Plans for five sub-regional centres</p> <p>Develop Growth Plans for high growth areas</p>

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>3.2: Service Delivery Reform ensures services reflect the needs of current and future Wheatbelt residents</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ageing in Place Education Children's and family services Health and well-being Safety Public transport Services to growth areas 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community appetite for better services Several examples of innovation <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centralised services Infrastructure and models not current Many uncoordinated and unsustainable services Lack of proactive planning to addresses demographic changes 	<p>Service Reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver solutions across communities Sub-regional governance and delivery required to achieve sustainability: (Deliver regional solutions with local impact, fund on a sub-regional basis, not a service provider basis) 	<p>Design and deliver integrated sub-regional services in the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged Care Health Education (K-tertiary) Family, youth and children's services Public transport

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>3.3: Community Amenity contributes to community well-being and liveability and creates economic opportunity</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture and the Arts and Heritage grow enterprise and enhances liveability Sport and Recreation enhances well being 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liveability of Wheatbelt communities rated highly by residents (safe, strong identity) Strong cross community planning exists to guide investment (economic, aged care, growth planning) Good examples of cross community planning, co-operation and service sharing <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple communities duplicate facilities and services Challenge for small local governments to provide facilities and services expected by community 	<p>Promote Wheatbelt amenity assets and invest in gaps in the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture and the Arts Heritage Sport and Recreation 	<p>Support effective governance and delivery structure across communities for each sector</p> <p>Support innovative design and management of multi-purpose, multi - user community facilities in small towns</p>

5.3.4 Valued Natural Amenity

Aspiration: The Wheatbelt’s unique natural amenity is valued as an asset for social, cultural and economic development for current and future generations

Current: 0 Off grid power community-wide, 16 communities with off grid water

Target 2050: 30 Wheatbelt communities have off grid power and water solutions

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>4.1: Climate change risks are minimised</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change mitigation 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant R&D exists into mitigation Significant investment in technology to enhance decision making <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change impacting on agricultural productivity and coastal communities (shoreline shift) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seizing the Opportunity investment delivers strategies to mitigate seasonal variation Planning accounts for possible shore -line shift 	<p>Invest in R&D and technology application to mitigate climate impact, including dry climate and frost tolerant plant breeds</p> <p>Assist Coastal Communities plan for impacts of shore-line shift</p>

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>4.2: Landscape management protects biodiversity and ensures compatible and profitable land use</p>	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape icons: Pinnacles, Wave Rock, Great Western Woodlands Strong land stewardship <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanently altered landscape affecting agricultural productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seizing the Opportunity investment delivers strategies to ensure soil health maintains production levels Community groups, facilitating improved land management practices, are supported 	<p>Invest in R&D and technology application to improve soil health</p> <p>Support Wheatbelt NRM to foster ‘best practice’ land management</p>

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>4.3: Water management results in water security to enable community amenity and industry development</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water security through water and wastewater planning and management 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aged water distribution infrastructure Limited total water management Opportunity to utilise alternative sources through treatment <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity of small communities to invest in water harvesting and re-use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alternative local water solutions with less reliance on ageing infrastructure R&D and investment in cost effective water treatment systems 	<p>Undertake integrated water planning</p> <p>Invest in water harvesting and re-use</p> <p>Implement a pilot project: desalination of water using renewable energy</p>

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>4.4: Nature based industry utilises the Wheatbelt’s natural assets</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewable energy Nature based tourism 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enormous potential of the natural landscape to deliver increased tourism numbers Enormous potential of the natural landscape to drive renewable energy production to support local transmission <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracting investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop visitor facilities and promote Wheatbelt landscape tourism R&D to deliver localised renewable energy solutions 	<p>Develop a tourism strategy that includes nature based tourism and identifies infrastructure priorities</p> <p>Partner with Western Power and universities to develop innovative renewable energy solutions for end of grid situations</p>



5.3.5 Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities

Aspiration: The Wheatbelt value proposition is clear to investors in government and private enterprise and families wishing to live and visit

Current: 75,000 residents

Target 2050: 105,000 new residents have been attracted to the Region, new investment creates 64,000 jobs

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>5.1: Workers, businesses, visitors, and investors are attracted to the Region</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted marketing Influence key decision makers 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heartlands WA has a sound track record in branding and promotion Sub-regional economic planning highlights investment opportunities <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current perceptions of the Region do not capture its range of opportunities Difficult to brand the Region's diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Heartlands WA to promote the Wheatbelt brand and be the portal for promoting workforce, investor and visitor opportunity Support tourism groups to undertake collaborative marketing 	<p>Implement targeted marketing for workforce and visitor attraction</p> <p>Attract private investment through the development of industry development plans and prospectuses for emerging industry (identified in sub-regional economic strategies.)</p>

5.3.6 Effective Partnerships

Aspiration: Cost effective investment occurs as a result of good information, quality project management and leveraged investment

Current: Unco-ordinated investment

Target 2050: Infrastructure Co-ordinating Group oversees all government investment in the region

Outcome	Summary of Issues	Solutions	Priority Actions
<p>6.1: High impact, cost effective Investment drives growth</p> <p>Focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure co-ordination Agency co-ordination Local government collaboration Proponent support 	<p>Enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good examples of cross community planning and investment Examples of innovative investment vehicles exist Significant private investment occurring in mining and agriculture <p>Inhibitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High fragmentation of business, industry and governance creates a challenge to deliver cost effective, cross community investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support groups of local governments' planning and investing in agreed regional priorities Attract and support private investors and project partners 	<p>Initiate the Wheatbelt Infrastructure Co-ordinating Group</p> <p>Support cross community investment trusts to drive sustainable investment</p> <p>Support groups of local governments to deliver regionally significant projects locally</p>



Innovation *driving* change

6.0 Implementation

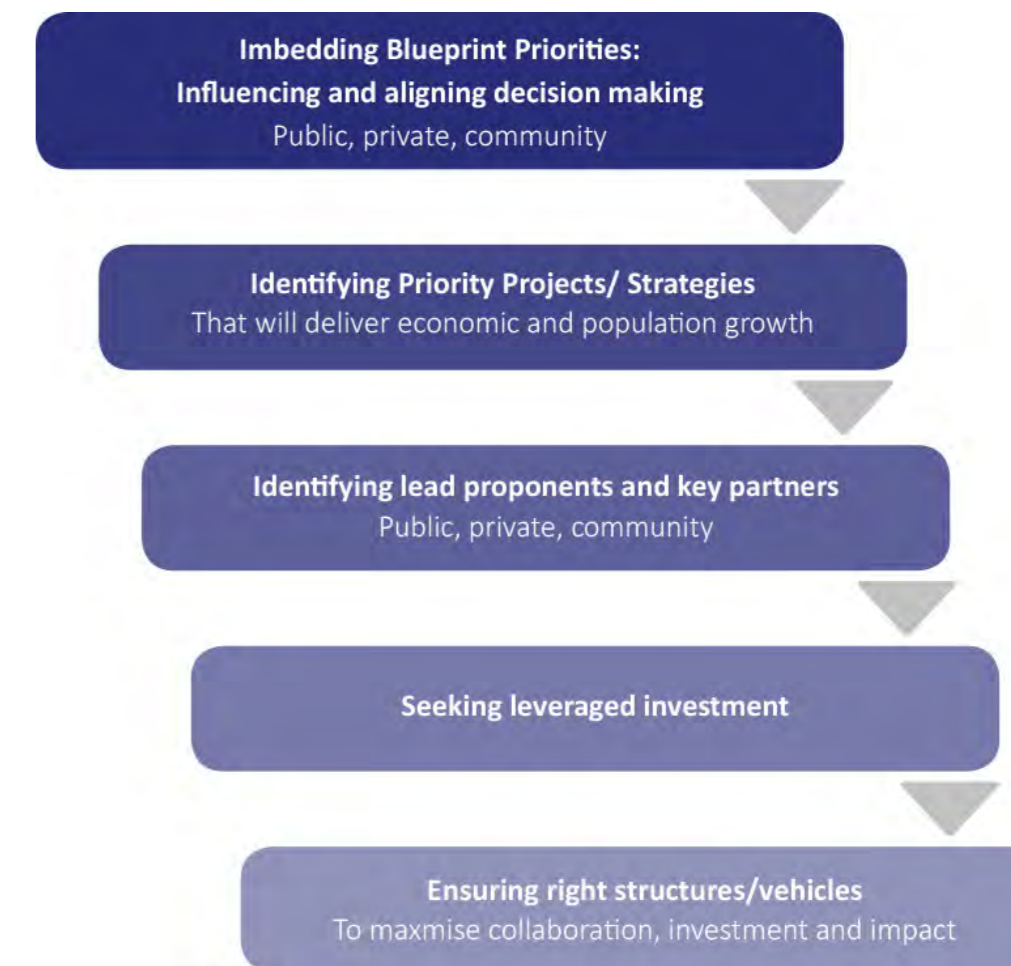
6.1 What does Blueprint Implementation Involve?

Effective Blueprint implementation will work at many levels. The first is at the 'macro level' which requires imbedding the Blueprint into decision processes to ensure alignment of effort and resources achieves maximum results. The second is in terms of implementing the priority actions outlined within the Road Map for Growth.

The list of priority actions identified in Section 5 are focussed on achieving results in the short to mid term. The Comprehensive Action Plan (Appendix 3) will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, and actions determined and prioritised accordingly. The priority actions are aspirational in nature and a pipeline of strategies and projects will be developed as proponents; resources and investment opportunities become available. These proponents include private enterprise, industry peak bodies, not for profit organisations and local, state and federal governments.

Maximising investment opportunity will be underpinned by seeking leveraging opportunities and ensuring the right structures are in place to maximise investment and impact through collaboration and partnerships.

Figure 6.1 Elements of Implementation



6.2 Who Implements the Blueprint?

There are numerous stakeholders who will be involved in Blueprint implementation. Effective implementation will require genuine engagement of and partnerships between relevant stakeholders.

We will need to look beyond our regional boundaries when searching for solutions and opportunities. Creating opportunities to work collaboratively across regions on initiatives that address State and regional priorities and maximise regional development outcomes will be a priority.

6.3 Co-ordinating Implementation

The Wheatbelt Development Commission's primary role in implementing this Blueprint will be to:

- advocate for the Blueprint and the Region to the public, private and community sectors;
- co-ordinate and facilitate collaboration on priorities for action across relevant stakeholder groups;
- develop and drive solutions and appropriate governance structures to get results;
- assist proponents to shape projects that align with the priorities and objectives outlined in this Blueprint;
- raise awareness of programs, initiatives and legislation that will impact on regional priorities; and
- engage in a continuous process of monitoring and improvement of the Blueprint and its priority areas for action.

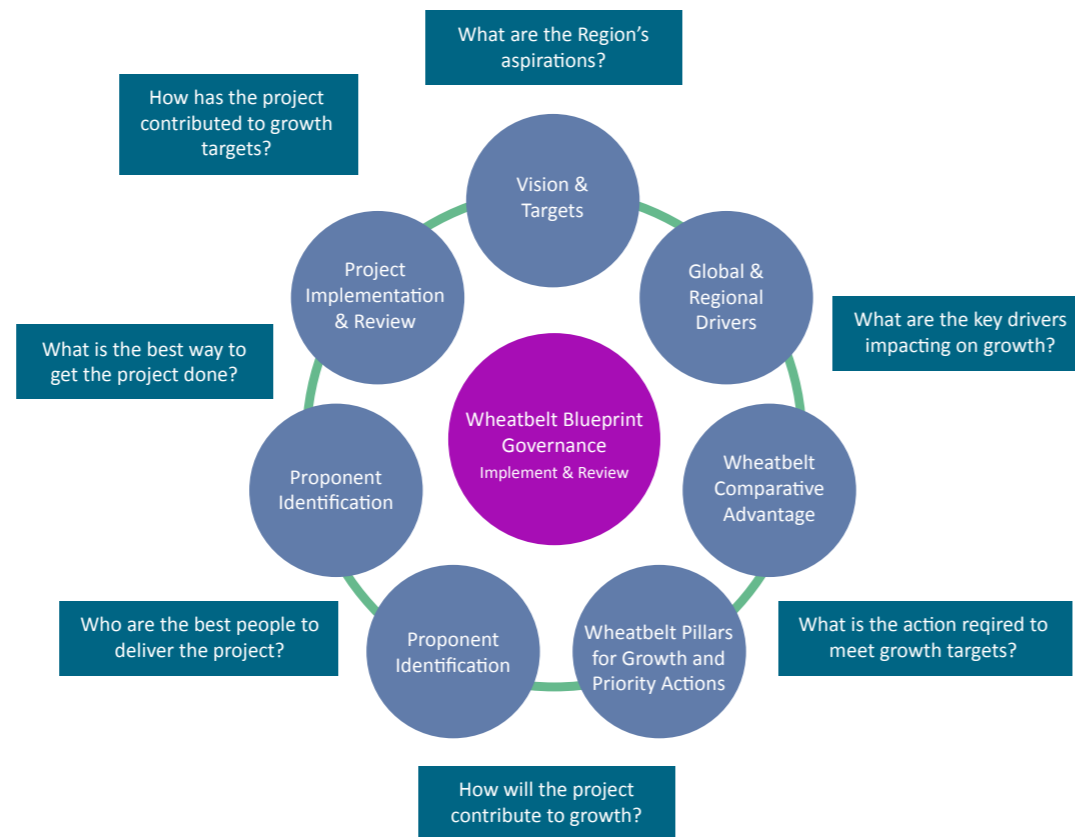
6.4 Blueprint Monitoring and Review

The Blueprint will have high level and ongoing oversight from the Board of the Wheatbelt Development Commission supported by RDA Wheatbelt. Joint board meetings held twice a year will:

- monitor implementation of the Blueprint and agreed priority elements within it; and
- review and update the Blueprint to reflect progress made, changing needs and resourcing.

In addition to this high level oversight, collaboration and co-ordination of priority actions will be

Figure 6.2 Blueprint Review Process



achieved through the following mechanisms:

- initiating the Wheatbelt Infrastructure Co-ordinating Group and aligning this group with other public and private planning processes;
- ongoing Agency engagement at both central and regional level;
- developing a pipeline of project proposals and business case development to source project funding; and
- ongoing support for project proponents, including government agencies, groups of local governments, private investors and not for profit groups.

6.5 How will Success be Measured?

The success of the Blueprint will be determined by its acceptance and use by stakeholders.

Success of implementation will be measured by:

1. The perception of the Blueprint and the Commission. This will be measured through the WDC annual stakeholder survey; and
2. The knowledge, acceptance and use of the Blueprint and its contributing plans, measured through:
 - number of times the Blueprint is referred to in stakeholder publications;

- number of specific priority actions that are implemented in any one year; and

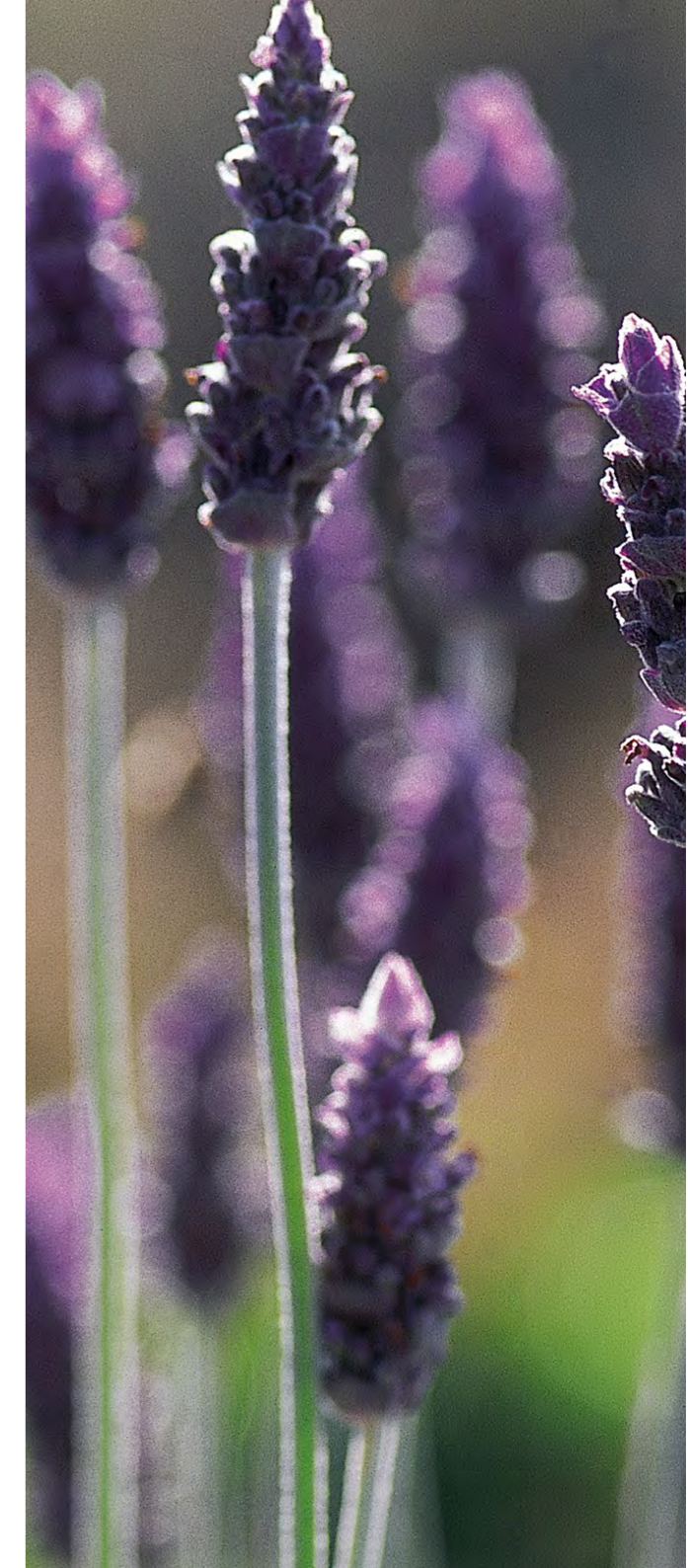
- evidence of positive progress in achieving stated targets.

6.6 Determining Where to Start

The Blueprint outlines an ambitious agenda for growth. With over 40 priority actions within the six pillars for growth, rigorous process is required to determine which priority actions (or projects) would deliver growth in population, economic diversification and private investment. The following criteria are used in this prioritisation process. (Figure 6.3)

Figure 6.3 Prioritisation Criteria

Lead criteria	Sub criteria - The degree to which the project:
Population growth	Results in population growth Normalises the population bell Attracts workers to the Region
Economic growth	Impacts on economy Attracts new industry to the Region Spreads economic diversity across the Region Increases capacity to drive productivity and innovation
Attract private investment	Regional impact of private investment Demonstrates commitment of non-government investors Meets identified market demand
Enhance liveability	Increases human and organisational capacity Improves external perception of the Region Retains population
Governance	Aligned to Blueprint Priority Actions Aligned to acts, plans, policies or priorities (State and Federal Government) Has a strong business case Value for money



6.7 Actionable First Steps

Imbedding the Blueprint with key decision makers began in earnest with extensive stakeholder consultation throughout its development. This process will continue so that alignment can be maintained and priority actions can be agreed to, developed and implemented.

In the short term (2-3 years), there are specific actions and projects arising from the extensive planning underpinning this Blueprint (economic, regional centre growth and aged care planning). These include:

Vibrant Economy

- sub-regional economic prospectuses to profile sub-regional investment opportunities;
- emerging industry development plans to ensure the fundamentals are in place to grow these industry sectors and to promote opportunities to investors; and
- industrial and residential land development to facilitate industry and workforce attraction.

Connected Communities

In each of the five sub-regional centres, including the SuperTowns of Jurien Bay and Northam, specific projects have been identified to facilitate economic and population growth, including:

- precinct development;
- land assembly;
- industry development; and
- community amenity.

Similar planning is required in high growth areas of Chittering and Gingin.

Service Delivery Reform: Aged Care

Cross regional planning has identified the need to invest in the four key planks of aged care service provision:

- age friendly communities;
- age appropriate housing;
- more effective home care service delivery; and
- residential care including dementia and respite care.

These are by no means all of the actions which must occur for the Wheatbelt to provide a solution to the State's growing population and to achieve its potential as a key driver of the State's prosperity. As more detailed planning and feasibilities are conducted in each of the priority areas for action, a pipeline of projects will continue to emerge.

Some of the priority areas for action will also be addressed through cross regional action emerging from the analysis of all nine Regional Investment Blueprints.



Driving *diverse* investment

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Growing *healthy* communities

APPENDIX ONE: Wheatbelt Population and Demographics

The Region's population at the 2011 Census was 73,814¹¹³ people making it the third most populous region in Western Australia after Peel and the South West.

As Figure 1 illustrates, there has been steady population growth rate in the Wheatbelt since 2007.

This growth has not been consistent across the Region with some sub-regions experiencing strong growth and others experiencing stagnant or declining population. This variation is in line with global urbanisation trends with peri-urban and coastal areas experiencing growth and the more traditional inland agricultural based regions experiencing stagnation or decline.

The Avon Sub-region is the most populated of the Wheatbelt's five sub-regions with a population over of 26,000 people in 2012.

Greatest sub-regional population increase from 2002-2012 in the Wheatbelt: Central Coast (13%)

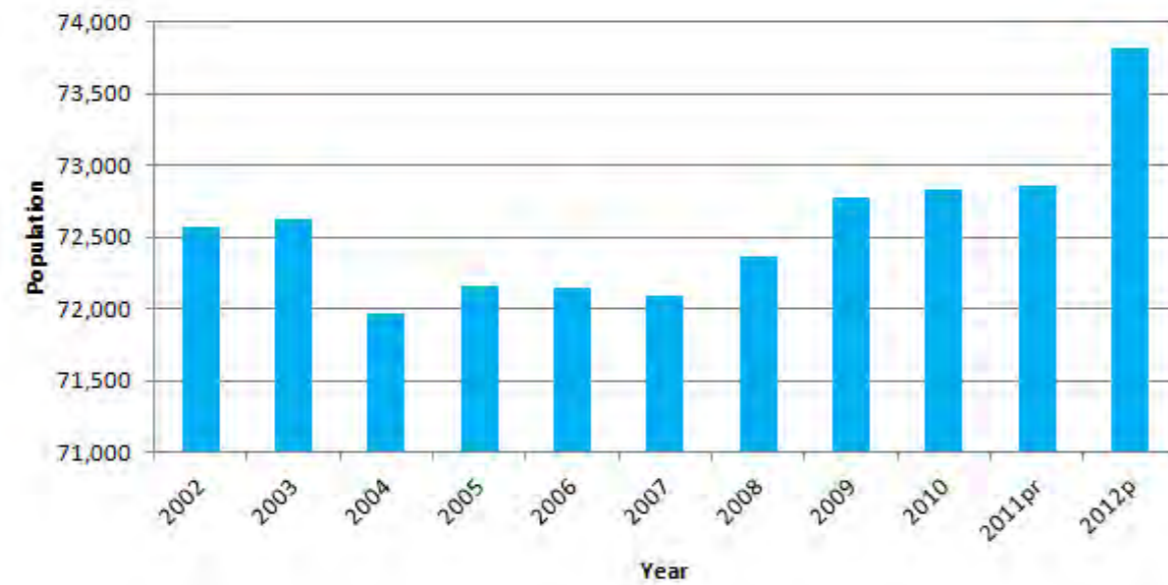
Greatest local population increase from 2002-2012 in the Wheatbelt: Shire of Chittering (53%)

Greatest local population decrease from 2002-2012 in the Wheatbelt: Shires of Mount Marshall and Mukinbudin (-28%)

There are three Wheatbelt local governments that experienced a similar annual growth rate between 2011 and 2012 as Western Australia as a whole (3.3%). These are:

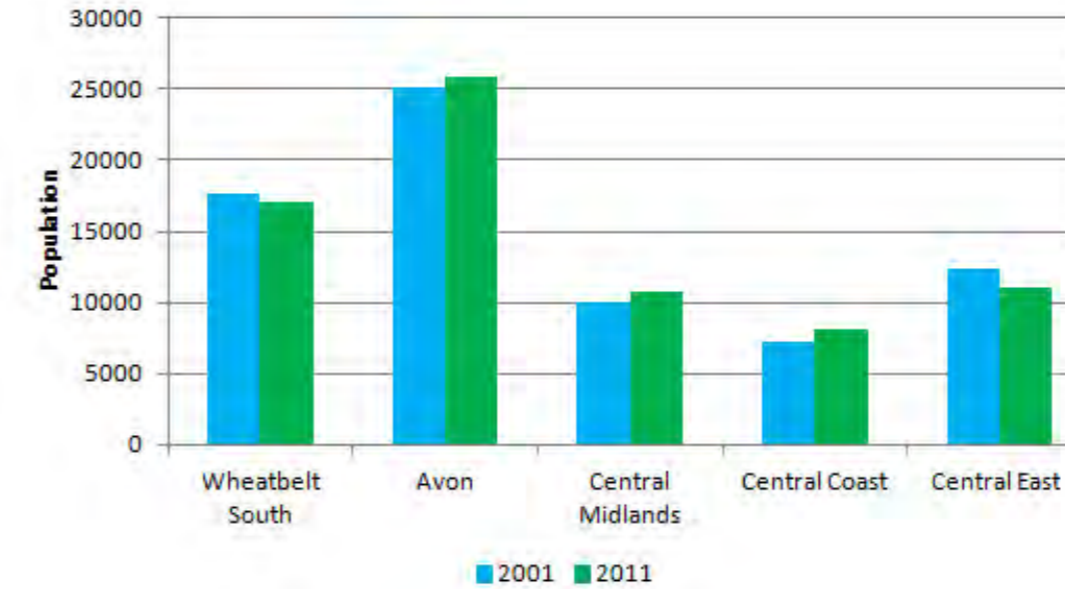
- Shire of Chittering (3.7%)
- Shire of Gingin (3.5%)
- Shire of Northam (3.1%)

Figure 1 Estimated Wheatbelt Residential Population 2001-2012



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Figure 2 Estimated Regional Population for Wheatbelt Sub-Regions 2001-2011



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Demographic Profile

Greater representation of children aged from 0-14 in the Wheatbelt compared to Western Australia's figures. This indicates a high number of families in the Region reflecting the liveability for young families and quality of primary education services. The Central Midlands sub-region has the largest proportion of its population in this age cohort (22%), with the Central Coast sub-region the least (19.5%). Under representation of population aged 14-44 (33%) compared to State figures (43%)¹¹⁴. This is particularly evident in the 15-29 age cohort illustrating the trend of out-migration to seek other education or employment opportunities. This trend is strongest in the Central Coast with this cohort only accounting for 31% of the population, and weakest in the Central East at 36%.

High representation of people aged 45 years and over (46%) compared to State figures (37%)¹¹⁵. This is concurrent with the national trends of an older farming population and the in-migration of retirees and semi-retirees in areas of high amenity (sea/tree-change in-migration) and is strongest in the Central Coast with this cohort making up almost 50% of the population. In line with global trends this age group is predicted to continue to increase in numbers.

Male dominated with 51.42% of population male. This is highest in those local authorities where mining is the dominant employment industry; Yilgarn (61.55%), Westonia (60.29%) and Kondinin (57.61%)¹¹⁶.

23% of the Region's population was born overseas¹¹⁷. This is significantly lower than WA

rate of 37%, but is increasing, up from 18.6% in 2001¹¹⁸. The most common countries of origin in descending order are United Kingdom, New Zealand, Philippines, South Africa, Netherlands, Germany and Ireland. The Region experiences relatively low levels of immigration with 167 permanent settlers in 2012¹¹⁹.

In the 2011 Census 4.7% of the Wheatbelt population identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander¹²⁰. This is higher than the State proportion of 3.1%. The Region's Aboriginal population shows a higher percentage of young people with the 0-14 cohort making up 39% of the Aboriginal population. The Local Government areas with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation of over 10% include Quairading (14.8%), Moora (12.2%), and Pingelly (11.2%).



The Region has a high percentage (30%) of low-income earners (income below \$21,000) in comparison to the State (26%)¹²¹. The local areas with the highest percentage of low-income earners are Beverley (38%), Kellerberrin (37%) and Nungarin (36%).

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) is a product developed by the ABS that ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. Areas with indicators equal to the national average will receive a score of 1000¹²². In 2011, Wheatbelt communities generally ranked poorly on the SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage with 63% of the Region's local government areas below 1000. The local areas of Pingelly, Kellerberrin and Quairading were the most poorly ranked in the Region.

Wheatbelt Population Projections

By 2050, the Wheatbelt will have a population of 180,000, based on the growth pressures Western Australia is experiencing, the Wheatbelt's proximity to the Perth Region and the availability of affordable housing in safe welcoming communities.

As a part of the Royalties for Region's SuperTowns initiative, the towns of Northam and Jurien Bay will experience significant growth. This growth will also flow to other parts of the Region reversing population decline trends as high order services become more accessible in regional centres.

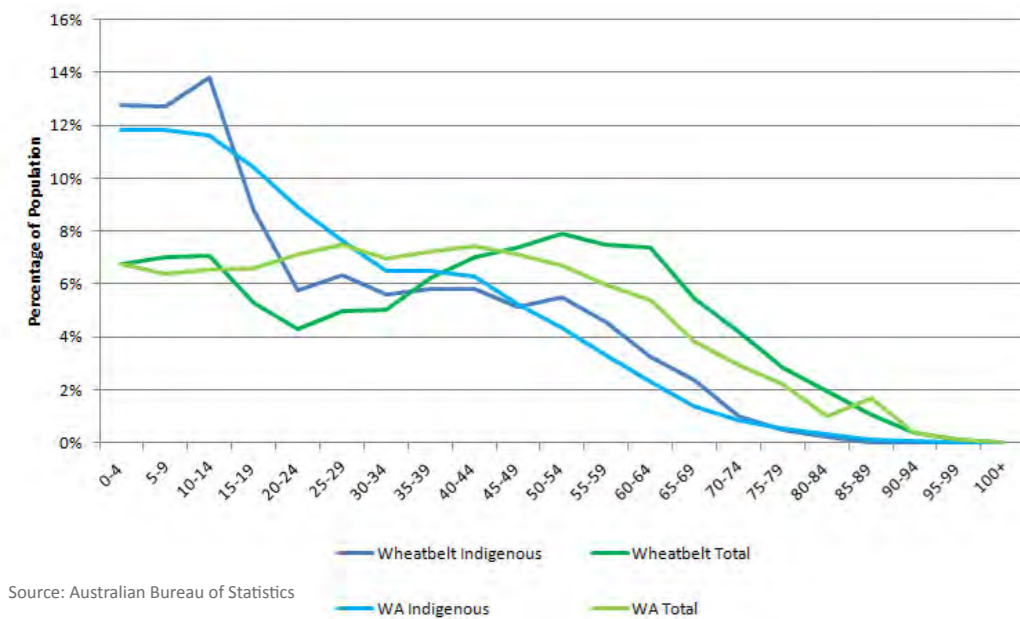
The Wheatbelt currently has 75,000 of the State's 2.35million people. This is 3.2% of the State population and 15% of WA's regional population.

Recent ABS population projections suggest Western Australia's population will increase to at least 4.8million people by 2050. If the Wheatbelt maintains its current percentage of the State's population this equates to 154,000 people in the Region by 2050. Current State Government policies aimed at increasing the percentage of the State's population living in regional WA, increasing density of living in the metropolitan area and the Wheatbelt's proximity to the Perth Region and the urban spread contribute to our belief that the Region's population will grow to 180,000 people by 2050.

Recent economic planning for the Wheatbelt indicates that the Avon, Central Coast and Central Midlands populations will double by 2031, amounting to 42,500 more people. The rest of the Region (Central East and Wheatbelt South) currently accounts for 40% of the Wheatbelt population. Suggesting that these areas grow more conservatively, by only 10%, the Region's population by 2031 will be 120,000, equating to 62% growth over 18 years or conservatively 2-3% per annum. Taking the lower of these, 2% per year for another 25 years to 2056, we could expect another 50% increase in population or a Wheatbelt population of approximately 180,000.

This would mean that the Wheatbelt would maintain its 15% share of the State's regional population, provided the other regions grow adequately to achieve 35% of the growth to the regions. Given the Wheatbelt's proximity to the Perth Region, peri-urban growth trends and the growing pressures on population growth in the metropolitan area the WDC sees this as easily achievable if the State's population growth continues as predicted.

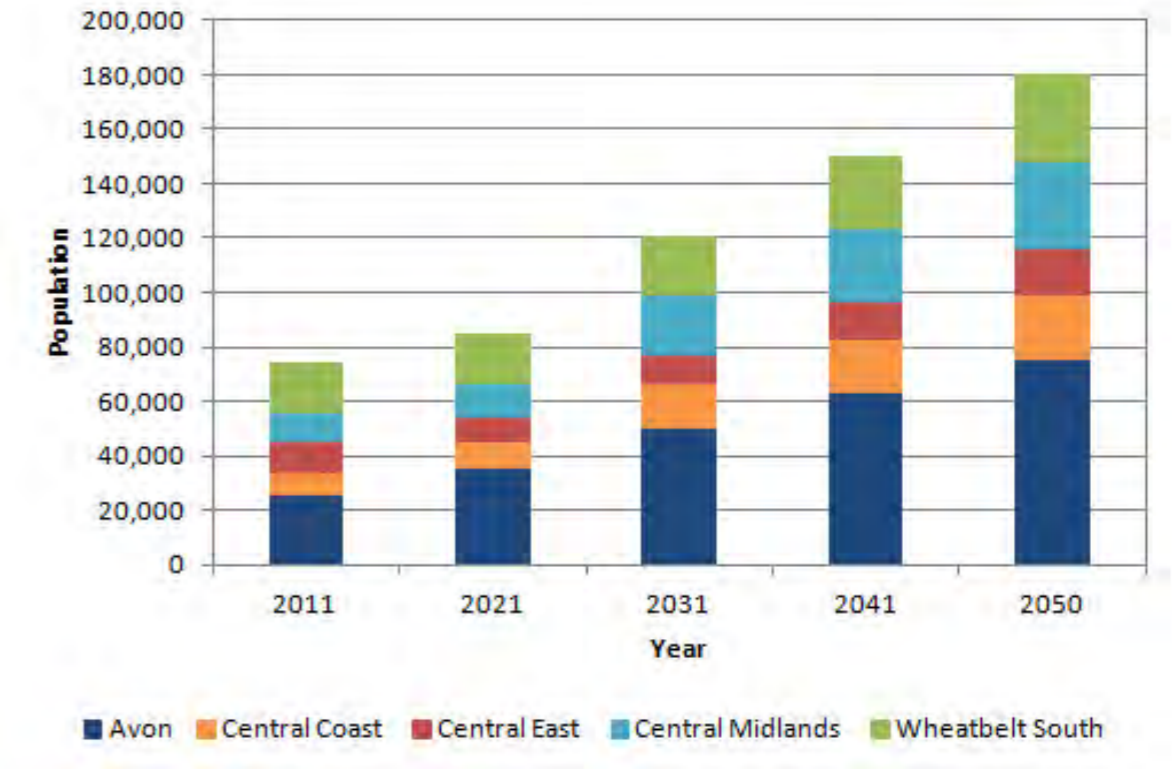
Figure 3 Wheatbelt Age Profile 2011



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics



Figure 4 Wheatbelt Population Projections by Sub-region



Source: WAPC and WDC Projections

Figure 5 Wheatbelt Population Projections (2011-2050)

Year	Wheatbelt	Regional WA	Western Australia	% of WA Population in the Wheatbelt	% of WA Population in the Regions	% of Regional Population in the Wheatbelt
2011	74,204	626,160	2,352,215	3.15%	26.62%	11.85%
2021	85,000	855,000	3,100,000	2.74%	27.58%	9.94%
2031	120,000	1,005,000	3,700,000	3.24%	27.16%	11.94%
2041	150,000	1,182,500	4,300,000	3.49%	27.50%	12.68%
2050	180,000	1,344,000	4,800,000	3.75%	28.00%	13.39%

Source: WDC Projections, adapted from WA Tomorrow

Ageing Population

The Wheatbelt Aged Support and Care Solution/s (WIACS) report, completed by Verso Consulting in 2013 found that, "by 2027 the population of the Wheatbelt aged 70 and over will have increased by 75.3% from 2011. The 70+ population of 7,646 will have increased to 13,400 by 2027, moving from 10.4% of the total population to around 17%." This projected growth is much greater than WA as a whole.

The Wheatbelt Aged Support and Care Solution/s report investigates an integrated approach to aged care service delivery that fits the Wheatbelt context. The solutions proposed in the report are intended to;

- Support ageing in place (services assisting the aged to remain in their communities);
- Identify existing and required infrastructure and service development needs; and

- Provide a range of actions and responsibilities to effectively implement proposed solutions.

Figure 6 Aged Care Need Predictions

	Population		Planning Places			Actual Places			Total Shortfall/Excess		
	2011 ABS Census	Residential	High Care	Total	Residential	High Care	Total	Residential	High Care	Total	
70+	7537	663	188	852	479	313	792	-184	125	-60	
Aboriginal 50-69	611	54	15	69	0	0	0	-54	-15	-69	
Total	8148	717	204	921	479	313	792	-238	109	-129	

	Population		Planning Places			Actual Places			Total Shortfall/Excess		
	2021 ABS Projections	Residential	High Care	Total	Residential	High Care	Total	Residential	High Care	Total	
70+	11552	924	520	1444	479	313	792	-445	-207	-652	
Aboriginal 50-69	936	75	42	117			0	-75	-42	-117	
Total	12488	999	562	1561	479	313	792	-520	-249	-769	

Source: Wheatbelt Aged Support and Care Solutions Report 2014, Verso Consulting

References

¹¹³ ABS (2011), Estimated Resident Population, Cat No 3218.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

¹¹⁴ ABS (2013), Census of Population and Housing, 2011, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

¹¹⁵ ibid

¹¹⁶ ibid

¹¹⁷ ibid

¹¹⁸ ibid

¹¹⁹ DIBP (2012) Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Settlement Reporting Facility, Canberra

¹²⁰ ABS (2013), Census of Population and Housing, 2011, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

¹²¹ ibid

¹²² ABS (2013), Socio-economic Indexes for Areas, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra



Valuing *productive* landscapes



Image: Cliffs Resources

APPENDIX TWO: Wheatbelt Economy

The Wheatbelt has displayed strong economic growth over the past 10 years (8.2% AAGR).

This growth has occurred across an increasingly diverse economic base with growth in the mining, transport and logistics, manufacturing and construction sectors.

Figure 1 The Wheatbelt has a diverse range of economic opportunities, drawing upon local comparative advantages to leverage global drivers.

Avon	Central Coast	Central East	Central Midlands	Wheatbelt South
Broadacre Agriculture	Agriculture, Horticulture and Food Processing	Broadacre Agriculture	Agriculture, Horticulture & Livestock	Agriculture, Livestock & Food Supply Chains
Transport & Industry	Renewable Energy	Mining & Support Services	Peri-Urban & Rural Living	Health & Education
Health & Aged Care	Retirement & Lifestyle	Population Services	Tourism	Lifestyle, Amenity & Retirement
Retail & Lifestyle	Mining, Construction & Light Industry		Health & Aged Care	Tourism
Tourism	Tourism		Mining, Manufacturing & Support Services	

The Wheatbelt possesses a range of competitive advantages and opportunities for future economic growth. However, these opportunities present differently across the sub-regions and communities. Economic strategies for each of the Wheatbelt's five Sub-regions provide full analysis of global trends, profiling of current and future economic opportunities and an opportunity network analysis highlighting each community's comparative advantages.

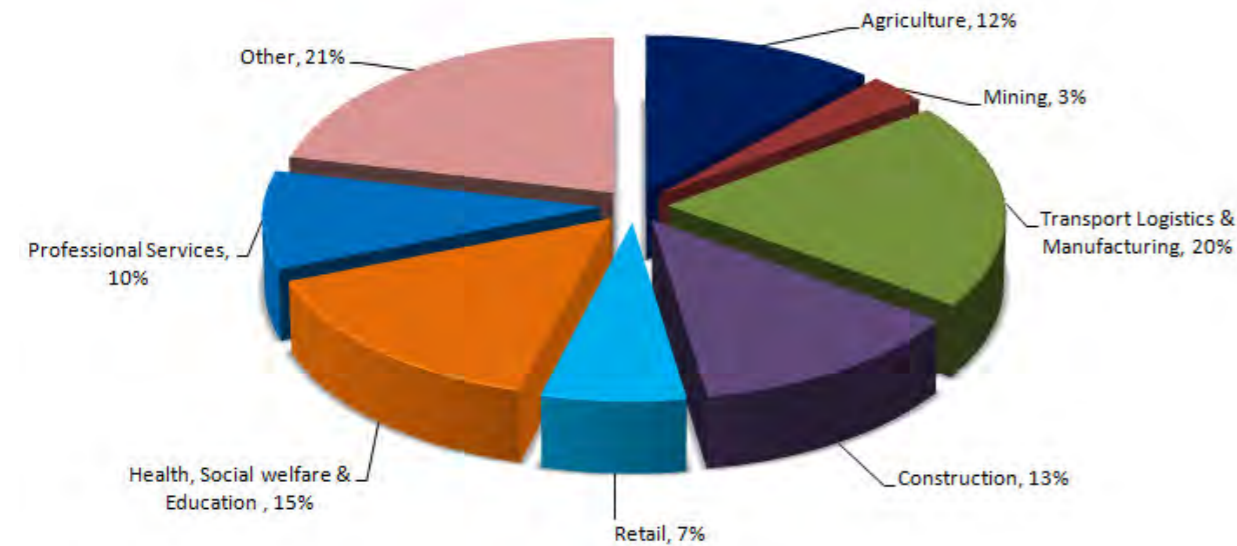
Figure 7 provides a brief summary of each Sub-region's economy and the associated opportunities for economic growth.

Avon

The major drivers of the Avon economic activity are transport, logistics and manufacturing, agriculture and construction.

These industries collectively account for 45% of sub-regional industry value add. Health, social welfare and education are also important sectors contributing an additional 15%. This is illustrated in Figure 8 below.

Figure 2 Industry Value Add: Avon Sub-region (2012/13)



Source: RPS (2012), RPS Economics Gross Regional Product Model, RPS, Gold Coast

Health, social welfare and education is the largest employment sector in the sub-region employing 19% of the workforce. Agriculture, transport, logistics and manufacturing; and retail are also significant employment sectors in the region.

In 2011, the Avon had an annual average unemployment rate of 3.6%, below the comparative state average of 4.1%¹²³.

This highlights the importance of attraction and retention of labour force for economic growth.

The Avon Sub-regional Economic Strategy identifies a number of key themes for future economic development. These include broadacre agriculture and animal husbandry; transport, logistics and mining support industries; health and aged care; retail and lifestyle; and tourism (Figure 3). A more comprehensive assessment of the Sub-region's economy and more information on these opportunities is available in the Avon Sub-regional Economic Strategy.

In 2011, Northam, as the Avon's regional centre, was announced as one of WA's nine SuperTowns. The Northam Regional Centre Growth Plan, released in 2012, outlines how the town can grow to be home to 20,000, servicing a sub-regional population of 50,000.

Figure 3: Avon Sub-Regional Economic Strategy

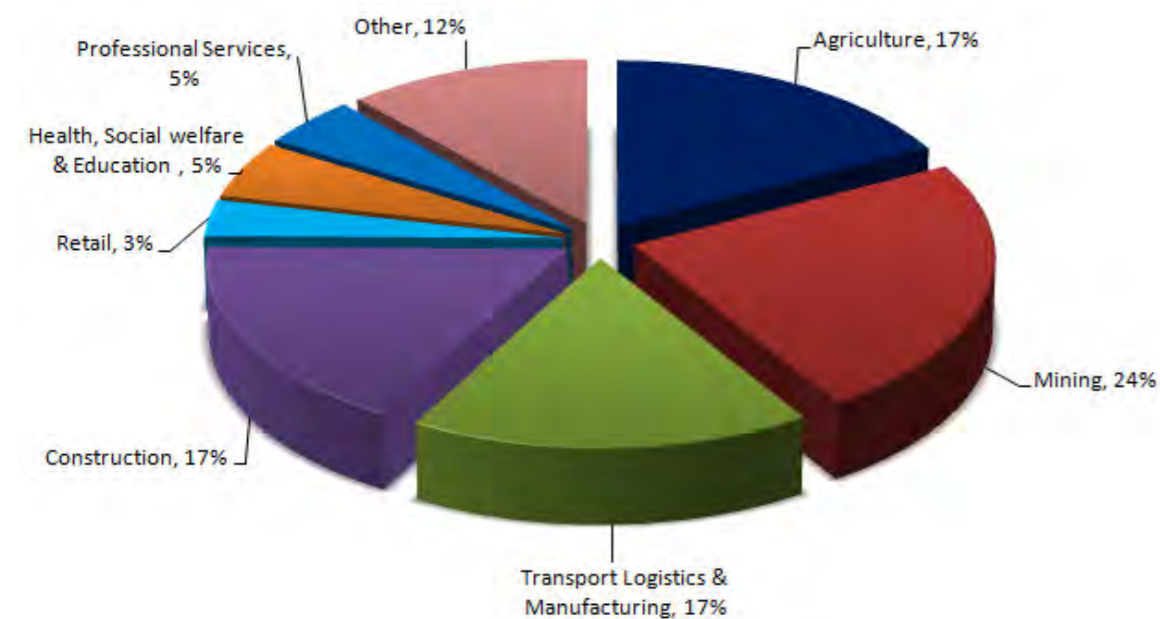


Central Coast

The major drivers of the Central Coast economic activity are mining agriculture and fishing activities and associated transport, logistics and manufacturing.

These sectors account for 58% of the local industry value add. Construction is also strong in the Region and accounts for a further 17%. This is illustrated in Figure 10 below.

Figure 4 Industry Value Add: Central Coast Sub-region (2012/13)



Source: RPS (2012), RPS Economics Gross Regional Product Model, RPS, Gold Coast

Agriculture is the dominant employment sector in the Central Coast, employing 27% of the sub-regions workforce. Transport, logistics and manufacturing; retail, construction and health, social welfare and education are also significant employment sectors in the Central Coast.

Unemployment rates in the Central Coast, at 2.0%¹²⁴ are significantly lower than the State average of 4.6%.

The impacts of northern urban expansion from the Perth Region, and amenity migration will assist in labour force attraction to allow economic growth in the Sub-region.

The Central Coast Sub-regional Economic Strategy identifies a number of key themes for future economic development. These include aquaculture (mariculture), horticulture and food processing; renewable energy; mining, construction and light industry; and tourism (Figure 5). A more comprehensive assessment of the Sub-region's economy and more information growth opportunities are available in the Central Coast Sub-regional Economic Strategy.

Jurien Bay, as the Central Coast's regional centre, was announced in 2011 as one of WA's nine SuperTowns. The Jurien Bay Regional Centre Growth Plan released in 2012 outlines how the town can transform from a small coastal settlement to a regional city of 20,000.

Figure 5: Central Coast Sub-Regional Economic Strategy

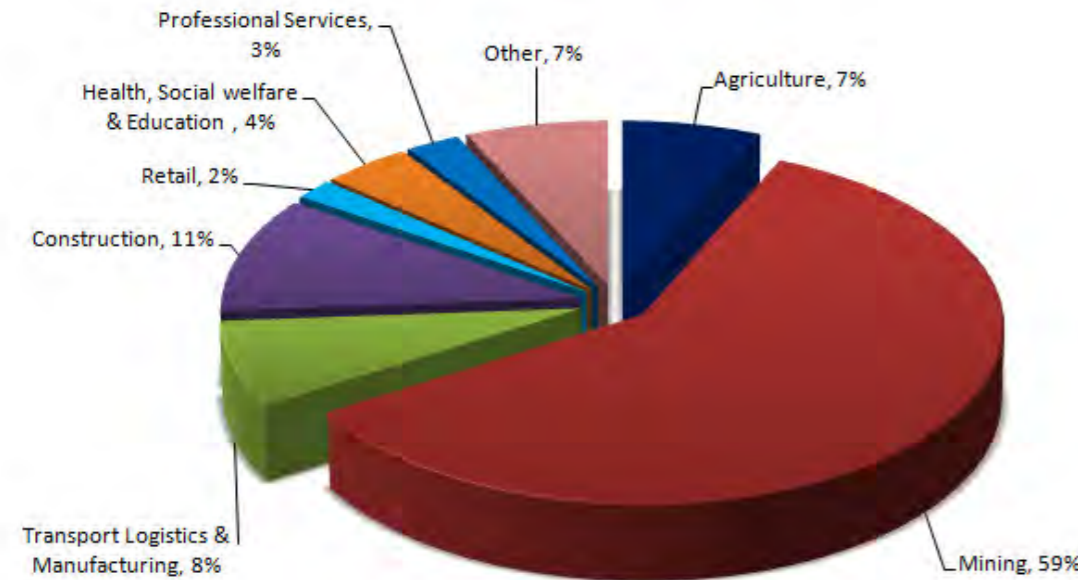


Central East

At 59%, mining is the most significant contributor to sub-regional industry value add (IVA) in the Central East. Construction has also been a strong contributor over the past three years reflecting the large industrial investments.

As shown in Figure 12 below, transport, logistics and manufacturing and agriculture also make significant contributions to the Sub-region's IVA.

Figure 6 Industry Value Add: Central East Sub-region (2012/13)



Source: RPS (2012), RPS Economics Gross Regional Product Model, RPS, Gold Coast

The high value of the mining industry in the Sub-region masks the significant contributions of the other sectors. Industry value add (IVA) from agriculture in the Central East is, in real terms, greater than agricultural IVA in the Central Coast, but makes a lesser contribution to the sub-regional total IVA.

While mining is the dominant industry in terms of industry value add, only 7% of the Central East workforce is employed in the industry. Agriculture, employing 28% of the workforce is easily the most dominant industry in employment terms. Health, social welfare and education, transport, logistics and manufacturing and retail are also significant employers in the Sub-region.

With historically low unemployment rates (3.7% in 2011)¹²⁵ and high participation rates (66.2%)¹²⁶, the attraction and retention of workforce is integral to economic and population growth in the Central East.

The Central East Sub-regional Economic Strategy indications are that opportunities for future economic development will be in broadacre agriculture; mining and support services; and populations services (including health, aged care, tourism and education and training). (Figure 7) A more comprehensive assessment of the Sub-region's economy, an Opportunity Network Matrix and more information on these opportunities will be available in the Central East Sub-regional Economic Strategy.

In partnership with LandCorp and the Shire of Merredin the WDC is developing the Merredin Regional Centre Growth Plan. This plan will outline how Merredin can grow to support a sub-regional population of 12,500.

Figure 7: Central East Sub-Regional Economic Strategy

Global Drivers

Central East and the World

The Central East is at the heart of regional Western Australia and is the Wheatbelt's gateway to the Goldfields. The Sub-region has historically had an export based agricultural economy, characterised by extensive coarse grain production. However, the emergence of mining activity, particularly in Yilgarn and Westonia, is changing local economical dynamics. This has the potential to help stabilise the Central East population and support future growth.

Population Growth

The Central East has experienced moderate population decline over the past decade. Despite projections for further population losses, the Sub-region has the economic capacity to stabilise and grow over the next 20 years.

Economic Profile

Agricultural Production

Broadacre grain production is the foundation of the Central East economy. Coarse grain production averages 1.6 million tonnes but is highly volatile. This reflects low rainfall and hot, dry summers. Bruce Rock is the primary concentration of agriculture activity. Below average per hectare yields are offset by large land holdings. Livestock is the next largest agricultural sector.

Strategic Location

The Central East is located adjacent to the Goldfields-Esperance Region. This provides the Sub-region strong connections to the Goldfields economy. Similarly the Sub-region is located on a major 'grey nomad' travel route through to Kalgoorlie, with many Central East communities benefiting from passing travellers.

Mining Activity

Yilgarn is the centre of mining activity in the Central East, although Westonia is also home to gold mining. Gold and iron ore are the most common commodities. Despite the relatively new nature of mining in the Sub-region, strong growth in production since 2007/08 has seen the value of product exceed \$1.6b in 2011/12. The development of mining activity provides a diverse range of supply chain opportunities in transport, logistics, training and equipment maintenance as well as employment opportunities.

Economic Opportunities

Broadacre Agriculture

Agriculture will remain a core industry of the Central East economy. However a hot, dry climate and below average rainfall will continue to impact production. Supporting R&D in dryland grain farming and promoting niche products will be key to the Sub-region's agricultural future.

Mining Support Services

The medium and long term potential of the Yilgarn Iron Ore Province and sub-regional gold mining presents an opportunity to underpin economic activity. However, maximising the benefit will require the growth and integration of local businesses into key supply chains.

Population Services

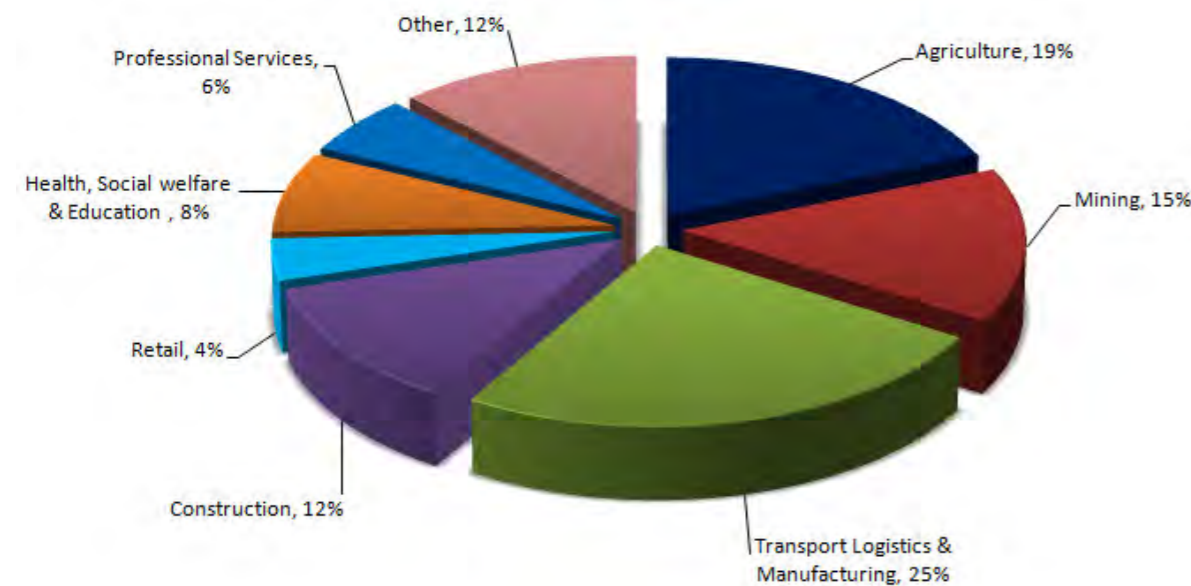
The effective delivery of services to residents including education, training, health and other community services is critical to retaining and growing the population. Higher quality service offering can also attract and support tourists and visitors.

Central Midlands

The major drivers of economic activity in the Central Midlands are transport, logistics and manufacturing and agriculture contributing 25% and 19% respectively to the Sub-region's industry value add.

Mining and construction are also significant contributors, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 8 Industry Value Add: Central Midlands Sub-region (2012/13)



Source: RPS (2012), RPS Economics Gross Regional Product Model, RPS, Gold Coast

Agriculture is the dominant employment sector in the Central Midlands, employing 26% of the workforce. Transport, logistics and manufacturing; health, social welfare and education; and retail are also significant employment sectors in the Sub-region.

In 2011, the annual average unemployment rates in the Central Midlands was 3.3%, well below State averages (4.6%)¹²⁷. Participation rates tend to remain high, highlighting the importance of attraction and retention of labour to the Sub-region's economic and population growth.

The Central Midlands Sub-regional Economic Strategy identifies a number of key themes for future economic development. These include agriculture, horticulture and livestock; peri-urban living; mining, manufacturing and support services; health and aged care; and tourism (Figure 15). A more comprehensive assessment of the Sub-region's economy and more information on these opportunities is available in the Central Midlands Sub-regional Economic Strategy.

WDC, LandCorp and the Shires of Moora, Wongan Ballidu and Dalwallinu are working in partnership to develop the Central Midlands Regional Centre Growth Plan. WDC is also consulting with a "Thought Leaders" group made up of business and community members. This plan, outlines how these centres can grow to support a sub-regional population of 20,000.

Figure 9: Central Midlands Sub-Regional Economic Strategy

Global Drivers

The Central Midlands is a dynamic Sub-region with a diverse economic, population and industry drivers. This diversity of activity means that the future economic development will be influenced by a wide range of global socio-economic trends.

Economic Profile

<p>Population Growth </p> <p><i>The Central Midlands has the economic capacity to support 20,000 residents in 2031, growth of almost 100% in 20 years.</i></p>	<p>Economic Activity </p> <p><i>The Central Midlands economy is highly diverse with mining, manufacturing and health care services building upon agricultural foundations. Tourism continues to contribute significantly to local expenditure.</i></p>	<p>Business Investment </p> <p><i>Business activity has been resilient in recent years, and is increasingly comprised of small local and large national businesses. Small business creation is strongest in Dalwallinu, Moora and Victoria Plains.</i></p>	<p>Health & Aged Care </p> <p><i>The Central Midlands population is ageing rapidly with almost all LGAs having above average residents aged 65+. This reflects a combination of retirement based migration and older rural communities. This is expected to drive demand for health and aged care services and facilities. Such services are currently concentrated in Moora.</i></p>	<p>Affordable Housing </p> <p><i>Housing in the Sub-region is generally affordable, though prices have now recovered to pre-GFC highs and are now over 100% up on 2006 levels. Housing in Chittering is severely unaffordable, reflecting its peri-urban and lifestyle attractions. Affordability pressures are likely being experienced most significantly in households in the tourism, construction, retail and health sectors and those on fixed incomes.</i></p>
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Economic Opportunities

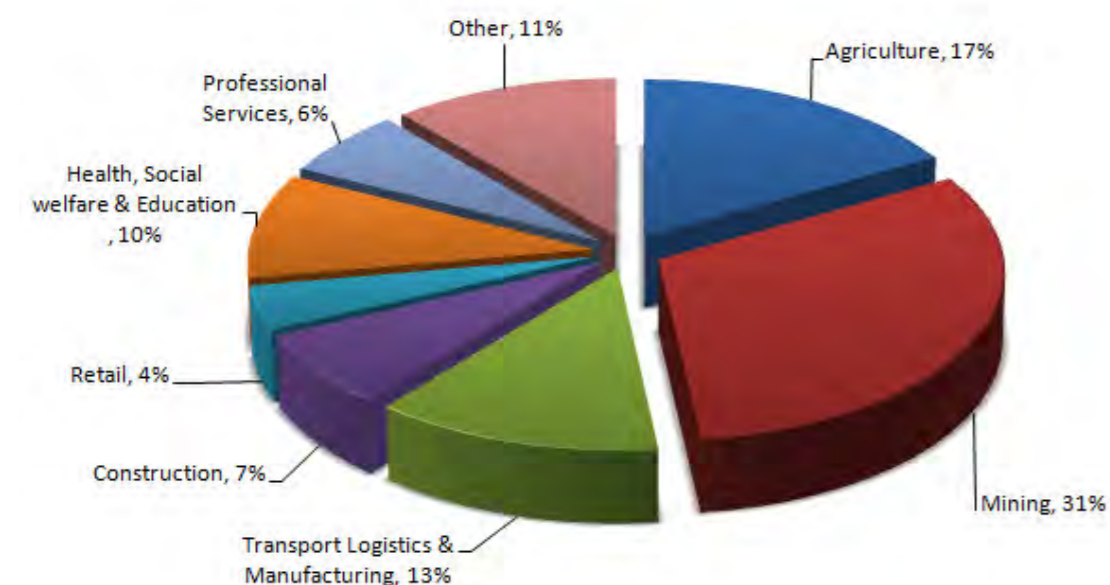
<p> Agriculture, Horticulture & Livestock <i>Leveraging strong water supplies, natural competitive advantages and favourable domestic and global market conditions to make the Central Midlands a dynamic, diversified value adding food producer.</i></p> <p> Peri-Urban & Rural Land <i>Embracing the Sub-region's role as a peri-urban and rural living destination of choice, by providing a diversity of affordable accommodation options and services for new residents.</i></p>	<p> Health & Ageing <i>Respond to the growing needs of older residents and an expanding population by providing improved access to high quality health care, including aged care.</i></p> <p> Mining, Manufacturing & Support <i>Leveraging local and regional mining activity and proximity to major markets to develop and grow the manufacturing and industrial base of the Sub-region, with supporting services and supply chains.</i></p> <p> Tourism <i>Increase overall tourist visitation to the Sub-region by continuing to support daytrip visitors while growing domestic and international overnight visitor numbers, through activities, attractions and accommodation.</i></p>
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Wheatbelt South

Contributing 31% and 17% respectively to the Wheatbelt South’s industry value add (IVA), mining and agriculture are the Sub-region’s major economic drivers.

As shown in Figure 10, transport, logistics and manufacturing; health, social welfare and education; and construction are also significant contributors.

Figure 10 Industry Value Add: Wheatbelt South Sub-region (2012/13)



Source: RPS (2012), RPS Economics Gross Regional Product Model, RPS, Gold Coast

Similar to the Central East, the high value of mining masks the significant contribution of the Sub-region’s agricultural industry, with agriculture in the Wheatbelt South generating the largest IVA in real terms.

Agriculture is the largest employment sector in the Wheatbelt South, employing 35% of the workforce. Health, social welfare and education; transport, logistics and manufacturing; and retail are also significant employment sectors.

In 2011, the annual average unemployment rate in the Wheatbelt South was 4.1%, below the State average of 4.7%¹²⁸. Workforce participation rates in the sub-region at 64.5% are similar to the State average (64%), indicating that any major employment growth will need to be accommodated by in migration.

Themes for future economic development that include agriculture, livestock and food supply chains; health and education; lifestyle, amenity and retirement; and tourism (Figure 11). A more comprehensive assessment of the Sub-region’s economy and more information growth opportunities is available in the Wheatbelt South Sub-regional Economic Strategy.

In partnership with the Town of Narrogin, Shire of Narrogin and Shire of Cuballing the WDC is developing the Greater Narrogin Regional Centre Growth Plan. WDC is also consulting with a “Thought Leaders” group made up of business and community members. This plan outlines how Narrogin can grow to support a sub-regional population of 22,500.

Figure 11: Wheatbelt South Sub-Regional Economic Strategy

Global Drivers

The Wheatbelt South is the agricultural heart of the Region. Home to extensive wheat and livestock production, the sub-regional economy is an export-oriented economy with emerging strengths in mining and tourism. These economic strengths have the potential to underpin positive population growth of the labour force and new sectors of the economy.

Economic Profile

<p>Population Growth </p> <p><i>The Wheatbelt South has the economic capacity to support 22,500 residents in 2036, growth of almost 7000 new residents in 25 years</i></p>	<p>Agricultural Production </p> <p><i>The Wheatbelt South is a major broadacre grain producing region in the State, with Lake Grace accounting for approximately a quarter of grain production. The Sub-region is also home to almost 30% of the State’s sheep flock and is a major cattle producer.</i></p>	<p>Mining Investment </p> <p><i>Mining investment in the Wheatbelt South has resulted in mining overtaking agriculture as the largest contributor to Gross Regional Product. Nickel mining in Kondinin is expected to continue to drive activity.</i></p>	<p>Health & Ageing </p> <p><i>The Wheatbelt South has one of the oldest population profiles in the Region, with almost one in four residents of towns such as Brookton and Corrigin already aged 65+. This age profile is expected to drive demand for a diverse range of health services, including hospital, GP, allied health and aged care. However, it will also impact the availability of working age people for local businesses, driving the need for population growth.</i></p>	<p>Small Business Generation </p> <p><i>The Wheatbelt South has the most dynamic small business sector across the Region. The Sub-region accounts for almost 30% of all small businesses in the Wheatbelt and has a higher level of small businesses per 1000 residents than leading Region’s such as the South West and Great Southern. Small Business activity is clustered in Narrogin but is distributed across the Sub-region. Agriculture and construction figure strongly while population and ageing is expected to drive population serving sectors like health and retail in the future.</i></p>
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Economic Opportunities

<p> Agriculture, Livestock & Food Supply Chains <i>Comparative climate resilience, established local supply chains and improved access to export infrastructure will allow the Sub-region to compete favourably to meet the growing demand for food in Asia and around the world.</i></p>	<p> Lifestyle, Amenity & Retirement <i>The peri-urban and rural environment of the Sub-region has the potential to attract and support a growing population. This includes catering for existing and new older residents as well attracting new families and workers.</i></p>
<p> Health & Education <i>Population growth and ageing is expected to drive need for health and education services. Health demand will range from primary health care to aged care services, while education services need to be closely linked to local industry.</i></p>	<p> Tourism <i>Tourism is an established opportunity with Wave Rock near Hyden an internationally recognised destination. Opportunities exist to leverage to the sub-region’s proximity to Perth to capture the ‘grey-nomad’, adventure and eco-tourism markets.</i></p>

References

¹²³ RPS (2012) Avon Sub-regional Economic Strategy, Wheatbelt Development Commission, Northam

¹²⁴ RPS (2014) Central Coast Sub-regional Economic Strategy, Wheatbelt Development Commission, Northam

¹²⁵ RPS (2014) Draft Central East Sub-regional Economic Strategy, Wheatbelt Development Commission, Northam

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ RPS (2014) Draft Central Midlands Sub-regional Economic Strategy, Wheatbelt Development Commission, Northam

¹²⁸ RPS (2014) Draft Wheatbelt South Sub-regional Economic Strategy, Wheatbelt Development Commission, Northam



Creating jobs

Appendix 3

Comprehensive Action Plan

Section 5 of the Blueprint has identified 40 priority short to mid-term actions to maximise growth opportunities for the Wheatbelt. Growth of the Region will rely on a range of actions. This appendix is the full range of strategies that will drive comprehensive and lasting growth, who will be the key stakeholders and describes outcomes will be achieved by 2050 is stated actions are implemented. It identifies transformational actions – those things that will move the Region beyond a ‘business as usual; growth pattern. The Foundational actions identified are more ‘business as usual’ actions, but important to address if growth targets are to be achieved.

1. Vibrant Economy

Aspiration: A diversified and adaptive economic base building on the Region’s assets and aligned with state, national and international opportunity.

Outcome 1.1: Diverse and innovative business and industry grow the Wheatbelt’s global market share.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Emerging industries diversify the economy and create new jobs	State Gov WDC Industry	Develop and promote emerging industries identified in the Wheatbelt Sub-regional Economic Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensive agriculture Transport and logistics Renewable energy (generation and distribution) Population services including tourism, aged care, health and education Knowledge products in areas of comparative advantage: Land stewardship, agriculture, specialised engineering 	Plan for and promote relocation of businesses from Perth Region (mining services, manufacturing, intensive agriculture, waste facilities) Expand planning policy for the management of Basic Raw Materials (BRM’s) beyond peri-urban Local Government Authorities	Gross Regional Domestic Product growth rate of 8.2% grows value from \$6.4b in 2012 to \$135b in 2050 No single industry contributes more than 25% of Regional Industry Value Add The State’s waste is managed to both reduce landfill and create energy without compromising high value areas (agricultural production or natural amenity.

Outcome 1.1: Diverse and innovative business and industry grow the Wheatbelt’s global market share.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Transformed agriculture remains globally competitive	State Gov WDC Industry	Seizing the Opportunity investment, results in enhanced productivity and profitability for Wheatbelt agri-businesses. Such initiatives include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building business capacity to meet the challenges of globalisation and climate change; Seizing whole of supply chain opportunities in growing global markets; Establishing innovation networks to share and sell knowledge; Improving the industry profile to attract workers, investors and markets; and Investing in infrastructure to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve water use; and enhance access to markets 	Develop cohesive structures that provide consolidation and focus for industry advocacy Ensure legislation and policy settings effectively manage land use conflicts	Agriculture Regional Product grows from \$2b in 2013 to \$22.8b in 2050 The Wheatbelt remains the States leader of agricultural production across the broadacre, horticulture and fishing sectors UWA Future Farm at Pingelly is a world recognised knowledge hub for climate change mitigation Muresk Institute is a world recognised knowledge hub for agriculture and manufacturing
		Identify and develop sites for agricultural processing precincts Support Muresk Institute and Pingelly Future Farm to play a pivotal role in global knowledge transfer in areas such as climate change adaptation, land stewardship and regional development		

Outcome 1.1: Diverse and innovative business and industry grow the Wheatbelt's global market share.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Businesses are networked, digital and Asia-ready	State Gov	Connect and build business capacity and grow markets through Heartlands WA on-line business portal	Develop telecommunications infrastructure that links Wheatbelt businesses regardless of their location	Wheatbelt businesses have a strong presence in key Asian markets
	Peak Bodies			
	NGO's			
		Support business to grow their markets through co-ordinated and strengthened links to Asia	Implement Wheatbelt Digital Action Plan	By 2020 one entity represents and promotes Wheatbelt business
		Develop sub-regional business alliances based on the successful Wheatbelt Business Network and Avon Business Alliance project. Create the Wheatbelt Business Alliance as the umbrella body of these Alliances		

Outcome 1.2: Skilled workers are attracted and retained to meet the needs of the Region and the State.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Workforce attraction meets industry need	Private Enterprise	Undertake innovative and extensive workforce attraction strategies	Review and implement the Wheatbelt Workforce Development Strategy, addressing attraction, retention and workforce development to match current and future requirements of industry and community	The Region has a localised, highly skilled tech. savvy and global workforce
	State Gov			
	Job Networks			
	Training Providers	Develop strategies that mitigate the out-migration of 15-29 year olds	Continue to advocate for Tourist and 457 Visas as critical sources for labour	Policy settings support the relocation of whole families to the Wheatbelt
			Develop cross industry training and employment opportunities across the primary industry sector (farming, mining, manufacturing)	Workers operate seamlessly across industry sectors

Outcome 1.3: Key strategic infrastructure is identified and invested in.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Integrated transport improves access to markets	State Gov	Develop a Wheatbelt Integrated Freight Plan that delivers:	Investment addressed increased heavy vehicles on roads. Current priorities are:	Road, rail and air systems are interconnected, safe and efficient
	Local Gov			
	Private Enterprise			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a grain freight solution, including links to Bunbury Port from Wheatbelt South a lime route solution transport needs for increased mining activity in the region a heavy haulage link from the Avon to Great Northern Highway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GNH Upgrades GEH Upgrades Strategic bypasses and bridges 	Key national highways are maintained to a standard that results in minimal conflict between freight and passenger movement
		Deliver an outer metropolitan ring road: Muchea, Avon, Brookton and associated Inter-modal facilities at these locations	Develop a Wheatbelt Aviation Strategy that addresses emergency, recreational, freight and industry need.	Road planning and construction meets the predicted growth requirements
		Locate the State's second general aviation and regular passenger airport in the Wheatbelt		Airport development in the Wheatbelt addresses pressures at Perth International and Domestic Airports, and Jandakot Airport

Outcome 1.3: Key strategic infrastructure is identified and invested in.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Digital capacity increases access to markets and services	Fed Gov	Build 88 additional mobile towers	Build 10 additional Mobile Towers to address identified short term priority need	Digital infrastructure enables Wheatbelt businesses and residents to participate in a global digital economy and have access to world class services and social amenity
	State Gov Local Gov Private Enterprise	Invest in fixed broadband bandwidth that enables real time video conferencing for e-health, e-education and e-business across the Region Support the development of knowledge hubs where lifestyle opportunity, comparative advantage and broadband capacity intersect		
Land supply meets economic and population growth requirements	State Gov Local Gov Private Enterprise	Implement “Energising the Wheatbelt”: renewable energy creation, distribution and transmission models, and where possible using this energy to provide and process ground water Invest in priority industrial and residential land assembly as identified in sub-regional economic plans and land assembly audits Develop ‘self-contained’ industrial and residential developments (own power and water sources, creative sewerage solutions)	Undertake targeted utilities investment, including maintenance and upgrades of existing infrastructure and innovative end of grid solutions Complete Avon Industrial Park Stage 3 Cluster complimentary businesses aligned to sub-regional advantage in precincts Replicate the Septic Tank Effluent disposal (STED) sewerage system Continue and expand Infill Sewerage Program	Land development normalised and cost of utilities connection is commensurate with metropolitan costs Supply meets demand of population of 180,000

Outcome 1.3: Key strategic infrastructure is identified and invested in.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Housing is diverse and of quality, matching household compositions	State Gov Local Gov NGO's	20 communities develop quality medium density universally designed housing Wheatbelt Cluster Housing model addresses aged care needs across 20 communities	Invest in priorities emerging from the 2014 Wheatbelt Housing Audit Develop a strategy to address market failure in housing development, including the development of cross community investment vehicles to attract leveraged funding	A normalised housing market delivers diversity in dwelling structure, renewal and growth in housing stock

2. Clever People

Aspiration: Lifelong learning - innovation and leadership drive economic growth and community vibrancy.

Outcome 2.1: Education and lifelong learning drives productivity.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Participation and achievement enhances productivity	State Gov Private education	<p>Reform service delivery to meet dispersed population setting, particularly in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early intervention • Integration of services • Use of transport and technology to improve access <p>Develop regionally based and resourced interagency intervention programs, including Parenting Centres in each regional centre, providing support to hinterland communities</p> <p>Enhance the footprint of higher education delivery through C Y O'Connor and Muresk Institute providing multi-disciplinary post compulsory training and education, particularly in areas aligned to the Region's comparative advantage (primary production, transport, logistic and manufacturing, population services, health, aged care, education)</p> <p>Policy settings enable the measurement of outcome cost/benefits rather than just input costs</p>	<p>Invest in fit for purpose infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 Moora, • Senior and Middle School Northam, Narrogin • New primary schools Northam and Narrogin • Renewal of 7 District High Schools • New TAFE Campus Narrogin • Investment in e-learning - hard and soft infrastructure <p>Develop and implemented programs to address needs of marginalised/at risk students (migrants, Aboriginal, disengaged youth)</p> <p>Invest in a WA Regional Higher Education Strategy</p>	<p>The education attainment of Wheatbelt residents compares favourably with their metropolitan counterparts</p> <p>Child Development Indices improve from 63% of Local Governments having a SEIFA of less than 1000 in 2013, to 50% in 2025 and 40% in 2050</p> <p>The Wheatbelt population profile in age cohort 15-29 increases from 15% of population in 2013 to 20% in 2030</p> <p>No matter where people live in the Wheatbelt, they have access to higher education, and are supported in their studies by knowledge networks</p>

Outcome 2.1: Education and lifelong learning drives productivity.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Pathways to employment drives economic growth	Fed Gov State Gov Business sector	<p>Enhance career development programs in schools</p> <p>Match training and workforce development offerings to industry need and better support small business to support training</p> <p>Design and deliver childcare services to suit a dispersed population context</p> <p>Co-ordinate programs to deliver employment and/or enterprise strategies for disengaged youth and the long term unemployed. One region, one provider</p>	<p>Support partnerships between schools, business and training providers to ensure that the new Western Australian Certificate of Education policy results in improved pathways from school, to training and employment</p> <p>Review and monitor the implementation of the Wheatbelt Workforce Development Strategy</p>	<p>Increased number of apprentices and traineeships trained in the Region and aligned to industry need</p> <p>Aboriginal employment participation improves from 26.2% unemployment in 2013 to 20% by 2020, 15% by 2025, 10% by 2030</p> <p>Childcare services increase workforce participation</p>
Aboriginal enterprise creates financial independence	Fed Gov State Gov Not For Profits Elders Groups	<p>Support Elders Groups develop and implement initiatives relevant to local need</p>	<p>Maximise opportunities from South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council for Aboriginal enterprise initiatives</p>	<p>Healing and economic independence results from Aboriginal enterprise</p>

Outcome 2.2: Innovation drives economic, social and environmental outcomes.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Innovation networks drive economic and community vibrancy	Fed Gov	Create 'knowledge hubs' where lifestyle opportunity, competitive advantage and broadband capacity intersect	Support programs that connect and support innovators (e.g. The Grow Zone)	Wheatbelt knowledge hubs attract world class innovators, lead to increased productivity, generate export income for the region and foster engagement and innovation
	State Gov			
BR & D capacity drive economic and community vibrancy	Local Gov	Establish a Wheatbelt Innovation Fund	Promote innovators within the Region	The Wheatbelt continues to be a focus of research activity in the university sector
	Private Enterprise			
	NFP's			
BR & D capacity drive economic and community vibrancy	State Gov	Muresk Institute is supported to foster a global regional knowledge network	Improve R&D in the region through strong links to University sector	The Wheatbelt continues to be a focus of research activity in the university sector
	Universities			
	Private enterprise			
		Establish a Wheatbelt 'Thinkers in residence'	Continue links to universities, including Pingelly Future Farm and Muresk Institute with an aim to foster research and development and attract bright young people to the region	

Outcome 2.3: Leadership harnesses diverse capacity that delivers benefit at a local, sub-regional and regional level.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Innovative governance creates efficiency and effectiveness across communities.	Fed Gov	Support the development of regional entities (such as regional infrastructure trusts and regional service providers) to own and manage assets across communities	Continue to support groups of local governments to develop cross community priority projects	Government, community groups and business sector are well placed to manage population growth
	State Gov			
Leadership and civic engagement underpins vibrant communities.	WDC	Develop more effective service delivery by devolving central decision making and resource allocation to region scale governance structures to improve the delivery of proactive integrated solutions across communities	Wheatbelt Foundation Fund continues to support leadership development programs	Local groups, with strong governance structures, drive economic and social development across communities
	NFP's			
	Private enterprise			
Leadership and civic engagement underpins vibrant communities.	Fed Gov	Establish leadership networks to share innovative ideas, support leadership initiatives and foster emerging leaders	Wheatbelt Foundation Fund continues to support leadership development programs	Wheatbelt leadership is diverse and based on collaborative models of engagement
	State Gov			
	Local Gov			
Volunteers contribute critical social capital	NFP's	Support Aboriginal Elders in each sub-region to develop economic and community programs appropriate to need	"Thought Leaders" group continues to support implementation of Sub-regional Economic Strategies	Minority groups are fully engaged in all aspects: community, business and civic life
	Private enterprise			
Volunteers contribute critical social capital	Local Gov	Support strategies that foster co-ordinated volunteer engagement and service delivery across community activity (emergency services, health and well-being, culture and arts, sport and recreation)	Volunteer contribution costed and accounted for in service delivery	Wheatbelt residents continue with high rates of volunteerism (26-50%)
	Community Resource Centres			

3. Liveable Communities

Aspiration: Diverse, safe, healthy and resilient communities where services and infrastructure reflect the needs and aspirations of current residents and attracts new residents

Outcome 3.1: Connected settlements support economic growth and offer multiple liveability options.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Strong and connected sub-regions – regional centres and hinterlands	WDC	Implement priorities identified in Sub-regional Economic Strategies and Regional Centre Growth Plans	Plan for high growth areas to the North of Perth and the Avon Arc	Annual population growth rate of 2.3% achieves a population target of 180,000 by 2050
	Local Gov			
	State Gov	Attract investment that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precinct development Land assembly Industry development Community amenity Market the liveability of Wheatbelt communities through Heartlands WA promotions		Jurien Bay, Merredin, Moora, Narrogin and Northam: Vibrant sub-regional centres strongly connected to hinterland communities
	Fed Gov			
	LandCorp			
	Private Enterprise			
Public transport enhances access to services	State Gov	Develop and implement a Wheatbelt Public Transport Plan that delivers Inter and intra region transport co-ordination	Support the Avon Link revitalisation initiative	Transport networks connect residents regardless of where they live to: work, services and recreation
	Local Gov			
	Community groups			
				Increased visitation results from enhanced transport systems

Outcome 3.2: Service Delivery Reform ensures health, education, aged, youth and children’s services reflect the needs of current and future Wheatbelt residents.					
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050	
Ageing in place	Federal Gov	Transform aged care and support service delivery through the implementation of the Wheatbelt Aged Care Support and Solutions Report	Support local governments plan for and deliver age friendly communities	Aged care infrastructure and services enable residents to age in place. They no longer have to leave the Region to live to enable access services	
	State Gov				
	Local Gov	Implement the cluster housing model by seeking investment for 20 clusters across the Wheatbelt		Aged Care reform results in another 14 residential beds in the Region by 2015 and 200 by 2027	
	Not for Profits				
					Advocate for new aged care delivery structures that deliver an integrated service across communities
					Develop and aged care industry strategy
Children’s services	Federal Gov	Deliver improved health, well-being and education results by early intervention and integration of services.	Priorities identified in the Wheatbelt Children’s Services Plan are invested	Child Development Indices improve from 63% of Local Governments having a SEIFA of less than 1000 in 2013, to 50% in 2025 and 40% in 2050	
	State Gov				
	Local Gov				
	Not for Profits				

Outcome 3.2: Service Delivery Reform ensures health, education, aged, youth and children's services reflect the needs of current and future Wheatbelt residents.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Family services	State Gov Not for Profits	Reform service delivery by developing sub-regional, cross agency governance structures that result in quality and cost effective services. One region, one provider	Develop a Wheatbelt Family Services Plan to address changing population profiles	Wheatbelt residents access a full range of services close to home
Health and well-being	Federal Gov State Gov Local Gov Not for Profits	Develop a strategy that delivers a comprehensive and co-ordinated mental health service. One region, one provider	Review Sub-Regional Health Service Plans to reflect changing community health profiles Investment from the Southern Inland Health Initiative improves primary care and accident and emergency services	Morbidity indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obesity • Arthritis • Cardio vascular disease • Diabetes • Male youth suicide • Mental health indicators have been significantly improved for Wheatbelt residents

Outcome 3.2: Service Delivery Reform ensures health, education, aged, youth and children's services reflect the needs of current and future Wheatbelt residents.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Safety	State Gov		Current review of Police services accounts for Wheatbelt characteristics	Community safety is a key attraction for current and new residents
Services to growth areas	Federal Gov State Gov Local Gov	Plan for and deliver services required in high growth areas of Gingin, Chittering and Dandaragan	A strong and vibrant network of sub-regional interagency groups plan for and deliver service delivery reform to meet the needs of a growing population	Population triggers are identified, and used to plan and implement new services
Culture and the Arts enhances liveability and enterprise	Local Gov NGO's Private enterprise	Support improved cohesion of multiple small groups across the region Complete the World's biggest art gallery, linking arts across the Central East	Support and promote the Wheatbelt Arts Trail Promote Wheatbelt Artists Calendar of Wheatbelt Events developed and promoted	The Wheatbelt is a focus for artists, resulting in industry growth and enhanced liveability options

Outcome 3.3: Community Amenity contributes to community well being and liveability and create economic opportunity.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Heritage	Local Gov	Develop heritage assets as places for Aboriginal enterprise and healing, e.g. Mogumber and Wandering Missions	Implement heritage projects emerging from the Wheatbelt Tourism Strategy	Wheatbelt built heritage is a valued community asset that is used for both community amenity and economic opportunity
	State Gov			
	NFP's		Wheatbelt Heritage Asset Register complete	
	Private enterprise			
Sport and recreation	State Gov	Implement the Wheatbelt Active Communities Plan, with a focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing soft infrastructure to better utilise hard infrastructure and increase resident activity; Innovative infrastructure design and co-location; and enhanced water management. 		Recreation facilities in Wheatbelt communities are highly utilised
	Local Gov			Talented Wheatbelt athletes continue to compete successfully on the world stage
				Activity levels of Wheatbelt residents contribute to reduced morbidity rates

4. Valued Natural Amenity

Aspiration: The Wheatbelt's unique natural amenity is valued as an asset for social, cultural and economic development for current and future generations.

Outcome 4.1: Climate change opportunities are pursued and risk minimised.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Climate change mitigation	Fed Gov	Export knowledge in climate change adaptation	Seizing the Opportunity R&D supports mitigation and adaptation strategies, particularly in the Wheatbelt's east	Wheatbelt's agricultural productivity continues to grow
	State Gov			
	R& D sector			
	Industry			
			UWA Future Farm supports climate change adaptation	The Wheatbelt's land stewardship is recognised internationally
			Emergency Services Plans account for increased numbers of extreme weather events that result in fire flooding and high winds	
			Coastal Town Plans account for coastal shore shift	

Outcome 4.2: Landscape Management protects biodiversity and ensures compatible and profitable land use.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Landscape management	Fed Govt	Support industry innovation in soil management	Evaluate current soil management initiatives and develop best practice holistic management methods	Productivity gains result from sound land stewardship
	State Govt			
	Industry			
			Ensure NRM groups have the capacity to support on the ground 'best practice' land stewardship	The Wheatbelt has developed a knowledge economy around dry land stewardship
				Soil condition is improved to increase productivity and reduce environmental impact

Outcome 4.3: Water management results in water security to enable community amenity and industry development.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Water security through water and wastewater planning and management	State Gov	Integrated water planning for the State that assures security of supply for Wheatbelt communities and industry	Implement an infill sewerage program with focus on peri-urban growth areas, to enable development	Secure water sources meet community and economic need
	Local Gov			
	Private enterprise			
		Integrated water planning for each Wheatbelt community, to increase water harvesting, recycling and re-use	Develop alternative sewerage options for smaller communities	100% water re-use achieved by 2030
		Invest in priority infrastructure identified in these plans so that industrial and community needs are met	Develop local desalination and re-use plants meet residential and industrial water needs	

Outcome 4.4: Nature based industry utilises the Wheatbelt's natural assets.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Renewable energy	Fed Gov	Support development of a demonstration solar farm to meet community-wide need	Collgar Wind Farm Stage 2	The Wheatbelt generates 80% of the State's renewable energy
	State Gov		Mid West Energy Project complete	
	Local Gov	Develop local distributed energy options		
	Private Enterprise	State waste facility located in the region creates opportunity for energy generation		

Outcome 4.4: Nature based industry utilises the Wheatbelt's natural assets.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Nature based tourism	State Gov	Develop a comprehensive nature based tourism plan within a Wheatbelt wide tourism strategy	Visitor information and investment in the Wheatbelt National Parks and nature reserves	Nature based tourism contributes to increased number of visitors, enhanced community amenity and improved understanding and respect for the environment
	Local Gov			
	Private Enterprise			
			Living Lakes Program continues to revitalise lake systems	

5. Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities

Aspiration: The Wheatbelt value proposition is clear to investors in government and private enterprise and families wishing to live and visit

Outcome 5.1: Workers, businesses, visitors, and investors are attracted to the region.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Targeted marketing	State Gov	Develop investor prospectuses emerging from sub-regional economic strategies	Profile Wheatbelt opportunities and match global queries with these opportunities through the Heartlands WA online marketing and 'business-connect' portal	Workforce shortages in key industries and geographic locations are met
	Local Gov			Targeted marketing results in increased investment and business relocation to the Region
Influencing key decision makers	NFP's	Implement worker attraction campaign to meet industry need	Support tourism groups to collaborate in developing and marketing product	Visitor numbers grow to 1.2m per annum by 2020
	Heartlands WA			
	Private Enterprise			
Influencing key decision makers	Federal Gov	Continue targeted messaging in relation to Wheatbelt investment and reform opportunities	Ongoing liaison with agencies, investors and elected members around Blueprint priorities	Wheatbelt issues are well understood and planning and investment meets developmental need
	State Gov			
	Local Gov			
	Private enterprise			
	Families			

6. Effective Partnerships

Aspiration: Cost effective investment occurs as a result of good information, quality project management and leveraged investment

Outcome 6.1: High impact and cost Effective Investment.				
Focus	Delivery	Transformational Actions	Foundation Actions	Outcome 2050
Infrastructure coordination	Fed Gov	The Wheatbelt Infrastructure Co-ordinating Group maximises co-ordination of major infrastructure development	Proactive planning on a sub-regional level (rather than reactive planning on a proponent-by-proponent/local level)	Utilities infrastructure development is coordinated and aligned to developmental priorities of the Region
	State Gov			
	Local Gov			
	Private Enterprise			
Agency co-ordination	Federal Gov		Ongoing liaison to ensure alignment with agency planning and Wheatbelt Regional Investment Blueprint	Targeted and effective investment contributes to meeting economic and population growth
	State Gov			
Local government collaboration	State Gov		Supporting groups of local governments to deliver collaborative projects	Cross community investment achieves economy of scale
	Local Gov			
Proponent support	Federal Gov	Supporting proponents to deliver priority actions identified in the Wheatbelt Regional Investment Blueprint		Targeted and effective investment contributes to meeting economic and population growth
	State Gov			
	Local Gov			
	Private Enterprise			
	Not for Profits			



Working *together* for the future

APPENDIX FOUR: Wheatbelt Region Map



APPENDIX FOUR: State Map



Acronyms

AAGR – average annual growth rate

ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics

AEDI – Australian Early Development Index

BMI – Body Mass Index

BRM – basic raw materials

COAG – Council of Australian Governments

CSIRO - Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation

DHS – Department of Human Services

DRD – Department of Regional Development

DSC – Disability Services Commission

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organisation

GDP – gross domestic product

GEH – Great Eastern Highway

GNH – Great Northern Highway

GP – general practitioner

GRP – gross regional product

GSP – gross state product

IWSS – Integrated Water Supply Scheme

IVA – industry value add

K-12 – Kindergarten to Year 12

LGA – local government authority

NBN – National Broadband Network

NFP – not - for - profit organisation

NGO – non government organisation

NRM – Natural Resource Management

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

R&D – research and development

RDWA – Regional Development Australia – Wheatbelt

RDL – Department of Regional Development and Lands

RMCP – Regional Mobile Communications Project

SEIFA - Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

SIHI – Southern Inland Health Initiative

STED – Septic Tank Effluent Disposal

SWALSC - South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council

SWIS – South West Interconnected System

WALGA – WA Local Government Association

WAM – WA Music

WAPC – Western Australian Planning Commission

WASCS – Wheatbelt Aged Support and Care Solution/s

WDC – Wheatbelt Development Commission

VET – Vocational Education and Training

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A long-exposure photograph of a night sky filled with concentric star trails. The trails are most prominent in the upper half of the frame, creating a sense of rotation. In the lower half, the dark silhouettes of several trees and the roof of a house are visible against the lighter, orange-tinged twilight sky.

Say *Hello* to the Wheatbelt

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