



Wheatbelt Development Commission

Annual Report 2023-24



wheatbelt.wa.gov.au

Acknowledgement of Country

The Wheatbelt Development Commission respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands that we live and work on; the family and clan groups of the Ballardong, Goreng, Gubrun, Kalamaia, Njaki-Njaki, Whadjuk, Wilman, Wudjari, Yued and Yamatji People, their Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge their living culture and important role in the sustainable economic development and prosperity of the Wheatbelt. We are committed to embracing opportunities for Aboriginal economic development, entrepreneurship and wealth creation; being a voice of change and reconciliation; supporting sustainable and healthy communities; and empowering future leaders.



Statement of Compliance

For year ended 30 June 2024

Hon Don Punch, MLA

Minister for Regional Development; Disability Services; Fisheries; Seniors and Ageing; Volunteering

In accordance with Section 63 of the *Financial Management Act 2006*, we hereby submit for your information and presentation to Parliament, the Annual Report of the Wheatbelt Development Commission for the financial year ended 30 June 2024.

The Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the *Financial Management Act 2006*.



Robyn Sermon

Chair
1 September 2024



Robert Cossart

Chief Executive Officer
1 September 2024



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Formats

To reduce our environmental impact, this report has been published in an electronic format.

If you would like to receive a physical copy of this report, please contact us using the details provided.

Feedback

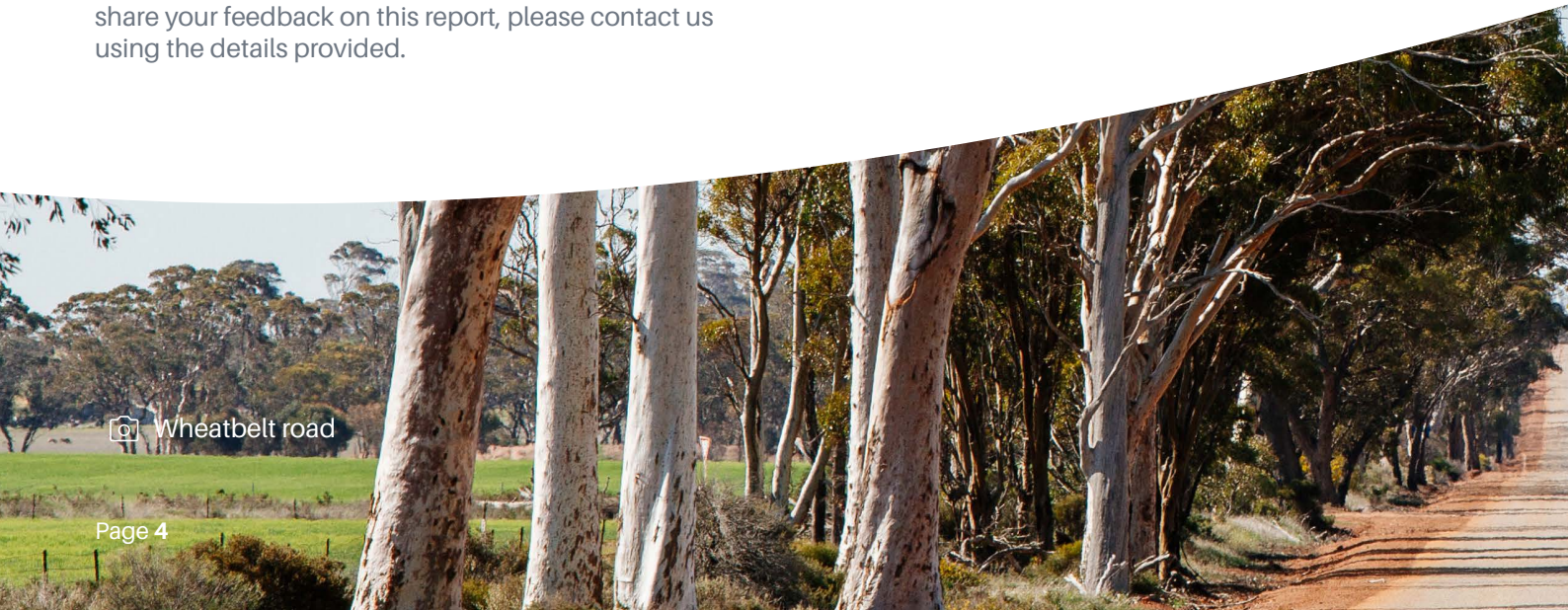
Ensuring the transparency, accuracy and relevance of our annual report is of paramount importance to us. To share your feedback on this report, please contact us using the details provided.

Contact Us

Telephone: (08) 9622 7222
 Email: info@wheatbelt.wa.gov.au
 Internet: www.wheatbelt.wa.gov.au

Cover Image

Collgar Wind Farm, Merredin, Western Australia
 Photography credit: Tourism Western Australia



 Wheatbelt road

Welcome to our 2023-24 Annual Report

This Annual Report informs Parliament, our stakeholders and the community of the operational, financial and service performance of the Wheatbelt Development Commission during the 2023-24 financial year.

It aims to demonstrate how the Wheatbelt Development Commission (the Commission) has facilitated economic development in the Wheatbelt through the initiatives it has supported, while also highlighting the challenges and opportunities that will shape the region's future.

This report is structured into three sections:

1. Agency Overview
2. Agency Performance
3. Disclosures and Legal

The performance of the Commission has been reported in alignment with the strategic priorities outlined in the Commission's *Strategic Plan 2024-26*, ensuring that all achievements reflect the long-term goals and objectives of the organisation.



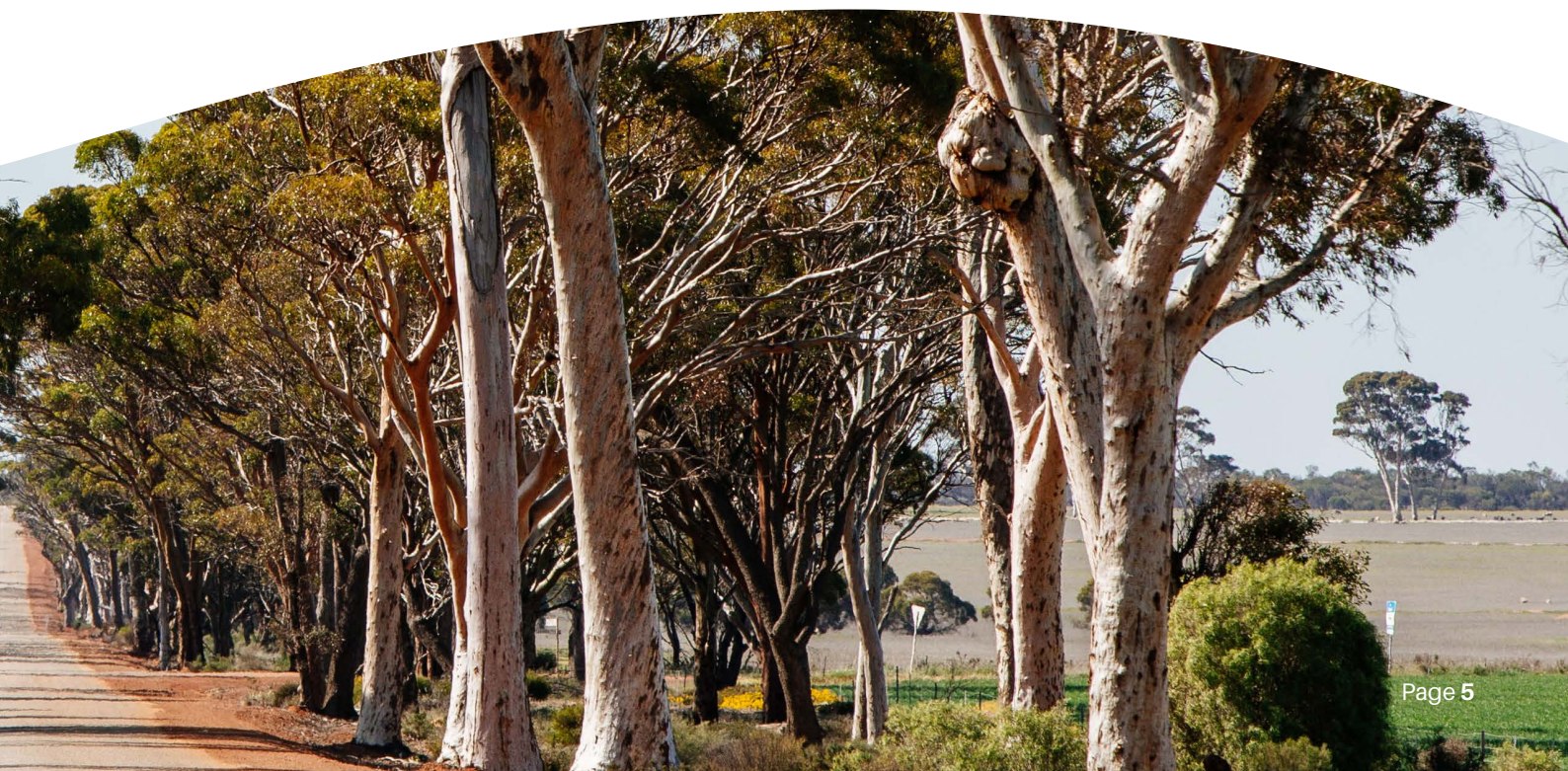
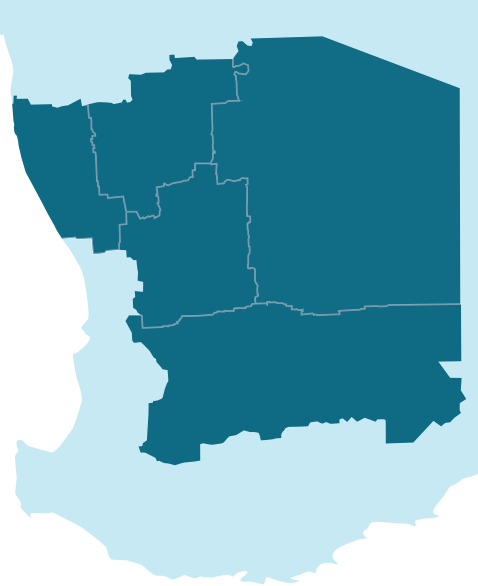
Scan here to view the Commission's **Strategic Plan 2024-26**

About the Wheatbelt Development Commission

The Commission is a statutory authority of the Western Australian Government. It is one of nine Regional Development Commissions, each serving a different region of Western Australia (WA).

The Commission was established under the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993* to promote economic growth in the Wheatbelt. The Commission's responsibilities include facilitating investment opportunities, supporting opportunities for local businesses and working on strategic planning to address the unique needs of the Wheatbelt.

With key focus areas of renewable energy, climate resilience, housing and infrastructure, the Commission aims to strengthen the Wheatbelt's economic resilience and overall prosperity.





From the Chair

Robyn Sermon

As Chair of the Wheatbelt Development Commission, I am delighted to present our Annual Report for 2023-24.

Joining the Commission in September 2023 has been a great opportunity for me to visit many parts of the Wheatbelt and connect with people who are passionate about the future of this region.

In October 2023 the *WA Regional Development Framework* was released, outlining five key focus areas for the WA Regional Development Portfolio in our journey towards long-term sustainable prosperity in regional WA.

The priorities outlined in the Portfolio Plan align with the significant growth observed in the Wheatbelt over the past year. Driven by the continued growth of the agriculture sector, the Wheatbelt is diversifying into renewable energy and mining. The influx of significant private investment underscores this growth, marking a pivotal shift towards a diversified and resilient regional economy.

In 2023, the Wheatbelt's Gross Regional Product reached \$9 billion, with a Regional Economic Output of \$17.4 billion. The agricultural sector continues to be the backbone of the Wheatbelt's economy, contributing more than \$4.99 billion in economic output. Meanwhile, the mining and resources sector is expanding rapidly, generating over \$4.23 billion in economic output and is projected to surpass agriculture as the leading export industry in the coming years.

The Wheatbelt's favourable climatic and geographic conditions are fostering an array of renewable energy projects. Over the next 15 years, it is projected that wind and solar generation in the Wheatbelt will grow to 9GW, with 22 projects in various phases of feasibility, construction and development.

While it can be tempting to focus solely on the positives of this past year, it's crucial not to overlook the challenges. The 2023-24 summer was one of the driest periods on record across large parts of the south-west land division.

In response to the impacts on the region's agriculture sector, the Commission's CEO was appointed by the Minister for Agriculture and Food as Chair of the Dry Season Taskforce in April 2024. The Taskforce was established to ensure a coordinated approach across government and industry to support agriculture business and rural communities through the challenging conditions.

As we look ahead, the Commission remains committed to fostering the long-term growth of the Wheatbelt, with vibrant communities that contribute to a prosperous and sustainable future.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the Board members for their commitment and to Oral McGuire for his service as Interim Chair from February to September 2023 and his ongoing contribution as Deputy Chair. I also extend my thanks to Julie Flockart and Leslee Holmes, who retired from the Board in October 2023.

Alongside continuing Board Members Oral McGuire, Shane Kay and Kerryn Chia, we welcome Tony O'Gorman and Rosemary Madacsi as new local government representatives.

I would like to thank all the staff of the Commission, led by Acting CEO Susan Hall (to February 2024) and returning CEO Robert Cossart (from February 2024), for their dedication and support in advancing the economic development of the Wheatbelt.

Finally, I want to thank all those who play a part in helping to promote and progress this wonderful region. Together, we are making great strides towards a bright and thriving future for the Wheatbelt.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, flowing 'M' followed by a horizontal line.

Robyn Sermon
Chair



Foreword by the Chief Executive Officer

Robert Cossart

As we reflect on the past year, the Wheatbelt Development Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to facilitating growth across the region.

Returning to the Commission in February 2024, after my secondment as State Recovery Coordinator for the 2023 Kimberley Flood Recovery, I want to extend my gratitude to Acting CEO Susan Hall. Her leadership was crucial in maintaining stability and direction of the Commission throughout 2023 and early 2024.

This year we have seen a significant increase in private sector investment in the Wheatbelt, presenting a valuable opportunity to capitalise on the region's unique strengths. This increased interest in development underscores the importance of adopting a strategic approach to regional growth.

Launching in January 2024, the Commission's *Strategic Plan 2024-2026* is focused on expanding both existing and new industries, improving regional living standards, supporting Aboriginal economic participation and achieving organisational excellence.

Our vision is a resilient, diversified Wheatbelt economy with thriving and sustainable communities that contribute to both our region and Western Australia. Over the past year, the Commission has pursued several region-specific initiatives to support this vision.

Addressing the housing shortage was a priority this year. We are collaborating with local governments and the private sector to unlock and develop strategic residential land. Through public and private investments, we aim to create sustainable housing solutions that meet the region's growing needs.

We are also confronting the challenges posed by a drying climate which impacts our regional communities. In response, we are committed to enhancing climate resilience through initiatives such as the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program and WaterSmart Farms project.

The Commission has continued to proactively address regional infrastructure needs, such as power and telecommunications deficiencies exacerbated by the January 2024 storms. We remain committed to collaborating with local governments and partner agencies to identify infrastructure investment priorities for the region.

I am proud to acknowledge the ongoing success of the Regional Economic Development Grants program, with \$573,500 in funding awarded to Wheatbelt projects in Round 6. This program represents our commitment to fostering innovation and our collective dedication to empowering communities in the region.

Furthermore, watching our region shine on the big screen has been a standout moment of the past year. Productions such as the *The Twelve* and *Runt* not only showcase our region's rich storytelling potential but also bring renewed attention to the creative and economic opportunities it offers.

I extend my appreciation to our dedicated staff, whose skills and commitment are vital to the success of regional development. This Annual Report provides a snapshot of our key achievements, made possible by the collective efforts of our Board, staff and the communities, residents and businesses across the region.

The Commission remains dedicated to fostering progress and innovation in the region, making the Wheatbelt a good place to live, work, visit and invest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RC'.

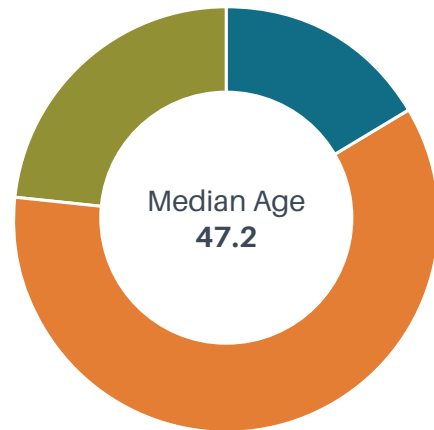
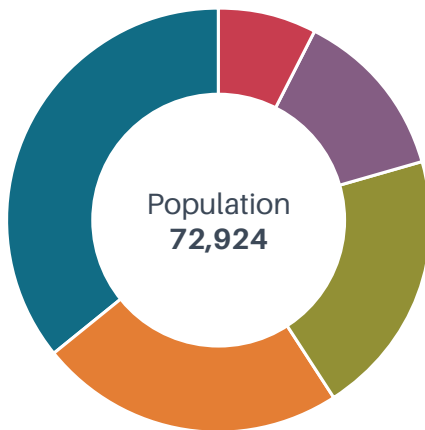
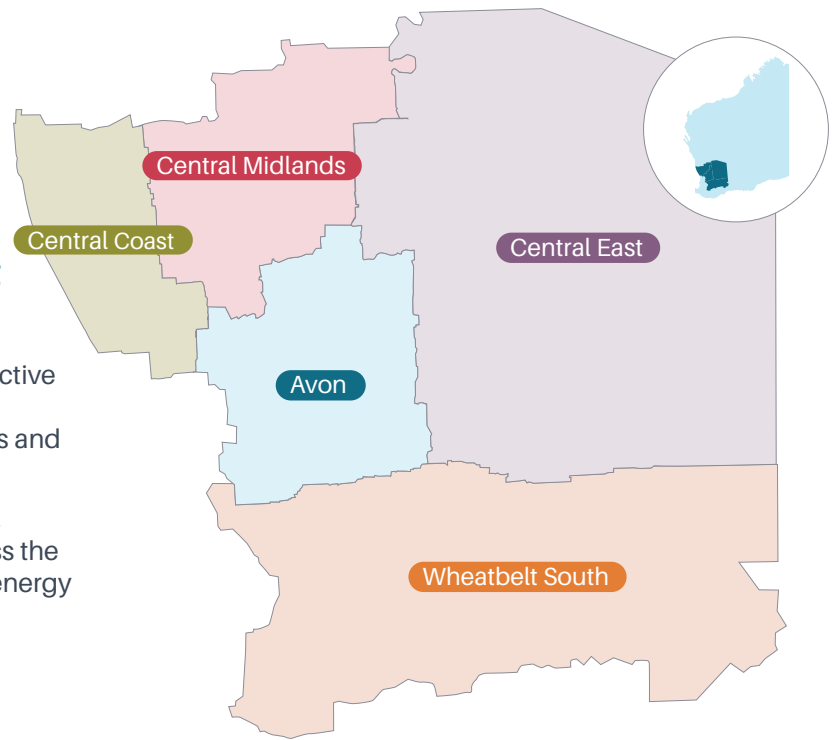
Robert Cossart
Chief Executive Officer

Our Region

Spanning over 154,862km² and housing over 72,000 residents, the Wheatbelt is WA's third most populous region.

From coastal waters and gentle valleys to productive farmlands and rugged terrain, the Wheatbelt's diverse landscape encompasses over 200 towns and settlements across 42 local governments.

The Wheatbelt's economic foundation is strong, stable and varied, driven by diversification across the agriculture, mining, manufacturing, renewable energy and freight and logistics sectors.



Population Per Sub-Regional Area

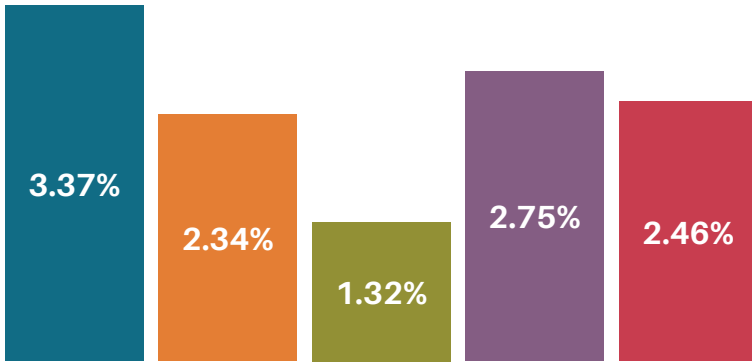
● Avon	25,901
● Wheatbelt South	16,996
● Central Coast	14,861
● Central East	9,396
● Central Midlands	5,770

Age Range Across the Wheatbelt

● Children (0 - 14)	16.61%
● Working age (15 - 64)	60.06%
● Retired (65+)	23.14%

Source: Remplan Community 2021

Source: ArcGIS Sub-region Dashboard / ABS Population and Housing Census 2021



Unemployment Per Sub-Regional Area

● Avon	3.37%
● Wheatbelt South	2.34%
● Central Coast	1.32%
● Central East	2.75%
● Central Midlands	2.46%

Source: ArcGIS Sub-region Dashboard / ABS Population and Housing Census 2021

Top 5 Industries by Regional Economic Output (\$B)

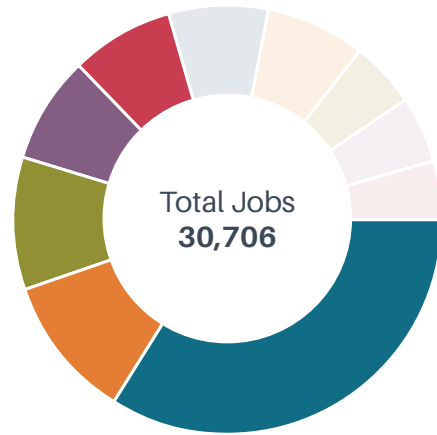
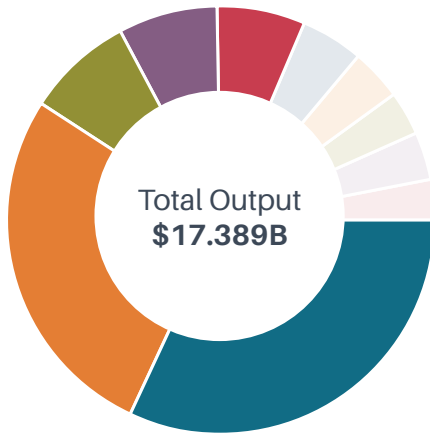
● Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	\$4.997
● Mining	\$4.237
● Construction	\$1.234
● Manufacturing	\$1.166
● Rental, Hiring Real Estate Services	\$1.042

Source: Remplan Economy

Top 5 Industries by Number of Jobs

● Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	9,039
● Health Care & Social Assistance	2,884
● Education & Training	2,631
● Public Administration & Safety	2,147
● Retail Trade	2,092

Source: Remplan Economy



Agency Overview





1

Organisational Structure

Who we are

The Wheatbelt Development Commission is a statutory authority established by the Western Australian Government. It is part of a network of nine Regional Development Commissions, each dedicated to a specific region of WA : Gascoyne, Goldfields-Esperance, Great Southern, Kimberley, Mid West, Peel, Pilbara, South West and Wheatbelt.

Responsible to the Minister for Regional Development, the Commission is overseen by a Board, which includes community representatives, local government representatives and Ministerial appointments. The Commission has a Chief Executive Officer and a team of staff located within the Wheatbelt.

What we do

The Commission facilitates economic and social development in the Wheatbelt, enhancing regional prosperity and wellbeing. Connecting government and the private sector, the Commission ensures economic development opportunities align with regional needs and aspirations.

Enabling legislation

The Commission was established under the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993*.

Other key legislation impacting on the Commission's activities

The Commission complies with all relevant written legislation, including but not limited to:

- *Corruption and Crime Commission Act 2003*;
- *Disability Services Act 1993*;
- *Electoral Act 1907*;
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*;
- *Financial Management Act 2006*;
- *Freedom of Information Act 1992*;
- *Industrial Relations Act 1979*;
- *Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993*;
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*;
- *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003*;
- *Public Sector Management Act 1994*;
- *Royalties for Regions Act 2009*;
- *Salaries and Allowances Act 1975*;
- *State Records Act 2000*; and
- *Procurement Act 2020*.

Objects and functions

Under the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993*, the objects and functions of the Commission are to:

- Maximise job creation and improve career opportunities in the region;
- Develop and broaden the economic base of the region;
- Identify infrastructure services to promote business development within the region;
- Provide information and advice to promote business development within the region;
- Seek to ensure that the general standard of government services and access to those services within the region are comparable to that which applies in the metropolitan area; and
- Generally take steps to encourage, promote, facilitate and monitor the economic development of the region.

For the purpose of achieving these objectives, the Wheatbelt Development Commission:

- Promotes the Wheatbelt;
- Facilitates coordination between relevant statutory bodies and government agencies;
- Cooperates with representatives of industry and commerce, employer and employee organisations, education and training institutions and other sections of the community within the Wheatbelt;
- Identifies opportunities for investment in the region and encourages that investment;
- Identifies infrastructure needs of the region and encourages the provision of that infrastructure; and
- Cooperates with departments of the Public Service of the State and the Commonwealth and other agencies, instrumentalities and statutory bodies of the State and Commonwealth and local government authorities, in order to promote equitable delivery of services.

Focus Areas in 2023-24

Supporting the transition to renewable energy

The Wheatbelt plays a critical role in WA's journey towards a low carbon future. The Commission is collaborating with local governments, renewable energy providers, Western Power and PoweringWA to ensure long-term benefits are secured for the region.

Facilitating regional housing outcomes

To address the acute housing shortage in the region, the Commission is collaborating with local governments and the private sector to activate strategic residential land assets through public and private investment to develop sustainable regional housing solutions.

Bolstering climate resilience

The Wheatbelt is experiencing a drying climate, with ongoing impacts to regional communities. The Commission is committed to building climate resilience across the region through initiatives such as WaterSmart Farms and the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program.

Connecting industries and supply chain infrastructure

To maintain and increase the domestic and international competitiveness of the region, the Commission is committed to facilitating the development of serviced industrial precincts with strategic connections to road and rail infrastructure.

Responsible Minister

Hon Don Punch MLA

Minister for Regional Development; Disability Services; Fisheries; Seniors and Ageing; Volunteering

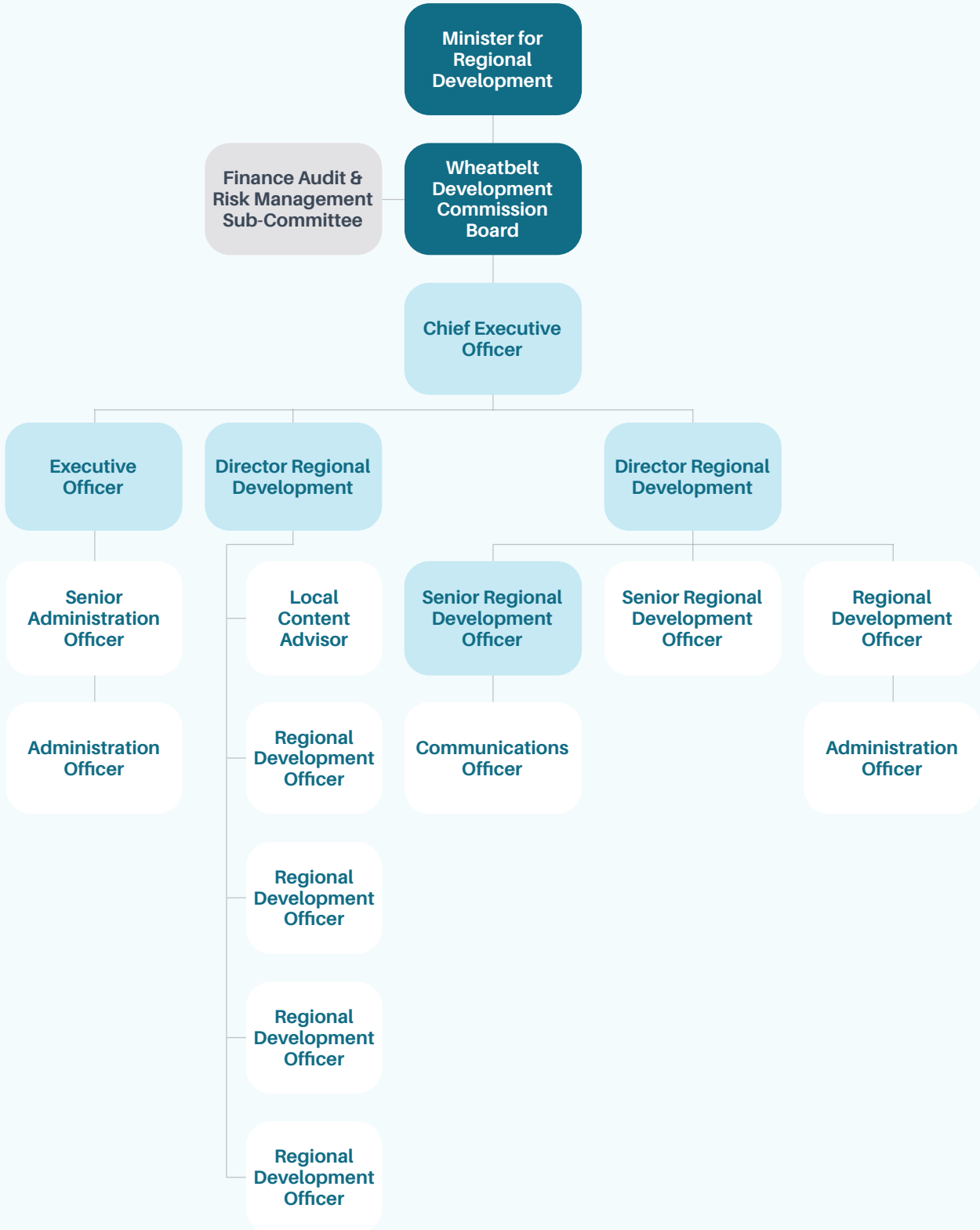
The Wheatbelt Development Commission reports to the Hon Don Punch MLA, Minister for Regional Development; Disability Services; Fisheries; Seniors and Ageing; Volunteering.

The Minister has the power to direct the Commission, either generally or with respect to a particular matter, on the exercise and performance of its powers, functions and duties under the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993*.



Organisational Chart

As of 30 June 2024



Our Board

The Board serves as the authoritative body overseeing the Commission, ensuring the organisation operates efficiently and effectively.

Regular Board meetings inform the formulation of advice to the Minister on regional matters, the establishment of policy directives for the Commission and the prioritisation of budgetary allocations.

Membership comprises community representatives, local government representatives and Ministerial appointments. The Commission's CEO is a member of the Board by virtue of office.



Robyn Sermon, Chair

Ministerial Appointment | Term of office to 31 October 2026

Robyn Sermon is an Executive Leader and Board Director with extensive experience in developing strategy, transforming teams and leading in the mining, agriculture, community and research sectors. Robyn has nearly 30 years of experience in developing business and community strategies, managing stakeholder relationships, negotiating and managing cross sector agreements and partnerships.

Ms Sermon, who was born and bred in the Wheatbelt, is highly regarded for her work in community development and has worked in all WA regions. She is a graduate of AICD and alumni of Leadership WA.



Oral McGuire, Deputy Chair

Ministerial Appointment | Term of office to 31 December 2024

Oral McGuire is a Noongar entrepreneur and landholder. He brings strong cultural knowledge, community networks and business knowledge to the Commission Board.

Mr McGuire is a prominent Noongar community leader, landholder and long-term champion of Aboriginal economic empowerment and capacity building, with specific experience in traditional land and fire management practices and cultural governance. He is a Director of the Noongar Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Chair of the Noongar Landholder Enterprise Inc. and a member of the RegenWA Steering Committee.



Tony O'Gorman

Representing Local Government | Term of office to 31 December 2025

Tony O'Gorman secured the state seat of Joondalup in 2001 and served as its representative for twelve years. In 2014, Tony settled in Jurien Bay, where he immersed himself in local governance. Initially serving as a Club Development Officer, he later assumed the role of Economic Development Manager for the Shire of Dandaragan. Tony retired from his Shire positions in July 2022, but remains a resident of Jurien Bay.

Mr O'Gorman successfully campaigned for a position on the Shire of Dandaragan Council in October 2023, becoming its Shire President. He remains dedicated to fostering the development of Jurien Bay into a prominent tourism destination and ensuring fair economic and community growth throughout the Shire.



Rosemary Madacsi

Representing Local Government | Term of office to 31 December 2025

Rosemary Madacsi has spent more than 40 years in remote and regional communities as a nurse, environmental consultant, leader in local government and in family businesses. She is a passionate regional advocate and has served on numerous key regional local government and community committees.

Ms Madacsi believes that an integrated approach is needed to build regional vitality and resilience and that the strengths and limitations of local government are critical to the robustness of communities. As an active councillor, Rural Water Council executive and member of the WA Feral Pig Advisory Group, she maintains broad interests in ethnography, climate change and regional development.



Kerryn Chia

Representing Community | Term of office to 30 June 2025

Kerryn Chia has a diverse background having worked in the agricultural sector, academia, the corporate sector and local government. She is the fourth generation in a southern Wheatbelt farming family and is currently an active business partner in a mixed enterprise family farm.

Ms Chia has also completed a doctoral research project whilst living in the Wheatbelt and brings her research and analytical skills to her role on the Board. She is passionate about the long-term sustainability of rural communities and her current work with the Shire of West Arthur includes strategic planning, community consultation and economic development.



Shane Kay

Representing Community | Term of office to 30 June 2025

Shane Kay is the Chief Executive Officer of the Moora Group WA, which includes Moora Citrus, Northern Valley Packers and Sandgroper Fruits. With an impressive career spanning over 30 years, Mr Kay has amassed extensive expertise in citrus production, packing and exporting.

In addition to his executive role, he is actively involved as a grower collaborator for research in the citrus industry, contributing valuable insights and practical knowledge to advance the sector.



Robert Cossart

Chief Executive Officer | Ex officio

Robert Cossart has been CEO of the Wheatbelt Development Commission since March 2020. As CEO, he is committed to establishing industry and government partnerships and ensuring the Commission is a respected partner in guiding policy and investment decisions for the region.

Mr Cossart was appointed as the State Recovery Coordinator in January 2023 to lead the State Government's recovery and reconstruction taskforce in response to widespread destruction caused by flooding from ex-Tropical Cyclone Ellie in the Kimberley region.

Our Executive Team

The Commission is composed of a 15-member team headed by the Chief Executive Officer. The Executive Team includes the Chief Executive Officer, two Directors Regional Development, a Senior Regional Development Officer and the Executive Officer.



Robert Cossart

Chief Executive Officer

Robert Cossart has been the Chief Executive Officer of the Wheatbelt Development Commission since March 2020.

Prior to joining the Commission, Mr Cossart was the Director of Northern Agricultural Development at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development. He is a member of the Rural & Regional Advancement Committee of the Mt Burdett Foundation and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Grant Arthur

Director Regional Development

Grant Arthur leads the Regional Services team at the Commission, dedicated to collaborating with local businesses and communities to foster economic and social development within the Wheatbelt.

In addition to working in regional development, Mr Arthur has worked as a Project Manager and Manager at the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, where he was responsible for Crown Land matters in the Mid West and Wheatbelt.



Renee Manning

Director Regional Development

Renee Manning was seconded to the Commission in 2021, after working in State Government across natural resource management, emergency management, land use policy and planning and farming systems research and development. She leads the Commission's climate resilience, energy, telecommunications and local content portfolios

Ms Manning is currently Deputy Shire President with the Shire of Merredin and an immediate past deputy Chair of Merredin College. She is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and an Australian Rural Leadership Program graduate.





Chris Sharples

Senior Regional Development Officer

Chris Sharples joined the Commission in January 2022 to assist in the development of organisational strategy and policy. He leads the Commission’s transport, logistics and infrastructure portfolios.

Mr Sharples has broad career experience across the public and private sectors, including seven years in Freight Planning and Policy at the WA Department of Transport.



Teresa Drew

Executive Officer

Teresa Drew has been the Executive Officer at the Commission since 2011.

As Executive Officer, her role is to support the CEO and Board ensuring the smooth running of the Commission’s governance requirements.



The Humps, Hyden | Shutterstock

Year in Review



Aug 2023

Bringing Dowerin Downtown in Perth

A major sponsor of Bringing Dowerin Downtown 2023, which saw 600 industry leaders attend the showcase event for our region and industry sectors.



Sep 2023

A/CEO Susan Hall travels to Indonesia

As part of the Indonesia Connect Roadshow 2023, led by Premier Roger Cook and including the Hon Jackie Jarvis, Minister for Agriculture and Food; Forestry; Small Business.



Apr 2024

Evoke Living Homes' Production Facility opening in Northam

Celebrating the opening of the Evoke Living Homes' all-weather production facility located in the Mortlock Business Precinct.



Apr 2024

Tour of CBH Group Meenaar grain receival site in Northam

Visiting the CBH Group Meenaar grain receival site highlighted its crucial role in the Wheatbelt's economy and job market.



Apr 2024

Addressing WA's challenging seasonal conditions

Cook Government establishes 2024 Dry Season Taskforce, chaired by the Commission's CEO Robert Cossart.



May 2024

Wheatbelt Futures Forum in Northam

A proud sponsor of the event, with Director Regional Development Renee Manning providing a strategic overview of the economic status of the Wheatbelt.



May 2024

State Budget Lunch in Jurien Bay

The Commission hosted the State Budget Lunch with the Hon David Michael, Minister for Mines and Petroleum; Ports; Road Safety; Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport.



May 2024

Renewable energy in Merredin

Staff visited Collgar Wind Farm, south-east of Merredin. The wind farm has a capacity to generate enough power for 160,000 homes.



Oct 2023

A/CEO Susan Hall travels to Central Midlands region

Visiting local agribusinesses and reconnecting with RED Grant recipient, AgriFRESH, who have been investing in the region through their horticulture operations.



Nov 2023

Round 6 RED Grants Announcement in Moora

Announcement of the Round 6 RED Grant recipients with the Hon Don Punch MLA, Minister for Regional Development at the Moora Speedway.



Feb 2024

Regional Development Commission Collaboration Workshop in Bunbury

Participated in a workshop centred around the regional liveability priority of the Regional Development Portfolio.



Mar 2024

Hosted Premier Roger Cook in Lancelin

Exploring the town's tourism attractions while engaging with stakeholders to prioritise sustainable population and economic growth in the vibrant Central Coast.



Feb 2024

Hosted International Delegation in the Wheatbelt

As part of the Innovate UK tour, highlights included visits to Muresk Institute, SLR Agriculture and Northern Valley Packers, where they were accompanied by Board member Shane Kay.



Feb 2024

evokeAG. 2024 in Perth

Showcasing the Wheatbelt at the country's premier agrifood tech event for farmers, scientists, business leaders and industry experts.



June 2024

The Power Shift in Perth

Hosted by AgZero 2030, CEO Robert Cossart joined a panel discussion on strategies to maximise renewable energy projects and bolster energy system resilience in regional contexts.



June 2024

Touring industry in Dalwallinu

Convening in Dalwallinu, the Commission's Board enjoyed the opportunity to tour the community and visit local businesses, Coerco and Dallcon.



June 2024

Machinery Activation in Perth

Celebrating 60 years of Dowerin Machinery Field Days and bringing the Wheatbelt to the city, five combine harvesters descended on the Langley Park foreshore.

Performance Management Framework

Relationship to government goals

The Commission’s guiding framework is the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993* and the Government’s strategic framework. The outcomes provided in the Act align with the Government goal of growing and diversifying the economy, creating jobs and supporting skills development, as well as the five themes of regional development endorsed by the Regional Development Trust.

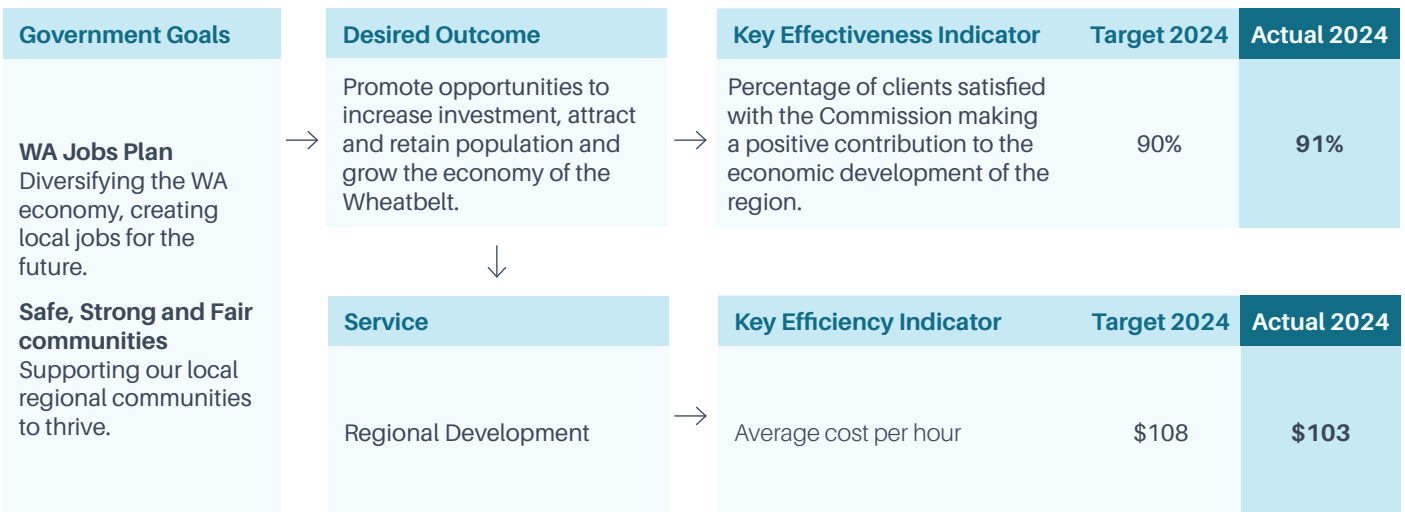
Outcome-based management framework

The Commission measures its effectiveness against the Government’s desired outcomes through an annual client perceptions survey, conducted by an independent market research company.

The Commission’s clients include local governments, Commonwealth and State government agencies, community and not-for-profit groups and private organisations.

Changes to outcome-based management framework

The Commission’s outcome-based management framework did not change during 2023-24.



Shared responsibilities with other agencies

The Commission operates in collaboration with State and Commonwealth agencies to effectively execute its strategic priorities and cross-government initiatives. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is a key partner in the achievement of our mutual objectives and in management of the organisation.

The Commission maintains partnerships with the 42 local governments within the Wheatbelt, identifying projects and initiatives that can make the region a better place to live, work, visit and invest.

Note that the staff of the Commission, excluding the Chief Executive Officer, are employed by DPIRD and are specifically assigned to the Commission as per Section 29 of the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993*.

Workforce inclusiveness

The Commission is committed to a diverse and inclusive workplace, as research shows agencies that value diversity and inclusion achieve greater staff satisfaction, better customer service outcomes and improved decision making. The workforce is more connected, motivated and productive.

As part of the 2023 WA Public Sector Census (conducted by the Public Sector Commission) RDC assigned DPIRD staff participated in the Census and were asked about their diversity, whether they had shared this information and if not, why. These results reflect the voices and experiences of the employees who took part in the survey including assigned staff from across the RDCs but have not been broken down to individual RDCs.

Scan here to view the Public Sector Commission's **2023 WA Public Sector Census**



Agency Performance





2



Wildflowers near Eaglestone Rock | Tourism Western Australia

Our Performance

Guided by our strategic priorities, the Commission works to sustain and enhance existing strengths while identifying opportunities for growth within the Wheatbelt.

Our vision

A diversified and growing Wheatbelt economy with vibrant and dynamic communities, creating a prosperous and sustainable future for WA .

Our mission

To facilitate the long-term development of the Wheatbelt by being a responsive and forward-thinking regional development agency. The Commission is committed to connecting government and the private sector to create practical solutions for our region.

Our values

Leadership

through engagement, advocacy and action

Innovation

in our approach to economic development

Collaboration

by connecting businesses, government and community

Integrity

by upholding organisational excellence

How we work

To ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to regional development across WA, the Regional Development Portfolio Plan identifies five areas of focus.

These focus areas serve as a crucial mechanism for effectively coordinating efforts across regions, whilst also accommodating regional prioritisation. The five focus areas are:

1. Regional Liveability
2. Economic Development, Diversification and Innovation
3. Climate Resilience and Low Carbon Transition
4. Aboriginal Empowerment and Prosperity
5. Organisational Excellence

Strategic priorities

The Wheatbelt Development Commission has aligned its strategic objectives with the regional development themes and outlines the resulting four objectives in the *Strategic Plan 2024-26*. These are detailed on the following page.



Strategic Priority

Grow existing and find and develop new industries

Enhance regional living standards

Increase Aboriginal participation in the regional economy

Organisational Excellence

Goals

- Attract and facilitate regional investment that supports economic growth
- Unlock barriers for new and growing industry
- Support community preparedness and realisation of local benefits arising from economic growth and diversification across the region
- Support and grow sustainable resource management and energy generation practices and projects across the region

- Build, hold and share regional intelligence regarding liveability and living standards
- Support innovative delivery and governance models associated with community services and facilities
- Improve digital connectivity across the region
- Plan for and support initiatives and programs that deliver housing outcomes across the region
- Promote the liveability and economic contribution of the Wheatbelt

- Support Aboriginal economic opportunities arising from the South West Native Title Settlement as a significant economic development package
- Support Aboriginal economic participation and unlock barriers for opportunities to grow participation

- Develop and retain collaborative and trusted partnerships in regional development
- As an organisation, lead by example demonstrating effective organisational governance, systems, processes and behaviours

Strategic Priority #1

Grow Existing and Find and Develop New Industries

Through facilitation and advocacy, the Commission is dedicated to diversifying the regional economy by leveraging existing strengths while seeking to develop and support new industries and businesses across the Wheatbelt.

\$15 billion investment pipeline

Capitalising on emerging investment opportunities

The region is set to capitalise on significant investments flowing into agriculture, mining, renewable energy and transportation. The Commission is working with the Wheatbelt’s local governments to ensure the region is well-prepared to support and leverage investment opportunities.



Leveraging the Wheatbelt’s role in renewable energy and decarbonisation

Supporting renewable energy companies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and nuances of the Wheatbelt, connecting them with regional stakeholders and identifying value-add opportunities.

Continuing commitment to the Northern Growth Alliance

The Northern Growth Corridor Infrastructure Priorities report outlines key infrastructure needs and strategic investment opportunities that facilitate economic growth for the local government areas of Chittering, Dandaragan and Gingin.



Major sponsor of the 2023 Bringing Dowerin Downtown Lunch

A key event on the Wheatbelt calendar and with more than 600 corporate leaders, industry stakeholders and Government representatives in attendance, the event featured a series of in-depth industry discussions on the future of the agricultural sector and the Wheatbelt.



Funding of Jurien Bay Boat Harbour improvements in 2024-25 State Budget

The northern breakwater will be extended by 170 metres as a component of a \$17.5 million entrance reconfiguration. The extension will help to maintain and improve the harbour’s water quality and environment.



Continuing activation of Avon Industrial Park (AIP)

Demand for land at the AIP has continued with all Stage 1 and 2 lots either sold or under offer. The Commission continues to work with DevelopmentWA, MainRoadsWA, the Shire of Northam and CBH Group on the establishment of Stage 3 and the activation of enabling road and rail transport infrastructure.

Improving the reliability and resilience of telecommunications infrastructure

The Commission is committed to working with our stakeholders to identify and advocate for regionally appropriate telecommunication infrastructure that enables economic growth and supports regional liveability.

More on Page 30 →

WA's biggest ever production filmed in York

TV series *The Twelve* was filmed in the picturesque Wheatbelt town of York, alongside the feature film *Runt*, leveraging the Wheatbelt's unique landscape and historical architecture.



Positioning Northam as a freight and logistics hub

With its connection to key east-west road and rail transport infrastructure and proximity to Perth, there is increasing commercial interest and private sector investment to position Northam as a nationally significant freight and logistics precinct.

Growing sustainable communities in the north-eastern Wheatbelt

The *NEWROC Economic Development Strategy 2024-2029*, developed in collaboration with the Commission, will guide policy and infrastructure investments for the Shires of Dowerin, Koorda, Mount Marshall, Mukinbudin, Nungarin, Trayning and Wyalkatchem.

435km of Priority 1 roads completed



Maintaining our global competitiveness and improving road safety

The Commission has maintained its active role in the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network program. As of the 2023-24 period, 435 kilometres of Priority 1 roads have been completed, in collaboration with twenty local governments in the Wheatbelt.

Images

1. A/CEO Susan Hall speaking at the 2023 Bringing Dowerin downtown Lunch. Credit: Matt Jelonek
2. Jurien Bay Boat Harbour. Credit: Department of Transport
3. Avon Industrial Park. Credit: DevelopmentWA
4. Behind the scenes of *The Twelve* at York Town Hall. Credit: David Dare Parker

Transforming Rural Telecommunications

Strategic goal

Unlock barriers for new and growing industry.

Key outcome

The enhanced reliability of digital infrastructure facilitates the expansion of industries and businesses in the Wheatbelt.

In regional areas such as the Wheatbelt, the importance of robust telecommunications infrastructure cannot be overstated.

In January 2024 a supercell thunderstorm resulted in extensive damage to the region's power and telecommunication network. The storm left 33,000 homes without electricity across the Perth hills, Wheatbelt and Goldfields regions, highlighting the vulnerability of the regions' power network and underscoring the critical need for more resilient power infrastructure and better-prepared communities.

Recognising the role that robust digital infrastructure plays in economic growth and regional liveability, the Commission remains dedicated to advancing telecommunication infrastructure upgrades across the region.

In 2023-24, the Wheatbelt has benefited from a suite of State and Commonwealth funding initiatives and services, including the Mobile Network Hardening Program (MNHP), the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) and the Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP).

Mobile Network Hardening Program

Announced in May 2024, Round 2 of the MNHP will deliver 12-hour batteries to 92 projects across WA. This initiative aims to enhance the resilience of mobile telecommunications infrastructure by preventing outages during natural disasters, extending service

operation during disruptions and supporting rapid service restoration following outages. Out of the 92 projects announced, 22 are located in the Wheatbelt. These sites are in the shires of Mt Marshall (2), Yilgarn (1), Dalwallinu (3), Bruce Rock (2), Dumbleyung (2), Kulin (2), Kondinin (2), Trayning (2), Lake Grace (3), Merredin (1), Nungarin (1) and Westonia (1).

Prior to MNHP Round 2, the Wheatbelt successfully gained funding in both stages of MNHP Round 1. In Stage 1, 35 Wheatbelt sites received 12-hour battery backups. In Stage 2, 12 sites received various resilience solutions. As of June 2024, 6 of the 10 Telstra resilience upgrades in Stage 2 have been completed, with the remaining Telstra sites and 2 Optus sites expected to receive permanent generators by the end of 2024.

Regional Connectivity Program and Mobile Black Spot Program

The RCP continues to deliver a variety of digital connectivity projects including but not limited to: mobile voice and data, fixed wireless broadband and community Wi-Fi. Over recent years, the Wheatbelt has been the beneficiary of several rounds of RCP, with Round 3 announced in December 2023, at the same time as Round 7 of MBSP.



MNHP Round 2 Sites

Andrew Rd Radio Terminal (Mt Marshall)

Bencubbin Exch (Shire of Mt Marshall)

Bodallin Exch (Shire of Yilgarn)

Boucher Rd (Dalwallinu)

Bruce Rock Exch (Shire of Bruce Rock)

Bruce Rock R/T (Shire of Bruce Rock)

Dumbleyung Exch (Shire of Dumbleyung)

Holt Rock Exch (Shire of Kulin)

Hyden Exch (Shire of Kondinin)

Kalannie Exch (Shire of Dalwallinu)

Kondinin Exch (Shire of Kondinin)

Kununoppin (Shire of Trayning)

Kununoppin Exch (Shire of Trayning)

Lake Grace (Shire of Lake Grace)

Newdegate (Shire of Lake Grace)

Nokanning Exch (Shire of Merredin)

Nungarin Exch (Shire of Nungarin)

Pithara Exch (Shire of Dalwallinu)

Powder (Shire of Kulin)

Sandford R/T (Shire of Westonia)

Tarin Rock Exch (Shire of Dumbleyung)

Varley Exch (Shire of Lake Grace)

RCP Round 3 Projects

CRISP Wireless North Coast next gen FW Project

CRISP Wireless Wheatbelt Expansion Project

CRISP Wireless Narrogin-Wagin Connectivity Expansion

Telstra Limited Tandegin

MBSP Round 7 Projects

Telstra Limited Little Italy (Shire of Kulin)

Telstra Limited Yilliminning (Shire of Narrogin)

Telstra Limited Yelbini (Shire of Trayning)

Dialling into the future

In 2024, pivotal processes such as the *State Digital Connectivity Plan* and the Regional Telecommunications Review are underway, shaping future telecommunications needs beyond 2025. Led by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the Office of Digital Government, the State Digital Connectivity Plan aims to guide strategic state investments in digital connectivity.

Concurrently, the triennial Regional Telecommunications Review, mandated by the Commonwealth's *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999*, is assessing regional, rural and remote telecommunications services. This review addresses disparities in telecommunications access, presenting its findings to the government.

Further, Telstra's intercity fibre network will see new fibre routes between Australia's capital cities. The network is designed to deliver up to 20,000 kilometres of new ultra-high capacity, low-latency fibre, enabling significantly increased transmission between capital cities. Running through the Wheatbelt and adjacent to key industrial land and freight and logistics locations, the intercity fibre network will open up opportunities for data intensive industries including advanced manufacturing and data centres.

Regional Economic Development Grants

Strategic goal

Attract and facilitate regional investment that supports economic growth.

Key outcome

Businesses in the Wheatbelt can expand through access to regional investment that supports local industries.

The Regional Economic Development (RED) Grants program is a State Government initiative that invests in local projects to stimulate economic growth and development in regional WA.

Each of the nine Regional Development Commissions manages the grant round process for their respective regions. In Round 6 of the program, the Commission awarded \$573,500 to fund six projects in the Wheatbelt.

The Hon Don Punch MLA, Minister for Regional Development; Disability Services; Fisheries; Seniors and Ageing; Volunteering, announced the successful Round 6 recipients at an event in Moora on 31 October 2023.

The selected projects in Round 6 aim to diversify agribusiness and tourism offerings, increase the availability of industrial land and support the expansion of childcare and construction services in the Wheatbelt.

Through the previous six rounds of the RED Grants program, the Commission has awarded a total of \$3,883,582 to 48 Wheatbelt projects. A seventh round of RED Grants closed for applications on 26 June 2024.

Round 6 RED Grant Recipients

A.J Armstrong & J.G Armstrong & M.M Armstrong

Enhancing Narrogin’s agritourism industry through the expansion of short-term accommodation facilities.

Funding Amount

\$125,000

Jurien Bay Panel & Paint Pty Ltd

Strengthening support for regional communities through upgraded smash repair facilities and equipment.

Funding Amount

\$110,000

Wafex Pty Ltd

Continuing to provide the world’s finest flowers with the establishment of a fresh and dry flower processing facility.

Funding Amount

\$100,000



Successful RED Grant Round 6 Recipients, Wheatbelt Development Commission staff, the Hon Don Punch MLA Minister for Regional Development and the Hon Shelley Payne MLC | Gemma Bovington

Shire of Wandering

Providing quality infrastructure by installing underground power in the local Light Industrial Area.

Funding Amount

\$100,000

Atrada Group Pty Ltd

Delivering a sustainable work environment with the construction of dedicated office facilities.

Funding Amount

\$90,000

Stegosaurus Pty Ltd

Supporting local families through the opening of a new childcare centre in the Shire of Moora.

Funding Amount

\$48,500

Event in focus

The Power Shift - Transitioning Farm Communities to Renewables

Leveraging its vast landscapes and abundant natural resources, the Wheatbelt is poised to be at the forefront of renewable energy development.

Over the next 15 years, it is projected that wind and solar generation in the Wheatbelt will grow to nearly 9GW, with 22 projects in varying phases of feasibility, construction and development.

Ambitious decarbonisation targets coupled with high investment interest in the region's renewable energy opportunities and community benefit expectations prompted AgZero2030 to host *The Power Shift: Transitioning Farm Communities to Renewables* conference on 20 June 2024.


The Commission was proud to be a sponsor of this event, which brought together renewable energy providers, local farmers, community representatives and government agencies to discuss opportunities and challenges inherent in the region's shift to renewable energy.

The event featured insights from global and national leaders in renewable energy project development, complemented by firsthand perspectives from Western Australian farmers and community leaders. The Commission's CEO Robert Cossart participated as a panellist in a policy session aimed at supporting this pivotal transition phase.

The conference served as a key platform to enhance visibility and deepen understanding among stakeholders regarding the opportunities and challenges linked to decarbonising the South West Interconnected System.

The Commission continues to actively support communities and liaise with agencies to ensure maximum benefit from the emerging opportunities.



 (L-R) Trevor Whittington, Tracey Lefroy, Mike Casey, Kim Brooksbank, Robert Cossart and Bodhi Hardinge participate in a panel discussion at The Power Shift | AgZero2030



📷 Northam Solar Farm | Infinite Green Energy

Strategic Priority #2

Enhance Regional Living Standards

Promoting sustainable infrastructure and social development that improves regional liveability and ensures thriving and resilient Wheatbelt communities.

Implementation of the small grant election commitments

By facilitating local community-driven projects through the Small Grants Program, the Commission continues to support developments that enhance the wellbeing and liveability of the Wheatbelt.


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Opening of modular construction facility in Northam

Evoke Living Homes' all-weather production facility will boost annual modular home delivery by 8-10 dwellings and increase overall production capacity by 20%. Funded through the RED Grants program, locally made modular homes are a key part of addressing the region's housing shortage. The facility was officially opened by the Hon Don Punch MLA on 9 April 2024.



1

 \$877,065 in funding for regional housing

Facilitating housing development initiatives for the region

The Shires of Victoria Plains, Moora, Dandaragan, Toodyay, Goomalling and West Arthur received \$877,065 through Stream 1 of the Commonwealth Government's Housing Support Program to boost regional planning capacity and support the delivery of affordable housing in the region.

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Supporting opportunities for Wheatbelt students

Partnering with Lumen Wheatbelt Regional University Study Hubs, the Commission provided three students with the opportunity to attend evokeAG 2024, gaining exposure to cutting-edge industry developments and fostering professional growth.



2

Continue to promote liveability of the Wheatbelt

By proactively developing and supporting a diverse range of communication strategies and platforms, the Commission remains dedicated to enhancing the liveability and economic vitality of the Wheatbelt.

Northam Water Reuse Strategy

The Shire of Northam's *Northam Water Reuse Strategy and Implementation Plan* outlines actions to capture and increase the use of treated wastewater to improve community amenity and public open space.



Improving the availability of key worker housing

Building on the success of the Mortlock Gardens housing development, the Commission is partnering with the Avon Community Development Foundation to expand accommodation offerings through planning efforts that address the evolving needs of the community.

Assessing the economic impact of aged care

Conducting an economic impact analysis of aged care accommodation models in the Wheatbelt, the Commission is collaborating with the Central East Accommodation & Care Alliance to support meaningful future investment that enhances liveability.

Ensuring drought preparedness across the Wheatbelt

The preparation of the *Regional Drought Resilience Plan* (RDRP) reinforces the Commission's commitment to supporting Wheatbelt community and agricultural industry preparedness for drought and climate change.

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Expanding childcare services in the region

Funding from Round 6 of the RED Grants program allocated to Stegosaurus Pty Ltd will see a new childcare centre opened in the Shire of Moora, providing a vital resource for local families and contributing to the area's economic prosperity.

Supporting strategic land-use planning that fosters economic growth

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage's review of the *Wheatbelt Planning and Infrastructure Strategy* will establish a regional vision and facilitate sound decision-making.

The Commission is engaged in the review to ensure the planning framework meets the growth needs of the region.



Living Well in the Wheatbelt Strategy 2035

Developed through District Leadership Group, the *Living Well in the Wheatbelt Strategy 2035* aspires to ensure that everyone in the Wheatbelt can start well, grow well, live and work well and age well.

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Images

1. Russell Draffin (left), Robert Cossart (centre) and the Hon Don Punch MLA (right) at Evoke Living Homes. Credit: Echo Newspaper
2. Kaitlyn Anderson and Annette Bowen with Lumen director Elise Woods (centre). Credit: Lumen Wheatbelt Regional University Study Hubs website
3. Mortlock Gardens. Credit: ABC Midwest & Wheatbelt, Eliza Bidstrup
4. The Hon Don Punch MLA (left) and the Hon Shelley Payne MLC (right) with Drew Parry and Jane Douglas of Stegosaurus Pty Ltd at the RED Grant Round 6 Announcement event in Moora. Credit: Gemma Bovington
5. The Commission welcomed Natalie Pearce (right) to the team to work on the Southern Wheatbelt RDRP and the extended Wheatbelt RDRP. Credit: Wheatbelt Development Commission

Addressing Housing Shortages in the Wheatbelt

Strategic goal

Plan for and support initiatives and programs that deliver housing outcomes across the region.

Key outcome

Pivotal initiatives across the region are unlocking housing outcomes that can help to ensure a more sustainable future.

The Wheatbelt is currently experiencing a housing shortage that impacts both economic growth and regional liveability.

With current rental vacancy rates in WA dropping below 1%, supporting initiatives and programs that deliver housing outcomes for the region continues to be a priority for the Commission.

By working closely with local governments, stakeholders and investors, the Commission is dedicated to addressing the constraints of the housing crisis and ensuring that the Wheatbelt remains a vibrant and attractive place to live, work, visit and invest.

Economic disparities and workforce demand

The lack of available housing in the Wheatbelt has compounding impacts on the region, with housing shortages making it increasingly difficult to meet workforce demand. Between 1999 and 2021, less than 35% of residential land that was approved for subdivision in the Wheatbelt was developed.

Over 80% of businesses surveyed in the region have identified housing as a major obstacle to effective workforce management. Demand for housing in the Wheatbelt is currently 2.9 times greater than the rate of supply. There is an unmet demand for over 1,000 workers, highlighting how the housing shortage is impeding regional economic development.

With every new house that is built in the Wheatbelt estimated to deliver around \$900,000 in regional economic benefits and an additional \$20,000 in social benefits¹.

The path forward for improvement

Over the past year, the Commission has taken a sub-regional approach to address the region's housing shortage. In partnership with 14 local governments, the Commission undertook three sub-regional housing investigations to identify barriers to supply of residential land and housing.

In partnership with the Commission, the Shires of Victoria Plains, Toodyay, Goomalling, Moora, Dandaragan and West Arthur secured \$877,065 in funding through Stream 1 of the Australian Government's Housing Support Program for increased planning capacity.

Continued collaborative efforts are essential to addressing the regions' housing shortage. The Commission is continuing to coordinate a sub-regional approach which to-date has secured commitments from more than 30 businesses and 15 shires to co-invest in housing solutions.

The Commission remains committed to supporting innovative initiatives that support regional housing solutions and can unlock significant economic potential.

¹ Econisis 2024

Building Drought Resilience

Strategic goal

Build, hold and share regional intelligence regarding liveability and living standards.

Key outcome

Drought response in the Wheatbelt is shaped by a profound understanding of regional nuances and challenges, fostering sustainable outcomes and community resilience.

Spanning vast expanses of terrain, the Wheatbelt is facing a drying climate that impacts not only local industries but also community resilience, biodiversity and regional economies.

As stakeholders address these challenges, initiatives focusing on resilience-building and sustainable resource management are paramount to ensuring the region's socio-economic stability and environmental health.

A key initiative of the Australian Government's \$5 billion Future Drought Fund (FDF), the Regional Drought Resilience Planning (RDRP) program invests in building climate resilience across the agriculture sector and regional communities.

To support proactive planning and preparedness, the Commission participated in the pilot year of the RDRP Program, completing the *Southern Wheatbelt Regional Drought Resilience Plan* (SW RDRP) in December 2023.

The SW RDRP implementation is focused on supporting water resilience across the pilot Shires of Dumbleyung, Wagin, Kulin, Kondinin and Lake Grace. A range of initiatives have been progressed or funded with alignment to the RDRP including:

- Commissioning of desalination units at Merredin and Dumbleyung
- Extension of the Water Smart Industries project to the Great Southern and Wheatbelt
- Awarding of Community Water Supply Grants to a range of Wheatbelt shires

- Funding community projects through the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) Helping Communities Prepare for Drought - Community Impact program

Following the success of the SW RDRP, the Commission are extending the learning of the pilot year to the broader wheatbelt. A region wide Wheatbelt RDRP is expected to be delivered in 2025. The Wheatbelt RDRP is funded by the State through Royalties for Regions (RfR) and the FDF. The plan will identify sub-regional and regional scale initiatives to support improved economic and community drought resilience.

The Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to crafting effective drought response strategies, informed by our comprehensive understanding of the region's unique challenges and needs. Through ongoing research, collaboration with local stakeholders and adaptive management practices, the Commission is dedicated to enhancing resilience and ensuring sustainable solutions.



Scan here to view the **Southern Wheatbelt Regional Drought Resilience Plan**

Living Well in the Wheatbelt

Strategic goal

Support innovative delivery and governance models associated with community services and facilities.

Key outcome

Advocated for improving accessibility and quality of community services to sustain and enhance regional wellbeing.

Enhancing living standards in the Wheatbelt is essential for promoting sustainable development, improving quality of life and ensuring the long-term viability of rural communities.

Recognising the unique challenges of the Wheatbelt is what prompted the Wheatbelt District Leadership Group (Wheatbelt DLG) to create the *Living Well in the Wheatbelt: Towards 2035 and Beyond* (the Strategy).

The Wheatbelt DLG is the primary leadership and coordination platform to support the integrated delivery of health and human service initiatives for the Wheatbelt. It brings together senior regional leaders of the Departments of Health, Communities, Education, Police and Justice, CEO of the Wheatbelt Development Commission, Noongar Aboriginal Corporations, elected member representatives of the three local government zones and Chair of the Wheatbelt Human Services Managers Forum (WHSMF).

By fostering collaboration across different sectors and communities, the Wheatbelt DLG aims to tackle the unique challenges of the region. Committed to ensuring residents of the Wheatbelt 'start well, grow well, live and work well and age well', the Wheatbelt DLG aspires to a future where everyone can equally participate in education, work, social and community activities.

The Strategy is the first time the collective agencies and organisations have come together to develop a long-term health and human services strategy for the region.

It outlines priorities and actions to address the socio-economic and cultural determinants of health; improve the health and wellbeing of the Wheatbelt communities; improve equity of access to social, community and healthcare services; and guide priorities and initiatives of the Wheatbelt DLG and the WHSMF.

Regardless of where people live in the Wheatbelt, the Strategy aspires to a future where people can grow and age in place. It envisions a sense of community whereby individuals and families living and working in the region stay healthy and well, alongside supporting those who are more vulnerable.

Whilst the Wheatbelt of the future will be different to the region experienced today, the actions made today will influence the future wellbeing, health, social and economic development of the region. The creation of *Living Well in the Wheatbelt: Towards 2035 and Beyond* is a significant milestone in planning for the region's future, ensuring that everyone who lives in the Wheatbelt can benefit from a thriving and sustainable place to live.

Small Grants Election Commitments



Narrogin Regional Leisure Centre - Lighting




Funding Amount: \$165,000

Led by the Shire of Narrogin, this project involved the removal of existing lighting infrastructure and the installation of LED lighting at the Narrogin Regional Leisure Centre.

In addition to the Small Grants Program, the project was also supported by financial contributions from the Shire of Narrogin and the Upper Great Southern Hockey Association.

The installation of LED lighting at the Narrogin Regional Leisure Centre has improved energy efficiencies, reduced electricity costs and allowed night games to be played, thereby supporting increased utilisation and visitation.

Through enhancements to a key local facility, the initiative has resulted in increased attendance and participation in community sport and recreation.

-  **Improved lighting**
-  **Enhanced facility use**
-  **Increased community engagement**



Jurien Bay Country Golf Club - Reticulation




Funding Amount: \$200,000

This project involved upgrading the reticulation system to enable the transition from a winter-only operation to a year-round facility. The Small Grants funding contributed towards the materials and works required for reticulating both the front and back nine of the golf course.

The project was carried out in three stages: reticulating the front nine, reticulating the back nine, and soil amelioration. The remaining costs were met by contributions from the Jurien Bay Country Golf Club and the Shire of Dandaragan.

Completed in 2024, the upgrade has increased usage of the golf course, enhanced local amenities and created a prominent community attraction.

This investment in key recreational infrastructure continues to position Jurien Bay as a desirable lifestyle and tourism destination.

-  **Year-round operation**
-  **Enhanced facility use**
-  **Improved community attraction**

Strategic Priority #3

Increase Aboriginal Participation in the Regional Economy

Partnering with Aboriginal organisations and corporations to unlock and promote opportunities for Aboriginal business development, procurement and employment.

Increase in Aboriginal business procurement

Aboriginal engagement in the Wheatbelt has surged from 0.2% to an average of 8% of the value share of regional supply since the introduction of the State Aboriginal Procurement Policy and the Buy Local Policy in 2018.

This growth reflects a shift towards more inclusive participation of Aboriginal businesses in the local economy.

[More on Page 44](#) →

Ongoing support to the Noongar Chamber of Commerce & Industry (NCCI)

The Commission is proud of its ongoing support and collaborations with the NCCI to enhance visibility and recognition of Aboriginal businesses in the region.

Working with the NCCI, the Commission is implementing targeted strategies to build capacity, increase awareness and promote the capabilities of these businesses.

Representation on the Noongar Economic Participation Steering Committee

The Commission has continued to represent the Regional Development Portfolio on the Noongar Economic Participation Steering Committee. The role of the Steering Group is to oversee the delivery of the Noongar Economic Participation Framework, which forms an important part of the South West Native Title Settlement.



Identifying opportunities to increase Aboriginal procurement

By advocating for increased Aboriginal procurement and employment outcomes across the private and public sectors, the Commission aims to promote greater economic inclusion, support local businesses and create more equitable opportunities for Aboriginal people.

Expansion of Boola Boornap Nursery

The upgrade and expansion of the Boola Boornap native tree nursery, completed in 2023-24, has enhanced its production capacity and enabled the enterprise to achieve industry accreditation.

[More on Page 46](#) →



1



Enhancements to Bilya Koort Boodja (BKB) in Northam

Small Grants Election Commitment funding supported improvements and updates at the BKB Centre including to the entry, yarning circle, touch table and conclusions wall areas.

[More on Page 47](#) →



Supporting the development of Aboriginal Corporations

The Commission remains committed to collaborating with the Yued, Ballardong and Gnaala Karla Booja Aboriginal Corporations on strategic planning, economic and social development initiatives.

Largest individual contract awarded to Aboriginal business

Landmark milestone for Aboriginal business

The largest individual contract in the Wheatbelt was awarded to an Aboriginal business, marking a significant milestone in the region’s commitment to advancing Aboriginal business procurement outcomes.

[More on Page 44](#) →



Continued growth of the Wheatbelt Aboriginal Ranger Program

In September 2023, the Maarli Services and Noongar Land Enterprise Group (NLE) received funding as part of Round 6 of the State Government Aboriginal Ranger Program. The Aboriginal Ranger Program has created more than 650 ranger jobs on Country since 2017.

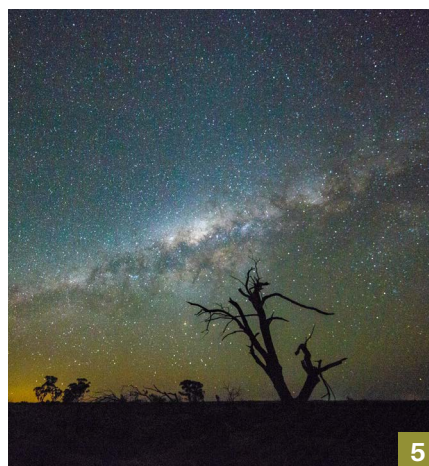
Maarli Services received \$1,653,193 in funding to undertake gnamma hole mapping across the Wheatbelt and NLE received \$827,557 in funding to enhance their ranger services across the region.

Identifying opportunities in renewable energy investment and decarbonisation

The Commission is committed to ensuring Aboriginal organisations are engaged in the increasing opportunities associated with the region’s renewable energy investment and decarbonisation initiatives.

Images

1. Boola Boornap Tree Nursery Opening | Credit: Jesse Collins
2. Bilya Koort Boodja | Credit: Shire of Northam
3. Maarli Services Pty Ltd | Credit: Maarli Services Pty Ltd Facebook page
4. Noongar Land Enterprise Group | Credit: Noongar Land Enterprise Group website
5. Night sky over Wongan Hills | Credit: Tourism Western Australia



Supporting the South West Native Title Settlement

Strategic goal

Support Aboriginal economic opportunities arising from the South West Native Title Settlement as a significant economic development package.

Key outcome

Continue to empower Aboriginal organisations to achieve significant economic and social outcomes throughout the Wheatbelt.

The Wheatbelt Aboriginal business landscape is rapidly evolving, marking a pivotal moment for economic growth and cultural empowerment in the region.

This positive shift is driven by the establishment of the South West Native Title Settlement (the Settlement) and the continued growth of the Noongar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI).

A key element of the Settlement is the establishment of the Economic Participation Framework. With the emergence of the Ballardong, Yued and Gnarla Kaarla Boodja Aboriginal Corporations, the framework seeks to empower the development and economic growth of Aboriginal communities in the south-west region.

The Commission is committed to supporting Aboriginal economic development through policy guidance, business advocacy and procurement opportunities. The Commission is partnering with the NCCI to develop culturally appropriate business development programs that capitalise on the private sector's investment in the region.


The State Aboriginal Procurement Policy (APP) and the Buy Local Policy (BLP) provide the framework for increasing Aboriginal business participation. Since the inception of the APP and the BLP in 2018, Aboriginal engagement in the Wheatbelt has risen from 0.2% to an average of 8% of the value share of regional supply.

As a result of ongoing investment in Aboriginal business capacity, the 2022-23 financial year saw a significant milestone with over 28% of the total contract value awarded to an Aboriginal business. This culminated in the largest individual contract in the Wheatbelt being awarded to an Aboriginal business.

The Commission is committed to working with the NCCI and the Ballardong, Yued and Gnarla Kaarla Boodja Aboriginal Corporations to support the growth of Aboriginal businesses, with a focus on freight and logistics infrastructure and investment in the Wheatbelt's renewable energy sector.



📷 Njaki Njaki Cultural Tours, Merredin | Tourism Western Australia

 Boola Boornap Tree Nursery | Jesse Collins


Noongar Land Enterprises Group – Boola Boornap Native Tree Nursery Upgrade and Expansion

Strategic goal

Support Aboriginal economic participation and unlock barriers for opportunities to grow participation.

Key outcome

Funding opportunities enable Aboriginal enterprises to expand their business activities and undertake essential projects.

The Noongar Land Enterprise (NLE) Group is a not-for-profit, Aboriginal-led grower group which seeks to develop commercially-viable, Noongar land-based businesses.

The first Aboriginal grower group in Australia, NLE purchased WA Farm Trees in 2020 and has since commenced commercial sales of native tree seedlings for land restoration.

Located in Burlong within the Shire of Northam, NLE's Boola Boornap native tree nursery is positioning NLE as a leader in the burgeoning native seedling and restoration industry. Boola Boornap means 'The Place of Many Trees' in the Noongar language.

Round 4 Wheatbelt RED Grant funding supported irrigation and seedling infrastructure upgrades at the Boola Boornap native tree nursery, including water catchment and storage, growing area, shed and office upgrades.

Completed in 2023-24, the upgrade and expansion project has increased the Boola Boornap production capacity and allowed the enterprise to attain industry accreditation. The upgrades will improve the viability and profitability of the business, allowing Boola Boornap to employ more local Aboriginal people as the operation expands. The increased capacity will also provide the Wheatbelt with more native seeds and seedlings for local land restoration and decarbonisation initiatives.

Boola Boornap is a key part of the NLE's strategy to support the growth of Noongar land-based businesses.

Small Grants Election Commitment

Bilya Koort Boodja

The Bilya Koort Boodja Centre for Noongar Culture and Environmental Knowledge (BKB Centre) is located in the Shire of Northam on the foreshore of the Avon River in Northam's CBD.

As a key tourism destination in the Avon Valley, the BKB Centre offers an interactive educational experience that recognises the continuous Aboriginal cultural and environmental presence in the Noongar Ballardong region.

Small Grants Election Commitment funding supported improvements and updates at the BKB Centre including to the entry, immersive space, yarning circle, touch table, season monitors and conclusions wall areas.

These improvements allow visitors to engage with local stories that highlight the regions rich cultural heritage.

The BKB Centre is critical to protecting, celebrating and sharing the cultural knowledge of Noongar people and highlights their land management practices and continued connection to country.

The grant funding has enabled the BKB Centre to increase visitation and engagement and better promote local Aboriginal culture, history and knowledge.



📷 Bilya Koort Boodja | Shire of Northam

Strategic Priority #4

Organisational Excellence

Committed to being a trusted partner in regional development through working in collaboration with the private and public sector to deliver regional outcomes.

Strategic Plan 2024-26 and Regional Development Framework

Shaping the future of regional development across the Wheatbelt, these strategy-shaping documents are important milestones in ensuring the Commission continues to make the region a good place to live, work, visit and invest.



Scan here to view the **Strategic Plan 2024-26**



Investing in our people - Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP)

Director Regional Development, Renee Manning, graduated from the 29th cohort of the ARLP in September 2023, exemplifying the Commission's commitment to supporting professional development and personal growth.

Maintaining a leadership role in support of the local governments and business sector

In September 2023, the Commission partnered with the North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils (NEWROC) to identify opportunities to enhance community benefit and minimise potential negative impacts associated with the regions decarbonisation investments.

This reflects the Commission's ongoing representation of the Wheatbelt's interests in emerging issues.

Robyn Sermon appointed as Chair of the Regional Development Council

Chair of the Commission's Board, Robyn Sermon, was announced as Chair of the Regional Development Council by the Hon Don Punch MLA, Minister for Regional Development in June 2024.



Member of the Western Australian Regional Development Alliance (WARDA)

By cultivating strategic partnerships and maintaining ongoing engagement with WARDA, the Commission advances economic and social development throughout the region, ensuring a cohesive and aligned approach across the Regional Development Portfolio and reinforcing a commitment to integrated and sustainable growth.



CEO appointed as Chair of the 2024 Dry Season Taskforce

The Taskforce was created in response to the record dry conditions across southern WA and to provide a coordinated approach across government and industry to support farm businesses and rural communities during the 2023-24 summer period.

[More on Page 50](#) →

Compliance with public sector training requirements

All Board and Staff members have completed required public sector training and annual refresher courses. This commitment ensures they remain knowledgeable and compliant with the standards required for effective public sector operation.



Support for regional events

The Commission continued to support regional events including Bringing Dowerin Downtown, Wheatbelt Futures Forum and The Power Shift: Transitioning Farm Communities to Renewables.



Investing in professional development

Director Regional Development, Renee Manning and Senior Regional Development Officer, Chris Sharples, achieved Australian Certified Economic Development accreditation in November 2023.

[More on Page 52](#) →

91% satisfaction rate in annual survey



Having impact across the region

91% of respondents in the annual survey of the Commission's key clients and stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the Commission's positive contribution to the region's economic development.

No adverse findings from internal and external audits

The Commission successfully passed both internal and external audits without any adverse findings, underscoring the Commission's commitment to transparency, effective governance and organisational excellence.

Images

1. ARLP Course 29 cohort. Credit: ARLP website
2. Robyn Sermon. Credit: Wheatbelt Development Commission
3. CEO Robert Cossart for Countryman. Credit: Shannon Verhagen
4. Audience at The Power Shift: Transforming Farm Communities to Renewables. Credit: Wheatbelt Development Commission
5. Wheatbelt Futures Forum. Credit: Rebecca Parkhouse
6. Economic Development Australia Training Program. Credit: Wheatbelt Development Commission

Dry Season Taskforce

Strategic goal

Develop and retain collaborative and trusted partnerships in regional development.

Key outcome

Cultivated partnerships that advance regional economic and social development.

In response to the challenging seasonal conditions faced by farmers across Southern WA, the Cook Government established the 2024 Dry Season Taskforce.

The 2023-24 summer period resulted in record high temperatures and low rainfall across large parts of the southern half of WA.

In response to the conditions the Minister for Agriculture and Food established the Dry Season Taskforce (the Taskforce) to ensure a coordinated approach across government and industry to support farm businesses and rural communities.

The Taskforce was Chaired by Wheatbelt Development Commission Chief Executive Officer Robert Cossart, who also led the emergency response to the 2023 Kimberley floods, in his role as State Recovery Coordinator.

The taskforce concentrated on several essential areas:

- Ensuring access and availability of fodder and water for livestock and cropping operations.
- Facilitating collaboration and coordination between industry stakeholders, local governments and state agencies.
- Promoting the extension and adoption of drought-resilient practices across diverse farming systems.
- Providing evidence-based information and tools to support on-farm decision-making processes.

On 26 April 2024 the State Government announced a \$8.6 million support package consisting of a range of initiatives and assistance measures to support agricultural industries and regional communities impacted by the record dry seasonal conditions. Funding included:

- \$2 million in hardship grants and \$4 million in interest-free loans for impacted farmers
- \$1.5 million investment in community water infrastructure
- \$875,000 to support mental health and community wellbeing programs
- \$225,000 in donations for charities

The Taskforce also engaged with industry leaders and the private sector to implement actions to increase supply chain capability (including increased domestic processing, live export and interstate transfers), stock feed availability (including release of export fodder, reserve grain and increased pellet manufacturing) and access to additional water infrastructure.

With much of the state eventually experiencing reasonable, albeit delayed, opening rains, the Taskforce has now concluded its work. The Taskforce's contributions provided valuable support to the agricultural sector during a challenging period.

Indonesia Connect Roadshow 2023

Strategic goal

Develop and retain collaborative and trusted partnerships in regional development.

Key outcome

Built on and maintained a network of strategic high functioning stakeholder networks.

The Indonesia Connect Roadshow 2023 led by Premier Roger Cook was a historic trade attended by more than 130 business delegates and the Western Australian (WA) Government.

Susan Hall, A/CEO of the Wheatbelt Development Commission, joined the mission alongside 30 delegates representing prominent Wheatbelt stakeholders including CBH, Craig Mostyn Group, Harvest Road and AgriFresh.

Indonesia's rapid energy demand growth underscores its commitment to increase renewable energy's contribution from 11% to 23% of its energy mix by 2025. This shift presents an opportunity for collaboration, particularly in exploring new and renewable energy sources where WA, including the Wheatbelt, holds expertise in energy innovation, robust environmental governance frameworks and advanced technology solutions.

The Commission's participation in the mission included discussions on clean energy transition projects and identified opportunities in hydrogen scalability, multi-day energy storage and enhanced solar production to meet regional energy needs efficiently. This forward-looking approach aligns with community engagement strategies, ensuring local readiness and support for renewable energy developments.

As the Wheatbelt prepares to play a pivotal role in these transformative industries, collaboration across industry, government and community remains essential. The Commission remains committed to supporting regional growth aligned with global sustainability goals, guided by collaborative efforts that generate shared value and propel the Wheatbelt into a hub for renewable energy.



Ben Tiller, Cecilia McConnell, Hon. Jackie Jarvis MLC, Hon. Roger Cook MLA, Susan Hall, Courtney Draper, Travis Robinson, Darcey Duncan

Ensuring Best Practice in Economic Development

Strategic goal

As an organisation, lead by example demonstrating effective organisational governance, systems, processes and behaviours.

Key outcome

The Commission maintains a team of highly skilled and experienced staff with specialised skills in economic development.

Economic development is a multifaceted discipline that encompasses a range of skills essential for fostering investment attraction, market development, innovation and entrepreneurship.

Recognising the importance of these competencies, the WA Regional Development Alliance initiated a strategic effort to enhance the economic development capabilities across the nine Regional Development Commissions.

To achieve this, WARDA partnered with Economic Development Australia to deliver a comprehensive training program, completed by Senior Regional Development Officer Chris Sharples and Director Regional Development Renee Manning in October and November 2023.

The curriculum covered a broad array of topics, including best practices in economic development, strategic planning, measurement and evaluation of economic initiatives, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurship and inclusive economic development.

Achieving Australian Certified Economic Developer accreditation underscores the Commission's commitment to maintaining high standards of expertise and effectiveness in regional economic development.



📷 Economic Development Australia Training Program

Event in focus

Wheatbelt Futures Forum

The Wheatbelt Futures Forum (WFF) was a vital platform for delivering insights into the development and growth of the Wheatbelt's small and medium business sector.

WFF 2024, coordinated by the Wheatbelt Business Network and the Northam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, took place in Northam on 1 May 2024. The Commission sponsored this event as part of its ongoing commitment to supporting economic growth and diversification in the region.

The forum attracted 150 attendees from various industries and government sectors. It provided a platform to discuss the region's opportunities and challenges. The event underscored the region's economic potential and the collaborative efforts required to drive sustainable development.

Director Regional Development, Renee Manning, delivered a presentation on the current economic health of the Wheatbelt. She emphasised the region's substantial contributions to the economy and offered valuable insights into its strengths and areas for growth.

Key topics such as housing, employment, renewable energy and disaster management were extensively covered during the forum. These discussions highlighted the interconnected nature of these issues and the need for integrated policy and investment solutions.

The WFF also served as a networking opportunity, fostering connections between industry leaders, government officials and community members. Attendees had the chance to engage in meaningful conversations, forge new partnerships and strengthen existing relationships. The collaborative spirit of the forum was evident, reflecting a shared commitment to the region's future.

The WFF is a key event in the regional business calendar and the Commission is committed to its continued success.



📷 Director Regional Development, Renee Manning, presents at WFF | Wheatbelt Business Network

Small Grants Election Commitments

Recipient	Project Title / Purpose	Funding Amount
Marsupial Mammals and Pappas	Wildlife Care - nets	\$2,000
Bejoording Volunteer Bushfire Brigade	Tables and chairs	\$2,500
Divine You	Solar Panels and Double Glazed door	\$5,000
Wundowie Men's Shed	Solar Panels and Plasma Cutter	\$7,000
Morangup Progress Association - Secretary	Cement Water Tank	\$15,000
Popanyinning Progress Association Inc	Recreation Ground - Permanent Shelter	\$15,000
Stryka Fight Team	Mobile Mixed Martial Arts Safety Enclosure	\$20,000
Merredin Men's Shed	Forklift	\$20,000
Beverley Off Road Motorsport Association	Ablution Facilities Upgrade	\$20,000
Ocean Farm Community and Recreation Association Inc. (OFCRA)	Kitchen Upgrade	\$20,000
Shire of Wickepin	All weather Honour Roll	\$24,000
RSL Northam Sub Branch	Vietnam Memorial, Kitchen Upgrade and Memorabilia Display	\$25,000
Shire of Pingelly	Town Hall Refurbishment - Arts and Tourist Space	\$25,000
Wheatbelt Health Network	Humans of the Wheatbelt - Second Edition	\$25,000
Narrogin Cottage Homes	Karinya Aged Hostel - Entrance Upgrade	\$27,000
Jurien Bay Sport and Recreation Centre	Portable Stage	\$30,000
York Arts and Events Inc	York Arts Centre - Development	\$30,000
Goomalling Farmers Club Inc.	Club Roof Replacement	\$30,000
Shire of Narrogin	Narrogin Airport - Patient Transfer Facility	\$30,000
Western Trails Alliance	Wheatbelt Cycling Collective - Cycling Trail Infrastructure	\$34,000
Northam Theatre Group Inc	Link Theatre Northam - Refurbishment	\$40,000

Recipient	Project Title / Purpose	Funding Amount
Bindoon Theatre Inc T/A Bindoon Entertainment, Arts & Theatre	Bindoon Hall - Sound and Light Upgrades	\$40,000
Wagin Historical Village Museum Inc	Display Pavilion Extension and Upgrade	\$40,000
Shire of Brookton	Brookton Old Railway Station - refurbishment	\$40,000
Project Gingin	Gingin Community Notice Board Project	\$50,000
Shire of Merredin	Merredin Water Tank - Refurbishment	\$50,000
Goomalling Football Club Inc.	Install Water Tanks	\$50,000
River Conservation Society Inc.	York Environmental Discovery Centre - Facility Upgrades	\$60,000
Wagin Frail Aged Inc.	Waratah Lodge - Compliance Software and Clinical Monitoring Systems	\$60,000
Northam Country Club	Northam Country Club - Storage Facility	\$60,000
Wyalkatchem CBH Agricultural Museum Inc	Display Shed Expansion	\$80,000
Wundowie Progress Association	Wundowie Labour Heritage - Museum and Heritage Walk	\$80,000
Hyden Tourist Development Co	Hyden Tourist Development Company - Vehicle Display Facility	\$80,000
Central Midlands Speedway Association Ltd	Moora Speedway - Safety Fence and Track Lighting	\$100,000
RSL Toodyay Sub-Branch	Clubrooms Development	\$100,000
Shire of Northam	Northam Railway Station Precinct - Platform Refurbishment	\$120,000
Shire of Chittering	Chittering Junior Cricket Club - Contribution to New Sports Pavilion	\$150,000
Shire of Northam	Bilya Koort Boodja - Cultural Interactive Experience	\$150,000
Shire of Narrogin	Narrogin Regional Leisure Centre - Hockey Grounds Lighting	\$165,000
Jurien Bay Country Golf Club Inc.	Golf Course Reticulation	\$200,000
Shire of Toodyay	Toodyay Memorial Hall Upgrade	\$100,000

Report on Operations

Actual results versus budget targets

Financial Targets

	2024 Target ⁽¹⁾ (\$000)	2024 Actual (\$000)	Variation ⁽²⁾ (\$000)
Total cost of services (expense limit) (sourced from Statement of Comprehensive Income)	2,278	2,302	(24) ¹
Net cost of services (sourced from Statement of Comprehensive Income)	2,278	2,302	(24) ²
Total equity (sourced from Statement of Financial Position)	214	153	(61) ³
Net increase / (decrease) in cash held (sourced from Statement of Cash Flows)	-	(167)	(167) ⁴
Approved salary expense level	228	305	(77) ⁵

⁽¹⁾As specified in the Section 40 budget estimates

⁽²⁾The variation is the difference between the Target and Actual for each line item

Explanation of variation

¹Total cost of services is in line with target.

²Net cost of services is in line with target.

³The variance in total equity relates to a higher opening position than target offset by a reduction in income from State Government.

⁴The decrease in cash held relates to a reduction in income from State Government.

⁵The variance in approved salary expense relates to an understatement in the target salary cap. This was addressed through the 23-24 Mid-year review.

Working Cash Targets

	2024 Agreed limit (\$000)	2024 Target ⁽¹⁾ /Actual ⁽²⁾ (\$000)	Variation (\$000)
Agreed working cash limit (at Budget)	35	35	-1
Agreed working cash limit (at Actuals)	35	233	198 ²

⁽¹⁾Target to reflect the Commission's anticipated working cash for the 2023-24 financial year.

⁽²⁾Actual is the actual working cash held at the close of the financial year.

Explanation of variation

¹N/A

²This variation is due to brought forward cash balance.



Disclosures and Legal





3

Auditor General Report



Auditor General

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

2024

Wheatbelt Development Commission

To the Parliament of Western Australia

Report on the audit of the financial statements

Opinion

I have audited the financial statements of the Wheatbelt Development Commission (Commission) which comprise:

- the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended
- notes comprising a summary of material accounting policies and other explanatory information.

In my opinion, the financial statements are:

- based on proper accounts and present fairly, in all material respects, the operating results and cash flows of the Wheatbelt Development Commission for the year ended 30 June 2024 and the financial position as at the end of that period
- in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (applicable to Tier 2 Entities), the *Financial Management Act 2006* and the Treasurer's Instructions.

Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Other Matter – prior period financial statements not audited

The financial statements audit of the Commission for the year ended 30 June 2023 was dispensed under section 14 of the *Auditor General Act 2006*. Consequently, the corresponding figures are unaudited. My opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of the Board for the financial statements

The Board is responsible for:

- keeping proper accounts
- preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (applicable to Tier 2 Entities), the *Financial Management Act 2006* and the Treasurer's Instructions
- such internal control as it determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor General Report

In preparing the financial statements, the Board is responsible for:

- assessing the entity's ability to continue as a going concern
- disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern
- using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Western Australian Government has made policy or funding decisions affecting the continued existence of the Commission.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

As required by the *Auditor General Act 2006*, my responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial statements. The objectives of my audit are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists.

Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations or the override of internal control.

A further description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website. This description forms part of my auditor's report and can be found at https://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf

Report on the audit of controls

Opinion

I have undertaken a reasonable assurance engagement on the design and implementation of controls exercised by the Wheatbelt Development Commission. The controls exercised by the Wheatbelt Development Commission are those policies and procedures established to ensure that the receipt, expenditure and investment of money, the acquisition and disposal of property, and the incurring of liabilities have been in accordance with the State's financial reporting framework (the overall control objectives).

In my opinion, in all material respects, the controls exercised by the Wheatbelt Development Commission are sufficiently adequate to provide reasonable assurance that the controls within the system were suitably designed to achieve the overall control objectives identified as at 30 June 2024, and the controls were implemented as designed as at 30 June 2024.

The Board's responsibilities

The Board is responsible for designing, implementing and maintaining controls to ensure that the receipt, expenditure and investment of money, the acquisition and disposal of property and the incurring of liabilities are in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 2006*, the Treasurer's Instructions and other relevant written law.

Auditor General's responsibilities

As required by the *Auditor General Act 2006*, my responsibility as an assurance practitioner is to express an opinion on the suitability of the design of the controls to achieve the overall control objectives and the implementation of the controls as designed. I conducted my engagement in accordance with Standard on Assurance Engagements ASAE 3150 Assurance Engagements on Controls issued by the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

Auditor General Report

That standard requires that I comply with relevant ethical requirements and plan and perform my procedures to obtain reasonable assurance about whether, in all material respects, the controls are suitably designed to achieve the overall control objectives and were implemented as designed.

An assurance engagement involves performing procedures to obtain evidence about the suitability of the controls design to achieve the overall control objectives and the implementation of those controls. The procedures selected depend on my judgement, including an assessment of the risks that controls are not suitably designed or implemented as designed. My procedures included testing the implementation of those controls that I consider necessary to achieve the overall control objectives.

I believe that the evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Limitations of controls

Because of the inherent limitations of any internal control structure, it is possible that, even if the controls are suitably designed and implemented as designed, once in operation, the overall control objectives may not be achieved so that fraud, error or non-compliance with laws and regulations may occur and not be detected. Any projection of the outcome of the evaluation of the suitability of the design of controls to future periods is subject to the risk that the controls may become unsuitable because of changes in conditions.

Report on the audit of the key performance indicators

Opinion

I have undertaken a reasonable assurance engagement on the key performance indicators of the Wheatbelt Development Commission for the year ended 30 June 2024 reported in accordance with *Financial Management Act 2006* and the Treasurer's Instructions (legislative requirements). The key performance indicators are the Under Treasurer-approved key effectiveness indicators and key efficiency indicators that provide performance information about achieving outcomes and delivering services.

In my opinion, in all material respects, the key performance indicators report of the Wheatbelt Development Commission for the year ended 30 June 2024 are in accordance with the legislative requirements, and are relevant and appropriate to assist users to assess the Commission's performance and fairly represent indicated performance for the year ended 30 June 2024.

Other Matter – prior period key performance indicators not audited

The key performance indicator audits of the Commission for the year ended 30 June 2022 and 30 June 2023 were dispensed under section 14 of the *Auditor General Act 2006*. Consequently, the results for the financial year 2021-22 and 2022-23 are unaudited. My opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

The Board's responsibilities for the key performance indicators

The Board is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the key performance indicators in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 2006* and the Treasurer's Instructions and for such internal controls as the Board determines necessary to enable the preparation of key performance indicators that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the key performance indicators, the Board is responsible for identifying key performance indicators that are relevant and appropriate, having regard to their purpose in accordance with Treasurer's Instruction 904 Key Performance Indicators.

Auditor General Report

Auditor General's responsibilities

As required by the *Auditor General Act 2006*, my responsibility as an assurance practitioner is to express an opinion on the key performance indicators. The objectives of my engagement are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the key performance indicators are relevant and appropriate to assist users to assess the entity's performance and whether the key performance indicators are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. I conducted my engagement in accordance with Standard on Assurance Engagements ASAE 3000 Assurance Engagements Other than Audits or Reviews of Historical Financial Information issued by the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. That standard requires that I comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to assurance engagements.

An assurance engagement involves performing procedures to obtain evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the key performance indicators. It also involves evaluating the relevance and appropriateness of the key performance indicators against the criteria and guidance in Treasurer's Instruction 904 for measuring the extent of outcome achievement and the efficiency of service delivery. The procedures selected depend on my judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the key performance indicators. In making these risk assessments, I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the engagement in order to design procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances.

I believe that the evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

My independence and quality management relating to the report on financial statements, controls and key performance indicators

I have complied with the independence requirements of the *Auditor General Act 2006* and the relevant ethical requirements relating to assurance engagements. In accordance with ASQM 1 Quality Management for Firms that Perform Audits or Reviews of Financial Reports and Other Financial Information, or Other Assurance or Related Services Engagements, the Office of the Auditor General maintains a comprehensive system of quality management including documented policies and procedures regarding compliance with ethical requirements, professional standards and applicable legal and regulatory requirements.

Other information

Those charged with governance are responsible for the other information. The other information is the information in the entity's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2024, but not the financial statements, key performance indicators and my auditor's report.

My opinions on the financial statements, controls and key performance indicators does not cover the other information and accordingly I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial statements, controls and key performance indicators my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements and key performance indicators or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I did not receive the other information prior to the date of this auditor's report. When I do receive it, I will read it and if I conclude that there is a material misstatement in this information, I am required to communicate the matter to those charged with governance and request them to correct the misstated information. If the misstated information is not corrected, I may need to retract this auditor's report and re-issue an amended report.

Auditor General Report

Matters relating to the electronic publication of the audited financial statements and key performance indicators

This auditor's report relates to the financial statements and key performance indicators of the Wheatbelt Development Commission for the year ended 30 June 2024 included in the annual report on the Commission's website. The Commission's management is responsible for the integrity of the Commission's website. This audit does not provide assurance on the integrity of the Commission's website. The auditor's report refers only to the financial statements, controls and key performance indicators described above. It does not provide an opinion on any other information which may have been hyperlinked to/from the annual report. If users of the financial statements and key performance indicators are concerned with the inherent risks arising from publication on a website, they are advised to contact the entity to confirm the information contained in the website version.



Carly Meagher
Acting Senior Director Financial Audit
Delegate of the Auditor General for Western Australia
Perth, Western Australia
5 August 2024

Certification of Financial Statements

For the financial year ended 30 June 2024

The accompanying financial statements of the Wheatbelt Development Commission have been prepared in compliance with the provisions of the *Financial Management Act 2006* from proper accounts and records to present fairly the financial transactions for the financial year ended 30 June 2024 and the financial position as at 30 June 2024.

At the date of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances which would render the particulars included within the financial statements misleading or inaccurate.



Clinton Haskew-Jones

Chief Finance Officer
31 July 2024



Robert Cossart

Chief Executive Officer
31 July 2024



Robyn Sermon

Chairperson of the Board
31 July 2024

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Statement of Comprehensive Income

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Notes	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
COST OF SERVICES			
Expenses			
Employee benefits expense	2.1(a)	374	286
Supplies and services	2.3	1,778	1,558
Depreciation and amortisation expense	4.0	6	7
Finance costs		1	-
Grants and subsidies	2.2	122	70
Other expenses	2.3	21	49
Total cost of services		<u>2,302</u>	<u>1,970</u>
Income			
Other income	3.2	-	51
Total income		<u>-</u>	<u>51</u>
NET COST OF SERVICES		<u>2,302</u>	<u>1,919</u>
Income from State Government			
Income from other public sector entities	3.1	523	656
Resources received	3.1	1,585	1,374
Total income from State Government		<u>2,108</u>	<u>2,030</u>
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE PERIOD		<u>(194)</u>	<u>111</u>
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME/(LOSS) FOR THE PERIOD		<u>(194)</u>	<u>111</u>

The Statement of Comprehensive Income should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Notes	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	6.2	233	254
Restricted cash and cash equivalents	6.2	-	146
Receivables	5.1	14	14
Total Current Assets		247	414
Non-Current Assets			
Amounts receivable for services	5.2	99	99
Right-of-use assets	4.0	12	19
Total Non-Current Assets		111	118
TOTAL ASSETS		358	532
LIABILITIES			
Current Liabilities			
Payables	5.3	49	80
Lease liabilities	6.1	7	19
Employee related provisions	2.1(b)	143	86
Total Current Liabilities		199	185
Non-Current Liabilities			
Lease liabilities	6.1	6	-
Total Non-Current Liabilities		6	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES		205	185
NET ASSETS		153	347
EQUITY			
Contributed equity		75	75
Accumulated surplus		78	272
TOTAL EQUITY		153	347

The Statement of Financial Position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Changes in Equity

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Notes	Contributed equity \$'000	Accumulated surplus \$'000	Total equity \$'000
Balance at 1 July 2022		75	161	236
Surplus		-	111	111
Other comprehensive income		-	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period		-	111	111
Balance at 30 June 2023		75	272	347
Balance at 1 July 2023		75	272	347
Deficit		-	(194)	(194)
Other comprehensive income		-	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the period		-	(194)	(194)
Balance at 30 June 2024		75	78	153

The Statement of Changes in Equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	Notes	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
CASH FLOWS FROM STATE GOVERNMENT			
Funds from other public sector entities		<u>523</u>	<u>656</u>
Net cash provided by State Government		<u>523</u>	<u>656</u>
<i>Utilised as follows:</i>			
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Payments			
Employee benefits		(311)	(344)
Supplies and services		(257)	(190)
Finance costs		(1)	(1)
Grants and subsidies		(122)	-
GST payments on purchases		(21)	(21)
Other payments		(10)	(49)
Receipts			
GST receipts on sales		-	15
GST receipts from taxation authority		23	15
Other receipts		14	38
Net cash used in operating activities		<u>(685)</u>	<u>(537)</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Payments			
Principal elements of lease payments		(5)	(7)
Net cash used in financing activities		<u>(5)</u>	<u>(7)</u>
Net increase / (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents		(167)	112
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the period		400	288
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	6.2	<u><u>233</u></u>	<u><u>400</u></u>

The Statement of Cash Flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Basis of preparation

The Wheatbelt Development Commission (Commission) is a WA Government entity and is controlled by the State of Western Australia, which is the ultimate parent. The Commission is a not-for-profit entity (as profit is not its principal objective). A description of the nature of its operations and its principal activities have been included in the 'Overview' which does not form part of these financial statements.

These annual financial statements were authorised for issue by the Accountable Authority of the Commission on 31 07 2024.

Statement of compliance

The financial statements constitute general purpose financial statements that have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures, the Framework, Statement of Accounting Concepts and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board as applied by Treasurer's Instructions. Several of these are modified by Treasurer's Instructions to vary application, disclosure, format and wording.

The *Financial Management Act 2006* (the Act) and Treasurer's Instructions are legislative provisions governing the preparation of financial statements and take precedence over Australian Accounting Standards, the Framework, Statement of Accounting Concepts and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board. Where modification is required and has had a material or significant financial effect upon the reported results, details of that modification and the resulting financial effect are disclosed in the notes to the financial statements.

Basis of preparation

These financial statements are presented in Australian dollars applying the accrual basis of accounting and using the historical cost convention. Certain balances will apply a different measurement basis (such as the fair value basis). Where this is the case the different measurement basis is disclosed in the associated note. All values are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars (\$'000).

Accounting of Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Income, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST), except that the:

- (a) amount of GST incurred by the Agency as a purchaser that is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is recognised as part of an asset's cost of acquisition or as part of an item of expense; and
- (b) receivables and payables are stated with the amount of GST included.

Cash flows are included in the Statement of cash flows on a gross basis. However, the GST components of cash flows arising from investing and financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO are classified as operating cash flows.

Contributed equity

Interpretation 1038 *Contributions by Owners Made to Wholly-Owned Public Sector Entities* requires transfers in the nature of equity contributions, other than as a result of a restructure of administrative arrangements, as designated as contributions by owners (at the time of, or prior to, transfer) be recognised as equity contributions. Capital appropriations have been designated as contributions by owners by *TI 955 Contributions by Owners made to Wholly-Owned Public Sector Entities* and have been credited directly to Contributed Equity.

Comparative information

Except when an Australian Accounting Standard (AAS) permits or requires otherwise, comparative information is presented in respect of the previous period for all amounts reported in the financial statements. AASB 1060 provides relief from presenting comparatives for:

- Right-of-Use Asset reconciliations.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Judgements and estimates

Judgements, estimates and assumptions are required to be made about financial information being presented. The significant judgements and estimates made in the preparation of these financial statements are disclosed in the notes where amounts affected by those judgements and/or estimates are disclosed. Estimates and associated assumptions are based on professional judgements derived from historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

2. Use of Our Funding

Expenses incurred in the delivery of services

This section provides additional information about how the Commission's funding is applied and the accounting policies that are relevant for an understanding of the items recognised in the financial statements. The primary expenses incurred by the Commission in achieving its objectives and the relevant notes are:

	Notes
Employee benefits expenses	2.1(a)
Employee related provisions	2.1(b)
Grants and subsidies	2.2
Other expenditure	2.3

2.1 (a) Employee benefits expenses

	2024	2023
	\$'000	\$'000
Employee benefits	337	246
Superannuation-defined contribution plans	37	40
Total employee benefits expenses	374	286
Add: AASB 16 Non-monetary benefits	7	7
Total employee benefits	381	293

Employee Benefits: include wages and salaries, accrued and paid leave entitlements and paid sick leave.

Superannuation: The amount recognised in profit or loss of the Statement of Comprehensive Income comprises employer contributions paid to the GSS (concurrent contributions), the WSS, the GESBs, or other superannuation funds.

AASB 16 Non-monetary benefits: non-monetary employee benefits, that are employee benefits expenses, predominantly relate to the provision of vehicle and housing benefits remeasured at the cost incurred by the Commission.

Notes to the Financial Statements

2.1 (b) Employee related provisions

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Current		
<u>Employee benefits provisions</u>		
Annual leave	40	39
Long service leave	101	46
	<u>141</u>	<u>85</u>
<u>Other provisions</u>		
Employment on-costs	2	1
Total current employee related provisions	<u>143</u>	<u>86</u>
Total employee related provisions	<u>143</u>	<u>86</u>

Provision is made for benefits accruing to employees in respect of wages and salaries, annual leave and long service leave for services rendered up to the reporting date and recorded as an expense during the period the services are delivered.

Annual leave liabilities: Classified as current as there is no unconditional right to defer settlement for at least 12 months after the end of the reporting period. The provision for annual leave is calculated at the present value of expected payments to be made in relation to services provided by employees up to the reporting date.

Long service leave liabilities: Unconditional long service leave provisions are classified as current liabilities as the Commission does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the end of the reporting period.

Pre-conditional and conditional long service leave provisions are classified as non-current liabilities because the Commission has an unconditional right to defer the settlement of the liability until the employee has completed the requisite years of service.

The provision for long service leave is calculated at present value as the Commission does not expect to wholly settle the amounts within 12 months. The present value is measured taking into account the present value of expected future payments to be made in relation to services provided by employees up to the reporting date. These payments are estimated using the remuneration rate expected to apply at the time of settlement and discounted using market yields at the end of the reporting period on national government bonds with terms to maturity that match, as closely as possible, the estimated future cash outflows.

Employment on-costs: The settlement of annual and long service leave liabilities gives rise to the payment of employment on-costs including workers' compensation insurance. The provision is the present value of expected future payments.

Employment on-costs, including workers' compensation insurance, are not employee benefits and are recognised separately as liabilities and expenses when the employment to which they relate has occurred. Employment on-costs are included as part of 'other expenditure, Note 0 (apart from the unwinding of the discount (finance cost))' and are not included as part of the Commission's 'employee benefits expense'. The related liability is included in 'Employment on-costs provision'.

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
<u>Employment on cost provision</u>		
Carrying amount at start of period	1	2
Additional/(reversals of) provisions recognised	1	(1)
Carrying amount at end of period	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements

2.1 (b) Employee related provisions (continued)

Key sources of estimation uncertainty - long service leave

Key estimates and assumptions concerning the future are based on historical experience and various other factors that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amount of assets and liabilities within the next financial year.

Several estimates and assumptions are used in calculating the Commission's long service leave provision. These include:

- expected future salary rates;
- discount rates;
- employee retention rates; and
- expected future payments.

Changes in these estimations and assumptions may impact on the carrying amount of the long service leave provision. Any gain or loss following revaluation of the present value of long service leave liabilities is recognised as employee benefits expense.

2.2 Grants and subsidies

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
<u>Recurrent</u>		
Non Public organisations	85	-
Public sector organisations	-	70
Local Government agencies	37	-
Total recurrent grants and subsidies	122	70

Transactions in which the Commission provides goods, services, assets (or extinguishes a liability) or labour to another party without receiving approximately equal value in return are categorised as 'Grant expenses'. Grants can either be operating or capital in nature.

Grants can be paid as general purpose grants which refer to grants that are not subject to conditions regarding their use. Alternatively, they may be paid as specific purpose grants which are paid for a particular purpose and/or have conditions attached regarding their use.

Grants and other transfers to third parties (other than contribution to owners) are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are paid or payable. They include transactions such as: grants, subsidies, personal benefit payments made in cash to individuals, other transfer payments made to public sector agencies, local government, non-government schools and community groups.

Notes to the Financial Statements

2.3 Other expenditure

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Supplies and services		
Board fees	64	66
Communications	2	1
Consultants and contractors	94	88
Consumables	6	17
Travel	17	5
Other	10	7
Resources provided free of charge by DPIRD ^(a)	1,585	1,374
Total supplies and services expense	<u>1,778</u>	<u>1,558</u>
Other expenses		
Building and infrastructure maintenance	1	3
Donations and sponsorships	-	30
Employment on-costs	1	(1)
Internal audit fees	10	11
Other expenses	9	6
Total other expenses	<u>21</u>	<u>49</u>
Total other expenditure	<u>1,799</u>	<u>1,607</u>

(a) Support Services provided by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) to support the Commission in the fulfilment of its statutory functions and obligations under the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993*. See note 3.1 Income from State Government.

Supplies and services expenses are recognised as an expense in the reporting period in which they are incurred. The carrying amounts of any materials held for distribution are expensed when the materials are distributed.

Other operating expenses generally represent the day-to-day running costs incurred in normal operations.

3. Our Funding Sources

How we obtain our funding

This section provides additional information about how the Commission obtains its funding and the relevant accounting policy notes that govern the recognition and measurement of this funding. The primary income received by the Commission and the relevant notes are:

	Notes
Income from State Government	3.1
Other income	3.2

Notes to the Financial Statements

3.1 Income from State Government

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Income received from other public sector entities during the period:		
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - operational funding	523	556
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - other	-	75
- Other public sector entities	-	25
Total grants and subsidies	523	656
Resources received from other public sector entities during the period:		
- Services received free of charge ^(a)	1,585	1,374
Total resources received	1,585	1,374
Total income from State Government	2,108	2,030

(a) Support Services provided by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development to support the Commission in the fulfilment of its statutory functions and obligations under the *Regional Development Commissions Act 1993*. See note 2.3 Other expenditure.

Income from other public sector agencies is recognised as income when the Commission has satisfied its performance obligations under the funding agreement. If there are no performance obligations, income will be recognised when the Commission receives the funds.

Resources received from other public sector entities are recognised as income (and assets or expenses) equivalent to the fair value of the assets, or the fair value of those services that can be reliably determined and which would have been purchased if not donated.

3.2 Other income

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Other sundry income	-	51

4. Right-of-use assets

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Vehicles	12	19

Additions to right-of-use assets during the 2024 financial year were \$nil (2023:\$nil).

Notes to the Financial Statements

4. Right-of-use assets (continued)

The Commission has leases for vehicles. The lease contracts are typically made for fixed periods of 1-5 years with an option to renew the lease after that date.

At the commencement date of the lease, the Commission recognises right-of-use assets and a corresponding lease liability. The right-of-use assets are measured at cost comprising of:

- the amount of the initial measurement of lease liability;
- any lease payments made at or before the commencement date less any lease incentives received;
- any initial direct costs; and
- restoration costs, including dismantling and removing the underlying asset.

The corresponding lease liabilities in relation to these right-of-use assets have been disclosed in note 6.1.

Subsequent Measurement

The cost model is applied for subsequent measurement of right-of-use assets, requiring the asset to be carried at the cost less any accumulated depreciation and accumulated impairment losses and adjusted for any re-measurement of lease liability.

Depreciation

Right-of-use assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the shorter of the lease term and the estimated useful lives of the underlying assets.

If ownership of the leased asset transfers to the Commission at the end of the lease term or the cost reflects the exercise of a purchase option, depreciation is calculated using the estimated useful life of the asset.

Impairment

Right-of-use assets are tested for impairment when an indication of impairment is identified. Where there is an indication of impairment, the recoverable amount is estimated. Where the recoverable amount is less than the carrying amount, the asset is considered impaired and is written down to the recoverable amount and an impairment loss is recognised.

Where an asset measured at cost is written down to its recoverable amount, an impairment loss is recognised through profit or loss.

If there is an indication that there has been a reversal in impairment, the carrying amount shall be increased to its recoverable amount. However this reversal should not increase the asset's carrying amount above what would have been determined, net of depreciation or amortisation, if no impairment loss had been recognised in prior years.

The risk of impairment is generally limited to circumstances where an asset's depreciation is materially understated, where the replacement cost is falling or where there is a significant change in useful life.

The following amounts relating to leases have been recognised in the statement of comprehensive income:

	2024	2023
	\$'000	\$'000
Vehicles	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>

The total cash outflow for leases in 2024 was \$6,379 (2023: \$7,212).

Notes to the Financial Statements

5. Other Assets and Liabilities

This section sets out those assets and liabilities that arose from the Commission's controlled operations and includes other assets utilised for economic benefits and liabilities incurred during normal operations:

	Note
Receivables	5.1
Amounts receivable for services	5.2
Payables	5.3

5.1 Receivables

	2024	2023
	\$'000	\$'000
GST receivable	2	4
Other debtors	12	10
Total current receivables	14	14

Trade receivables are recognised at original invoice amount less any allowances for uncollectible amounts (i.e. impairment). The carrying amount of net trade receivables is equivalent to fair value as it is due for settlement within 30 days.

5.2 Amounts receivable for services (Holding Account)

	2024	2023
	\$'000	\$'000
Non-current balance at end of period	99	99

Amounts receivable for services represent the non-cash component of service appropriations. It is restricted in that it can only be used for asset replacement or payment of leave liability.

Amounts receivable for services are considered not impaired (i.e. there is no expected credit loss of the Holding Account).

5.3 Payables

	2024	2023
	\$'000	\$'000
Trade payables	27	78
Other payables	-	2
Accrued expenses	16	-
Accrued salaries	6	-
Total current payables	49	80

Payables are recognised at the amounts payable when the Commission becomes obliged to make future payments as a result of a purchase of assets or services. The carrying amount is equivalent to fair value, as settlement is generally within 15-20 days.

Notes to the Financial Statements

6. Financing

This section sets out the material balances and disclosures associated with the financing and cash flows of the Commission.

	Note
Lease liabilities	6.1
Cash and cash equivalents	6.2
Capital commitments	6.3

6.1 Lease liabilities

	2024	2023
	\$'000	\$'000
Current	7	19
Non-current	6	-
	<u>13</u>	<u>19</u>

Initial measurement

The Commission measures a lease liability, at the commencement date, at the present value of the lease payments that are not paid at that date. The lease payments are discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease. If that rate cannot be readily determined, the Commission uses the incremental borrowing rate provided by Western Australia Treasury Corporation.

Lease payments included by the Commission as part of the present value calculation of lease liability include:

- fixed payments (including in-substance fixed payments), less any lease incentives receivable;
- variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate initially measured using the index or rate as at the commencement date;
- amounts expected to be payable by the lessee under residual value guarantees;
- the exercise price of purchase options (where these are reasonably certain to be exercised);
- payments for penalties for terminating a lease, where the lease term reflects the Commission exercising an option to terminate the lease.

The interest on the lease liability is recognised in profit or loss over the lease term so as to produce a constant periodic rate of interest on the remaining balance of the liability for each period. Lease liabilities do not include any future changes in variable lease payments (that depend on an index or rate) until they take effect, in which case the lease liability is reassessed and adjusted against the right-of-use asset.

Periods covered by extension or termination options are only included in the lease term by the Commission if the lease is reasonably certain to be extended (or not terminated).

This section should be read in conjunction with note 4.1 Right-of-use-assets.

Subsequent measurement

Lease liabilities are measured by increasing the carrying amount to reflect interest on the lease liabilities; reducing the carrying amount to reflect the lease payments made; and remeasuring the carrying amount at amortised cost, subject to adjustments to reflect any reassessment or lease modifications.

Notes to the Financial Statements

6.2 Cash and cash equivalents

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Non-restricted cash and cash equivalents	233	254
Restricted cash and cash equivalents		
<i>Royalties for Regions Fund Projects Restricted cash</i>		
Regional Grant Scheme	-	146
Total cash and cash equivalents	233	400

For the purpose of the statement of cash flows, cash and cash equivalent (and restricted cash and cash equivalent) assets comprise cash on hand and short-term deposits with original maturities of three months or less that are readily convertible to a known amount of cash and which are subject to insignificant risk of changes in value.

6.3 Capital commitments

There are no known capital expenditure commitments, being contracted capital expenditure additional to the amounts reported in the financial statements (2023: None).

7. Financial instruments and Contingencies

	Note
Financial instruments	7.1
Contingent assets and liabilities	7.2

7.1 Financial Instruments

The carrying amounts of each of the following categories of financial assets and financial liabilities at the end of the reporting period are:

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
<u>Financial assets</u>		
Cash and cash equivalents	233	400
Financial assets at amortised cost ^(a)	111	109
Total financial assets	344	509
<u>Financial liabilities</u>		
Financial liabilities at amortised cost ^(b)	62	99
Total financial liabilities	62	99

(a) The amount of financial assets at amortised cost excludes GST recoverable from the ATO (statutory receivable).

(b) The amount of financial liabilities at amortised cost excludes GST payable to the ATO (statutory payable).

Notes to the Financial Statements

7.2 Contingent assets and liabilities

Contingent assets and liabilities are not recognised in the statement of financial position but are disclosed and, if quantifiable, are measured at the best estimate.

Contingent assets and liabilities are presented inclusive of GST receivable or payable respectively.

There were no contingent assets or liabilities which would affect the Commission at the end of June 2024 (2023: None).

8. Other Disclosures

This section includes additional material disclosures required by accounting standards or other pronouncements, for the understanding of this financial report.

	Note
Events occurring after the end of the reporting period	8.1
Key management personnel	8.2
Related party transactions	8.3
Related bodies	8.4
Affiliated bodies	8.5
Special purpose accounts	8.6
Remuneration of auditors	8.7
Supplementary financial information	8.8
Explanatory statement	8.9

8.1 Events occurring after the end of the reporting period

There were no events occurring after the reporting period date that impact on the financial statements.

8.2 Key management personnel

The Commission has determined key management personnel to include the members of the accountable authority, senior officers of the Commission and the Minister that the Commission assists. The Commission does not incur expenditures to compensate Ministers and those disclosures may be found in the Annual Report on State Finances.

The total fees, salaries, superannuation, non-monetary benefits and other benefits for members of the accountable authority and senior officers of the Commission for the reporting period are presented within the following bands:

Compensation band (\$)	2024	2023
Compensation of members of the accountable authority		
30,001 - 40,000	1	1
20,001 - 30,000	1	-
10,001 - 20,000	-	1
0 - 10,000	6	5
Compensation of senior officers(\$)		
150,001 - 200,000	3	2
100,001 - 150,000	1	1
50,001 - 100,000	1	1
	'000	\$'000
Total compensation for members of the accountable authorities and senior officers (including superannuation)	763	577

Notes to the Financial Statements

8.3 Related party transactions

The Commission is a wholly owned and controlled entity of the State of Western Australia. Related parties of the Commission include:

- all cabinet ministers and their close family members and their controlled or jointly controlled entities;
- all senior officers and their close family members and their controlled or jointly controlled entities;
- other agencies and statutory authorities, including related bodies, that are included in the whole of government consolidated financial statements (i.e. wholly-owned public sector entities);
- associates and joint ventures, of a wholly-owned public sector entity; and
- the Government Employees Superannuation Board (GESB).

Material transactions with other related entities

Outside of normal citizen type transactions with the Commission there were no other related party transactions that involved key management personnel and/or their close family members and/or their controlled (or jointly controlled) entities.

8.4 Related bodies

The Commission had no related bodies during the reporting period.

8.5 Affiliated bodies

The Commission had no affiliated bodies during the reporting period.

8.6 Special purpose accounts

The Commission had no special purpose accounts during the reporting period.

8.7 Remuneration of auditors

Remuneration paid or payable to the Auditor General in respect of the audit for the current financial year is \$45,000 (2023:nil; as the Auditor General dispensed with the audit for the years ended 30 June 2023 and 30 June 2022 under section 14 of the *Auditor General Act 2006*).

8.8 Supplementary financial information

(a) Write-offs

There were no write-offs during the financial year.

(b) Losses through theft, defaults and other causes

There were no losses of public money and public and other property during the financial year.

(c) Gift of public property

There were no gifts of public property during the financial year.

8.9 Explanatory statement

The Commission is exempt from TI 945 Explanatory Statement as their Total Cost of Services is below \$10 million for the two most recent consecutive comparative periods.

Certification of Key Performance Indicators

For the financial year ended 30 June 2024

We hereby certify that the key performance indicators are based on proper records, are relevant and appropriate for assisting users to assess the Wheatbelt Development Commission's performance and fairly represent the performance of the Wheatbelt Development Commission for the financial year ended 30 June 2024.



Robyn Sermon

Chairperson of the Board
31 July 2024



Robert Cossart

Chief Executive Officer
31 July 2024

Detailed Information in Support of Key Performance Indicators

Relationship to Government Goals

The Commission is the primary referral point in assisting people and groups working on projects and business or industry to develop products/services that will benefit the whole of Wheatbelt Community.

Government Goal	Desired Outcome	Service
WA Jobs Plan Diversifying the WA economy, creating local jobs for the future.	Encourage and promote opportunities to increase investment, attract and retain population and grow the economy of the Wheatbelt.	Regional Development
Safe, Strong and Fair communities Supporting our local regional communities to thrive		

Key Effectiveness Indicators

The key effectiveness indicator measures the extent to which the Commission is effective and makes a positive contribution to the economic and social development of the Wheatbelt.

The Commission's effectiveness in achieving its government desired outcome is measured by undertaking an annual survey of key clients and stakeholders. This survey is conducted by an independent market research company. 107 stakeholders were identified, comprising of Local, State and Commonwealth agencies, as well as private entities and non-government agencies. A total of 91 completed surveys were obtained from this client contact list (a response rate of 85%), giving a maximum standard error ratio of +/- 4.0% at the 95% confidence level.

Respondents were asked if the Commission is effective and makes a balanced positive contribution to the social and economic development of the Wheatbelt.

The percentage below represents the respondents who thought the Commission was average or better in that regard of the results of the question asked above.

Key Effectiveness Indicator:	Actual 2021	Actual 2022	Actual 2023	Target 2024	Actual 2024
Percentage of clients satisfied with the Commission making a positive contribution to the economic development of the region.	92%	95%	91%	90%	91%

Service: Regional Development.

Key Efficiency Indicator: Cost per project hour

The following table records the total cost of services per hour as an audited key efficiency indicator.

Key Efficiency Indicator	Actual 2021	Actual 2022	Actual 2023	Target 2024	Actual 2024
Average cost per hour	\$85	\$130	\$114	\$108	\$103

The Commission's budget is directed to numerous output focused projects supporting the economic and social development of the Wheatbelt. The commission continually seeks external funding sources and networking partners to enhance projects scope and effectiveness.

Comments

The total hours worked was in line with target and total operating expenses was 4% below target resulting in the average cost per hour being 4% below target.

Detailed Information in Support of Key Performance Indicators

Other legal disclosures

Act of Grace payments

The Wheatbelt Development Commission made no Act of Grace payments during the 2023-24 financial year.

Unauthorised use of credit cards

Credit cards may be issued to officers for purchasing goods and services for the Commission where warranted. No unauthorised use of this facility was recorded during the 2023-24 financial year.

Advertising

Section 175ZE of the *Electoral Act 1907* requires public agencies to report details of expenditure to organisations providing services in relation to advertising, market research, polling, direct mail and media advertising. The Wheatbelt Development Commission incurred the following expenditures over the 2023-24 financial year:

Expenditure	Organisation	Amount (\$)	Total (\$)
Advertising	Jurien Bay CRC – Craytales	64.11	1,335.02
	The Northern Valleys News	268.18	
	The Northam Advertiser	295.00	
	Merredin CRC – The Phoenix	29.21	
	WA Newspapers - The West Australian	550.88	
	The Government Gazette	127.64	
Market research	Advantage Communications and Marketing Pty Ltd	3,980.00	3,980.00
Polling	Nil	Nil	Nil
Direct mail	Nil	Nil	Nil
Media advertising	Initiative Media	259.25	259.25
Grand total			\$5,574.27

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan outcomes

The Wheatbelt Development Commission is committed to promoting an inclusive environment that allows all people to access our services and facilities. The Commission is included under the umbrella of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)'s Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2018-23. This plan is designed to ensure all people are considered in all Commission activities and services and ensure access to Commission events, information, buildings and facilities. It also ensures all people receive equitable services and opportunities to participate in Commission activities.

The Wheatbelt Development Commission is committed to achieving the following seven outcomes outlined in the DPIRD Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2018-23:

- People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of and any events organised by the Wheatbelt Development Commission.
- People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of the Wheatbelt Development Commission.
- People with disability receive information from the Wheatbelt Development Commission in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
- People with disability receive the same level and quality of service from Wheatbelt Development Commission staff as other people receive.

Detailed Information in Support of Key Performance Indicators

- People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Wheatbelt Development Commission.
- People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the Wheatbelt Development Commission.
- People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Wheatbelt Development Commission.

The Plan will be communicated to the community, agents and contractors and department and Regional Development Commission staff via publication on the internet, intranet and by email. A copy of the DPIRD Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2018-2023 can be found on the Commission's website and the DPIRD website and intranet.

Compliance with public sector standards and ethical codes

The Wheatbelt Development Commission has had no compliance issues during the 2023-24 financial year regarding the Public Sector Standards, the WA Code of Ethics or the internal Code of Conduct.

The Commission's Code of Conduct and policy suite forms part of Board and employee induction requirements to ensure all new starters are aware of their responsibilities. To ensure staff remain observant of the Public Sector Standards, WA Code of Ethics and the Commission's code of conduct, a mandatory online training module, Accountable and Ethical Decision Making, is required to be completed annually by staff through DPIRD's electronic learning management system and is regularly discussed at staff meetings. The Board maintains a schedule to review internal policies to ensure continued compliance with Public Sector Commission requirements.

Recordkeeping plans

In accordance with the *State Records Act 2000*, the Wheatbelt Development Commission has a Record Keeping Plan consistent with State Records Commission Standard 2, Principle 6. Policies relating to record keeping and computer management are reviewed biennially and updated if required, in line with current operational and compliance requirements.

New employees are required to complete a mandatory online Record Keeping Awareness training module in DPIRD's electronic learning management system as part of their induction. The course gives an overview of the record keeping policies and practices implemented by the Commission and DPIRD, with a requirement for staff to re-sit the module every two years. Face-to-face records management training is provided when onboarding new employees to ensure they are familiar with the Commission's record keeping practices.

Freedom of Information

The Commission maintains a range of documents relating to business activities in both hard copy and electric format. Documents relating to administrative processes and procedures, corporate services, grant funding management, board functions and project work are kept in accordance with the *State Records Act 2000*.

Applications for information not normally provided publicly or available on the Commission's website can be made under the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*. The Wheatbelt Development Commission received no Freedom of Information requests during the 2023-24 financial year.

Government policy requirements

Work, health and safety

The Wheatbelt Development Commission is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in its workplaces in accordance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*. The Commission has a suite of policies to support safe workplace practices, which form part of the Board and Staff induction. The Commission also reports regularly to the Board on work, health and safety matters. The Commission's offices are co-located with DPIRD's offices and comply with the Department's Work, Health and Safety policies and procedures.

Detailed Information in Support of Key Performance Indicators

WA Multicultural Policy Framework

The Wheatbelt Development Commission is participating in DPIRD's Multicultural Plan 2021-26. The plan outlines tangible ways in which the Commission will work to achieve policy priorities, outcomes and strategies of the WA Multicultural Policy Framework for the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) community of Western Australia.

Occupational safety, health and injury management

The Commission is committed to assisting injured workers in their return to work as soon as medically appropriate and adheres to the requirements of the *Worker's Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981* in the event of a work-related injury. In such instances, the Commission will make provisions for injured workers, including an Injury Management System and Return to Work Program.

	Target 2022-23	Actual 2022-23	Target 2023-24	Actual 2023-24
Number of fatalities	0	0	0	0
Lost time injury/disease incidence rate	0	0	0	0
Lost time injury and/or disease incidence rate	0	0	0	0
Lost time injury and/or disease severity rate	0	0	0	0
Percentage of injured workers returned to work	0	0	0	0
i) Within 13 weeks	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
ii) Within 26 weeks	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percentage of managers trained in occupational safety, health and injury management responsibilities	Greater than 80%	100%	Greater than 80%	100%

Detailed Information in Support of Key Performance Indicators

Board and Committee remuneration

Wheatbelt Development Commission Board

Position title	Member name	Type of remuneration	Period of membership	Term of appointment/tenure	Base salary/sitting fees	Gross/actual remuneration for financial year
Chair	Robyn Sermon	Stipend	8 months	01/11/2023–31/10/2026	\$47,250 per annum	\$30,252.05
Deputy Chair	Oral McGuire	Stipend + Sitting fees	12 months	09/04/2020–31/12/2024	\$5,000 per annum + \$790 per full day / \$513 per half day	\$20,062.57
Member	Kerryn Chia	Sitting fees	12 months	11/01/2021-30/06/2024	\$680 per full day/ \$422 per half day	\$4,360.00
Member	Julie Flockart	Sitting fees	6 months	05/02/2018–31/12/2023	\$680 per full day/ \$422 per half day	\$3,187.00
Member	Leslee Holmes	Sitting fees	6 months	05/02/2018–31/12/2023	\$680 per full day/ \$422 per half day	\$1,244.00
Member	Shane Kay	Sitting fees	12 months	29/04/2022-30/06/2025	\$680 per full day/ \$422 per half day	\$3,938.00
Member	Rosemary Madacsi	Sitting fees	3 months	15/04/2024-31/12/2025	\$680 per full day/ \$422 per half day	Nil
Member	Tony O’Gorman	Sitting fees	3 months	15/04/2024-31/12/2025	\$680 per full day/ \$422 per half day	Nil
Total						\$63,043.62

Note: Oral McGuire was Interim Chair from 01/02/2023 – 31/10/2023.

Note: Board Member fees increased on 8 November 2023 from \$622 to \$680 for a full day and from \$403 to \$422 for a half day. There was no change to the Deputy Chair sitting fees.

Detailed Information in Support of Key Performance Indicators

Financial Audit Risk Management Sub-committee

Position title	Member name	Type of remuneration	Period of membership	Term of appointment / tenure	Base salary/ sitting fees	Gross/actual remuneration for financial year
Independent Chair	Miriam Sauley	No Sitting fee	01/07/2023-30/04/2024	01/07/2021-30/04/2024	Nil	Nil
Member	Julie Flockart	Sitting fee	01/07/2023-30/06/2024	01/07/2023-31/12/2023	\$312 full day/ \$208 part day	\$208.00
Member	Kerryn Chia	Sitting fee	01/07/2023-30/06/2024	01/07/2023-30/06/2024	\$312 full day/ \$208 part day	\$624.00
Total						\$832.00



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