

## RDA Wheatbelt Quarterly Report Jan to March 2018

Welcome to the first of a regular update on the activities and achievements of RDA Wheatbelt. The aim of this publication is to introduce new activities, update on ongoing projects and to answer some of the questions as to what RDA Wheatbelt does. For more information on any of the activities please contact the Administration Office on 08 9575 1888 or [admin@rdawheatbelt.com.au](mailto:admin@rdawheatbelt.com.au)

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# 1 PROJECTS

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## 1.1 SECONDARY FREIGHT NETWORK

In collaboration with Wheatbelt Road Groups North and South, RDA Wheatbelt is assisting with the Federal Funding pathway aspect of a regional approach to the development of integrated secondary freight routes. Phase 1: Identification of secondary freight routes has been completed by Local Government. Phase 2: A high level analysis of the current condition of each road within the Secondary Freight network and what is needed to bring these roads to fit for purpose has been completed by Local Government. In 2017 RDA Wheatbelt completed a comprehensive submission to the Federal Inquiry into National Freight and Supply Chain Priorities in support of the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network.

This quarter RDA Wheatbelt has continued to support the project through the facilitation of appointments with Nicole Lockwood (Chair of the WA Freight and Logistics Council, Board Member Infrastructure Australia, and Chair of the Westport Taskforce), and the Principal Policy Advisor Agriculture, Minister MacTiernan. A meeting with Minister MacTiernan has been confirmed for April 4th. These meetings are designed to inform and as an opportunity for advocacy for the project in the context of other work being undertaken by the State. The meetings with Minister MacTiernan's office are in relation to an application for funding to support the next phase of the project.

In this quarter work has also commenced on the Cost Benefit Analysis and Business Case for a potential grant application to the Building Better Regions Fund. The idea is to be ready to go should a round be called in the second half of this year (co-contributions are yet to be secured to support this). RDA Wheatbelt has committed \$88,000 towards the cost of this work.

## 1.2 COLLABORATION FOR REGIONAL IMPACT

This project has been in development for around 9 months and is based on International best practice.

In recognition of a likely declining funding pool from Government, and increasing demand to resolve issues of wellbeing (education, health, housing, youth unemployment, aged care services and others), RDA Wheatbelt has been exploring a model that looks at connecting issues of need and service deliverers, with both collaborative frameworks (helping the jigsaw to fit together better), and social impact investment (to provide an alternative funding stream).

It targets both the Great Southern and Wheatbelt regions in order to achieve critical mass suitable for the Investment market. It could be Wheatbelt and any other region, however Great Southern is the first region approached.

The mechanism is a "Backbone" support structure – a structure that has been used successfully for this purpose around the world and in other parts of Australia.

Work this quarter has been dedicated to initial seed fund capital raising. Federal and State government have been approached to provide financial support as has the most populous Shires in each region (Albany and Northam). RDA Wheatbelt has committed funds to this project and is asking other tiers of Government to "match us" so that the Backbone can commence work in the 2018/19 financial year. This seed funding would then be utilised to leverage additional capital, with an intent that the balance of Wheatbelt and Great Southern Shires would progressively come on board (this is a user pays model). If the seed capital raising round is successful, further briefings on this project will occur at a shire level over 2018.

Expert members who have confirmed their engagement with the Backbone include Bankwest Foundation (with strong connections to social impact investment within Australia) and UWA Centre for Social Impact (research). Discussions also occurred during the quarter with Social Ventures Australia (a specialist firm that matches investors to projects), an International Social Impact investor (with a view to securing international representation on the Backbone) and representatives of the public company Corporate sector (looking for a suitable representative from big business).

Pilot project proposals include Youth Unemployment, exploration of a Harlem Children's Zone model looking at outcomes for young people up to age 18 and Aboriginal Economic participation.

### 1.3 ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

During this quarter RDA Wheatbelt **secured \$975,000** (GST ex) to support Aboriginal Enterprise Development in the Yued (Moora) and Ballardong Nyungar (Noongar) regions of the Wheatbelt (covering initially Northam, Brookton, Cunderdin, Dowerin, Merredin, Toodyay and York). This project will cover approximately 82% of the region's Aboriginal population.

The design of the project commenced in August 2015 with community consultation and engagement of Federal and State Agencies over the following 2 years to refine to an innovative approach to address structural disadvantage associated with both employment opportunities and pathways for education for the Noongar population within the Wheatbelt. RDA Wheatbelt has had a number of unsuccessful attempts to secure funding for this project and are delighted to have been successful through the Australian Government Department of Social Services Inclusive Communities Grants.

A range of organisations are funded to deliver enterprise support services once a business venture has been identified, however none of these services are physically present within the Wheatbelt, and rely on contact from entrepreneurs, who must first locate them utilising an internet search.

This Grant will fund a Noongar Enterprise Support field officer in each region to encourage and support social enterprise and small indigenous business and will also provide a mechanism for the delivery of other funded programs into the Wheatbelt (such as the IBA Business Information Sessions that currently has no avenue within the Wheatbelt to connect with prospective indigenous business owners), and others. It can thus be the 'straw man' around which other programs designed to reduce the gap in indigenous employment, economic development and social participation, can populate. Ultimately a focus in this area is expected to generate a critical mass of services that will create a supportive environment for indigenous business, increasing economic activity and employment.

Social enterprises are expected to act as incubation hubs, stimulating and assisting with the development of micro enterprise as the community and individuals therein gain confidence, experience and commercial knowledge.

As far as possible, the RDA Wheatbelt solution is closely aligned to the success factors identified by the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Steering Committee: a. Cooperative approaches b. Community involvement c. Good governance d. Ongoing government support.

RDA Wheatbelt is now working on the implementation plan for these Inclusive Communities grants.

In addition, further funding is being sought (application currently with DPIRD) for the creation of a toolkit focused on opportunities created through the release of assets as part of the South West Native Title Settlement. The idea is to provide inspiration and ideas for the commercialization of assets – similar to the Enterprising Communities program completed by RDA Wheatbelt in 2017.

### 1.4 IMPLEMENTING LITHIUM VALLEY

During this quarter RDA Wheatbelt joined a collaboration led by RDA Perth to fund a study looking at how the region can benefit from the demand for rare minerals, by forming part of the supply chain for a processing capability at Kwinana.

Globally, the race is on to develop energy storage technologies such as battery storage systems for both large-scale energy grids and small-scale applications such as mobile phones, big data sensors and automated vehicles. All energy storage applications require 'tech metals' such as lithium, cobalt, zirconium, vanadium and rare earths. These tech metals are in abundance across Australia and in particular, Western Australia.

Currently, Australia is the dominant lithium producer globally with estimated reserves sitting around 1.6 million metric tonnes.<sup>i</sup> Initially, lithium has been extracted and exported as a semi-processed

material (spodumene). With the construction of a new lithium plant at Kwinana, the potential exists to further refine lithium and other tech metals at Kwinana into commercial ready products for portable power storage, health, defense and other high technology applications, some of which haven't been invented yet.

There is an opportunity for Western Australia to become a global hub for the lithium economy especially the strategically important energy storage production. This is a historically significant industrial, social and economic change and would attract billions of dollars of investment and tens of thousands of quality jobs to the State.

However, other countries recognise this opportunity as well and are determined to capture this market from Western Australia, especially Malaysia, China, Chile and Singapore. Western Australia has to fight, and fight hard, to hold on to the existing advantages while expanding into higher technology processing. Government and Industry have to co-operate to be successful, like other countries are doing. Industry believes the window of opportunity for Western Australia to secure a strong foundation in this area will occur before the end of 2018, otherwise it will be lost to other countries.

RDA Perth, in partnership with Curtin University and selected industry stakeholders are undertaking a project to define and outline implementation for the establishment of a specialised industrial precinct in Kwinana for the downstream processing of tech metal resources into advanced materials and other value-added products for commercial use across integrated energy storage technologies.

Leveraging the strengths of the world-class Kwinana Industrial Area and future development of the outer harbour, it is expected that the project will target requirements and recommendations, both for government and industry, to take advantage of downstream processing of lithium and other relevant resources into products in the globally strategic energy storage technology sector.

The focus will also include identifying other opportunities that exist to further enhance and secure the supply chain of Western Australia's natural resources for advanced materials. This will allow increased value capture of WA's resources, provide significant new job opportunities and develop new industries, some of which could be located in the wheatbelt region.

## 1.5 FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### 1.5.1 Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF)

Round 2 of BBRF closed on the 19<sup>th</sup> December and the outcomes of this round are pending. No information is yet available on any possible future rounds. RDA Wheatbelt actively engaged with 35 organisations for this round. [For more information.](#)

### 1.5.2 Regional Growth Fund

Regional Growth Fund - Now open - closing 27 April. The minimum funding available under RGF is \$10 million with a requirement for matching funding. The fund is open to state and territory governments, local governments, not-for-profit and for profit organisations for projects that are located in, or significantly benefit regional Australia. Projects may include a number of strategically linked projects, which together form a package of works that will deliver economic benefits to a region or regions. This will allow the combining of projects that cross over LGA and /or Regional Development Australia (RDA) boundaries. RDA Wheatbelt has targeted a number of organisations and offered support for applicants. [For more information.](#)

## 1.6 NORTHERN VALLEYS AGRIBUSINESS

As a result of the enthusiasm and the implementation of the Northern Alliance Tourism Study initiated by the Shire's of Chittering, Gingin and Dandaragan, an informal tourism strategy group has been formed in Chittering to ensure clear lines of communication between local and regional approaches.

For the time being, RDA Wheatbelt remains engaged in the process to provide assistance with sourcing possible funding and investment for events or enterprises as well as providing introductions to key out of region stakeholders to provide a State-Wide perspective and to facilitate linkages for marketing.

## 1.7 WHEATBELT BUSINESS NETWORK

RDA Wheatbelt has been working with the WBN to develop a 'Wheatbelt – Immersion tour' to China for both local representatives and businesses. This will allow businesses to be exposed to the Chinese market to begin their analysis of whether this is a suitable country to expand into. The tour would expose businesses to what is needed to be successful in China, and also create opportunities to network with Australian businesses already operating in China to benefit from their learnings.

RDA Wheatbelt Inc, Wheatbelt Development Commission, Wheatbelt Business Network Inc and Heartlands Inc have been collaborating with the view to forming an MoU. Participants at a joint meeting were strongly of the view that by far the strongest advocate for small business in the Wheatbelt is the Wheatbelt Business Network (WBN), and the other three organisations should do whatever they can to support the WBN to be sustainable in the long term, advocating on behalf of and for Wheatbelt based businesses.

## 1.8 ENTERPRISING COMMUNITIES

This program was completed on the 31 December 2017. The Enterprising Communities program was conceived as an approach to engage and invigorate Wheatbelt communities to take more control of their future. The key elements of the program were a series of films of six communities that had successfully undertaken community enterprises in conjunction with supporting facilitated workshops.

The evaluation of the Enterprising Communities program has been completed. In total, 22 events, with 478 attendees, were held across 13 shires, 8 of which have experienced population decline from 2011 to 2016. Many are planning follow up meetings and a further three indicating they will host further facilitated community meetings in 2018 at their own expense. To view the report, [follow this link](#).

## 2 SUBMISSIONS, RESEARCH, EVALUATIONS, NEWSLETTERS ETC

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The RDA Wheatbelt [Enterprising Communities Program evaluation report](#) was completed in January.

Evaluation of the Bruce Rock District High School True Blue Dreaming Mentoring program was undertaken as a fee for service offering this quarter. The evaluation comprehensively analyses the performance and outcomes of the mentoring program over the past eight years and includes all students, not just those 'at risk'. Interested parties should contact Bruce Rock District High School for further information.

RDA Wheatbelt distributes a monthly ENewsletter with RDAW activities, regional information, grants and events. Follow the [link for archived Newsletters](#).

## 3 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

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Whist comprehensive consultation and engagement is facilitated via telephone and email, face to face meetings in relation to activities over the last quarter include -

### 3.1 FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Dep't Prime Minister and Cabinet, Dep't Primary Industry and Regional Development, National Trust WA plus Wheatbelt Local Gov't representatives.

### 3.2 CORPORATE AND BUSINESS

UWA Centre for Social Impact, Wesfarmers, Aust Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Curtin Uni, City of Albany, Commonland, Nyungar Chamber of Commerce, Wide Open Agriculture,

### 3.3 COMMUNITY

Wheatbelt Business Network and the Secondary Freight Network Project.

### 3.4 OTHER

RDA WA state Executive Officer's meeting and the Food Futures Forum.

## 4 CONGRATULATIONS AND NEW HORIZONS

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### 4.1 MINISTER ANNOUNCES NEW RDAW CHAIRMAN

RDA Wheatbelt is pleased at the recent announcement by the Minister for Regional Development, Territories and Local Government, the Hon. John McVeigh MP, on the appointment of Mr Terry (Tuck) Waldron to the position of Chairman.

Mr Waldron brings a range of experience to the Committee as the Nationals Member of the WA Legislative Assembly from 2001 to 2017 (Including as Minister for 6.5 years) and previously in the rural real estate industry, sports administration & development and farming. Mr Waldron expresses keen interest in maintaining strong rural communities in WA, advocating that these communities should be able to provide excellent facilities, services, opportunities and security for families.

"I am honoured and delighted to be offered the opportunity to steer RDA Wheatbelt forward. My interests in the region align with the new RDA charter and I am keen to strengthen economic development and investment within the Wheatbelt" said Mr Waldron.

Outgoing Chairman Mr Graham Cooper OAM has been on the committee for 8 years, 4 as Deputy Chair and another 4 as Chair. Graham has brought a wealth of experience to the RDA Wheatbelt Committee from the WA Dept of Agriculture in Soil and Water Conservation and Farmways, his local rural merchandise business in Cunderdin. Graham's voluntary contributions to the region include being a Board Member for the Wheatbelt Development Commission, Cunderdin Shire Councillor and President, South East Avon Voluntary Regional Council and with an advisory group for Elders rural services WA.

Mr Waldron said "I sincerely thank Graham Cooper for his great commitment to, and his outstanding work for the region, both through his role with RDA Wheatbelt and numerous other organisations. Under this leadership RDA Wheatbelt has achieved many 'wins' for the region and I feel that we are in a strong position to continue delivering positive outcomes for the Wheatbelt"

### 4.2 NEW DIRECTOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We are also very pleased to welcome Mrs Mandy Walker to the new position of Director Regional Development (DRD). The DRD position encompasses the extra charter priorities to attract corporate funding to the region. To contact Mandy please call 0428 372 179 or email on [mandy.walker@rdawheatbelt.com.au](mailto:mandy.walker@rdawheatbelt.com.au)

Our Executive Officer Juliet Grist, has now relocated to the Great Southern and we know 'the south' is very lucky to have access to her expertise in regional development. The Committee and Staff wish Juliet every success in her new regional economic consulting initiative.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/lithium/mcs-2017-lithi.pdf>