

2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo: Steven Holland



Photo: Majella Nolan



An Australian Government Initiative

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INTRODUCTION

RDA Wheatbelt is a not-for-profit, incorporated organisation, governed by a Committee and funded by the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development.

The RDA network strengthens partnership across all three tiers of government, regional business and the wider community to boost the economic capability and performance of regions.

RDA Committees have an active and facilitative role in their communities and a clear focus on growing strong and confident regional economies that harness their competitive advantages, seize on economic opportunity and attract investment.

The aim of the RDA Wheatbelt Business Plan for 2018-19, was to focus on developing **Aboriginal Enterprise** through the implementation of the Noongar Enterprise Development Support project; progressing the **Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network** project to address the critical transport issues; and building capacity within the **Small Business** Community to take advantage of **emerging industries and innovation** within the agricultural, aviation, tourism, cultural and aged care sectors.

KEY OUTCOMES

BASED UPON THE AGREED ROLE AND FUNCTION OF RDA WHEATBELT

1. Increased economic opportunities and investment in the Wheatbelt.
2. Increased trade and jobs creation
3. Cooperative effort with all levels of government, industry, community and other regional stakeholders leads to improved economic development outcomes.
4. Achieve Government program objectives
5. Maximise access to Government programs and grants.
6. Advice supports development outcomes.

KEY PARTNERSHIPS

RDA WHEATBELT IS COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO MAXIMISE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR REGION. OUR PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS INCLUDE:

- The 42 Local Government that make up the Wheatbelt region
- The Wheatbelt Development Commission (WDC) – a statutory authority charged with the role of implementing the State's Regional Development Policy.
- Local community members and community groups
- The 41 Wheatbelt Community Resource Network Centres and Network
- WA Local Government Association – Great Eastern Country, Avon-Midland Country and Central Country.
- Regional Organisation of Councils (ROC)
- The Wheatbelt Business Network (WBN)
- Local industry groups (eg Wheatbelt Grower Groups)
- State and Federal government agencies and departments

KEY ACTIVITIES

Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network

Noongar Enterprise Development Support

Supporting Local Government

Supporting BBRF and other funding stream Applications

RDA Wheatbelt Survey

Visa and Skilled Migration

RDA CHARTER

1. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to identify economic opportunities and leverage private and public sector investment to the regions;
2. Connect regional businesses, councils and industry sectors with international trade partners, financial markets and potential investors;
3. Promote and disseminate information on Australian Government policies and grant programs to state and local governments and industry, business and community sectors;
4. Support community stakeholders to develop project proposals to access funding;
5. Develop and maintain positive working relationships with the local government bodies in their regions;
6. Facilitate public and private sector decentralisation;
7. Assist in the delivery of Australian Government programs, where relevant and where requested by the Minister;
8. Engage with regional entrepreneurs and emerging business leaders to explore new opportunities to grow local jobs in their regions;
9. Provide information on their region's activities and competitive advantages to all levels of government, industry, business and community sectors; and
10. Provide evidence-based advice to the Australian Government on critical regional development issues positively and negatively affecting their regions



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to our 2018-19 report, I am really pleased to say it has been a period of great activity for RDA Wheatbelt where as an organisation we have forged ahead. We have really progressed and developed as an extremely important facilitator and connector across the Wheatbelt, ensuring economic and social development and bringing real benefits to our local communities.

As a body, we are now extremely visible and well recognised across our large region. We have focussed on promoting what we do and having a personal presence in our local communities. I am confident our ongoing visits to our communities and our real focus on connecting, understanding and working with our local governments is proving really positive and bringing benefits to our shires and to RDA Wheatbelt.

I am very proud of the important role we have played in supporting the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network and the development and progress of our Noongar Enterprise Development Support project. I am also excited with our work and focus on aged care, agriculture and tourism, where we see further opportunities.

As Chairman I am extremely lucky to have a very engaged, enthusiastic and dedicated Committee who know our vast region so well and I thank them for their great input and support. A special thank you to my Deputy Chair Karen Strange who is so committed to growth and success in the Wheatbelt, works so well with our staff and has given fantastic support to me in my role, including standing in for me when I was away. Thank you Karen.

Good staff are pivotal to the success of an organisation such as ours. We are extremely fortunate to have our three core staff members who are totally committed, so engaged and enthusiastic about what they do. I am constantly inspired by their efforts and their enthusiasm for the WA Wheatbelt. Thank you Mandy, Chris and Pippa for all your hard work, support and the positive culture you bring.

Can I also sincerely thank Robert Miles and Steph Mippy for the terrific job they are both doing with our Noongar Enterprise Development Support projects. They have pioneered this program, which is developing very well and I am positive the benefits of their efforts will continue to flow on through their communities.

It's been a year of great progress, but we cannot afford to rest on our laurels as we still have so many opportunities and challenges in front of us.

I, together with the team and all our partners look forward to the next twelve months.

Tuck Waldon

Chairman

DIRECTOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT

As Director of Regional Development at RDA Wheatbelt I am pleased to welcome you to our 2018-19 Annual Report.

The diversity across our Wheatbelt is what makes us such an important asset to the State of WA. Our innovative business and industry leaders go about their work to harness our uniqueness and position the region as the engine room of the agricultural economy. Its been a pleasure over the past year to work with the Wheatbelt Development Commission to take advantage of State run programs like the Regional Economic Development Grants which provide our 10,000 small businesses with opportunities to showcase their entrepreneurial and innovative approaches to service and product delivery.

The past year has seen the team be present in the Wheatbelt connecting with our Local Governments and businesses to gather intelligence from across the region for our future work plans. These visits are such a useful way for us to be informed and to have a sense of situational awareness of the current issues and opportunities that we can communicate back to our Federal colleagues and Ministers.

Pippa, Chris, Steph and Rob have worked hard and enthusiastically to deliver the region the best service they can. Our job is about connecting people, businesses and the community to each other and services across all levels of Government and I would like to thank my team for their contribution to this. Without their eyes and ears on the ground, I wouldn't be able to do my job.

Thanks also goes to my Chair Tuck, Deputy Chair Karen and my Committee, for their ongoing support, mentorship, contribution and representation of me and the organisation outside of set meetings within portfolio interests.

We've seen a move into exploring issues such as migration and workforce challenges facing our agricultural, trades and manufacturing sectors; understanding linkages between human services in the region as well as working with emerging Aboriginal enterprises this year.

It is with pride that RDA Wheatbelt has continued it's involvement with the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network. The commitment of this group of volunteers working to attract funds for local government roads to ensure transport efficiencies and improve safety across the freight network is to be commended. The investment of \$70 million by the Federal Government funds, along with contributions from State regional development funds and the continuing monetary and in-kind contribution of all 42 Local Governments is an outstanding achievement which is now being realised in actual design and construction work to be commenced in 2019/20. Perseverance and dedication to the long term goal of achieving a place on the Infrastructure Australia (IA) Infrastructure Priority List and

● DRD REPORT CONT.

subsequent IA funding has been a key attribute of this group which has been justly recognised by being finalists in the 2019 Department of Local Government, Sport and Culture WA Regional Achievement and Community awards.

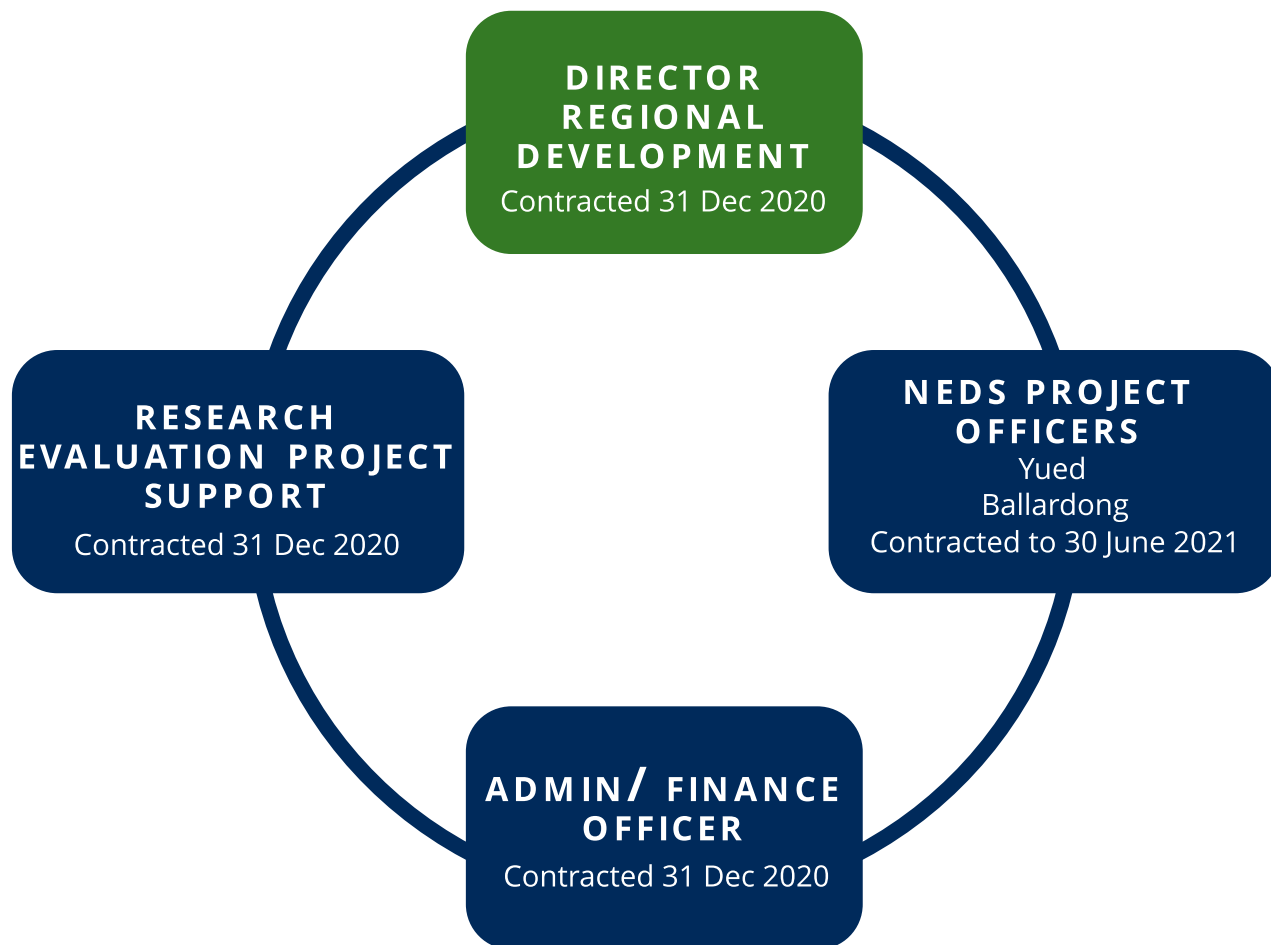
I see a number of opportunities for economic and community development this year including the roll out of the Container Deposit Scheme, tourism initiatives and a joint Wheatbelt Development Commission Innovation Conversations project.

I appreciate the partnerships created across the region and value the time given to us particularly by Local Government and businesses so that we can better deliver the RDA Charter outcomes for the Wheatbelt. I look forward to another productive and impactful year.

Thanks, Mandy.



STAFF



COMMITTEE

The Committee of RDA Wheatbelt is comprised of between six and nine volunteer members drawn from community, business, government and not-for-profit organisations across the region. The Chair's appointment is made by the Federal Minister for Regional Development, with all other Committee positions appointed at a local level by the Chair and Deputy Chair.

Committee members have a strong understanding of the Wheatbelt region and the key issues it faces. They are strong advocates for the region and foster a region-wide view of issues. Members also actively contribute to debate within the committee and guide the preparation of reports, plans and other RDA Wheatbelt documents.

Changes to the Committee this year include Ms Bonnie Cole who has relocated to the Eastern States and Mrs Lauren Schutz who declined to renominate in February due to other commitments. The Committee and Staff express our sincere thanks to Lauren and Bonnie for their time and commitment.

In June we welcomed Mrs Lisa Judson to our team. Lisa's financial experience and qualifications are required due to both Lauren and Bonnie previously representing these skills within the Committee.



COMMITTEE PROFILES



Mr. Terry Waldron
Perth
Chair

- Chair of the WA Cricket Association
- Chair, WA sports star of the year award
- Chair, Central East Aged Care Alliance
- Former Member of State Parliament for 16 years
- 6.5 years Minister for Sport & Recreation, Racing, Gaming & Liquor
- Former General Manager WA Country Football League
- Former Secretary Australian Country Football Council
- Former Real Estate Business Owner/Director, Gt Southern and Wheatbelt South



Mrs. Karen Strange
Bruce Rock
Deputy Chair

- Partner in grain and livestock, family farming enterprise
- Chair of 'Wheatbelt and Beyond Youth Mentoring'
- Community Based Liaison Officer, Bruce Rock District High School
- Wheatbelt Youth Council Committee Member
- Past-Women's Advisory Council for the Minister for Women's Business



Ms. Kim Hewson
Jurien Bay
Committee Member

- Principal, Economic Transitions
- Extensive experience in tourism, hotel management, sales and marketing in both regional and international markets
- Seven years assisting regional communities diversify their tourism product
- Currently Company Secretary of the Australian Prospectors and Miners' Hall of Fame



Mr. Michael Aspinall
Seabird
Committee Member

- Chair Keep Australia Beautiful Council
- Board member Keep Australia Beautiful National Body
- President Wanneroo Agricultural Society Inc
- Former Shire of Gingin, Councillor (13 years) and President
- Former member of WALGA's Municipal Waste Advisory Council (13 years)
- Former member of the Control of Vehicles (off-road Areas) Act Advisory Committee
- 28 years in a variety of roles, for an engine and fuel injection research and development company

COMMITTEE PROFILES



**Mrs. Lisa Judson
Bolgart**

Committee Member
Appointed June 2019

- Agricultural finance manager (10+ years)
- Former Project and Community Engagement Manager, Natural Resource Management and Community Engagement
- Member: Bolgart Primary School Council (Community Member)



**Mrs. Fiona Bush
York**

Committee Member

- Regional Manager WA Primary Health Alliance
- Previously Regional Coordinator South West WA Medicare Local
- Eleven years in variety of health sector roles including health promotion, project management and contract management



**Mr. Steve Martin
Wickein**

Committee Member

- Farming enterprise at East Wickein
- Councillor and past President, Shire of Wickein
- Former Road Safety Council Board Member
- Past representative on numerous WALGA groups in freight, transport, grain network, roads, Zones etc
- Eight years in journalism



**Mrs. Wendy Newman
Dowerin**

Committee Member

- Former CEO of the Wheatbelt Development Commission
- Deputy Chair WA Country Health Service
- Deputy Chair Directions Workforce Solutions Inc
- Principal Consultant Quintessence Consulting



**Mrs. Lauren Schutz
Narrogin**

Committee Member
Retired Feb 2019

- Agribusiness Manager with National Australia Bank based out of Narrogin
- Vice President Williams Netball Club
- Previously treasurer of Narrogin and Districts Netball Association



**Mrs. Bonnie Cole
Naremben**

Committee Member
Retired Dec 2018

- Executive Manager Corporate Services, Shire of Naremben
- Previous roles in local government since 2004 include Bruce Rock, Gingin, Wyndham East Kimberley and Kellerberrin
- Held positions on sporting and community committees
- Grew up on a Wheatbelt farm

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

WHEATBELT DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

In June 2019 a Service Level Agreement was signed specifically for an Innovation Conversation project. This project aims to increase community interest in, and engagement with, emerging technologies, and innovative job opportunities and processes. The Innovation Conversations events will be held across three central east communities in 2020 to celebrate existing innovators and explore future possibilities.

SHIRE OF NORTHAM AND BILYA KOORT BOODJA CULTURAL CENTRE

This relationship through the Noongar Enterprise Development Support (NEDS) projects has been formalised with a successful grant application to the Regional Economic Development funding to develop an online platform for the sale of Aboriginal goods and services. RDA Wheatbelt, as the grant recipient, will be overseeing this project.

CENTRAL EAST AGED CARE ALLIANCE

CEACA was formed in 2012 to address the significant under-resourcing of housing, health care beds and other age-appropriate related resources for elderly residents wanting to remain living in the Central East Wheatbelt. RDA Wheatbelt has supported this organisation in a number of areas over the years, including funding applications. This partnership has now been strengthened with the RDA Wheatbelt Chair taking on the position of Chair with CEACA.

WHEATBELT SECONDARY FREIGHT NETWORKING GROUP

In conjunction with all 42 Local Governments, Regional Road Groups Wheatbelt North and Wheatbelt South, Main Roads WA, WDC and WALGA. RDA Wheatbelt's role in this partnership is to facilitate access to federal funding pathways and assist in advocacy for the group. Highlighted as the biggest collaboration with LGs in Australia.

WHEATBELT BUSINESS NETWORK

At a June 2019 joint meeting of the Wheatbelt Development Commission and RDA Wheatbelt Boards agreed to continue to support, promote and facilitate the Wheatbelt Business Network as the region's small business 'go to' for business help and networks. The Director Regional Development is a Member of the WBN WE Shine Committee.

Some Members of the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network group with the Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack and Leader of the Nationals WA, Mia Davies.



KEY ACTIVITIES

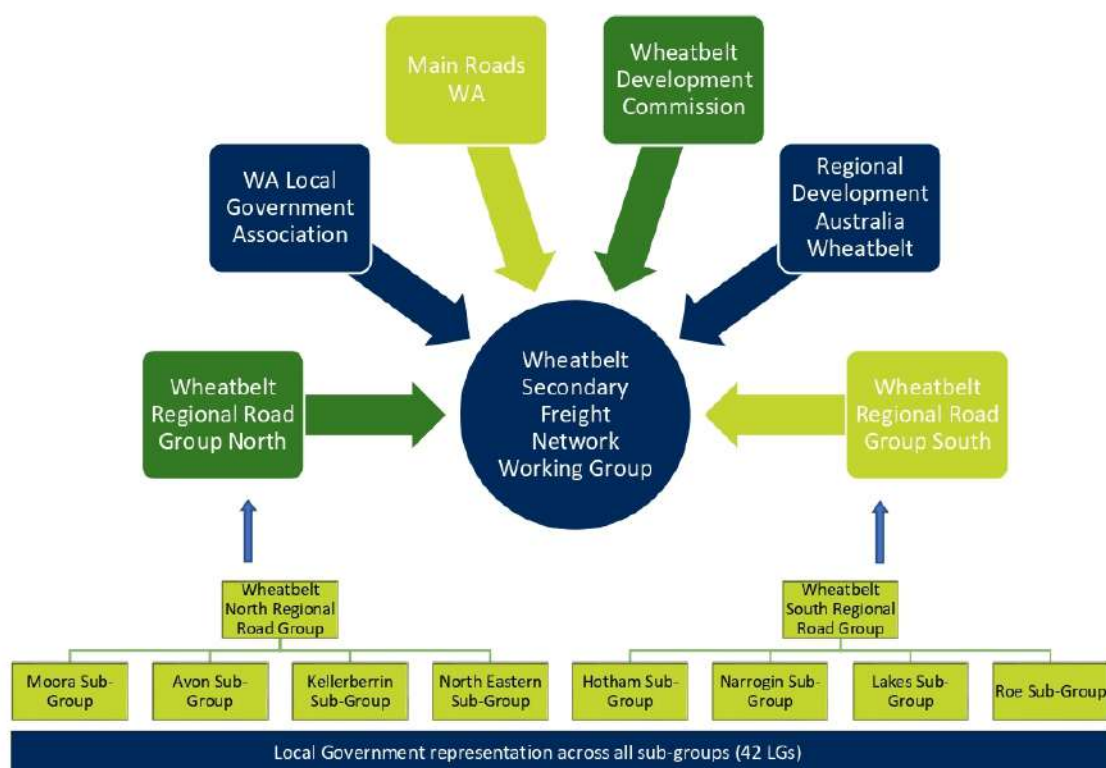
RDA WHEATBELT INITIATIVE – WHEATBELT SECONDARY FREIGHT NETWORK - KEY OUTCOMES: 1. INCREASED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES 3. COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ACROSS REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS 4. ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM OBJECTIVES 5. MAXIMISE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND GRANTS 6. SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

This period has been busy, whilst the leadership role is handled by the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network (WSFN) Group, of which RDA Wheatbelt is a Member, our contributions have greatly assisted and enabled the progression of this initiative.

The WSFN Group consists of representatives from the following organisations: Wheatbelt North Regional Road Group, Wheatbelt South Regional Road Group, Regional Development Australia (RDA) Wheatbelt Inc, WA Local Government Association, Main Roads WA - Wheatbelt Region and the Wheatbelt Development Commission in collaboration with ALL the 42 Local Governments of the Wheatbelt.

The key achievements of the project during this period are:

- RDA Wheatbelt utilised its own funds towards the preparation of a prefeasibility business case and a cost benefit analysis of the planning process, thereby removing a key obstacle to progressing this initiative.
- The in-kind investment by local government to date is estimated to be in excess of \$750,000, with a further \$252,000 cash funding committed across all the 42 LGAs.
- A successful application for a Regional Economic Development (RED) Grant of \$100,000, which is intended to contribute towards a Lead Consultant to undertake project management.



- The Australian Government Roads of Strategic Importance (ROSI) funding has allocated \$70 million towards works.
- The goal of achieving inclusion of the Wheatbelt Secondary Freight Network project on the Infrastructure Australia Infrastructure Priority List is one step closer with the ROSI funding.

The DRD and WSNF Group representatives have been invited to present at the 2019 SEGRA and Australian Regional Development Conference, highlighting the benefits of this huge collaborative project and the impact for the region.

RDA WHEATBELT INITIATIVE - NOONGAR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT -

KEY OUTCOMES: 1. INCREASED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES 2. INCREASED TRADE AND JOB CREATION 3. COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ACROSS REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS 4. ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM OBJECTIVES 5. MAXIMISE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND GRANTS 6. SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

The Noongar Project Officers were employed during this period. The Ballardong region is represented by Robert Miles and the Yued region by Stephanie Mippy.

RDA Wheatbelt is pleased to say that the outcomes already achieved by Rob and Steph have surpassed our expectations. The first six months for our Project Officers was focused on developing their business skills to be able to then support individuals and organisations through the process of setting up their own businesses. Not only have Rob and Steph worked hard with their business mentor and coach, but also well and truly started delivering these projects with many people already engaged in this process and meetings, workshops, engagements with Departments and organisations building strong networks.

The focus has now been on developing connections, networks and program resources like the participant resource folders, the coaching conversation for business startup, discussion tools, understanding business concept documents and business plans. Project names have been assigned and branding completed with the websites and stationery all designed by the Project Officers to give them ownership of the projects.

The official launches were held in March to highlight entering the second phase of the projects where the Moorditj Yaakiny (Standing Strong) and Ngala Wele Karla (Our Dream on Fire) projects are officially "Open for Business"

RDA Wheatbelt was also successful in an application to the Regional Economic Development Fund (REDs) for an online booking platform project. The platform is to manage online bookings, an online store, customer interactions and service provider database for



enterprises through Bilya Koort Boodja (BKB) centre for Nyoongar culture and environmental knowledge in Northam.

With some participants already at a stage where their ideas and dreams are shaping into a realistic business enterprises, it is proving to be an effective model for engagement and turning opportunities into businesses.

Ballardong <https://www.moorditjaakiny.com.au/>

Yued <https://www.ngalawelekarla.com.au/>

SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (LGs) –

KEY OUTCOMES: 1. INCREASED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES 2. INCREASED TRADE AND JOB CREATION 3. COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ACROSS REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS 4. ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM OBJECTIVES 5. MAXIMISE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND GRANTS 6. SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

RDA Wheatbelt has increased support for the region by engaging with proponents at the concept level of projects. We can be more effective in matching partners and projects with funding streams and which is the foundation of the message we are promoting. Face to face meetings are also an opportunity to engage over challenges and opportunities.

Three regional visits have been conducted whereby the Chair, Deputy Chair, Director Regional Development (DRD), Research, Evaluation and Project Support (REPS) Officer have over several days met with 5-7 LGs at a time. They meet with the CEO, Shire President and Community Development Officer to discuss projects and how RDA Wheatbelt can assist across all regional topics. This approach has been extremely successful and with three visits this year it is planned to complete a further three in the coming year to eventually cover all 42 LGs.

SUPPORTING BBRF APPLICATIONS –

KEY OUTCOMES: 1. INCREASED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES 2. INCREASED TRADE AND JOB CREATION 3. COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ACROSS REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS 4. ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM OBJECTIVES 5. MAXIMISE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND GRANTS 6. SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

RDA Wheatbelt has assisted with grant applications across a range of projects and funding streams that vary greatly in size and scope. The support ranges from research support, feedback on applications, matching projects to funding, identifying partners and providing letters of support.

Successful Building Better Regional Fund (BBRF) announcements for the period include:

Infrastructure Stream:

- Shire of Toodyay - \$4.7mil to develop a sport and recreation precinct.
- Shire of Trayning - \$363,317 for the aquatic centre redevelopment.
- Shire of Lake Grace - \$20,000 towards refurbishing the Varley museum.
- Shire of Chittering - \$4.71mil towards the Lower Chittering Sport & Recreation Facility.
- Mukinbudin Early Childhood Learning Centre - \$255,000 for a purpose built centre.
- York Motor Museum - \$21,000 Roof Renovation.
- Shire of Goomalling - \$20,000 Enlivening Pioneers' Pathway Drive Trail Signage Interpretation.

Community Stream:

- Narrogin - \$19,500 for Regional Early Education and Development Leadership Capability Building in the Wheatbelt's Child Care Sector.
- Shire of Lake Grace Astrotourism Towns. Grant \$36,000 total project cost \$48,000.

Delivering community stargazing events, developing a stargazing tourism trail and promoting Astrotourism.

- Wheatbelt Business Network -Data for Decisions. \$20,000 to commission a study and analysis of small business performance and opportunities in the WA Wheatbelt.
- Wheatbelt Health Network -Cultuoristy Project. An alternate approach to cultural awareness. \$19,800 for training approximately 30 employees.

RDA WHEATBELT SURVEY “SUPPORTING THE WHEATBELT - HOW DID WE DO?”

KEY OUTCOMES: 3. COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ACROSS REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS 4. ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM OBJECTIVES 5. MAXIMISE ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND GRANTS

A bi-annual survey was distributed via email to stakeholders in May. Comparison of 2017 and 2019 evaluation data indicates that more stakeholders have a greater understanding of the roles RDA Wheatbelt undertakes. It could be speculated that the increased level of stakeholders understanding contributed to more of them recognising that RDA Wheatbelt was having an impact on identifying and understanding issues of importance along with finding solutions and building regional capacities.

A key element in that may have added weight to these responses was the increased level of relevance in RDA Wheatbelt's engagement with stakeholders which was measured not only by the slight increase in affirmative responses in 2019, but the absence of disagreement with the statement. Response showed that the higher levels of relevance were reflected across other areas such as collaboration with and support of stakeholders.

Fundamentally the role of RDA Wheatbelt could be summarised in the perception of leadership it provides in the region. From the perspective of many community/small business respondents, it was providing a leadership role while LGA/State Government Agencies respondents were more circumspect. That being said it could be proposed that the 2019 evaluation was more comprehensive and as such has identified areas of strength and also those that need some additional focus.

VISAS AND SKILLED MIGRATION –

KEY OUTCOMES: 1. INCREASED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES 2. INCREASED TRADE AND JOB CREATION 3. COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ACROSS REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS 4. ACHIEVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAM OBJECTIVES 6. SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

The Director Regional Development has engaged with the Department of Home Affairs and attended the Migration Institute of Australia conference in March as a result of increasing concerns around staffing and visa issues across the region. Unsuccessful visa applications being an emerging issue for horticulture in the western part of the Wheatbelt. Manufacturing businesses in the Eastern Wheatbelt and heavy Agricultural machinery service centres across the Wheatbelt are also experiencing inability to fill positions to the extent where migration is being investigated as a possible solution.

Training local people to fill regional positions is always the priority, but where this is not meeting the needs of regional industries the economic and social impact is felt across the region.

RDA Wheatbelt has been approached regarding the merits of pursuing a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) for the horticulture industry in the Wheatbelt. DAMAs are a mechanism to fast track specific skill sets into a region. The DAMA idea may have merit considering the value of horticulture in the region and potential expansion of the Northern Growth Alliance. A DAMA for the central and eastern Wheatbelt in terms of agricultural and manufacturing trades could also be worth exploring.

EXTERNAL FUNDING

NOONGAR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT (NEDS) – DEPT OF SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING \$175,000 EX GST

During 2018 RDA Wheatbelt secured two third party contracts totalling \$975,000 (ex GST) over 3 yrs and 3 mths to support Aboriginal Enterprise Development in the Yued (Moora) and Ballardong Nyungar (Noongar) regions of the Wheatbelt. \$200,000 was received during this reporting period.

ABORIGINAL ONLINE PLATFORM BILYA KOORT BOODJA – WA DEPT PRIMARY INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT \$28,000 EX GST

RDA Wheatbelt was successful in an application for Regional Economic Development funding for an online platform to be hosted at the Northam Bilya Koort Boodja Cultural Centre. This project complements the NEDS projects in that it provides a central online platform for use by the Aboriginal Enterprises for the sale of goods and services. The Shire of Northam has contributed \$3000 and will be assisting with running the platform as an in-kind contribution.



REGIONAL PRIORITIES

- There are nearly 10,000 small and medium enterprises registered in the Wheatbelt region. Supporting SMEs within the Wheatbelt region to harness innovation in their sector, deliver products and services in a profitable and sustainable manner as well as being a source of local job creation is critical to ensuring the economic vibrancy of the region is maintained.
- The Wheatbelt's population is increasingly skewed toward the ageing end of the scale. Substantial investment in infrastructure and service models that are regionally sustainable for an ageing population is critical to ensure that we can meet the needs of this demographic.
- The gap is increasing in outcomes for Aboriginal people within the Wheatbelt across the spectrum in health, education, workforce participation, employment, life expectancy, home ownership and many other measures. A concerted effort is required across all agencies in collaboration with the Noongar people to reverse this trend. RDA Wheatbelt is leading the work on economic participation and contributing to the work on health and education.
- Intensive Agriculture is fundamental to the region's economy. The prospects for these industries are bright, but for them to thrive, new and innovative products, practices and business models need to be explored. Activities under intensive agriculture include broad acre farming, horticulture, aquaculture, citrus, wool, feed lots, eggs, beef, lamb, chicken and pork etc. The region also has an expanding range of commercial niche products including wine grapes, honey, olives, quinoa, blueberries, mangoes, avocados, asparagus, raspberries, strawberries, camel milk, goat cheese, goat, lentils, sorghum, wildflowers and bush foods.
- Limited mobile phone reception in many parts of the region impacts on emergency services, social amenity of communities and business performance/development. Sub-standard internet connections are a further social and economic disadvantage in the region, which will only be partially addressed by the NBN roll-out. Digital connectivity is essential to provide opportunities for business start-ups, growth and innovation in the region.
- The natural attributes of the region make it particularly suitable for renewable energy projects including large scale wind and solar farms. Connection costs, storage technology and capacity restraints in the distribution network are inhibiting the development of energy generation and limiting the regions ability to contribute to the renewable generation market.
- The natural and cultural attributes of the region make it extremely versatile in tourism service and product offerings. Support for local government, business and communities is required to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the regional, state, national and international tourist sectors.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES CONT.

- Population growth across the region is varied and the lack of diverse and suitable housing stock is a key developmental issue for the Wheatbelt. Multi-purpose housing developments to accommodate the needs of different sectors of the community are required across the region.
- An extensive national, State and local road and rail network serves the Wheatbelt region. Investing in this infrastructure is imperative to ensure safe and efficient access to ports and strategic hubs for connection with domestic and international markets.
- The Wheatbelt has lower Year 12 attainment rates when compared with the rest of Western Australia. There are also limited opportunities to participate in post-compulsory education in the region. Reform in the delivery of education to this region is required to improve the employability of people within the Wheatbelt.
- The Wheatbelt lacks adequate early childhood education and care facilities for children. This lack of services is a significant workforce development issue.





EMERGING ISSUES

ABORIGINAL ENTERPRISE – OUTCOMES 1,2,3,4,5,6

Currently Aboriginal enterprise in the Wheatbelt could be described as virtually non-existent. Only six Aboriginal individuals in the 2016 census identified themselves as self-employed which represents 2% of all self-employed in the region. Additionally, registered Aboriginal businesses (SME's) made up just 0.06% of all SME's in the Wheatbelt.

These figures emphasise the need for the NEDS project which is targeted at building business competencies in conjunction with developing enterprises and creating employment opportunities for the region's Ballardong and Yued people. The project targets of 60 Noongar people registering a business and 60 engaged in workplace skills training at the end of the second year of the project will have a substantial impact on the existing situation.

In addition, positioned in the background of the NEDS project is the actioning of the SWALC agreement part of which involves the distribution of \$1.2 billion to six Noongar Body Corporates. Two of these Noongar Body Corporates being Ballardong and Yued will be located in the Wheatbelt. In effect this will mean a direct and indirect inflow of over \$400 million into the region that although directed towards the Noongar people will have a flow on effect in the broader regional economy.

INTENSIVE AGRICULTURE – OUTCOMES 1,2,3,5,6

There are challenges and opportunities for intensive agriculture in the Wheatbelt. This includes the horticultural, meat and egg producers in the Gingin area who are facing urban encroachment and impending reductions in water allocations. At the same time these issues offer the opportunity to encourage investment and develop more intensive agriculture systems such as the Wide-Open Agriculture initiative, in other sub regions of the Wheatbelt.

A further challenge is access to workforce. Whilst local employees are the preferred option, these are limited and the issue is compounded by an inability to attract the metrocentric workforce due to travel, lower wages, lack of high standard housing and other services.

A key component that should be considered when investigating potential options is the inclusion of a local value add component which will add another dimension to economic and population growth in the region. It is important that we focus on keeping the multiplier effect in the Wheatbelt.

EMERGING ISSUES CONT.

REGIONAL POPULATION – OUTCOMES 1,2,3,4,5

The population of the Wheatbelt has continued to grow however there is a growing disparity in age demographics. There was a 37% increase in the 65 and over population between 2011 and 2016 compared to a 3.5% decline in the 0 to 14 years population. Between the two census, the 65 and over population's proportional representation in the overall Wheatbelt population increased from 16% to 20% while the 0-14 year's population proportional representation decreased from 21% in 2011 to 18% in 2016. In addition, between 2011 and 2016 there has been a 74% increase in the Aboriginal 65 and over population resulting in a proportional rise from 4% to 7% of the region's Aboriginal population.

In as much as the ageing trend represents a level of challenge for LG's in the region, it also represents an opportunity. This could be through providing an increasing suite of services for aged residents, thereby increasing employment opportunities. There is also an opportunity to grow the ageing services sector by developing a coordinated approach to promote ageing migration from urban areas to the Wheatbelt.

Such an approach could be strategically focused on capturing the aged value change from early retirement through to high care aged services. A key element that could drive this would be the competitive advantage that the region has in terms of less expensive housing and lower costs associated with high care services.

Promoting urban aged migration to the Wheatbelt could be structured on:

- The opportunity for early retirees to add a further cash component to their superannuation through selling their city property at a considerably higher price than it would cost to buy or build in the region.
- Memberships of sporting clubs such as golf and bowling clubs are substantially less than the city.
- Safe and vibrant communities.
- Options to progress through the aged care chain from at home services to low care independent living units to high care facilities at lower costs than the city.

The potential benefits from urban aged migration for the region's LGs could include:

- Younger retirees joining sporting and community clubs.
- Injection of additional spending in communities.
- Physically capable retirees adding to communities volunteer pools.
- Increases in aged services creating employment opportunities.

EMERGING ISSUES CONT.

- Opportunity to attract doctors, dentists and other medical services to LGs.
- Increased employment opportunities contributing to population growth.

The aged market represents a feasible prospect that could diversify and grow the Wheatbelt's economy along with the population. However there needs to be a collaborative strategic planning approach that coordinates amenities and services between LGs to optimise beneficial outcomes while avoiding unnecessary duplication or poor economic and social outcomes.

INNOVATION IN DELIVERY OF DIGITALLY BASED BUSINESS, EDUCATION & HEALTH SERVICES – OUTCOMES 1,2,3,4,5,6

RDA Wheatbelt has been heavily invested in the delivery of digitally based businesses and education. We see these two areas as of particular importance in driving economic growth, sustainability and employment in the region.

Delivery of digitally based business

In preparing and delivering three submissions on digital telecommunications, RDA Wheatbelt, identified the key issues confronting Wheatbelt businesses in their delivery of digitally based business being:

- Poor connectivity and reliability.
- Slow internet speeds.
- Inadequate data allowances.
- Inadequate mobile phone coverage despite 94% of businesses regular using mobile phones to conduct business.

At the same time the majority of businesses agreed that these issues were contributing to:

- Difficulty in starting a business.
- Difficulty in establishing and growing a new business.
- Difficulty in expanding an established business.
- Restricting access to markets.
- Difficulty in accessing new markets and growing a business's market base.



Regional population continues to grow, however so does the disparity across demographics. Between 2011 and 2016 there has been a 74% increase in the Aboriginal 65 and over population resulting in a proportional rise from 4% to 7% of the region's Aboriginal population.

Access to education, training and skills development are in part contributing to the decline in the region's 15-24 years population. Many parents and teachers felt that improved connectivity would offer students more curriculum options especially around ATAR subjects.



● EMERGING ISSUES CONT.

The results of the survey showed that inadequate digital connections were restraining economic growth in the region and therefore should remain a key imperative to be addressed in RDA Wheatbelt's role in driving investment, jobs and economic growth in the region.

Delivery of digital education services

Education, training and skills development are the backbone of economic resilience and sustainability for the region. Currently access to such services are somewhat limited in the Wheatbelt, particularly outside the regional centres and are in-part contributing to the decline in the region's 15-24 years population as many in this group move to the city for further education and training.

RDA Wheatbelt's research showed that 50% of the parents who responded in the survey chose where their children undertook their secondary education based on access to reliable internet connectivity. Additionally, in regard to restricted secondary curriculum choices in country schools, many of the parents and teachers felt that improved connectivity would offer students more curriculum options especially around ATAR subjects.



FINANCIALS

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUSTRALIA WHEATBELT INC
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2019

	Operating	Projects	Income	Investment	TOTAL
Opening reconciled cash at 1 July	15,396	170,181	79,144	255,914	520,635
INCOME FOR THE YEAR					
Grant Income	332,670	231,000			563,670
Fee for service	6,818				6,818
Innovation Conversations	10,000				10,000
Noongar Enterprise Development	52,410		13,446		65,856
Interest Income	598	1,361	343	5,521	7,823
Other	5,348		54,245	3,000	62,593
TOTAL INCOME	407,844	232,361	68,034	8,521	716,760
TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE 2019	423,240	402,542	147,178	264,435	1,237,395
EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR					
Asset Acquisitions	1,696	5,048			6,744
Committee Costs	24,727		408		25,135
Financial & Professional	4,521	1,238	700		6,459
Marketing & Activities	8,189	18,946			27,135
Office Lease & Outgoings	10,144				10,144
Operational Costs	10,544	27,597			38,141
Extra Funding Capacity Building	4,863				4,863
Staff Salaries	253,016	112,118			365,134
Other Staff Expenses	43,229	26,132			69,361
Motor Vehicle Costs	21,632	19,211	39,158		80,001
Project Costs		3,000	45,704	50,348	99,052
Business Consultant		80,835			80,835
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	382,561	294,124	85,970	50,348	813,003
Cash at Bank 30 June 2019	40,679	108,418	61,208	214,087	424,392



CONTACT

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