



**Regional  
Development**  
*Australia*  
MIDWEST GASCOYNE



## **ANNUAL REPORT ON OUTCOMES**

**2021 - 2022**



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(ABN 22 450 469 916)**

## **RDAMWG CHAIR YVONNE MESSINA'S REPORT**

I am again delighted to present the annual outcomes report for Regional Development Australia Mid West and Gascoyne (RDAMWG) 2022 to 2023.

Over the past year our organisation has continued to focus on strategic partnerships and capacity building as our contribution to the ongoing growth of the Mid West and Gascoyne region. Attention has been given to strengthening partnerships that support practical initiatives and outcomes for the benefit of communities.

Representing twenty local government shires in a geographic area that spans more than 600,000 sq. kms we value the partnerships across the region which support a coordinated and comprehensive approach to key strategy and policy issues. Most importantly whilst the Mid West and Gascoyne region has similarities with other regions it also has unique capabilities, and these capacities must be curated to enhance liveability and productivity at the same time.

The Northern part of our region is the Gascoyne which is encompassed within the geographic boundaries covered by the Office of Northern Australia. RDAMWG is using its resources to invest in a collective commitment to planning with respect to public and private sector investment in this important part of Western Australia. The importance of the focus on Northern Australia with respect to jobs, investment and sustainable communities is acknowledged as is the ongoing requirement for stable leadership, investment, and policy for Northern Australia.

RDAMWG uses its resources to invest in the collective commitment to planning, whether it be a regional road network, ecotourism, telecommunications or community capacity building. We believe that our robust community connections and the experience of working within a whole of government basis, with both bottom up and top-down coordination across agencies will add value to our outcomes. Importantly our organisation has close working relationships with each local government organisation. We include local government in everything that we do as we have found that when social and economic planning processes are aligned with Commonwealth and State processes there are better outcomes for all stakeholders.

The 21<sup>st</sup> of May Federal election saw a change in government and on behalf of the Board and organisation I would like to congratulate The Hon. Nola Marino, MP, Member for Forrest on her re-election to the House of Representatives. It is also my pleasure to thank The Hon. Nola Marino for the leadership and support given to the RDA program during her time as Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories.



It is also my pleasure to convey my congratulations to Hon. Kristy McBain, MP, Member for Eden-Monaro and Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories and The Hon. Madeleine King, MP, Member for Brand and Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia.

RDAMWG has taken steps to establish early relationships with both The Hon. Kristy McBain and The Hon. Madeleine King as their respective portfolios are important to the development of a policy framework for public and private infrastructure investment in our regions.

The sustainability of our regional communities is an essential part of regional development, and RDAMWG believes an inclusive view that balances fit for purpose social and economic infrastructure is required to provide the Mid West and Gascoyne communities with the services necessary to attract and hold the people who are required to enable development.

I am also honoured to continue my appointment as chair of RDAMWG and look forward to the ongoing opportunities to utilise our resources to solidify relationships and deliver both short- and long-term solutions that grow the capacity of the region through its communities, people and businesses.

Overall, the past year has seen stability in the RDAMWG Board with Rossco Foulkes-Taylor choosing not to continue his appointment into the 2022/23 financial year. During the year the Board comprised of Tom Maina (Deputy Chair), Tony Turner, Tami Maitre, Jackie Brooks, Jim Sandy, Rossco Foulkes-Taylor and Ray Moir. I would like to express my sincere gratitude for their service. Contributing to a volunteer Board is always a difficult challenge and the dedication, seriousness and interest is evident and appreciated. The achievements of RDAMWG are due in large measure to the leadership of the Board and the commitment to quality over an extended period.

**Yvonne Messina JP, GAICD**

**Chair RDA Mid West and Gascoyne**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

RDA Mid West and Gascoyne is a not-for-profit, incorporated organisation, governed by a Board and funded by the Australian Governments, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

The RDA network strengthens partnership across all three tiers of government, regional business and the wider community. We aim to work with all these stakeholders to find local solutions to local issues in the Mid West and Gascoyne regions of Western Australia. By bringing people together, we can generate ideas and strategies to move forward with.

Regional Development Australia Mid West and Gascoyne is one of the nine Western Australian and fifty-two Regional Development Australia offices nationwide.

## 2.0 RDA CHARTER

Refreshed by the Assistant Minister for Regional Development in October 2020 the Charter for Regional Development Australia is to:

Collaborate with other RDA Committees, all levels of government, and the private sector:

RDA Committees will:

- a) Facilitate regional economic development outcomes, investment, local procurement and jobs.
- b) Promote greater regional awareness of and engagement with Australian Government policies, grant programs and research.
- c) Improve Commonwealth regional policymaking by providing intelligence and evidence based advice to the Australian Government on regional development issues.
- d) Co-ordinate the development of a strategic regional plan, or work with suitable existing regional plans that will align with the Commonwealth's regional priorities.

## 3.0 RDA MID WEST AND GASCOYNE – OUR VISION

### 3.1 RDAMWG BOARD

The RDAMWG met six times during the 2021 – 2022 year, including five ordinary board meetings and the Annual General Meeting which was held on Thursday 23 September 2021.

Board members serving during this time were:

- Yvonne Messina (Chair)
- Tom Maina Mwangi (Deputy Chair)

- Tony Turner (Member)
- Tami Maitre (Member)
- Jackie Brooks (Member)
- Ray Moir (Member)
- Jim Sandy (Member)
- Ross Foulkes-Taylor (Member)

The organisation operates under a funding agreement with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and Arts<sup>1</sup> which runs from 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2025.

### **3.2 VISION**

A Strong and prosperous Mid West and Gascoyne region with an enhanced identity, prosperity and quality of life.

### **3.3 STRATEGIC INTENT**

We are committed to facilitating a strong regional economy through economic opportunity and investment.

### **3.4 MISSION**

Together we grow our region.

### **3.5 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

RDAMWG activities are guided by three strategic outcome areas

#### **3.5.1 Facilitate regional economic development outcomes, investment, jobs and local procurement**

- Regional collaboration.
- Improved competitive advantages.
- Business promotion and innovation.
- Investment, jobs, procurement and other regional development outcomes.

#### **3.5.2 Promote greater regional awareness of and engagement with Australian Government policies, grant programs and research.**

- Alignment of regional requirements to federal government programs / policies.
- Seek opportunities for regional businesses and organisations to access and win grant funding.

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<sup>1</sup> As per circular DITRDCA, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

- Provision of best practice facilitation and advice regarding accessing relevant grants.

### 3.5.3 Contribute to Commonwealth regional policy making by providing intelligence and evidence-based advice to the Australian Government on regional development issues.

- The capability and performance of RDAMWG is improved and enhanced.

### 3.6 Our Values Identify What RDAMWG Cares About

<b>Equity and Inclusiveness</b>	Productive client relationships first, every time
<b>Engagement</b>	Engaging with those who are committed to our vision
<b>Integrity</b>	Honesty and credibility underpin our work
<b>Respect</b>	We value diversity, trust, cultural respect & fairness to all
<b>Resilience</b>	We value the capacity to adapt, to not give up, to try new things and be willing to rebound and recover

## 4.0 TOP FIVE BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

### 4.1 SUMMARY OF KEY OUTCOMES

Progressing opportunities to lead and facilitate a programmed approach to **Regional Growth and Investment**.

*Gascoyne Infrastructure priorities report was prepared to provide a Gascoyne specific view of the infrastructure priorities that will deliver the greatest return to the Gascoyne in terms of business investment and jobs growth. The Gascoyne Infrastructure Priorities Statement is aligned with Federal and Western Australian State Infrastructure strategies and promotes a collaborative regional approach.*

RDAMWG has focused on developing best practice through an investigation of the **Collaborative Arrangements** between Shires and Mining Companies.

*Originating from many discussions and feedback from regional communities this project has reviewed agreements and commitments in place between small communities and mining companies. There are opportunities to develop 'best practice' templates from current initiatives and to further identify the ways that best practice in mining and community engagement can deliver successful community outcomes. The project is now embedded within the Murchison regional strategy and aligned with the Western Australian Local Government Association, Mining Policy Forum.*

Lead engagement with Shire communities with the aim of developing frameworks that support **Growth Strategies for Small Shires**.

*Acknowledging that many shires are experiencing a multidecade trend of population decline RDAMWG has initiated a project that examines the strategies used by small shires to address population decline.*

Leading the development of the **Governance and Leadership** arrangements for six Shires to participate in the development of the Murchison GeoRegion tourism initiative.

*The Mission of the Murchison GeoRegion project is 'showcase the unique Murchison environment to create sustainable economic and social development by implementing the structures, systems and processes that will support global recognition of the Murchison GeoRegion'.*

*Working in partnership with Murchison GeoRegion working group and the Mid West Development Commission RDAMWG contributed to the project via:*

*Leadership: Providing the environment to accelerate the development of the project.*

*Collaboration: Established a non-binding MoU between RDAMWG, the project working group and the Mid West Development Commission.*

*Process: Managed the development of the Strategic Plan, Implementation Plan and the Governance Model structure.*

*Resourcing: Co funded a project officer.*

Building community capacity through a best practice **'grants program'**.

*Developing the capacity of the Mid West and Gascoyne community and business community to easily identify, learn about, apply for and manage applications for federal, state and local government and non-government grants and associated funding programs is a priority and key program area for RDAMWG.*

## **4.2 BUILDING BETTER REGIONS FUND ROUND 5.**

RDAMWG was pleased to be able to support the applications of local government and service organisations within Round 6 of the Building Better Regions Fund.

At the time of preparing this report the outcomes of the Round 6 funding applications have not been announced.

## **5.0 PARTNERSHIPS**

### **5.1 DEVELOPING NORTHERN AUSTRALIA**

RDAMWG is a participant and Member of the RDA Northern Australian Alliance. The Alliance was established to provide input to and respond to the 'Our North Our Future: White Paper on Developing Northern Australia' (2015). Geographically the Gascoyne Region Shires of Exmouth, Carnarvon, Shark Bay and Upper Gascoyne in addition to the Shires of Meekatharra and Wiluna are included in the Developing Northern Australia agenda. It is anticipated that a new 5-year plan for developing Northern Australia will commence soon.

### **5.2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ZONE MEETINGS**

At a local level, the region is managed by 20 Local Government Authorities who provide services to communities that range in size from around ninety people to 39,000 people. These Local Governments belong to voluntary regional associations of Councils that are supported by the Western Australian Local Government Association. RDAMWG is a non-voting participant of these Local Government zone meetings:

- **Murchison Country Zone of Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) (Cue Parliament)** incorporating the Shires of Cue, Meekatharra, Mount Magnet, Murchison, Sandstone and Yalgoo.
- **Northern Country Zone of WALGA (Midlands)** incorporating the Shires of Carnamah, Chapman Valley, Coorow, Irwin, Mingenew, Morawa, Northampton, Perenjori, Three Springs and the City of Greater Geraldton.
- **Gascoyne Country Zone of WALGA** incorporating the shires of Carnarvon, Exmouth, Shark Bay and Upper Gascoyne.

## 6.0 RDAMWG REGIONAL FOCUS

During the 2020/21 budget year RDAMWG turned its attention to the smaller remote communities within the Mid West and Gascoyne region. This has been a deliberate policy and program position informed by:

- An evidence-based understanding of economic and population-based indicators.
- The development of an improved understanding of the vision that leaders have for their communities and the gaps in resources and capabilities.
- Our major projects which are highlighting opportunities to create shared value and collaboration across communities.

Observations are that:

- The development of appropriate governance and implementation frameworks at a local and regional level is essential to develop the business case opportunities that are required for transformational programmes that will attract both private and public sector investment.
- RDA's play a valuable role in developing shared value that identifies issues and opportunities that cross local government boundaries.
- Sub-regional and regional interventions are required to develop and implement strategies that address growth opportunities in small shires.
- Implementation of both State and Federal Government programs is challenging within micro communities.
- There is no one single solution to the factors that support jobs and growth. A multifaceted approach that incorporates population is required.

## 7.0 OUTCOMES

### 7.1 FACILITATION OF REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES, INVESTMENT, JOBS AND LOCAL PROCUREMENT.

<p><b>7.1.1 Gascoyne Infrastructure Priorities</b></p>	<p>Following consultation with Gascoyne Shires RDAMWG prepared the Gascoyne Infrastructure Priorities statement. The report will allow RDAMWG to develop a Gascoyne Infrastructure Priorities Statement that will drive regional infrastructure strategy and advocacy.</p>
<p><b>What did we do?</b></p>	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The Infrastructure Priorities report was prepared to provide a <b><i>Gascoyne regional perspective</i></b> of infrastructure priorities – a Gascoyne Perspective. The priorities are aligned with infrastructure reports released by Infrastructure WA and Infrastructure Australia and the themes of the Northern Australia agenda.</p> <p>The geographic scope of the report includes the Shires of Carnarvon, Exmouth, Shark Bay, Meekatharra, Murchison, Wiluna, and Upper Gascoyne.</p> <p><b>Process</b></p> <p>The following process was used in preparing this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Literature Search of Federal, State and Regional strategic documents</li> <li>(ii) Engagement with key stakeholders</li> <li>(iii) Analysis of current and proposed regional projects</li> <li>(iv) Theming of projects to identify Gascoyne Pillars for economic growth</li> <li>(v) Identification of infrastructure requirements</li> <li>(vi) Review of Government priorities</li> <li>(vii) Review of funding opportunities</li> <li>(viii) Prioritisation of infrastructure requirements</li> <li>(ix) Identification of regional barriers and enablers</li> </ul>



	<p><b>Delivery</b></p> <p>The report was presented during an extended RDAMWG Board meeting in Carnarvon in late 2021. The meeting was attended by Shire CEO’s and elected members and a representative of the Office of Northern Australia.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) RDA has commenced preparation of a regional road strategy identified as an infrastructure priority in the Infrastructure Priorities report. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Roads are critical for the further development of tourism, mining and horticulture.</li> <li>b. Providing serviceable roads to Aboriginal communities will reduce social and economic inequalities.</li> </ul> </li> <li>(ii) Business case opportunities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Road safety.</li> <li>b. Reduction in transport costs.</li> <li>c. Improved access to employment, health and education services.</li> <li>d. Increased resilience to flooding, particularly during the wet season.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Did it have an impact?</b></p>	<p>The work around Gascoyne Infrastructure has shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The importance of having a ‘regional voice’.</li> <li>➤ Acknowledgement that organisations like RDA can fulfill an ‘honest broker’ role in developing a regional business case perspective on areas of common interest.</li> <li>➤ Recognition that that the business case for public sector investment requires evidence that it can assist in de-risking private sector activity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority Performance Measures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) The need for a regional infrastructure strategy is recognised.</li> <li>(ii) Willingness of regional local government organisations to collaborate for the benefit of their own communities and the region.</li> </ul>

	<p>(iii) Readiness of local government and business to participate in a shared activity.</p> <p>(iv) Process allows refinement to a range of infrastructure areas: digital, housing, skills etc.</p> <p>(v) Regional consensus and advocacy supported by stakeholders.</p> <p>(vi) RDAMWG has an enhanced understanding of its role in collaborating with stakeholder organisations particularly in capacity development.</p>
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<b>7.1.2 Small Shires in the Mid West Growth Strategies</b>	RDAMWG has commenced a project on the strategies and practices used by small shires to create growth and build their economies to improve community outcomes and bring investment into the local area.
<b>What did we do?</b>	<p>The project is using seven Shires in the North Midlands region as case studies with a view to using the outcomes in a broader regional context.</p> <p>The Shires are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carnamah</li> <li>• Coorow</li> <li>• Irwin</li> <li>• Mingenew</li> <li>• Morawa</li> <li>• Perenjori</li> <li>• Three Springs</li> </ul> <p>A driver for the project is that:</p> <p>In percentage terms the largest population declines in Australia are experienced in rural local government areas with small populations.</p> <p>Overall, the population of the Mid West and Gascoyne region is declining faster than long term predictions.</p> <p>Six of the local government areas in the Mid West are among the top ten in Australia, experiencing high levels of population decline in percentage terms.</p>

	<p>RDAMWG has met with people in leadership positions from each of the Shires to discuss approaches and intended outcomes.</p> <p>Developed a high-level understanding of current population declines in Shires.</p> <p>Developed case studies of how other towns have successfully addressed population decline.</p> <p>Engaged with Regional Australia Institute as an organisation that has a special interest in policy and regional Australia.</p>
<p><b>Did it have an impact?</b></p>	<p>RDAMWG is championing the importance of population alongside jobs and growth.</p> <p>Communities are now raising their concerns about population decline and the impact on identity and sense of place.</p> <p>Resource challenges and sustainability are discussed along with factors that enhance liveability and attract or retain people.</p>
<p><b>Priority Performance Measures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Communities recognise population decline as an issue and are prepared to work towards improved sustainability, liveability and population.</li> <li>(ii) How agencies like RDAMWG, and the regions small towns and communities, can better understand the ways that local capabilities can address opportunities in the region’s economy.</li> <li>(iii) Improved understanding of the tool sets and capabilities that can be used by local government and communities to enhance liveability, economic growth and population.</li> <li>(iv) Greater collaboration between local government and communities on infrastructure and investment opportunities.</li> <li>(v) Interventions that result in improvements in liveability, investment, jobs and population.</li> </ul>

<p><b>7.1.3 Murchison GeoRegion</b></p>	<p>RDAMWG took a lead role in developing the strategic focus and governance arrangements for the aspiration to create a UNESCO certified Global Geopark within the Murchison GeoRegion.</p>
<p><b>What did we do?</b></p>	<p>RDAMWG ‘s contribution covered four key enablement areas:</p> <p><i>Leadership:</i> Provided the environment and support to accelerate the development of the project.</p> <p><i>Collaboration:</i> Initiated a non-binding MoU between RDAMWG, Mid West Development Commission and the Gascoyne GeoRegion Project Working Group. The MoU creates a partnership agreement to support the objectives and delivery of the GeoRegion objectives.</p> <p><i>Process:</i> Managed the development of the Strategic and Implementation Plan along with the Governance Model structure.</p>
<p><b>Did It have an impact</b></p>	<p>The appointment of a shared project officer resource is a case study for the region. This is the first time the regional shires have contributed to the employment of a shared resource.</p> <p>The local governments have greater clarity of their role and contribution to the GeoRegion and the management of the sites. For example: Local Governments see their role as initiating the project and transferring management to commercial stakeholders and Indigenous owners in the future.</p> <p>Broader community recognition that Geotourism is emerging a global product that has the potential to support visitation to the region.</p>
<p><b>Priority Performance Measures</b></p>	<p>The performance measures for RDAMWG are different to those of the Project Working Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Advice provided to the Project working group is valued and recognised as appropriate.</li> <li>➤ Lead and maintain the MoU between RDAMWG, the Murchison GeoRegion Project Working Group and the Mid West Development Commission.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Employment agreement for the GeoRegion project officer supports the objectives of the project.</li> </ul>
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**7.2 PROMOTE GREATER REGIONAL AWARENESS OF AND ENGAGEMENT WITH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT POLICIES, GRANT PROGRAMS AND RESEARCH.**

<p><b>7.2.1 Grant Management</b></p>	<p>Promoted grants and programs available to the region as well as supporting grant applications made by Local Governments and stakeholder organisations.</p> <p>RDAMWG has provided advice on any application when it is sought in the context of an understanding of regional strategies, challenges and opportunities.</p> <p>Provided an aggregated grant information and assistance portal in partnership with RDA Wheatbelt.</p>
<p><b>What did we do?</b></p>	<p><i>Grant Portal</i></p> <p>Developing the capacity of the Mid West and Gascoyne local governments, community and business to easily identify, learn about, and manage applications for federal, state and local government and non-government grants and associated funding programs is important program area for RDAMWG.</p> <p>RDAMWG and RDA Wheatbelt have jointly funded and launched:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A Grant portal that is now provided to local governments, community groups and business groups in up to 63 Shires throughout the Mid West, Gascoyne and Wheatbelt regions. The Grant portal reduces the reliance on other organisations for Grant information.</li> </ul> <p>The Grant Portal can be accessed on the RDAMWG website: <a href="http://www.rdamwg.com.au">www.rdamwg.com.au</a></p> <p><i>Promotion of Grants</i></p> <p>Grants and funding opportunities are promoted on the RDAMWG website, social media and through the RDAMWG newsletter.</p>

	<p><i>Grant Support</i></p> <p>Over the past year has supported local shires and community in applications made for community and infrastructure projects to Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) , Regional Economic Development Grants (REDS), Disaster Recovery and other community and innovation that have become available.</p>
<p><b>Did It have an impact</b></p>	<p>Regional communities rely heavily on grants for infrastructure, events, cultural and community development and capacity building, and this RDA initiative is in response to a widely recognised need for improved awareness and access to grant funding.</p> <p>RDA’s Funding and Grants Hub is a time-saving and effortless way for applicants from small community organisations to local governments to identify funding tailored to their needs.</p> <p>The Grants hub is accessible to local government Shires, business and community groups across sixty-three regional communities.</p> <p>In April 2022 the Grant Hub had:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 1,300 grants on the portal.</li> <li>➤ 343 registered users and increase of eighty-eight over the previous year.</li> <li>➤ 2,184 Grant alerts sent to registered users by email.</li> <li>➤ 457 sessions where a user was actively engaged in the portal.</li> <li>➤ 1,377 views of individual grant information pages.</li> <li>➤ Most popular grant categories include: tourism and events, sporting and community strengthening grants.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority Performance Measures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Local Governments and communities have up to date information on available Grants.</li> <li>➤ LG and communities improve skills in Grant application and management.</li> <li>➤ RDAMWG can assess skill requirement required with respect to Grant application and management.</li> <li>➤ Applicability of grant to the region can be assessed from an advocacy perspective.</li> </ul>

<p><b>7.2.2 Developing Northern Australia</b></p>	<p>The Office of Northern Australia (ONA) sits within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.</p> <p>It is the Australian Government’s area of expertise for Northern Australia, coordinating implementation of the Government’s Northern Australia policy agenda to achieve a sustainable and contemporary northern economy. The ONA provides policy advice, coordinates operational support for the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, supports Indigenous inclusion of First Nations involvement in the agenda, coordinates whole-of-government reporting, and facilitates governance structures.</p> <p>The Shires of Exmouth, Carnarvon, Upper Gascoyne, Shark Bay, Meekatharra, Murchison and Wiluna fall within the geographic scope of Northern Australia</p>
<p><b>What did we do?</b></p>	<p>RDAMWG is working with the Gascoyne Shires to develop a coordinated approach to ONA policy and initiatives and communicates these to relevant local government stakeholders.</p> <p><i>Staff Briefing</i></p> <p>(i) At the invitation from RDAMWG a representative of the ONA attended and addressed an RDAMWG meeting in Carnarvon attended by local government CEO’s, elected representatives and business owners.</p> <p><i>Input into White Paper</i></p> <p>RDAMWG provided input to the Green paper on Developing Northern Australia, which sought to facilitate feedback on opportunities, risks, challenges and policy options to drive growth in the north.</p> <p><i>Gascoyne Infrastructure Requirements</i></p> <p>RDAMWG facilitated attendance at an online workshop on Gascoyne Infrastructure Requirements that was conducted by Infrastructure Australia.</p>

	<p><i>Gascoyne Infrastructure Priorities</i></p> <p>RDAMWG has undertaken a contemporary view of the infrastructure priorities that will deliver the greatest return to the Gascoyne and the State in terms of business investment and jobs growth. This report will allow RDA to develop a Gascoyne Infrastructure Priorities Statement that will drive regional infrastructure strategy and advocacy.</p> <p><i>Gascoyne Regional Roads</i></p> <p>Following the Infrastructure Priorities work, RDAMWG has undertaken preliminary work on the need for a regional road network renewal plan with a view to meeting the future needs of industry.</p>
<p><b>Did It have an impact</b></p>	<p>Developing the capacity of Gascoyne local governments and business to interpret and respond to policy and funding opportunities provided through the Office of Northern Australia is an important program area for RDAMWG.</p> <p>To have influence, the Gascoyne Shires must work together as a regional group identifying regional infrastructure and investment opportunities.</p> <p>RDAMWG can contribute to Northern Australia policy through reports and submissions.</p> <p>A further role is the development of regional collaboration and prioritisation of key issues that can then be promoted and advocated to Government.</p>
<p><b>Priority Performance Measures</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Local Governments and communities have up to date information on the Northern Australia policy agenda.</li> <li>➤ The Gascoyne region has a voice in the implementation of the Northern Australia policy agenda.</li> <li>➤ The Gascoyne region can support and agree priorities that have the potential to attract funding and support through the Office of Northern Australia.</li> </ul>



<b>7.2.3 Partnerships and Alliances</b>	Establish partnerships and alliances with both public and private sector organisations that create <b>greater regional awareness of Australian Government policies, grant programs and research.</b>
<b>What did we do?</b>	<p>Participate in committees and associations that work together for the region:</p> <p><b><i>Developing Northern Australia</i></b></p> <p>RDAMWG is a participant and Member of the RDA Northern Australian Alliance. The Alliance provides a forum to share issues and discuss matters of regional interest as well as providing an RDA perspective to the Northern Australia agenda.</p> <p><b><i>Regional Local Government Organisations</i></b></p> <p>RDAMWG is a non-voting participant of Local Government zone meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Murchison Country Zone of Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) (Cue Parliament)</b> incorporating the Shires of Cue, Meekatharra, Mount Magnet, Murchison, Sandstone and Yalgoo.</li> <li>➤ <b>Northern Country Zone of WALGA (Midlands)</b> incorporating the Shires of Carnamah, Chapman Valley, Coorow, Irwin, Mingenew, Morawa, Northampton, Perenjori, Three Springs and the City of Greater Geraldton.</li> <li>➤ <b>Gascoyne Country Zone of WALGA</b> incorporating the Shires of Carnarvon, Exmouth, Shark Bay and Upper Gascoyne</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Cruise Geraldton Committee</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Coordinates matters concerning the development and management of the cruise ship industry.</li> </ul>
<b>Did It have an impact</b>	Collaboration with agencies and organisations in both government and non-government sectors is fostered and encouraged and is an essential role of RDA's.
<b>Priority Performance Measures</b>	Collaborative partnerships with other agencies, government departments and organisations increase awareness of RDA's.

	Partner organisations recognise the value created by RDA.
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**7.3 CONTRIBUTE TO COMMONWEALTH REGIONAL POLICY MAKING BY PROVIDING INTELLIGENCE AND EVIDENCE-BASED ADVICE TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES.**

<b>7.3.1 Regional Advice and Reporting</b>	<p>RDAMWG has participated in and where appropriate lead the development of submissions, briefings and face-to-face interactions that highlight issues and opportunities relevant to the region.</p> <p>Where appropriate available datasets have been used to highlight important trends and indicators that contribute to an understanding of the region and underpin business case and advocacy initiatives.</p>
<b>What did we do?</b>	<p>Provided anecdotal and evidence on the impact of Cyclone Seroja, skill and regional housing needs.</p> <p>Participate and facilitated the involvement of RDAMWG Board members in Regional Intelligence briefings.</p>
<b>Did It have an impact</b>	<p>Information provided has had input into policy formulation and the influence of federal programs.</p>
<b>Priority Performance Measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Stakeholder awareness of regional issues.</li> <li>➤ Identification of the key indicators that support the RDAMWG program.</li> <li>➤ Support for a regionally coordinated capacity building program from the organisations and stakeholders for the initiatives critical to the regions' prosperity.</li> </ul>

## 8.0 WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Progressive improvements have been made to the RDAMWG website and the social media strategy has resulted in greater use of RDAMWG LinkedIn and Facebook channels. Increasingly the website and social media channels will be used in a more integrated way to promote RDAMWG and support the delivery of program and services.

As an example, the website contains a link to the regional Grant Portal and key information on the website is updated on a regular basis. The following table shows website visitation for March through to May 2022.

*Figure 1: Summary RDAMWG Website Visits*

	<i>Unique visits</i>	<i>Page views</i>	<i>Top active pages visited March, April, May 2022</i>	<i>Referring sites</i>
<b>March 2022</b>	198 (Up 26% from Feb)	378	1. MWG region – up 72% 2. About us – up 50% 3. Covid 19 support – up 54% 4. Latest news – up 60% 5. Projects – up 54%	Google Bing RDABA.grantguru.com.au
<b>April 2022</b>	133	219		
<b>May 2022</b>	170 (up 24% from April)	269		

Social media for May 2022 is as follows:

### *Facebook*

- Total page followers end May 2022: 396
- All posts link back to RDAMWG website

### *LinkedIn*

- End of May 2022: 196 followers, 28 new followers since 1 April
- 3,295 post impressions
- 18 unique visitors

The RDA newsletter is distributed around four times a year to a wide audience.

## 9.0 CASE STUDIES

### 9.1 CASE STUDY 1: MURCHISON GEO REGION: LEADERSHIP

#### 9.1.1 Background

The Gascoyne Murchison region is characterised by hectares of rich red earth, rugged and dramatic rock formations, vast cattle stations and small towns that were built on the dreams of the gold rush.

The Shires of Yalgoo, Murchison, Mount Magnet, Sandstone, Cue, Meekatharra, and Wiluna have recognised the importance of the regions ancient rock formations and joined forces to integrate some of the unique sites into a Geotrail. The trail is targeted at an emerging global Geotourism market that has a focus on geology and natural landscapes.

Each of sites that been identified have unique geological features in addition to ecological, cultural or heritage significance.

It is within this context that the Shires have an aspiration to have the region designated as a UNESCO geopark. This would be a first for Australia.

#### 9.1.2 Role of RDAMWG

The project is managed by a regional working group that it is made up elected representatives and specialist GeoRegion advisers. RDAMWG is a non-voting participant on the working group.

#### ***Governance and Leadership***

Establishing and practicing good Governance in sustainable GeoRegion tourism requires an understanding of governance models and the issues surrounding them that will eventually be considered by any application to achieve and retain Geopark status.

RDAMWG took a lead role in creating a governance model that would allow the GeoRegion to be established as a regional entity with the ability to manage any aspect of the GeoRegion independent body.

*Through a joint funding arrangement RDAMWG managed the development of the Strategic and Implementation Plan along with the Governance Model structure. This included an:*

- Engagement Planning Workshop (2nd July): An engagement workshop to develop an engagement process for the project and to ensure that planning reflects the needs of key stakeholders.
- Strategic Planning (4<sup>th</sup> August): Developing a strategic plan for the GeoRegion to position the project for the next five years with goals, strategies and actions. Outputs included the development of governance, management structures and management plans to:

- Guide the project.
- Frame the governance and funding arrangements between seven LGA's at a regional level.
- Utilise in the future for preparation of submissions to Federal government and UNESCO.

At the same time the Working Group established a clear sense of purpose through Vision and Mission statements. These are outlined below:

- Vision: The ancient lands and brilliant skies of the Murchison GeoRegion are recognised around the world as a premier tourism experience.
- Mission: Showcasing our unique environment to create sustainable economic and social development by implementing the structures, systems and processes that will support global recognition of the Murchison GeoRegion.

#### ***Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Shared Responsibility***

Recognising the need to support the GeoRegion Working Group until the proposed governance structure is formalised RDAMWG has established a non-binding MoU between itself, the project working group and the State Government Mid West Development Commission. The MoU allows each entity to support the GeoRegion initiative and its objectives. Importantly the MoU supports an employment arrangement between RDAMWG and the GeoRegion Working Group. Reviewed annually RDAMWG employs a project officer and part of their time is allocated to progress the GeoRegion initiative.

#### **9.1.3 Summary**

##### ***RDAMWG role and leadership:***

*Regional Capacity:* Led the development of regional capacity by using its role to establish a regional body that can manage a project with multiple shared interests. Overtime, private and public sector organisations, will be able to participate in the GeoRegion to further its social, cultural and economic interests and objectives.

*Leadership:* Provided the environment and support to accelerate the development of the project.

*Collaboration:* Initiated a non-binding MoU between RDAMWG, Mid West Development Commission and the Gascoyne GeoRegion Project Working Group. The MoU creates a partnership agreement to support the objectives and delivery of the GeoRegion objectives.

*Process:* Managed the development of the Strategic and Implementation Plan along with the Governance Model structure.

## 9.2 CASE STUDY 2: GASCOYNE INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES

### 9.2.1 Background

Against the backdrop of Federal and State Government reports into State and regional infrastructure requirements and the policy framework from the Office of Northern Australia RDAMWG was aware that the Gascoyne region lacked a regional perspective on key infrastructure and policy matters. They required an outward looking infrastructure and policy framework that represented the regions requirements, as opposed to an external Government view of requirements.

Due to this objective, RDAMWG commissioned a piece of work to identify infrastructure priorities that will deliver the greatest return to the Gascoyne, the State and the Nation in terms of business investment and jobs growth.

The outcome of this initiative is summarised below however the report identified the keys sectors for investment and jobs creation as:

- (i) Tourism
- (ii) Mining
- (iii) Aboriginal empowerment

When the prioritisation of underpinning infrastructure was considered, the areas where most opportunity was seen to exist and where the regions stakeholders could have most influence were:

#### Short Term (0-4 years)

- (i) Road – hard infrastructure.
- (ii) Housing and accommodation – hard infrastructure.

With a key advocacy role in influencing outcomes in:

- (i) Digital infrastructure.
- (ii) Renewable energy.

#### Medium Term (5-10 years)

- (i) Aviation infrastructure
- (ii) Water security
- (iii) Population services
- (iv) Port infrastructure

### 9.2.2 Engagement

RDAMWG presented the report to Gascoyne region CEO's and Shire Presidents at a meeting which was also attended by a representative from the Office of Northern Australia.

### 9.2.3 Next steps

RDA intends to use this work to lobby the Australian and Western Australian Governments to gain funding support, positive policy changes and other measures which can support the economy and communities of the Gascoyne.

In terms of next steps RDRAMWG will collaboratively develop:

#### **Advocacy**

- (i) Strategic Statement for the Gascoyne.
- (ii) A Gascoyne Infrastructure Consensus Statement: This has commenced.
- (iii) A Regional Advocacy strategy.

#### **Operational Infrastructure Priorities**

- (i) Integrated road strategy: This has commenced
- (ii) Digital strategy.
- (iii) Integrated key worker accommodation strategy.

#### **Governance**

RDAMWG will lead and coordinate:

- (i) Stakeholder participation across all sectors.
- (ii) Regional agreement on 1-3 infrastructure goals.
- (iii) Infrastructure strategies to support the infrastructure goals.
- (iv) Timeframes and measurement.
- (v) Advocacy strategy.
- (vi) Communication plan.

Figure 2: Summary Gascoyne Infrastructure Priorities

	Business Investment & Growth Sectors				
	Tourism	Mining	Liveability	Priority Rating	Actions for RDA
	<i>Growth in the Tourism sector requires an increase in visitation numbers, including higher spending international and interstate visitors, and improved access to attractions, especially inland destinations.</i>	<i>Mining is undergoing growth with the development of two rare earth / mineral sands deposits, and these are seen as being an opportunity to provide employment to regionally based workers.</i>	<i>Improving the Liveability of the region is essential for attracting workers and families to live in regional towns to support regional growth opportunities. This is also critical for the regional Aboriginal population.</i>		
<b>Roads</b>	<b>High</b> An improved Road network will enable increased visitation into the region, improving access to inland destinations, and linking the region more directly to other tourist destinations and the eastern states	<b>High</b> An improved road network would support improved freight transport for the Mining sector. Increased mining activity and transport of commodities to ports impacts on road condition and road safety.	<b>High</b> An improved road network would improve connectivity within the region and road user safety. Improved roads may also facilitate DIDO mining workers from local towns improving employment opportunities and growing resident populations	<b>High</b> Short-term priority as it underpins most Investment Pillars, particularly Tourism. Consistent with government strategies and funding priorities.	Support the development of a Regional Roads Strategy (freight, tourism, liveability). Advocate for funding from Commonwealth Government for integrated road strategy.
<b>Digital Communications</b>	<b>High</b> Poor connectivity, reliability, speed and coverage gaps reduce mobile phone and internet access for	<b>Medium</b> Improved digital connectivity within the region may enable improved use of Technology within the Industry	<b>High</b> Improved digital services provide the community with improved connectivity and better access to online services such as education and	Digital connectivity & infrastructure improvements are included in Aust & WA Govt priority lists and funding. There is also	The role of the region will be to take a strong advocacy role in gaining government prioritisation for funding.



	people when they are travelling in the region.		health care. Access to reliable telecommunications is also critical in emergency situations	the STAND program to support emergency services with improved digital infrastructure	
<b>Housing &amp; Accommodation</b>	<b>High</b> The lack of accommodation is a key limiting factor for the industry. Expected growth in the tourism industry will place pressure on the availability of appropriate accommodation for an increased workforce	<b>High</b> The lack of housing availability is a limiting factor for supporting a DIDO workforce for mining operations	<b>High</b> Improved availability of quality and affordable housing, including workers' accommodation, is essential for attracting permanent residents and seasonal workers. Current housing is considered inferior quality and overpriced.	<b>High</b> Improving and developing Housing and Accommodation is urgently needed to address critical shortages for government workers, key industry workers and seasonal workers. Improving housing outcomes for Aboriginal people is critical for Aboriginal empowerment.	Region needs to develop a Workers Accommodation Strategy to support the horticultural industry and expected growth in tourism
<b>Workforce Development</b>	<b>High</b> The expected growth in tourism should also see growth in existing businesses while also attracting new business operators and creating demand for skilled workers across a range of services including accommodation, hospitality and the delivery of tourist experiences.	<b>Medium</b> Improving capability of existing regional residents would deliver a regional workforce to support the emerging mining sector.	<b>Medium</b> Growth in a regionally based workforce would drive demand for increased population services.	<b>Medium</b> The expected growth of the Tourism and Mining sectors is expected to provide the greatest opportunities for attracting new permanent workers, and for upskill existing residents in the Region.	The development of Aboriginal led tourism enterprises should be a focus of an integrated tourism strategy for the Gascoyne.

<p><b>Aboriginal Empowerment</b></p>	<p><b>High</b> Aboriginal Cultural Tourism will play a significant role in regional tourism with increasing demand for authentic cultural experiences. This should eventually lead to Aboriginal tourism offerings and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. The development of Aboriginal-led tourism enterprises should be a focus of an integrated tourism strategy for the Gascoyne.</p>	<p><b>High</b> Increasingly mining companies are proactively seeking to train and employ Aboriginal people in their operations, with some success in the Pilbara. Access to training services to support regionally based Aboriginal people become job ready would be an important benefit of growth in this sector.</p>	<p><b>High</b> The IA Priority List identifies the relief of overcrowding and improving the quality of housing in remote areas and road access improvements for remote WA communities as priorities, both of which would benefit Aboriginal communities.</p>	<p><b>High</b> Action in this area is being driven at all levels of government. IWA's Infrastructure Strategy identifies a number of priorities for improving liveability in remote Aboriginal communities, including infrastructure, but places greater focus on building Aboriginal capability and capacity in Aboriginal enterprise and participation in business. The release of an implementation plan and significant federal funding to address the Closing the Gap report is providing the national road map.</p>	<p>A priority for the region is to address the Closing the Gap report by developing an integrated Regional Strategy for Aboriginal Empowerment.</p>
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## 10.0 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

### 10.1 STAKEHOLDERS

RDAMWG major stakeholders are the:

- Business and general community,
- 20 local government authorities,
- Mid West and Gascoyne Development Commissions,
- State and Federal Government Departments,
- State and Federal politicians,
- Education providers including Geraldton Universities Centre,
- Other RDA's,
- Indigenous groups and organisations,
- Mid West and Gascoyne Chamber of Commerce
- Mid West Ports
- Progress Mid West – Greater Geraldton Growth Plan
- WALGA
- Murchison Zone of WALGA
- Northern Zone of WALGA
- Central Regional TAFE
- A broad range of working groups and committees.

Our Business Plans are aligned with relevant regional and decentralisation policies of the state and federal governments and the regional development commissions.

RDAMWG listens to the voice of the regional and remote communities as this allows the organisation to provide advice to the federal government on regional priorities and allow consistent and aligned input from all stakeholders.

Face to face communications through regular visits and attendance at regional forums have been vital to success outcomes and adding value in the utilisation of scarce resources.

It is further recognised that alternative ways of communicating with our various stakeholders across a large and distributed region need to be considered. RDAMWG has used social media tools including LinkedIn and Facebook, and our own website.

Regular updates of state and federal members have been envisaged and already issue specific approaches to Canberra and Perth are being discussed with key stakeholders.

## **10.2 GOVERNANCE**

Oversight of the Business Plan has been provided through reports to each Board meeting in addition to:

- Project management protocols and the development of operational plans for each program area.
- Budget and financial review against programs,
- Regular meeting between RDAMWG Executive Officer and the RDAMWG Chair.

A calendar which outlines strategic, governance and operational activities is a standing item on the RDAMWG Board agenda.

### **10.2.1 Policies and Procedures**

The RDAMWG has a range of financial, risk management, operational and health and safety policies and procedures. Policies and Procedures are a standing item on meeting agenda and are reviewed on a regular basis.

### **10.2.2 Financials & Accounts**

RDAMWG accounts are managed under contract by offsite bookkeepers. The bookkeeper uses MYOB and most records are maintained in electronic form.

Financial reports are presented to each Board meeting and reports are reviewed at the end of each month.

The RDAMWG Auditor is renewed on a 2–3-year cycle with regular communication of end of year requirements maintained between the Executive Officer, bookkeeper and Auditor.

### **10.2.3 Constitution**

The RDAMWG Constitution is up to date (Associations Incorporations Act 2015) and registered with the WA Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety.

#### **10.2.4 Insurances**

In addition to Public and Products Liability Insurance provided through the DITRDC, RDAMWG has Business Pack Insurance that includes Public Liability Insurance, Burglary and Contents insurance.

#### **10.2.5 Risk Management**

The RDAMWG Board has a risk management strategy that allows the organisation to identify potential risks and if necessary, put in place measures to manage and mitigate risks. Workers compensation insurance is paid annually.

Risk management process allows risks to be identified, analysed, evaluated, treated and monitored across a range of category areas that include financial, legal, political, governance, health and safety.

COVID -19 has been recognised as key risk and is a standing item in the RDAMWG Agenda. RDAMWG has a separate COVID-19 Policy that allows flexibility in line with state and federal government health practices.

## 11.0 SUPPORTING REGIONAL PROFILE

### 11.1 SPATIAL DIMENSIONS

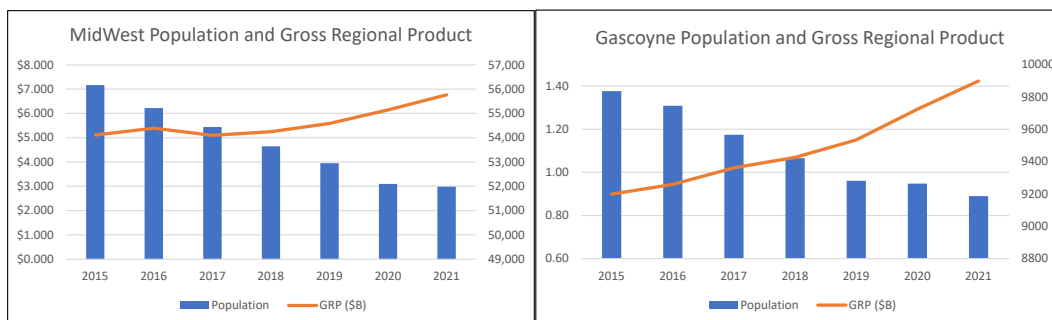
Overall, the RDAMWG region covers more than 600,000km<sup>2</sup>. Abutting the Indian ocean, the coastline stretches from Green Head to Exmouth and reaches more than 800km inland to the Gibson desert.

The Gascoyne region itself covers nearly 138,000sq kms, which represents about 5.5% of Western Australia’s total land area. The Mid West on the other hand covers around 478,000 sq. kms which is around 18% of Western Australia’s total land area. <sup>2</sup>

### 11.2 SUMMARY REGIONAL NARRATIVE

The RDAMWG approach and perspective is shown in the message conveyed the graphs below which show population and gross regional product trends for Mid West and Gascoyne. Whilst the productive output of the region is increasing the population is decreasing. There are many causes and outcomes and the simplest would be that if industry output were increasing there would be a corresponding increase in jobs and therefore population growth. This does not seem to be occurring.

*Figure 3: Mid West & Gascoyne: Population & Gross Regional Product*



### 11.3 ECONOMY

#### 11.3.1 Mid West Region

With a nominal GRP of \$7.02 billion in 2021, the Mid West contributed 2.8 per cent towards Western Australia’s GSP. Mining, agriculture, fishing, tourism, retail and manufacturing are the Mid West’s key industries. Mining is its most valuable sector, with a range of minerals and energy deposits available including gold, iron ore, copper, nickel, silver and more recently mineral sands, rare earths, and vanadium.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Regional Blueprints (Mid West and Gascoyne) ABS (March 2020) Regional Population Growth

<sup>3</sup> Remplan MidWest: Using ABS June 2021, Gross State product

### 11.3.2 Gascoyne Region

With a nominal GRP of \$1.5 billion in 2021<sup>4</sup>, the Gascoyne contributed 0.5 per cent towards GSP. Agricultural lands along the Gascoyne River make Carnarvon an ideal location for horticultural development.

The Gascoyne is known as a key food bowl. The Carnarvon Horticulture District is considered one of the best-managed irrigation district in Australia and contributes 99.5 per cent of the total production value of Western Australian bananas.

### 11.4 REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

The Mid West supports 24,000 jobs representing 2% of the people working in Western Australia. These jobs are predominantly in the Mining, Health Care, Education, Retail trade and Agriculture, forestry and fishing sector which together account for more than 50% of employment.

Again, the City of Greater Geraldton dominates with 70% of regional jobs.

The Gascoyne supports 4,623 jobs predominantly in the Accommodation and food services, agriculture and fishing and public administration sectors.

Regional Shires are again seen as vulnerable with very few jobs recognising that the ABS data might count fly-in and fly-out workers in the jobs data. For example, Meekatharra had a population of 1260 people and employment<sup>5</sup> of 1060. In some Shires fly-in / fly-out and the seasonal agriculture-based workforce amplify the overall job numbers.

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<sup>4</sup> Remplan Economy using ABS June 2021 Gross State product

<sup>5</sup> See Remplan: ABS Census Place of Work and Employment

Figure 4: Mid West Region Jobs

Mid West Region Jobs				
Shire	Jobs		Perc. 2016	Change 2011 to 2016
	2011	2016		
Sandstone	50	30	0.13	-67%
Murchison	50	62	0.26	19%
Cue	193	91	0.38	-112%
Mingenew	233	229	0.96	-2%
Carnamah	350	287	1.20	-22%
Three Springs	358	290	1.21	-23%
Morawa	547	291	1.22	-88%
Mount Magnet	454	316	1.32	-44%
Chapman Valley	327	340	1.42	4%
Coorow	383	356	1.49	-8%
Yalgoo	687	732	3.06	6%
Perenjori	748	797	3.33	6%
Irwin	1177	1049	4.38	-12%
Northampton	1173	1156	4.83	-1%
Meekatharra	1274	1260	5.26	-1%
Greater Geraldton	15984	16653	69.56	4%
	<b>23988</b>	<b>23939</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>-0.2%</b>

**Remplan: ABS 2011 & 2016 Census Place of Work Employment**

Figure 5: Mid West Region Industry Sector & Jobs

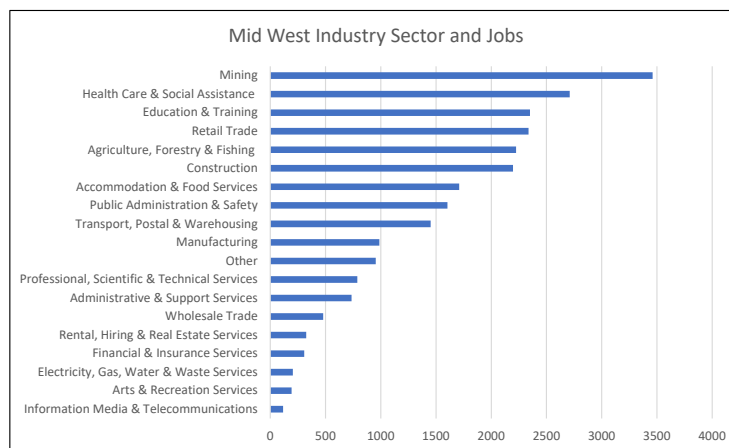
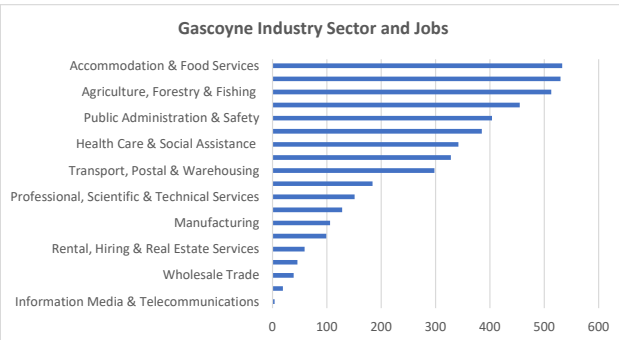




Figure 6: Gascoyne Region Jobs, 2011 & 2016

Gascoyne Region Jobs				
Shires	Jobs			Change 2011 - 2016
	No. 2011	No. 2016	Perc. 2016	
Carnarvon	2554	2811	61%	9%
Exmouth	1323	1386	30%	5%
Shark Bay	468	364	8%	-29%
Upper Gascoyne	82	62	1%	-32%
	<b>4427</b>	<b>4623</b>		
Remplan: ABS 2011 & 2016 Census Place of Work Employment				

Figure 7: Gascoyne Region Industry Sector and Jobs, 2016



### 11.5 COMMUNITIES

The region supports twenty regional communities which are managed by Local Government authorities. There are 16 Shires within the Mid West and four in the Gascoyne regions respectively.

Within the region the City of Greater Geraldton accounts for:

- 72% of the population
- 66% of jobs, and
- 57% of economic output.

The remaining 20 communities share:

- 38% of the population
- 24% of jobs, and
- 43% of output.

### 11.6 REGIONAL POPULATION DRIFT

Perth was one of three Australian cities to record increased growth in 2019-20. Pre COVID and restrictions on international arrivals the growth is attributed to:

- Net overseas migration: 22,000 people
- Net internal migration: 700 people
- Natural increase: 14,600 people.

Whereas WA Regions had:

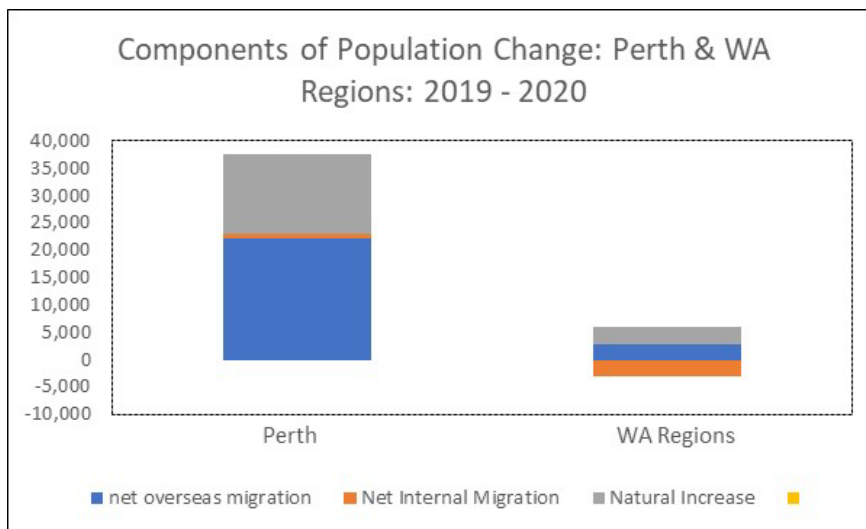
- Net overseas migration: 2,755 people
- Net internal migration: -3,145 people
- Natural increase: 3,133 people.

Regional Western Australia is growing slower than the Capital City with internal migration contributing to population loss. Over the June 2109 to June 2020 period Western Australian regions had a net internal migration loss of -3,100. This was a significant increase to 2018-19 levels where the net internal migration loss was -1,900.

Figure 8: Population Change Perth & Perth Regions: June 2019 to June 2020

Population Growth in Perth, June 2019 to June 2020				
	Population in June 2020	Pop Growth 2019 %	Pop Growth 2020 %	Diff. Percentage Points
<b>Perth</b>	2,125,114	1.4	1.8	0.4
<b>WA Regions</b>	538,447	0	0.5	0.5

Figure 9: Components of Population Change: Perth & WA Regions: 2019 - 2020



### 11.6.1 Mid West Population

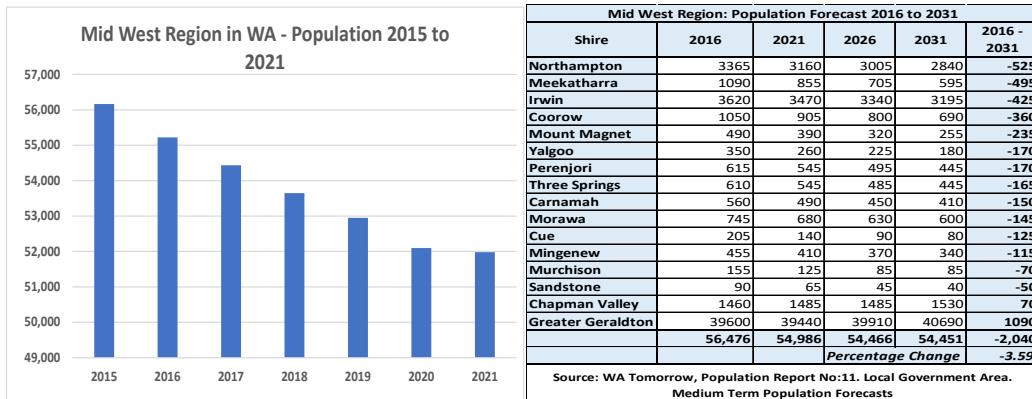
Between 2015 and 2021 the population of the Mid West region declined from 56,164 by 6% or 3,370 people to 52,794.

This is alarming as the recorded population decline exceeds the WA State Government predicted population forecast which indicated a population of 54,451 in 2031.

All Shires apart from Chapman Valley and Murchison experienced a decline in population.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Remplan MidWest: using ABS Regional Population data (March 2022)

Figure 10a & b: Mid West Region, Population Change and Forecasts



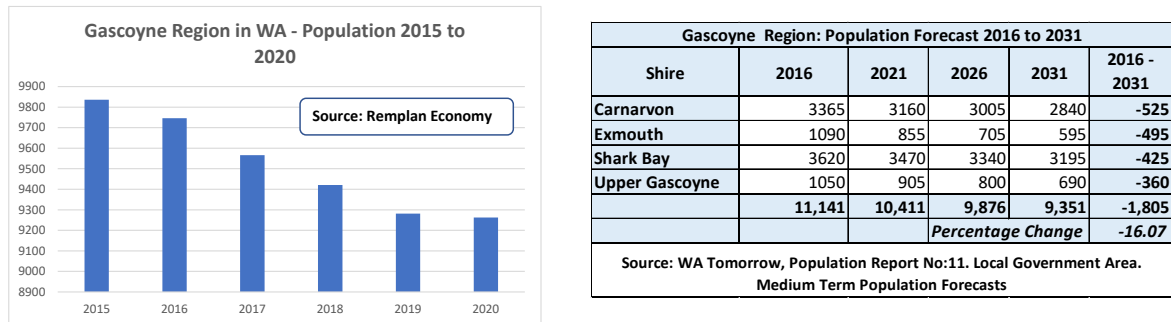
This suggests that there is a net migration from the region as whilst the population of City of Greater Geraldton is growing it is not increasing at a rate to counteract the population decline of the region.

**11.6.2 Gascoyne Population**

The Population of the Gascoyne region declined 6% from 2015 to 2020, which equates to 547 people. The population in 2020 is 9262 which is close to 2031 forecasts in the WA Tomorrow, population forecasts.

Whilst the Gascoyne region is declining over all, the Shires of Exmouth, Shark Bay and Upper Gascoyne are experiencing some population growth with significant population declines in Carnarvon.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 11a & b: Gascoyne Region, Population Change & Forecasts



The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has reported that net migration to Australia’s regions is highest on record with 43,000 people moving to regional areas from capital cities in 2020<sup>8</sup>. These figures are qualified with the acknowledgment that whilst the exodus from Capital Cities has been occurring for some years, the difference in the COVID driven trend is that the number of people leaving the regions for capital cities has reduced substantially (see Tables 1 & 2).

<sup>7</sup> Remplan Gascoyne: Using ABS Regional Population data (March 2022)  
<sup>8</sup> ABS: Regional Population Growth Australia (cat. No. 3218.0)

## 11.7 WESTERN AUSTRALIA HOUSING

It goes within saying that housing and housing affordability is a complex pattern and the housing situation for Perth is different to that of regional WA and the Mid West and Gascoyne region. In many small towns there is no housing market, as lenders will not secure a loan against an asset that has little or no value. The Shire of Carnarvon for example has not had a new house built for six years.

### 11.7.1 House Approvals

House approvals have declined significantly in the early part of 2022<sup>9</sup>, returning to levels experienced prior to the pandemic. The reasons might include the end of the stimulus boost, a stagnation of supply chains, the potential for interest rate increases and a decline in interstate migration.

*Figure 12: Approved Dwellings & Changes in Dwelling Approvals, 2021 to 2022, WA*

Dwelling Units WA, 2020 to 2022			Change in Dwelling Approvals, WA. Oct 2021 to Jan 2022			
Jan 2020	Jan 2021	Jan 2022	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022
1,100	2,900	1,150	-1.5%	.04%	-9.8%	-19.9%

### 11.7.2 New Development

Historically low interest rates below 3 percent and grants for new builds have reinforced low borrowing costs, sparking a boom in new credit for dwelling construction for both owner occupiers and investors. The early part of 2022 saw a decline in the value of home loans. This market is driven more by the investor market than owner occupiers, with loan commitments (debt) to investors at their highest known levels.

### 11.7.3 Rental Vacancies

Shortages of both owner-occupier and rental accommodation have emerged as Western Australians have returned from interstate and overseas due to travel restrictions. The Perth rental vacancy rate more than halved through 2020, to now sit below 1 per cent - levels not seen since 2013.

Whilst there might be hope that an increase in investor housing stock will alleviate rental supply shortages, international and interstate arrivals might cause increased demand and push rental prices further.

<sup>9</sup> See BCEC Quarterly Economic Commentary

#### 11.7.4 Mid West Housing

Housing supply and rental affordability is emerging as an important regional issue and as the largest population centre Geraldton is an example of issues within the larger region.

#### 11.7.5 Summary of Housing Matters

A summary of housing matters is:

- A current rental vacancy rate between 1 and 2 percent, in comparison to 4.1% in June 2020.
- A lack of variety in housing products means that there are fewer affordable options.
  - The lack of housing choice is a barrier to the attraction of new workers and residents.
- Costs of construction have increased 15-20% per sqm over the past 12 months because of tightened supply of timber, steel, fittings and a shortage of tradespeople.
- Construction costs are 20% above metropolitan averages with limited commercial builder capacity.

One of the key challenges to private sector housing investment is the mismatch between property values and construction costs. Historical developments have experienced poor sales performance and there is low demand or depth for apartment living.

The existing housing stock is poor and the growth in property value has been low with current levels below those of 2010. Along with this income levels are 30% below WA averages.

#### 11.7.6 Opportunities and Actions<sup>10</sup>

Opportunities that have the potential to influence the housing market are improving private project investments which suggests Geraldton is entering a growth phase. The requirement from both the private and public sector for housing and the availability of development sites.

Recognising that housing is complex matter there are a few levers that state and local government can use to unlock opportunities, drive increased housing choice and create the conditions for increased private sector residential investment.

- (i) Information development and publication: improving developer and purchaser understanding of the opportunities and needs for housing in the region.
- (ii) Enabling infrastructure delivery: supporting the private sector to bring forward housing supply that would otherwise be constrained or unviable.
- (iii) Direct housing supply: through public-private partnerships, direct investment and / or financial incentives.

<sup>10</sup> See Urbis: (April 2022) Geraldton Housing Market Advice

- (iv) Policy controls: influencing investment decisions, housing development and development outcomes.

Figure 13: Mid West Region Overview

Mid West Region Overview										
Shire	Employment 2016		Population	Output (\$)		Unemployment (Dec 2021)	Housing (April 2021)		Driving time from Population Centre	
	Jobs	Perc.		GRP (Nominal) 2021	Perc		For Sale	For Rent	From Perth	From Geraldton
Sandstone	30	0.13%	90	\$8,138,678	0.12%	8.70%			8.34	5.53
Murchison	62	0.26%	155	\$15,218,489	0.22%	8.70%			8.38	4.52
Cue	91	0.38%	205	\$44,866,589	0.6%	8.70%			7.05	4.3
Mingenew	229	0.96%	455	\$45,097,646	0.6%	3.30%	0	0	4	1.1
Carnamah	287	1.20%	560	\$64,310,639	0.9%	5.30%	6	0	3.1	2
Three Springs	290	1.21%	610	\$61,782,804	0.9%	3.30%	9	0	3.24	1.5
Morawa	291	1.22%	745	\$73,815,509	1.1%	3.30%	10	1	4	2
Mount Magnet	316	1.32%	490	\$148,374,099	2.1%	8.90%			6.15	3.4
Chapman Valley	340	1.42%	1460	\$81,315,400	1.2%	3.90%			5.1	1
Coorow	356	1.49%	1050	\$82,868,428	1.2%	3.30%	1	10	2.5	2.2
Yalgoo	732	3.06%	350	\$510,064,174	7.3%	8.70%			5.1	2.55
Perenjori	797	3.33%	615	\$996,211,231	14.2%	3.30%	1	1	2.1	3.44
Irwin	1049	4.38%	3620	\$265,102,447	3.8%	2.60%	53	3	3.5	1
Northampton	1156	4.83%	3365	\$245,790,343	3.5%	3.90%	53	2	5	0.5
Meekatharra	1260	5.26%	1090	\$542,093,130	7.7%	8.80%			8.15	5.45
Greater Geraldton	16653	69.56%	39600	\$3,839,286,952	54.7%	4.20%	55	18	4.5	
	<b>23939</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>54460</b>	<b>\$7,024,336,556.15</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>WA 3.5%</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>35</b>		

*Remplan: ABS 2016 Census Place of Work Employment  
RealEstate.com.au (April 2021)*

Figure 14: Gascoyne Region Overview

Gascoyne Region Overview										
	Employment 2016			Output (\$)			Housing		Driving time from Population Centre (Hours/Min)	
Shire	Jobs	Perc.	Population	GRP Nominal (2021)	Perc	Unemployment (Dec 2021)	For Sale	For Rent	From Perth	From Geraldton
Carnarvon	2811	61%	5524	\$1,045,872,496	70.71%	6.5%			9.26	5
Exmouth	1386	30%	5169	\$334,982,624	22.65%	2.2%			13.9	8.4
Shark Bay	364	8%	947	\$82,699,131	5.59%	2.2%			8	4.1
Upper Gascoyne	62	1%	280	\$15,635,891	1.06%	2.3%			11.1	6.4
	<b>4623</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>11920</b>	<b>\$1,479,190,141.30</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>WA 3.5%</b>				
Remplan: ABS 2016 Census Place of Work Employment RealEstate.com.au (April 2021)										