WHEATBELT BLUEPRINT
OVERVIEW
Acknowledgements

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

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

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

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

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

Disclaimer

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This Blueprint takes us on a journey of identifying:
• The desired future state of the Wheatbelt;
• The Wheatbelt’s potential to grow and prosper in the global village in which we function;
• The Region’s human, economic, social and environmental capacity, and gaps in that capacity; and
• The priority actions needed to maximise the existing capacity, minimise the gaps and thus transform the Region from a ‘business as usual’ scenario to achieve aspirational population and economic growth goals.

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

As this Blueprint is developed, we already see the benefit of this partnership approach:
• Groups of local government working together on agreed priority projects and developing innovative governance structures to ensure viability into the future;
• Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt and the Wheatbelt Development Commission working together on agreed priorities, advocating for policy, program and funding settings to meet regional need;
• Agencies within and external to the Region keen to work in an integrated way to achieve better outcomes;
• Regional organisations, industry and business all committed to collaborative ways of working; and
• Better decisions made through improved access to information.

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

Tim Shackleton
Chair, Wheatbelt Development Commission
February 2015

Say Hello to the Wheatbelt

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

#wheatbeltblueprint

Say Hello to the Wheatbelt
Overview

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

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

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

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

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

The Blueprint Structure

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

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

Vision for the Future

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

**Vibrant Economy**
A diversified and adaptive economy built on the Wheatbelt’s assets and aligned to State, National and International opportunities.

2050 Target: 7% Average Annual Growth Rate

**Blueprint Aspirations and Targets**

2050 Target: 7% Average Annual Growth Rate

2050 Target: Off grid power and water for 10,000 Wheatbelt communities

**Global Drivers**
Increased globalisation of world economies, growing affluence in Asian markets and associated demand for food and population services present opportunities for economic development in the Wheatbelt, given the Region’s comparative advantages. The globally connected knowledge economy, underpinned by private and public investment in technology and innovation, will drive long term sustained growth. The Region’s world class food production is just one opportunity to grow the Wheatbelt’s knowledge economy.

The global population is growing, ageing and becoming urbanised. The necessary assets to double its current population, providing a solution to the State population growth challenges. This includes the increasing proportion of the ageing cohort. Climate change, water availability and the environmental impact of economic development are putting pressure on global food production. Renewable energy is increasingly being relied upon to supply growing demands. Land stewardship is mitigating climate impact and the Wheatbelt’s natural environment offers a variety of renewable energy opportunities. Tourism growth will also occur as a result of increasingly affluent populations wishing to engage with the natural environment.

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

**Clever People**
Lifelong learning, highly skilled labour, innovation and leadership drive economic growth and community viability.

2050 Target: Workforce of 109,800

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

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

2050 Target: 180,000 people

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

2050 Target: Off grid power and water solutions in 30 Wheatbelt communities

**Harnessing the Wheatbelt’s Capacity for Growth**

*A business as usual* is not an option if the aspirations identified in the Blueprint are to be achieved. For sustainable growth across the Region transformation solutions are required. Given the global opportunities, the Wheatbelt’s comparative advantages and barriers to growth outlined in Section 4, there exists considerable opportunity to grow the Region’s economy and population by developing, six key pillars for growth.

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

- **Emerging Industry Development - Supporting growth of emerging industry sectors to consolidate the Region’s diversified economy.** Pursuit of more intensive industry matched to comparative advantages and global opportunities will ensure more jobs for a growing population.
- **Transforming Agriculture - Increasing productivity of existing industry through pursuit of opportunity along the supply chain and increased application of innovation and technology and developing intensive agriculture opportunities.**
- **Business Development - Supporting the Region’s 10,000 small businesses so that they can grow and prosper in the global market.**
- **Skilled Workers –** The Wheatbelt has one of the lowest regional unemployment rates after the Pilbara and Goldfields-Esperance. However there is a significant out-migration of the 15-29 year old cohort. Attraction of workforce aged population is critical to support economic growth.
- **Key Infrastructure -** Investing in strategic infrastructure assets including transport and digital infrastructure, land development and housing will underpin growth opportunities. Maximum growth can be achieved by looking at job intensive industry development and building on the following areas of comparative advantage:

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

Shared commitment to the implementation of transformational strategies is required to deliver on the Region’s vision and achieve the stated aspirations and targets. The Blueprint analysis has identified the following key areas for action, and outlines them within the themes of the Wheatbelt Strategic Framework (2012) which was developed collaboratively by regional stakeholders.

A focused effort is required in the short to mid-term, so key actions that will drive significant growth in the short term are found in Section 5.

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

Clever People

To achieve population growth, there is a need to address the out-migration of 15-29 year olds. The higher than State proportion of the 0-4 and 65+ cohorts and this out-migration result in a ‘reversed’ population bell. Population attraction strategies need to aim at normalising this population profile. Critical to the Region achieving its growth opportunities to key decision makers will be strategies that market Wheatbelt diversity and opportunities are more likely to invest. Strategies that market Wheatbelt opportunities to key decision makers will be critical to the Region achieving its growth potential.

Effective Partnerships

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

Liveable Communities

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

Service delivery reform will result in innovative service models across the highly disurban area and better match services to the population profiles of the Region. Investment in Community amenity will ensure continued community vibrancy and the attraction and retention of population.

Value Added Natural Energy

The Wheatbelt has a permanently altered landscape that will continue to benefit from strong land stewardship. The natural landscape offers considerable social and economic benefit and is being impacted by climate variation. This landscape, the water within it and climate change need to be effectively managed to mitigate risk. Already producing 60% of the State’s renewable energy and benefitting from high visitor numbers to natural attractions, the Wheatbelt is well placed to continue deriving benefit from this landscape provided possible conflicts between productivity, biodiversity and land use are effectively managed.

Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities

Key to optimising the opportunities for the Wheatbelt are changing perceptions of the Region. The Region is often portrayed in terms of opponents and supporters. This Blueprint provides evidence of a different Wheatbelt, a region of growth and opportunity.
### Vibrant Economy

#### Aspirations & Targets

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<tr>
<th>Aspirations &amp; Targets</th>
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<td>Outcomes</td>
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<td>Priority Actions</td>
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1.1: Diverse and innovative business and industry grow the Wheatbelt’s global market share

- **Industry Development**
  - Develop emerging industry strategies for intensive agriculture, transport and logistics, renewable energy, aviation and population services (aged care, health, education and tourism)
  - Agricultural investment through “Seizing the Opportunity”

- **Business Development**
  - Develop sub-regional business alliances for collaborative market development
  - Implement “Growing the Digital Wheatbelt” Strategy
  - Support Heartlands WA to market job, investment and visitation opportunities

1.2: Skilled workers are attracted and retained to meet the needs of the Region and the State

- **Workforce Attraction**
  - Support Heartlands WA to market job, investment and visitation opportunities
  - Support CY O’Connor and Murdoch Institutes to deliver cross industry training
  - Support the Wheatbelt Workforce Alliance to promote pathways to employment

1.3: Key strategic infrastructure is identified and invested in

- **Key Infrastructure**
  - Enhance access to markets and services:
    - strategic transport network
    - digital capacity
    - housing
  - Implement the Wheatbelt Digital Action Plan, including ongoing investment in new mobile towers and building broadband capacity
  - Develop an Integrated Transport Plan for the Wheatbelt and invest in identified priorities
  - Conduct residential and industrial land audits and invest in identified priorities
  - Invest in innovative end of grid power and water solutions
  - Action findings of the Wheatbelt Housing Audit and support innovative investment vehicles and universally designed housing
  - Conduct a Waste Site Identification feasibility

Target 2050:
- Average Annual Compound GDP Growth Rate of 7%

### Clever People

#### Aspirations & Targets

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2.1: Education and lifelong learning drives productivity and thus economic growth

- **Lifelong Learning - Innovation and Leadership drive economic growth and community vibrancy.**
  - Target 2050: Workforce of 109,800

2.2: Innovation drives economic, social and environmental outcomes

- **Develop Innovation Networks**
  - Build R & D Capacity
  - Support Heartlands WA to profile Wheatbelt innovation

2.3: Leadership harnesses diverse capacity that delivers benefit at a local, sub-regional and regional level

- **Foster Innovative Governance**
  - Foster Leadership and Civic Engagement
  - Support Volunteers

Aspirations & Targets: Design and invest in new service delivery models to ensure early intervention and enhanced partnership and achievement

Implement the Wheatbelt Children’s Services Plan

Support the Wheatbelt Workforce Alliance to establish business, education and training partnerships that increase training and employment participation

Support Aboriginal Elders Groups develop and implement initiatives relevant to local need

Promote Infrastructure Trusts as a mechanism for cross community investment

Support groups of local government to invest in regional priorities

Encourage Community Resource Centres to take a lead role on volunteer support and co-ordination
Connected Communities

3.1: Connected settlements support economic growth and offer multiple livability options.

- Implement Growth Plans for 5 sub-regional centres
- Develop Growth Plans for high growth areas

3.2: Service delivery reform ensures health, education, aged, youth, and children’s services reflect the needs of current and future Wheatbelt residents in an efficient and cost effective way.

- Design and deliver integrated sub-regional services in the areas of:
  - Aged Care
  - Health
  - Education (K-tertiary)
  - Family, youth and children’s services
  - Public transport

3.3: Community amenity contributes to community well-being and livability and creates economic opportunity.

- Support effective governance and delivery structure across communities for each sector
- Support innovative design and management of multipurpose, multi-user community facilities in small towns

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

Target 2050:
Population of 180,000

Valued Natural Amenity

4.1: Climate change risks are minimised.

- Landscape Management
  - Invest in R&D and technology application to improve soil health
  - Support Wheatbelt NRM foster ‘best practice’ land management

4.2: Landscape Management protects biodiversity and ensures compatible and profitable land use.

4.3: Water management is improved for the benefit of community amenity and industry development.

- Water Security
  - Undertake integrated water planning
  - Invest in water harvesting and re-use
  - Implement pilot project: desalination of water using renewable energy

4.4: Nature based industry utilises the Wheatbelt’s natural assets.

- Tourism
  - Develop an tourism strategy that includes nature based tourism and identifies infrastructure priorities
  - Partner with Western Power and Universities to develop innovative alternative energy solution for end of grid situations
### Marketing Wheatbelt Opportunities

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<tr>
<td><strong>The Wheatbelt value proposition is clear to investors in government and private enterprise and families wishing to live and visit</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Target 2050:</strong></td>
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<td>105,000 new residents and new investment creates 64,000 jobs</td>
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#### 5.1: Workers, businesses, visitors, and investors are attracted to the Region

**Targeted Marketing Influencing Key Decision Makers**

- Implement targeted marketing for workforce and visitor attraction
- Attract private investment through the development of industry prospectuses for emerging industry identified in Sub-regional Economic Strategies

### Effective Partnerships

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<td><strong>Cost effective investment occurs as a result of proponent partnerships, good information, quality project management and leveraged investment</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Target 2050:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-regional governance and investment structures drive growth and effective service delivery</td>
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#### 6.1: High impact, cost effective investment drives growth

**Infrastructure Co-ordination**

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

**Initiate the Wheatbelt Infrastructure Co-ordinating Group**

Support cross community investment trusts to drive sustainable investment

Support groups of local governments to deliver regionally significant projects locally
Blueprint Governance and Implementation

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

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

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

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

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

Success of implementation will be measured by:

1. The perception of the Blueprint and the Commission. This will be measured through the WDC annual stakeholder survey; and
2. The knowledge, acceptance and use of the Blueprint and its contributing plans, measured through:
   - number of times the Blueprint is referred to in stakeholder publications;
   - number of specific priority actions that are implemented in any one year; and
   - evidence of positive progress in achieving stated targets.

Blueprint Development & Review

Success of implementation will be measured by:

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

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