

Acknowledgement

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The term 'Aboriginal' people in this report is inclusive of Torres Strait Islanders. It is noted that the terms 'Aboriginal' and 'Indigenous' have both been used in this report as a result of the terminology used in sourced information.

Guide to implementation

This plan aims to build, attract and retain a skilled workforce to meet the economic needs of the Wheatbelt region. It contains a range of priority actions which were identified by local stakeholders to address local workforce development challenges.

The plan aligns with the State Government's *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia*, which provides a framework for government and industry's response to Western Australia's skill and workforce needs.

The Wheatbelt Workforce Development Alliance, which is made up of industry, community and government representatives from the region, will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this plan. The alliance will identify those actions within the plan that should be given highest priority and facilitate their implementation. Progress will be reported to stakeholders annually and be included in Skilling WA's annual progress report.

The plan has been designed as an important reference point for all stakeholders as it identifies the challenges, agreed solutions and organisations that have a key stake in its implementation.

For the Regional Development Council as the peak advisory body to the Western Australian Government on regional development matters, the plan is used to identify workforce issues and solutions which require policy consideration across regions. This includes guidance on Royalties for Regions initiatives to support regional workforce needs.

For local government bodies the plan identifies workforce issues to be taken into account as part of local government decision making processes.

The plan will be used by industry associations and employer peak bodies as a reference when working directly with employers to implement industry and enterprise solutions to workforce development challenges.

The plan also captures the views and aspirations of the broader community and provides a useful reference when engaging on workforce development issues across the region.

The Department of Training and Workforce Development in conjunction with the Wheatbelt Workforce Development Alliance will facilitate the coordination of State Government responses outlined in the plan. This will include working with those agencies and training providers designated to take the lead on priority actions in the plan.

Contents

Chapter 1: Background and methodology	6
Chapter 2: Wheatbelt workforce development – the way forward	8
Introduction and scope.....	8
Roles, responsibilities and partnerships	8
Timeframe	9
Chapter 3: Profile of the Wheatbelt region	10
Regional overview.....	10
Regional economy	12
Gross regional product.....	13
Wheatbelt industries	14
Enterprise structure	15
Dwelling approvals	17
Income distribution	18
Major projects impact analysis	19
Population demographics	21
Age structure	22
Gender structure	24
Household and family composition	24
Regional labour market.....	26
Employment trends	26
Unemployment trends	27
Participation in the labour market.....	28
Employment by industry sector.....	28
Ageing of the labour force	29
Occupational structure	30
Internal migration.....	30
International migration.....	32
Education and training profile	32
Highest level of schooling.....	34
Post school qualifications	34
Training delivery	36
Education and training issues	37
Aboriginal participation.....	38
Aboriginal demographics.....	38
Aboriginal participation in the labour force.....	38
Aboriginal unemployment rates	40
Employment by industry.....	41

Aboriginal education and training.....	42
Regional infrastructure.....	44
Roads.....	44
Rail.....	44
Aviation.....	45
Electricity.....	45
Telecommunications services.....	46
Water.....	46
Social infrastructure.....	49
Education infrastructure.....	49
Health infrastructure.....	49
Sporting and community facilities.....	49
Settlements and land supply.....	51
Settlements.....	51
Land supply.....	52
Chapter 4: Mechanisms to meet future labour needs.....	56
Workforce participation.....	57
Migration.....	58
Attraction and retention.....	58
Skills development and utilisation.....	59
Planning and coordination.....	60
Chapter 5: Priority issues for the Wheatbelt.....	62
Summary of priority issues.....	62
Regional perceptions.....	63
Young people.....	63
Career pathways.....	64
Housing.....	64
Education.....	65
Health services.....	66
Technology.....	66
Priority issues for Wheatbelt sub-regions.....	67
Competitive wages.....	67
Relative size of firms.....	68
Ageing workforce.....	68
Aboriginal employment.....	69
Social and cultural opportunities.....	69
Transport.....	69
Lack of driver's licences.....	70
Chapter 6: Future workforce needs for the Wheatbelt region.....	72
Future labour force demand.....	72
Supply/demand projections.....	72
Timeframe.....	79
Chapter 7: Action plan.....	80
References.....	88
Appendix A: Wheatbelt consultation list.....	90
Appendix B: ABS sub-division map.....	94

Background and methodology

Over recent years, regional Western Australia has faced increased challenges associated with ensuring the availability of a skilled and flexible workforce. It has become increasingly difficult to secure the labour required that would enable regions to meet their full economic and social potential due to the combination(s) of:

- rapid economic growth;
- employment demand;
- inter-regional migration;
- an ageing workforce; and
- changes in the nature of education and training.

To address this issue the Western Australian Department of Training and Workforce Development (the Department), in collaboration with local stakeholders, is preparing coordinated and integrated workforce development plans for each of the State's nine regions.

These workforce development plans sit within the context of the Department's *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia* and involve a number of core considerations:

- an assessment of current and future demand for workforce skills;
- an examination of existing capacity and capability of the workforce;
- current and future workforce gaps; and
- the development of realistic and achievable workforce development strategies.

This plan was overseen by the Wheatbelt Workforce Development Alliance (previously called the Wheatbelt Workforce Development Steering Committee) which comprises key representatives from across the region.

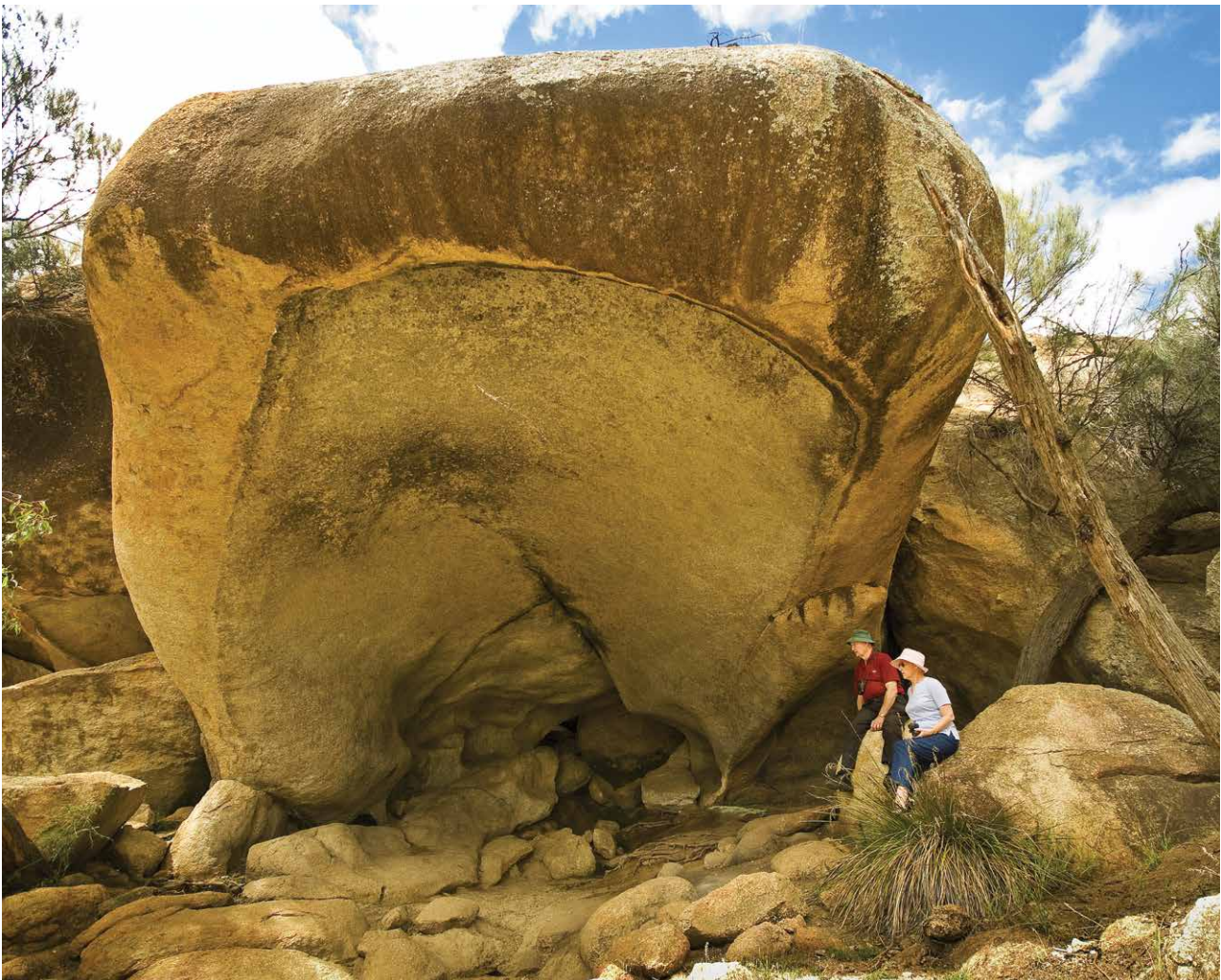
To support the preparation of the *Wheatbelt workforce development plan 2013–2016* the Department in conjunction with the Wheatbelt Workforce Development Alliance commissioned a *Wheatbelt Historical Statistical Snapshot* in 2010. This research has been utilised as background for this workforce development plan.

Consultations were undertaken through sub-regional forums conducted in Merredin, Narrogin, Northam, Jurien Bay and Moora which attracted over 90 participants from across the region. Targeted consultations were also undertaken through face to face and small group meetings with government agencies and key stakeholders. Appendix A contains a list of stakeholders involved in the consultation process.

Pre-reading for the forums was a discussion paper designed to provide background information for the consultation phase of this project. Importantly, this paper offered a basis for discussion and debate about workforce planning in the region and provided:

- an overview of selected employment trends in the Wheatbelt;
- a discussion about some of the occupations in high demand across the region; and
- a review of some of the key attraction and retention issues in the region.

This plan is the result of extensive consultations which were used to identify and validate the priority issues facing Wheatbelt workforce development and the regional community identified occupation list which form the basis for actions in the *Wheatbelt workforce development plan 2013–2016*.



Wheatbelt workforce development – the way forward

Introduction and scope

The regional workforce development plans being developed by the regional workforce development alliances provide a whole of government, industry and community sector approach to providing services, infrastructure and support for the nine regions in Western Australia.

Specific government, industry and community based agencies will be given the ‘lead’ responsibility to coordinate strategies and projects agreed to and included in the *Wheatbelt workforce development plan 2013–2016*. These strategies and projects are aligned to the five strategic goals of *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia* (Skilling WA). In this way, the *Wheatbelt workforce development plan 2013–2016* can also be used to inform the development of Skilling WA.

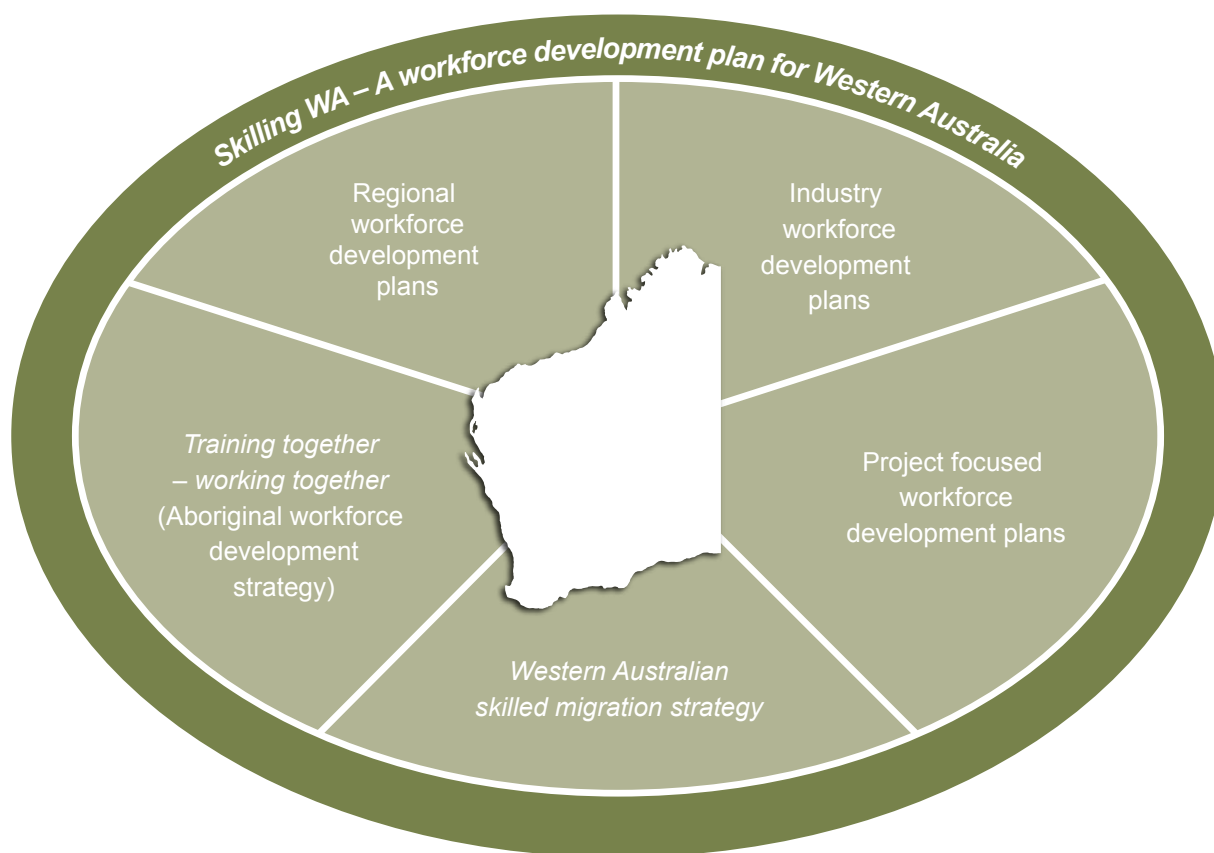
The *Wheatbelt workforce development plan* is intended to provide a broad regional assessment of the workforce development trends and issues in the region. It does not aim to tackle in depth all of the various issues and scenarios associated with employment in the region, but aims to develop a more general analysis of problems, likely solutions and required actions.

Roles, responsibilities and partnerships

Skilling WA recognises the significant impact Western Australia’s regional communities, diverse range of industries and multicultural population have on the State’s economy, while also acknowledging the unique challenges this presents. To meet these challenges, the Department of Training and Workforce Development has developed an integrated workforce planning and development process.

This integrated process shown in diagram 2.1 will ensure that the specific needs of industries, regions and those under-represented in the workforce, as well as major projects and enterprises are addressed. Governments, industry, community, education and training providers, enterprises, new job seekers and workers all have a role to play in meeting the workforce development needs of the State. Only in partnership with these stakeholders will the State address the skill and labour demands of our industries and provide the opportunity for all Western Australians to benefit from our growing economy.

Diagram 2.1: Outputs from Western Australian workforce development planning



Source: Department of Training and Workforce Development.

Timeframe

While the *Wheatbelt workforce development plan 2013–2016* has a four year timeframe, Skilling WA will be regularly reviewed and updated by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. The Department will continue to engage with Western Australian industries, government agencies, workers, the education and training sector and other key stakeholders to identify emerging trends and issues impacting on workforce development. Further, the Department will work with these stakeholders to identify and implement strategies to address these issues.

The Department will be responsible for the regular review of economic and labour market data. The Department will also continue its ongoing consultation with key workforce development partners to monitor the State's progress in achieving its workforce development goals and priority actions.

The status of the outcomes will be the subject of ongoing review, with progress reported to the Ministerial Taskforce on Approvals, Development and Sustainability on a quarterly basis. These rigorous measures will ensure that Skilling WA remains up to date and relevant, and that it achieves its objective of planning for the current and future workforce development needs of Western Australia.

Profile of the Wheatbelt region

Where available the most recent government and industry data have been used in this report, however, there are a number of limitations associated with the availability and accuracy of data. In some cases, notably the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census, the most recent data available at the time of writing were for 2006. As such, some of the demographic, occupational and socioeconomic data offer a limited assessment of very recent trends. There are also well known concerns with the accuracy of some Census data in remote areas, particularly where labour and populations are highly mobile. Where possible, alternative sources of data have been used or the trends and patterns have been cross checked during regional consultations.

Regional overview

The Wheatbelt region comprises an area of 154 862 square kilometres and is the third most populous area in Western Australia, with over 74 000 people living in the region. The region has 43 local government areas and 210 gazetted town sites however, only around 160 towns are currently populated. The region is divided into four main sub-regional areas (figure 3.1): Central East; Central South; Avon and Central Midlands and has four main service centres: Northam, Merredin, Moora and Narrogin (Wheatbelt Development Commission 2009).

The region has a relatively diverse population with over 15% of the population not born in Australia and around 4% being of Aboriginal descent (Ellis-Smith 2010). The median age of the population is approximately 39 years. The region has an over representation of people in the 65+ age cohort and an under representation of people in the 15–24 age cohort. This can be partly attributed to the high levels of out-migration of young people in search of further employment, education or social opportunities (Davies 2007), and an ageing population (Tonts, Davies and Haslam-McKenzie 2008).

Due to the size of the region, the environment of the Wheatbelt is also extremely diverse. While a significant proportion of the region is agricultural, the Central Midlands sub-region has 150 km of coastline from Guilderton to Jurien Bay, while the Avon sub-region has a relatively high rainfall and is close to Perth. Alternatively, the Central East sub-region is rich in minerals such as gold, nickel and iron ore (Ellis-Smith 2010).

It is important to note that for the purposes of this profile, the local government areas of Dalwallinu and Wongan-Ballidu have been included in the Avon sub-region rather than the Central Midlands to align with Australian Bureau of Statistics data for the region.

Figure 3.1: Wheatbelt sub-regional areas



Source: Wheatbelt Development Commission, 2009.

Regional economy

Historically, the Wheatbelt economy has been based on agriculture, particularly cropping, and this has remained the most dominant industry in the region. However, despite the dominance of the agriculture industry, the regional economy is also supported by mining, commerce, manufacturing, fishing, building and construction and tourism.

The region is the highest contributor to Western Australia's total agriculture output, contributing \$3.1 billion to the economy in 2008, 44% of the State's agriculture output, by value (Department of Regional Development and Land 2006) and agriculture employs just under one third of Wheatbelt workers (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009). Wheat is the primary agricultural commodity produced, at over half of the agricultural output of the region. Other major agricultural commodities include livestock disposals and livestock products including wool (Department of Regional Development and Land 2006).

Horticulture is a growing industry in the Central Midlands sub-region, where higher rainfall levels are suitable for growing fruits and vegetables including olives, avocados, lettuce, grapes and citrus fruits (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

The fishing industry in the Wheatbelt contributes significantly (21%) to the State's total fishing output. In terms of value, the rock lobster catch in the Central Midlands sub-region makes up the majority of the region's output (Tonts et al 2008).

The manufacturing industry contributes 2.9% to the State's total manufacturing output and the majority of businesses in the sector are based on processing local produce and supplying and servicing the agricultural sector (Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010a). A significant number of businesses, however, also serve national and international markets (Tonts et al 2008).

Mining is another key industry in the region with key mineral commodities including gold, iron ore, mineral sands and nickel. Mineral sands are largely mined at Eneabba in the Central Midlands sub-region, while gold, nickel and iron ore are largely found in the Central East sub-region (Department of Regional Development and Land 2006).

The building and construction industry has followed an upward trend between 2003–04 and 2009–10, particularly in the Central Midlands and Avon sub-regions. In 2009–10 the value of total building approvals was \$285 million. The value of residential approvals has exceeded the value of non-residential approvals for the last 15 years (Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010a).

The retail and wholesale industries in the Wheatbelt primarily service the agriculture sector, with a range of commercial activities occurring across the region, mainly concentrated in Narrogin, Northam, Merredin and Moora (Department of Regional Development and Land 2006).

Tourism in the Wheatbelt region makes up 10% of the total Western Australian tourism market, with attractions including the Moore and Avon rivers, the Pinnacles, Wave Rock and the New Norcia monastic complex (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009). Annually, Australia's Golden Outback spends \$1 million promoting the Wheatbelt as a tourist destination.

Finally, government sectors also play an important role in the local economy, as major employers in the health, education and social services sectors (Tonts et al 2008).

Gross regional product

The Wheatbelt's gross regional product (GRP) in 2008–09 was \$5.6 billion, contributing 3.3% to Western Australia's economic output. Between 2005–06 and 2008–09, the economic output of the region increased by 37.9%, slightly lower than the growth in the Western Australian economy of 42.5% (table 3.1).

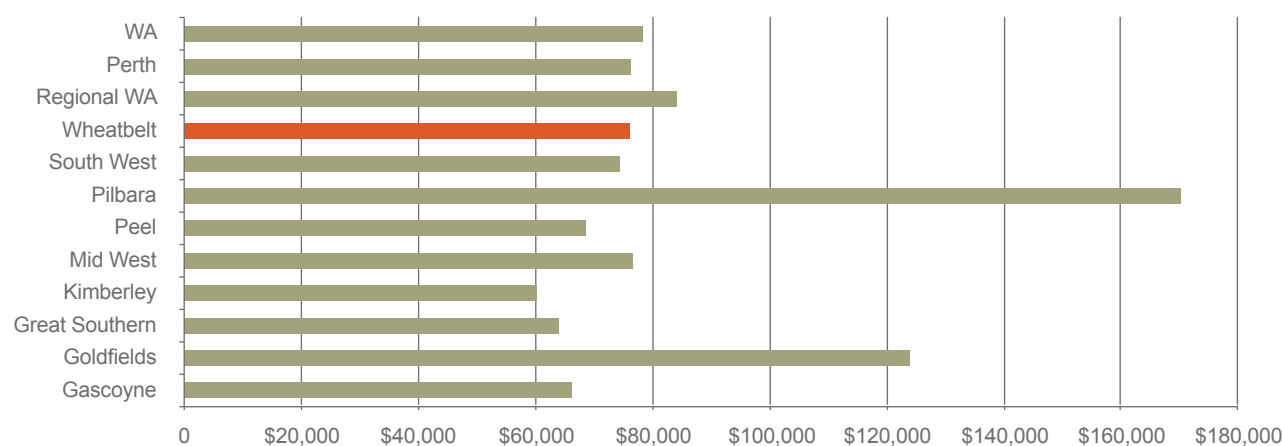
Table 3.1: Gross regional product in the Wheatbelt region 2005–06 and 2008–09

	2005–06		2008–09		Change 2005–09	
	\$ Billion	% of State	\$ Billion	% of State	\$ Billion	%
Wheatbelt	4.0	3.4	5.6	3.3	1.5	37.9
WA	119.2	-	169.9	-	50.7	42.5

Source: Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010a.

In 2008–09, per capita GRP the Wheatbelt was ranked fourth out of the nine regional areas in Western Australia, at \$75 823, just below the State average of \$78 275. The Wheatbelt's per capita GRP highlights the efficiency of the regional economy and the agricultural sector in particular, as only the highly resource intensive regions of the Pilbara, Goldfields-Esperance and Mid West have higher levels of productivity per person than the Wheatbelt (Tonts et al 2008) (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Gross regional product per capita 2008–09



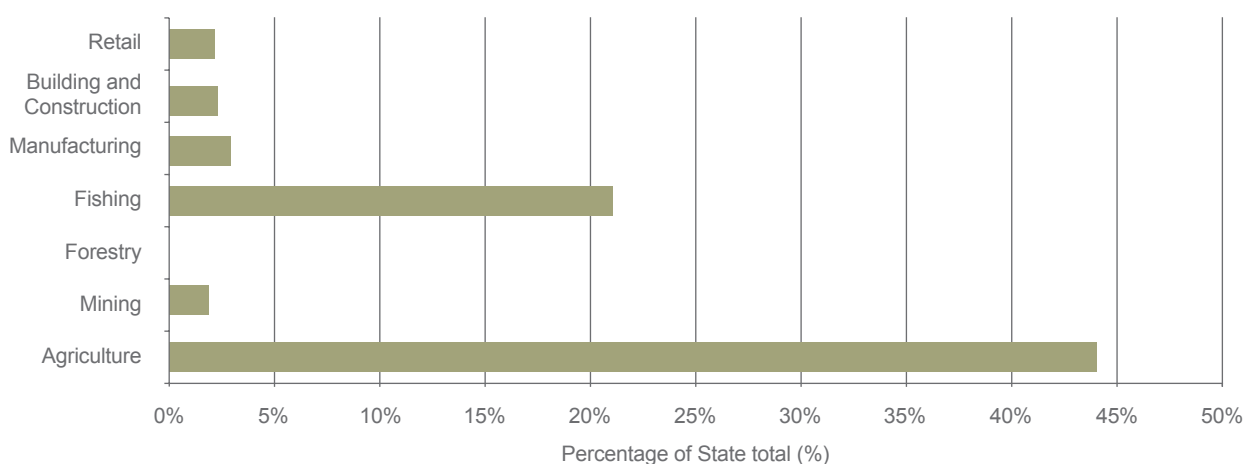
Source: Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010a.

Wheatbelt industries

As identified in figure 3.3, the agricultural and fishing industries are the most dominant across the Wheatbelt in terms of contribution to GRP. Agriculture contributed \$3.1 billion to the State economy, 44% of the State's agricultural output in 2008–09, while the fishing industry contributed \$58 million to the State's economy and 21% of the total fishing output of the State.

Other dominant industries in the region include: manufacturing (which contributed 2.9% to the State's total manufacturing output); building and construction (2.2%); retail (2.1%) and mining (1.8%) (Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010a).

Figure 3.3: Wheatbelt industry contribution to State GRP 2008–09



Source: Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010a.

However, due to the geographic diversity of the Wheatbelt, the dominance of industries in each sub-region is variable. Within the Central South and Central East sub-regions, broad acre grain and livestock production contribute significantly to the economic output of the region, while the Central East sub-region also has significant mining (gold) and transport, postal and warehousing industries.

In the more economically diverse sub-region of Avon, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry continues to be dominant, with farming a key economic driver (Tonts et al 2008). A number of other industries also make an important contribution to the economy in the Avon sub-region, including mining; electricity, gas, water and waste; transport, postal and warehousing; and education and training.

The Central Midlands sub-region is characterised by strong agriculture and fishing industries, particularly in the rock lobster fishing sector. Mineral sands mining in the Eneabba area is also a significant contributor to the economic output of this sub-region (Tonts et al 2008).

Enterprise structure

There were 10 026 businesses operating in the region in 2007 (ABS 2010) with one third (32%) located in the Avon sub-region and a similar proportion (30%) located in the Central South sub-region (table 3.2). Twenty three percent were in the Central Midlands sub-region and 15% were located in the Central East sub-region.

Agriculture, forestry and fishing businesses accounted for 52% of all businesses in the Wheatbelt region and are the most dominant industries in all four sub-regions. Other dominant industries by business number included property and business services as well as construction and retail trade industries.

In the more economically diverse regions of the Avon and Central Midlands, there were a large number of businesses throughout 2007 in the construction industry along with property and business services, retail trade, transport, postal and warehousing. By comparison, the Central East and Central South sub-regions had fewer dominant industries due to the prominence of agricultural businesses in this area.

Table 3.2: Number of businesses in Wheatbelt region 2007

	Central Midlands	Central South	Avon	Central East	Total Wheatbelt
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1185	1758	1461	807	5211
Mining	12	6	18	15	51
Manufacturing	63	90	141	33	327
Electricity, gas and water supply	0	6	3	0	9
Construction	273	186	336	105	900
Wholesale trade	57	72	135	45	309
Retail trade	165	282	297	105	849
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	66	72	96	33	267
Transport, postal and warehousing	132	117	153	39	441
Communication services	9	18	27	15	69
Finance and insurance	78	78	93	18	267
Property and business services	219	216	348	135	918
Education and training	0	3	9	0	12
Health and community services	27	45	78	24	174
Cultural and recreational services	12	21	30	6	69
Personal and other services	48	39	48	18	153
Total businesses	2346	3009	3273	1398	10 026

Source: ABS 2010.

As shown in table 3.3, the Wheatbelt was dominated by small and medium enterprises. In 2006, 55.7% of businesses employed no staff (sole traders), while a further 27.5% employed between one and four staff members (ABS 2006).

Non-employing businesses were the most common business structure in all industries, accounting for more than three quarters of businesses in mining; electricity, gas and water; finance and insurance; property and business services; and cultural and recreational services.

Table 3.3: Proportion of businesses, by staff, Wheatbelt region 2006

	No staff	1–4 staff	5–19 staff	20–49 staff	50+ staff
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	52.4%	31.2%	13.6%	2.1%	0.6%
Mining	77.2%	12.3%	5.3%	0.0%	5.3%
Manufacturing	55.4%	18.5%	17.4%	6.5%	2.2%
Electricity, gas and water supply	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Construction	66.4%	26.3%	6.1%	0.8%	0.4%
Wholesale trade	54.9%	24.2%	16.5%	2.2%	2.2%
Retail trade	42.6%	31.2%	20.9%	4.6%	0.8%
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	30.0%	18.8%	36.3%	12.5%	2.5%
Transport, postal and warehousing	54.0%	30.2%	13.7%	2.2%	0.0%
Communication services	43.5%	43.5%	8.7%	0.0%	4.3%
Finance and insurance	86.7%	7.8%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Property and business services	74.0%	16.6%	7.9%	0.7%	0.7%
Education and training	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Health and community services	49.0%	26.5%	20.4%	2.0%	2.0%
Cultural and recreational services	76.0%	4.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Personal and other services	65.9%	24.4%	9.8%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: ABS 2010.

This enterprise structure in the Wheatbelt is similar to much of regional Australia and has important implications for workforce planning and regional development. Research indicates that smaller businesses, particularly those with less than 10 employees are more acutely affected by skilled labour shortages (Tonts and Davies 2008). There are a number of significant challenges for small and medium enterprises to overcome that are associated with labour shortages including the (Tonts and Davies 2008):

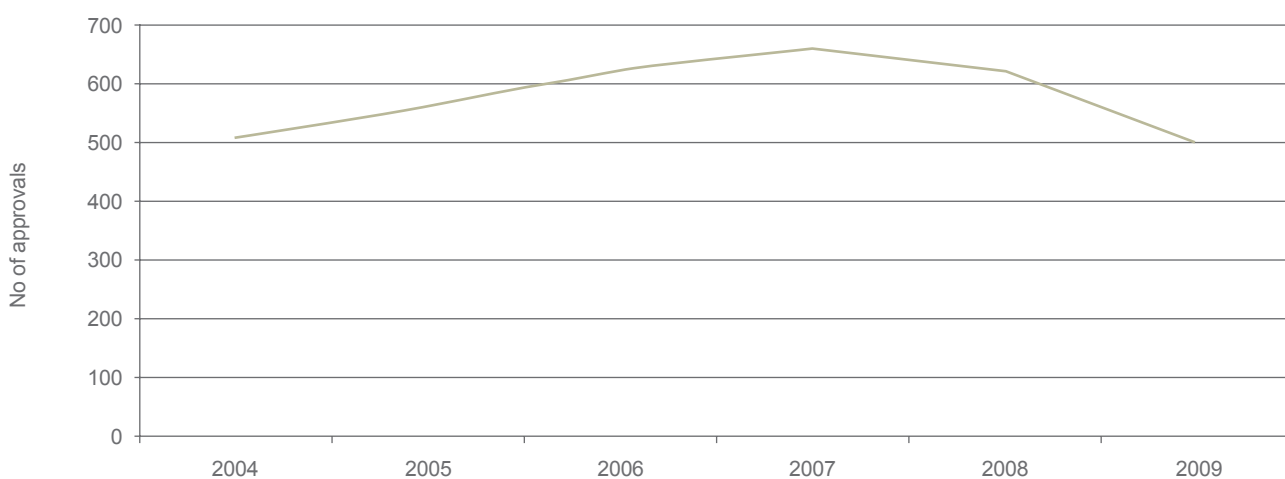
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- rising cost of wages, as small and medium businesses are often less able to absorb rising costs;
 - attraction of new staff – small and medium enterprise often do not have the resources to undertake recruitment campaigns to the same extent as larger organisations thereby making recruitment difficult, particularly in a limited labour market; and
 - high staff turnover and the high costs associated with recruitment and retraining.

Dwelling approvals

Dwelling approvals are a useful indicator of the performance of an economy, as it can provide an indication of the level of construction activity being undertaken. In addition, it can provide a measure of economic confidence, where high dwelling approval levels indicate economic prosperity and both business and consumer confidence in the future. High rates of dwelling approvals are often associated with in-migration and can provide an indication of future population growth (Tonts and Davies 2008).

In the Wheatbelt region, dwelling approvals increased steadily between 2004 and 2007 before recording a decline in 2008 and 2009. Overall, dwelling approvals in the region recorded a 1.7% decrease between 2004 and 2009 (figure 3.4). This is considerably different to the Western Australian average, which recorded an 18.6% decrease in dwelling approvals throughout the same period.

Figure 3.4: Dwelling approvals Wheatbelt 2004–09



Source: ABS 2010.

The largest number of approvals occurred in the Avon, which accounted for 37% of all approvals in the Wheatbelt region in 2009, followed closely by the Central Midlands sub-region (34%) (table 3.4). This strong activity in the building and construction industry potentially explains the disproportionately high number of building and construction businesses in the Central Midlands sub-region (see table 3.2) and can be attributed to the growing population and infrastructure demands in this sub-region.

Table 3.4: Dwelling approvals in the Wheatbelt 2004–09 by sub-region

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Avon	198	174	234	265	197	187
Central East	24	27	21	36	30	32
Central Midlands	232	258	260	247	292	172
Central South	54	99	109	112	104	108
Total	508	558	624	660	623	499
WA	23 834	24 233	26 170	25 087	23 641	19 386

Source: ABS 2010.

In contrast, the Central East sub-region had only 32 approvals in 2009, however, this relatively low level of approvals can potentially be attributed to the small population and absence of a major settlement in the sub-region (Tonts and Davies 2008).

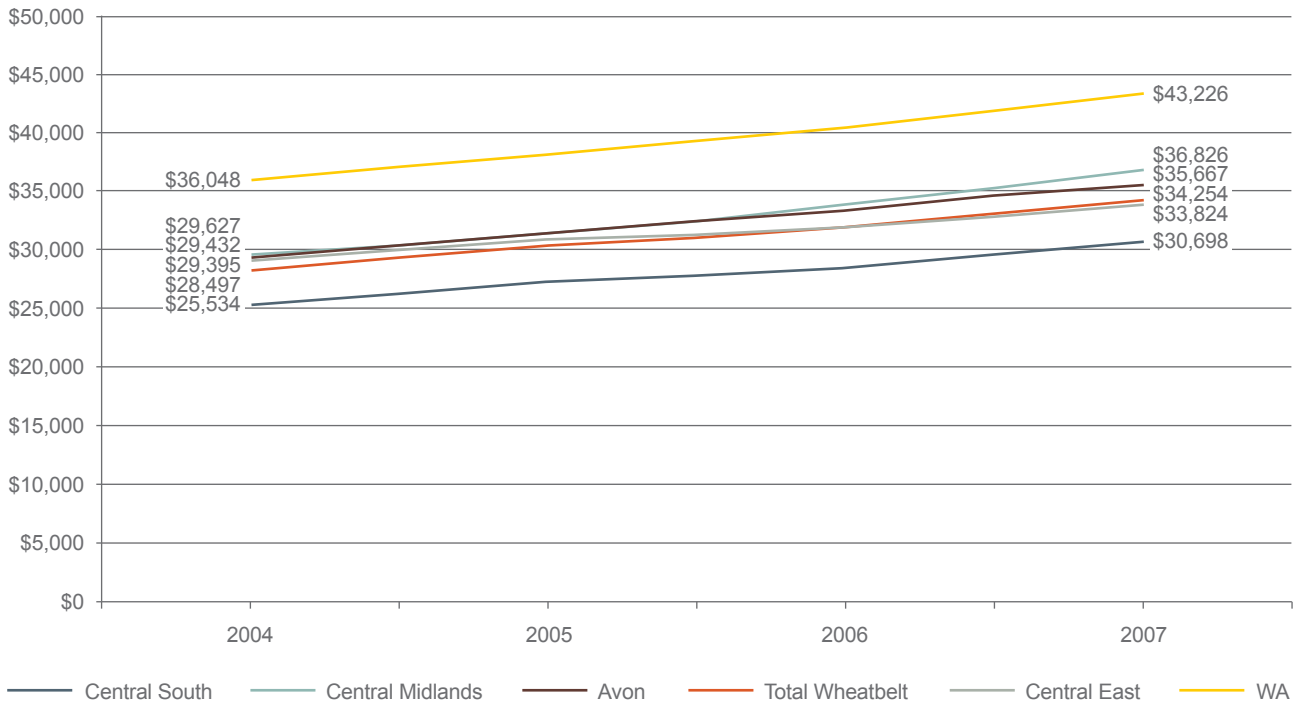
Income distribution

The ability of a region to attract and retain labour is significantly influenced by its capacity to pay competitive wages (Tonts et al 2008). Although the Wheatbelt region had a lower average individual income than the State average between 2004 and 2007 (figure 3.5), the region experienced 20.2% growth in average individual incomes, which is above the State average of 19.9%.

The Central Midlands sub-region experienced the highest growth levels, with an increase of 24% followed by the Avon and Central South sub-regions with 21.3% and 20.2% respectively. Only the Central East sub-region experienced income growth lower than the State average, at 14.9%.

The median incomes in the Wheatbelt region remain below the State average, however, this is largely due to the volatility of the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries (Tonts et al 2008), particularly in the Central South and Central East sub-regions.

Figure 3.5: Average individual incomes in Wheatbelt 2004–07



Source: ABS 2010.

There are significant income disparities between sub-regions in the Wheatbelt, with high incomes restricted to particular sectors and occupations. This environment creates ‘churn’ in the labour market as people change jobs frequently, in search of higher wages, particularly in the resources sector. Additionally, people moving from low income to high income employment can create significant labour shortages in jobs such as cleaners and sales assistants (Pelusey, Hatch and Tonts 2010).

Major projects impact analysis

Major projects in the region are generally funded through either the Royalties for Regions Regional Grants Scheme or the State and local governments’ capital works program.

Royalties for Regions Regional Grant Scheme

The Royalties for Regions Regional Grant Scheme funds a number of significant projects within the Wheatbelt region and substantially contributes to the area’s economic and community development.

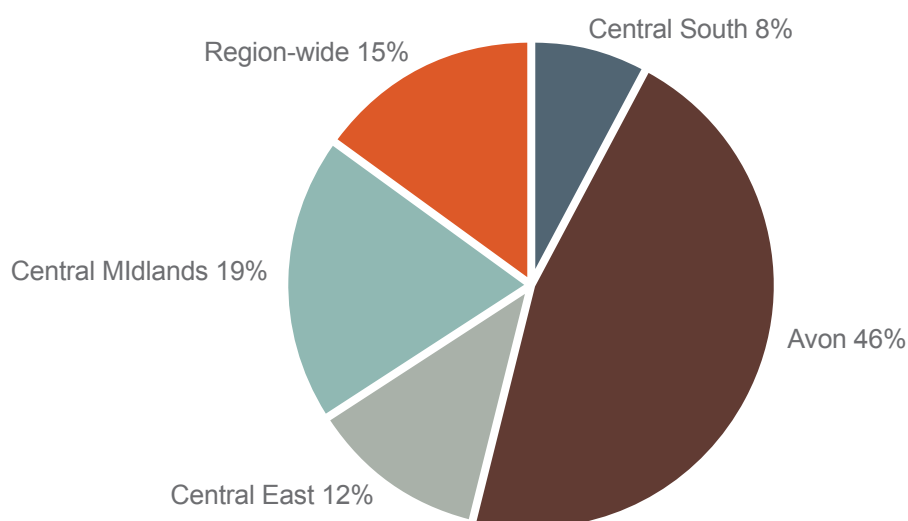
In 2010, the Wheatbelt region received \$3.12 million for 26 projects (Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010b).

Figure 3.6 shows the distribution of Royalties for Regions projects by sub-region. Nearly half of the projects funded in 2010 were in the Avon sub-region (46%), followed by the Central Midlands sub-region (19%), potentially indicating an increased demand for infrastructure in these sub-regions as a result of population increases.

Some of the key projects funded in the region include the:

- establishment of a Centre for Agriculture and Farm Technology in Narrogin (\$597 000);
- construction of a Community Resource Precinct in Wongan Hills (\$300 000);
- Tootra Street Industrial Park Extension (\$251 475); and
- Kellerberrin Recreation and Leisure Centre Development (\$200 000).

Figure 3.6: Proportion of Royalties for Regions projects by sub-region 2009–10



Source: Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010b.

A similar proportion of funding was received in 2008–09 with \$3.4 million of funding going towards 24 projects in the Wheatbelt region (Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010b). Key projects funded in this period include:

- Jurien Bay Foreshore and Jetty Redevelopment (\$750 000); and
- Southern Wheatbelt Cultural Development Program (\$330 000).

Capital works program

The Wheatbelt region was allocated nearly \$122 million in the 2008–09 Budget for capital works. The region's roads were a key priority with funding of more than \$68.7 million, as were the region's water supplies with \$35.3 million committed for a range of projects.

In 2008–09 capital works spending per capita in the metropolitan area was \$1459 per person. However across regional Western Australia, capital works spending per capita

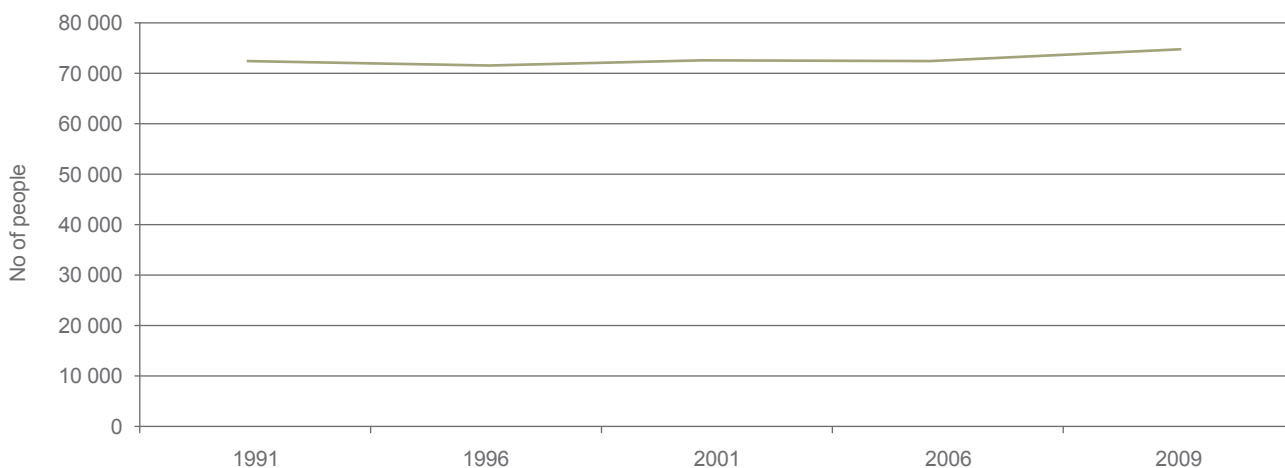
was \$3296 (Wheatbelt Development Commission 2008); while in the Wheatbelt region it was slightly higher than the metropolitan area at \$1661 per person¹.

Population demographics

Between the 1950s and the mid 1990s, the Wheatbelt region experienced a pattern of population decline due to a variety of reasons, including farm amalgamations and expansions, technological innovations in farming and an associated decrease in the service and business sectors of country towns (Tonts et al 2008).

However, since the mid 1990s, the population of the region has experienced modest growth reaching a peak of 74 899 in 2009 (figure 3.7), with an average annual population growth rate of 0.2% over the period.

Figure 3.7: Wheatbelt population 1991–2009



Source: ABS 2010 and 2010a.

The population of the Wheatbelt is highly dispersed. Towns with the highest density populations are closer to the metropolitan area, while in the far north and east of the Wheatbelt there are greater distances between towns and smaller concentrations of people (Regional Development Australia 2010).

Recent population growth in the Wheatbelt region has been attributed to a number of reasons including:

- a high price differential between metropolitan and regional land (Tonts et al 2008);
- the emergence of new regional industries such as tourism;
- a growing preference to live in regional areas, particularly due to its proximity to metropolitan Perth and the Perth Domestic Airport;
- an increase in fly-in fly-out mine employees; and
- the ‘tree change phenomenon’ (Department of Training and Workforce Development 2009).

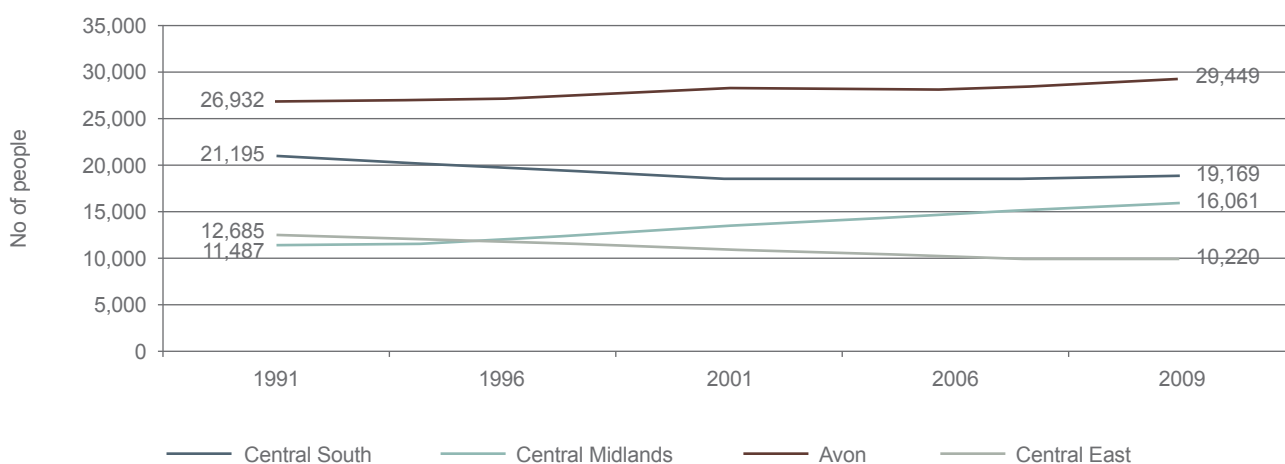
¹ As calculated using ABS 2008 population data.

Despite the overall growth of the Wheatbelt region, not all sub-regions experienced similar growth. Figure 3.8 shows that the Central East and Central South sub-regions recorded population decreases of 19.4% and 9.6% respectively between 1991 and 2009, due to a number of factors including climate change and declining financial viability of many farms.

Consultation conducted by the Western Australian Planning Commission (2010) indicates the need for future planning for changing demographics, employment opportunities and agricultural zoning in these areas.

In contrast, over the same period, the Avon sub-region experienced a 9.3% increase in population, while the population of the Central Midlands sub-region increased 39% from 11 487 to 16 061. The Shire of Chittering, in the Central Midlands sub-region, experienced the highest average annual growth rate between 2003 and 2009, at 5.3% (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Figure 3.8: Wheatbelt population, by sub-region 1991–2009



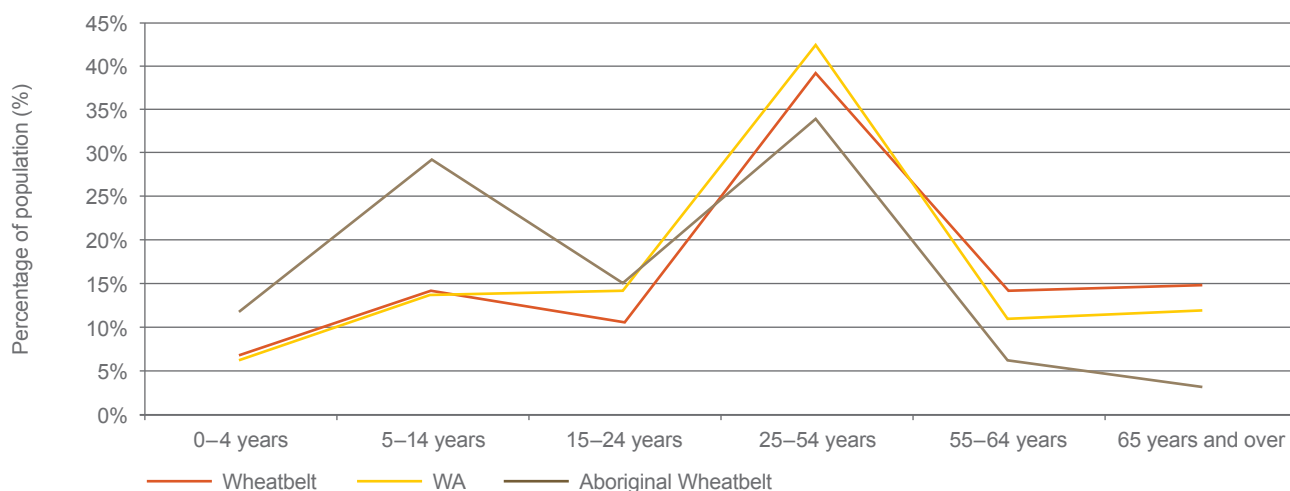
Source: ABS 2010 and 2010a.

Pelusey, Hatch and Tonts (2010) suggest that the most rapid growth in sub-regions occur in those areas which have a high number of amenities and facilities, such as the Avon sub-region.

Age structure

The Wheatbelt region has a similar age structure to other rural areas throughout Australia, particularly those characterised by a high level of dependence on agriculture (see figure 3.9). Throughout the region 15–24 year olds are under-represented which can be attributed to the out-migration of young people to metropolitan areas post school, to seek further education and employment opportunities (Davies 2007). Much of the movement out of the region is to Perth and there is little evidence to suggest this dynamic is changing (Davies and Tonts 2007).

Figure 3.9: Age structure of Wheatbelt 2009

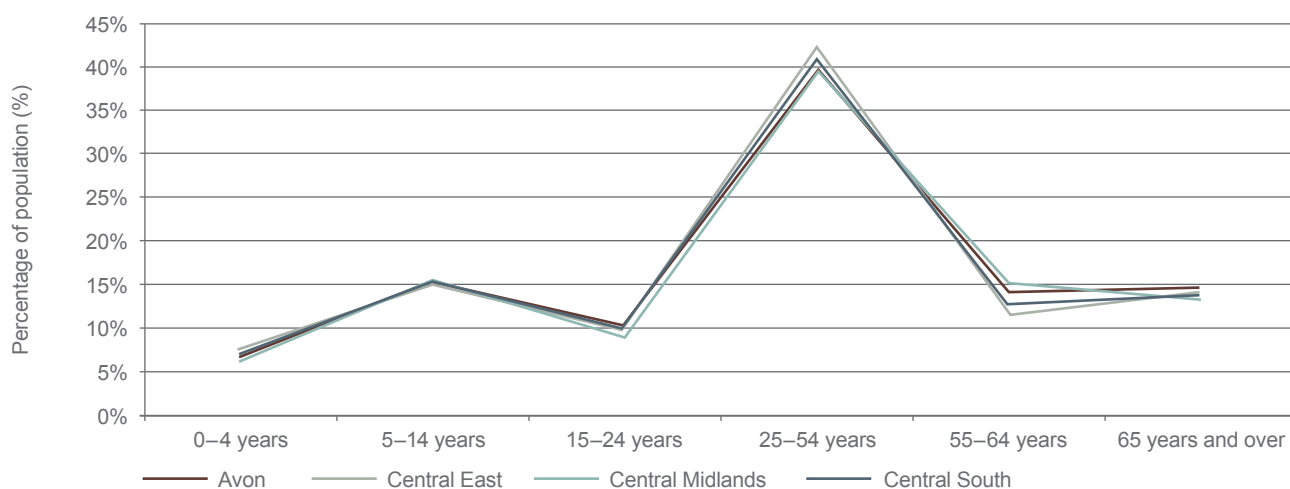


Source: ABS 2010.

In contrast, there is an over representation of people in the 55–64 and 65+ cohorts in the region, attributed to an ageing farming population which is a common issue found in rural areas throughout Australia (Tonts et al 2008), as well as the in-migration of retirees and semi-retirees (Pelusey et al 2010).

The age structure trends for each of the Wheatbelt sub-regions, replicate the trends seen in the Wheatbelt as a whole (figure 3.10) and are largely shaped by the economic structure of the region, with a high level of employment in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry (Tonts et al 2008).

Figure 3.10: Age structure of Wheatbelt sub-regions 2009

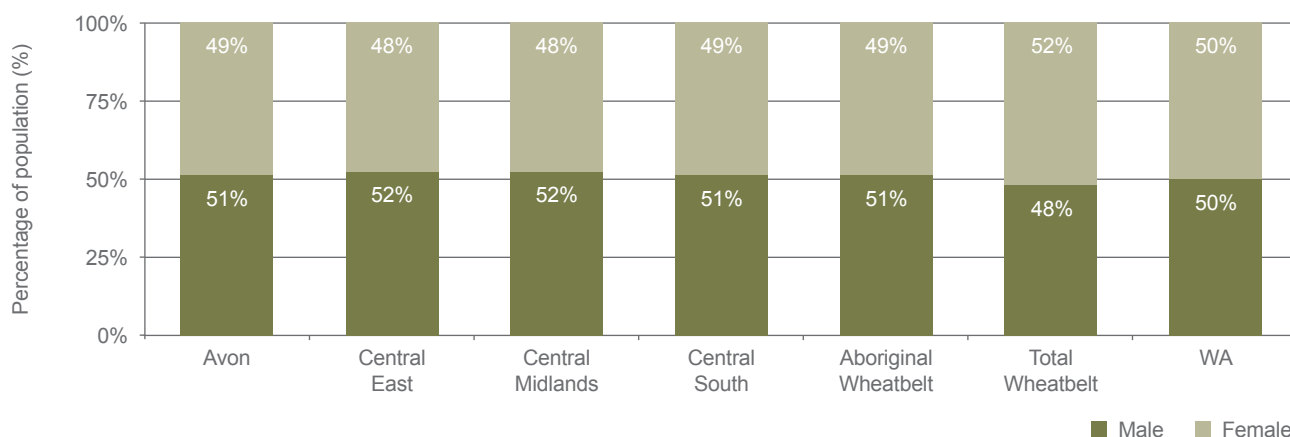


Source: ABS 2010.

Gender structure

As with the age structure of the Wheatbelt region, the gender distribution is also largely shaped by the economic structure of the region (figure 3.11). This can be attributed to the high number of male dominated sectors in the region, including mining, agriculture and manufacturing.

Figure 3.11: Gender structure of Wheatbelt by sub-region 2009



Source: ABS 2006.

The gender distribution in each of the sub-regions of the Wheatbelt indicates males make up the slight majority of the regional population. In comparison, gender distribution throughout the rest of Western Australia is, on average, equal.

The Aboriginal structure reverses the Wheatbelt trend of a higher proportion of males in the area and records 48% males and 52% females (ABS 2006).

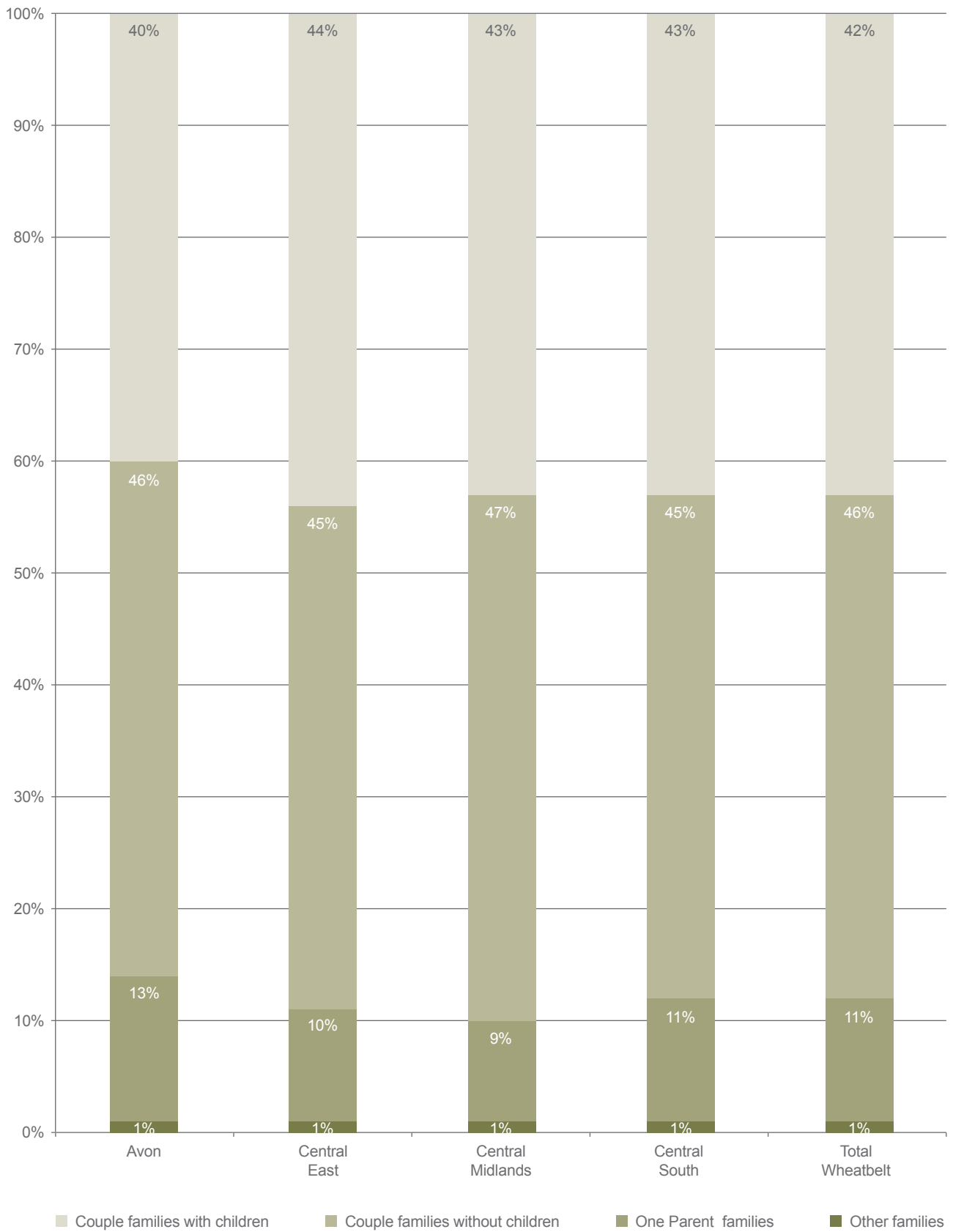
Household and family composition

Over 70% of households within the Wheatbelt region are one family households while one quarter are lone person households. Multiple family and group households make up just 0.7% and 2.2% of households respectively.

Figure 3.12 presents the family composition of the Wheatbelt region. The region is largely characterised by couples without children (46%) and couples with children (42%). One parent families only account for 11% of families within the region, while other family structures account for 1%.

The family structure for each sub-region (Avon, Central East, Central Midlands and Central South) is similar to the structure of the Wheatbelt as a whole.

Figure 3.12: Family structure of Wheatbelt by sub-region



Source: ABS 2006.

Regional labour market

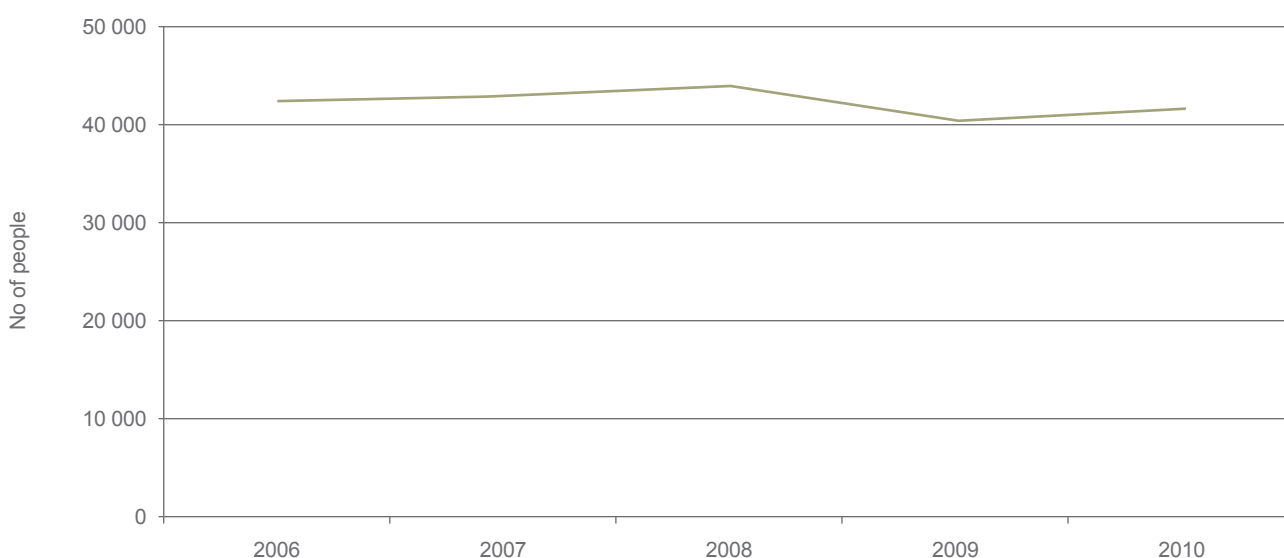
Employment trends

Overall, the Wheatbelt experienced a 1.3% decrease in the labour force between 1996 and 2006; however, this was highest in the Central South and Central East sub-regions (19.3% and 6.2% declines respectively). Comparatively, between 1996 and 2006, both the Avon and Central Midlands sub-regions experienced growth in the labour force of 1.9% and 20.0% respectively.

A number of regional areas have experienced growth over recent years and this can be attributed to the emergence of resource projects and successful local development strategies (Davies and Tonts 2009). However, there are also a number of key reasons for growth, specific to the Avon and Central Midlands sub-regions. Both sub-regions are relatively accessible to the Perth metropolitan area and have a greater availability of amenities and facilities due to the presence of a larger regional centre in each area. Both the Avon and Central Midlands sub-regions are considered to have more aesthetic value (Davies 2007), as the Avon sub-region has a high average rainfall creating a 'greener' environment, while the Central Midlands sub-region is characterised by a significant proportion of coastline (Ellis-Smith 2010).

Between 2006 and 2008, the labour force increased 3.3% to 43 877, but subsequently decreased in 2009 (figure 3.13). This rapid decline in the labour force can partly be attributed to the global financial crisis, which saw a decline in the number of people engaged in primary industries in the Wheatbelt region and an associated decrease in service and business sectors across each regional area (Davies and Tonts 2009).

Figure 3.13: Labour force Wheatbelt 2006–10



Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2010 and Department of Regional Development and Lands 2008.

Evidence cited in Davies and Tonts (2009) indicated that when farmers leave the industry, they choose to move to coastal areas or larger urban centres throughout Western Australia thereby contributing to patterns of population decline, business closure and economic withdrawal.

Throughout 2010, there is a recorded recovery (of 2.5% to 41 431) in the labour force and this is relatively consistent with the quick recovery of the Western Australian economy as a whole.

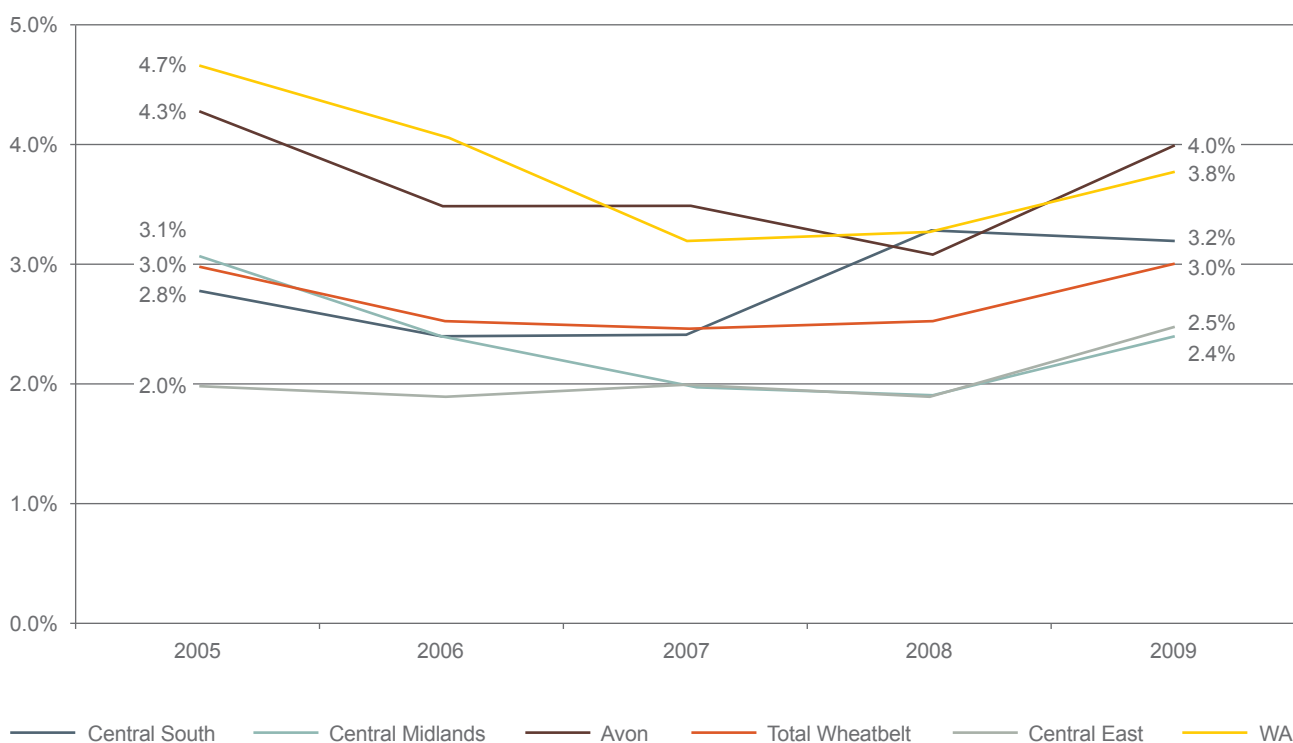
Unemployment trends

As a whole, the Wheatbelt region records a consistently lower unemployment rate compared to the State average (figure 3.14), but overall records a similar underlying trend between 2005 and 2009. The Wheatbelt's low unemployment rate is a reflection of the productivity of the local economy (Tonts et al 2008).

In 2009 the Wheatbelt recorded an unemployment rate of 3.0% compared to the State average of 3.8%. The unemployment rate is highest in the Avon sub-region (4.0%) and lowest in the Central Midlands (2.4%) and Central East (2.5%).

The Wheatbelt also had a lower unemployment rate than regional Western Australia in 2009 (3.0% Wheatbelt, compared to 4.1% regional Western Australia).

Figure 3.14: Wheatbelt unemployment rate 2005–09



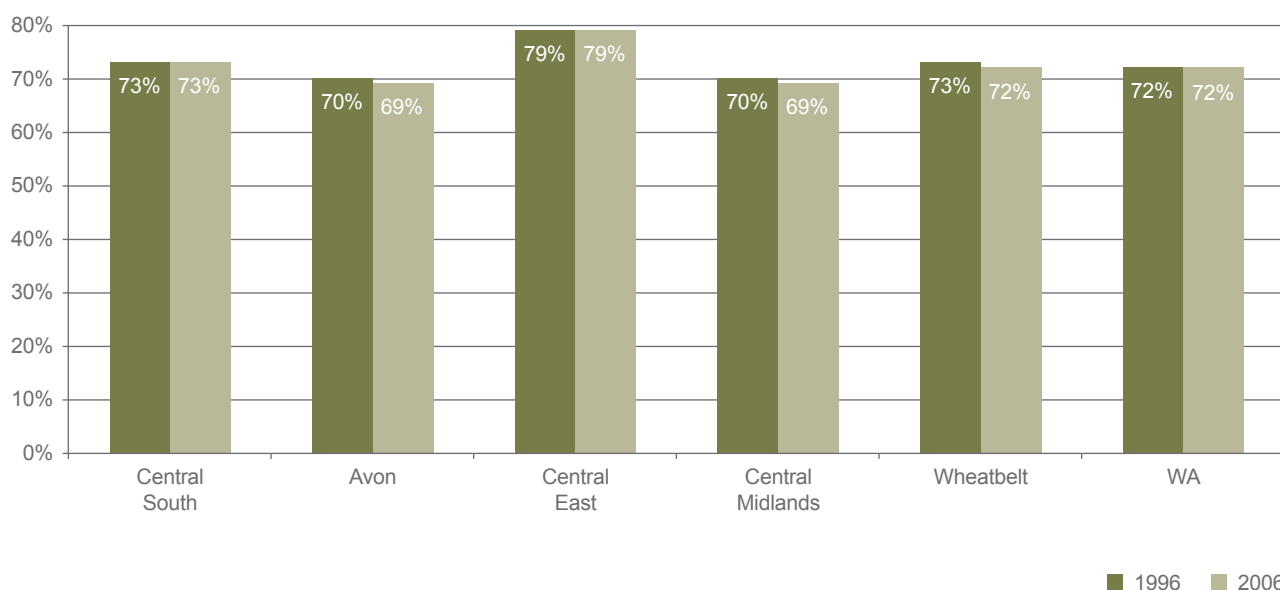
Source: ABS 2010.

Participation in the labour market

The participation rates in each Wheatbelt sub-region varied considerably between 1996 and 2006 (figure 3.15). The Central South and Central East sub-regions recorded the highest participation rate at 72.6% and 79% respectively. While the Central South participation rate dropped marginally, the Central East rate remained stable between 1996 and 2006. Despite this, both sub-regions were higher than the Western Australian average of 71.9% in 2006. High participation rates are typical of regional areas which are characterised by a high proportion of the labour force engaged in the agricultural and resources sectors. Due to the high participation rates in these sub-regions resources should particularly focus on increasing participation of women and Indigenous people (Davies and Tonts 2007a).

In contrast, the participation rates of the Avon (69.2%) and Central Midlands (68.6%) were below the Western Australian average. This, coupled with the higher unemployment rates in each of these sub-regions, indicated an under utilisation of local resources and the need to address labour and skill needs locally (Tonts et al 2008).

Figure 3.15: Wheatbelt labour force participation rates by sub-region for 1996 and 2006



Source: ABS 2006.

Employment by industry sector

An analysis of employment by industry sector reinforces the current contribution of the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry to the Wheatbelt economy. The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry in the Wheatbelt region employed 30.1% of the workforce, compared to just 10.8% of the regional Western Australian workforce employed in this industry (Ellis-Smith 2010).

In the Central East and Central South sub-regions, more than 35% of the population were employed in the agriculture sector, while in Avon, 22% and the Central Midlands, 28.4% of the population were employed in the agriculture sector (ABS 2006).

Agriculture, however, is predicted to decrease over the next 10 years, due to a number of factors including declining rainfall levels and changing currency values and commodity prices (Ellis-Smith 2010).

The retail trade; public administration and safety; education and training; and health care and social assistance industries were also large employers across all sub-regions (ABS 2006).

The Central Midlands sub-region had a high number of people employed in the construction industry (9.1%) compared to the other sub-regions as a result of the disproportionately high number of building and construction businesses in this sub-region (table 3.2).

There are also many developing industries which contribute significantly to the region's economy including mining, commerce, manufacturing and tourism (Ellis-Smith 2010).

Ageing of the labour force

The region, as a whole, had over 29% of the population over the age of 55, compared to 23% of the Western Australian population, in 2009.

The sub-regions of Avon, Central East and Central Midlands have the highest combined median age in Western Australia of 41.5 years as well as the highest increase in median age (of 2.5 years) since 2004 (ABS 2010b). All sub-regions in the Wheatbelt had a higher median age than the State average of 36.2 in 2009.

Western Australian Planning Commission (2012) projections indicate that the median age will continue to increase to 2026, resulting in a significant proportion of the population over the age of 60.

In the Avon sub-region, every sector of the workforce is older than the State average, however in the agriculture, forestry and fishing; electricity, gas, water and waste; and arts and recreation industries, more than 35% of the labour force is over 55 years (ABS 2006).

Alternatively, the Central Midlands sub-region has a similar age structure to Western Australia, with the majority of sectors having fewer than 20% of the labour force over 55 years (ABS 2006).

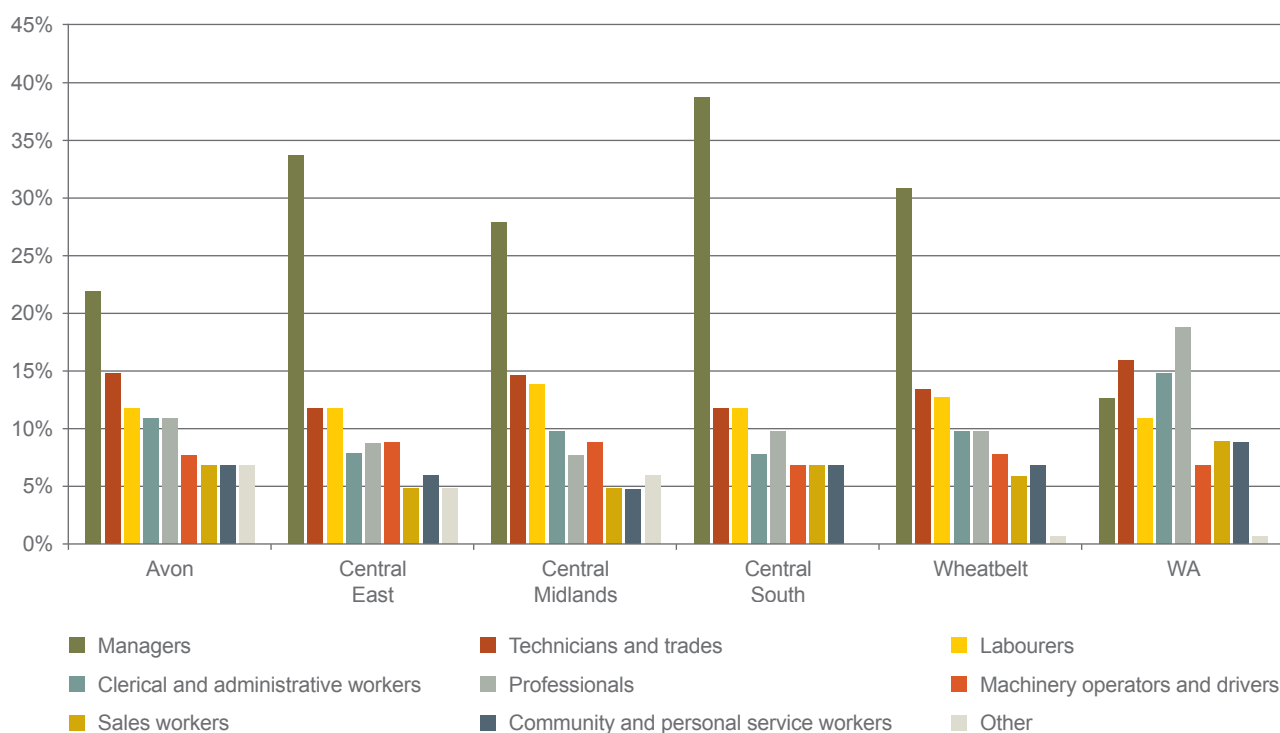
Within the Central East sub-region, industries with an ageing labour force included agriculture, forestry and fishing; electricity, gas, water and waste; administration and support services; and health care and social assistance, with all industries characterised by 20% or more of the labour force over 55 years (ABS 2006).

The Central South sub-region also has a number of industries with an ageing workforce with the agriculture, forestry and fishing; transport, postal and warehousing; professional, scientific and technical services; and arts and recreation industries, all having over 20% or more of the workforce over 55 years (ABS 2006).

Occupational structure

As shown in figure 3.16, the Wheatbelt is dominated by a considerably higher proportion of those classified as manager, relative to the State average (31% compared to 13% respectively). However, this is attributable to the high number of farming families within the region, as farmers are classified as managers.

Figure 3.16: Key occupations in the Wheatbelt, by sub-region 2006



Source: ABS 2006.

In contrast, there is a smaller proportion of professional occupations (11% Wheatbelt, 19% State average). This is potentially influenced by the lack of a major regional centre and the region's close proximity to Perth, as the activities associated with these occupations (such as administration, clerical and sales workers) are more densely located in larger regional centres (Tonts et al 2008).

Internal migration

While almost 30% of the population (20 921 people) migrated into the Wheatbelt region between 2001 and 2006, the population of the region only grew by 3.3% (2435 people) over this period, indicating that a significant amount of out-migration occurred over this period also.

The Wheatbelt region experienced slightly lower internal migration levels than the State average, with 53% of the population living at the same address in 2001 as they were in

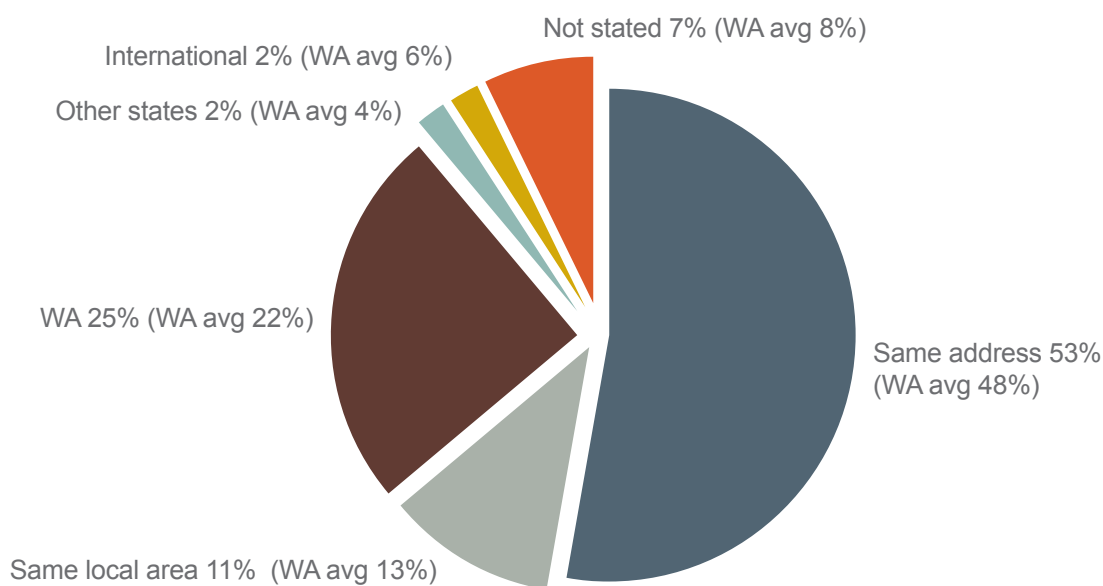
2006, compared to 48% of the population of Western Australia (see figure 3.17). Additionally, 11% of the population moved within the region between 2001 and 2006.

Over this same period, 25% of the Wheatbelt population migrated to the Wheatbelt region from other areas of Western Australia, while 4% of the population migrated to the Wheatbelt from interstate or international destinations between 2001 and 2006.

Australian rural communities have experienced a steady decline in youth migrating to the regions since the early 1990s coupled with high rates of youth out-migration. This has had dramatic consequences on many rural communities, making it difficult for them to attract young people to fill skilled job vacancies and apprenticeship positions, particularly in regions dominated by agriculture and manufacturing industries, such as the Wheatbelt. A declining youth population also has social ramifications, as it reduces the capacity of the community to replenish its skills base and social networks, such as sporting clubs and community organisations (Davies 2007).

There are a number of reasons why young people, particularly females (Davies and Tonts 2007) migrate to larger regional centres or cities. Most significantly, it is to access education, employment and further social opportunities not afforded to them in rural communities. However, declining youth workforce participation in rural communities is also attributed to the increasing use of fly-in fly-out workers as a result of increased mining activity in Western Australia, as well as the perceived high start up costs and low salaries of traditionally rural businesses and industries (Davies 2007).

Figure 3.17: Internal migration, Wheatbelt 2001–06



Source: ABS 2006.

A research study identified the Wheatbelt region as a rural community that is struggling with declining youth workforce participation as it is perceived to have a low aesthetic value. It has not received the benefits of regional population growth associated with the growth in the mining sector, which has been concentrated in the Goldfields-Esperance and Pilbara regions. The study also indicated that the understanding about social and employment opportunities in the region was poor, with people who had lived in the region or who had strong family or social connections more likely to view the region in a more positive light (Davies and Tonts 2007).

The Central East and Central South sub-regions had the most stable populations with 56% and 57% of the population respectively remaining at the same address between 2001 and 2006.

International migration

Around 15% of the population of the Wheatbelt were born overseas (Ellis-Smith 2010). People from the United Kingdom were the most likely to migrate to the Wheatbelt region, with 49% of migrants living in the Wheatbelt region at the 2006 Census, originating from the UK. This is followed by New Zealand (16%) and South Africa, Germany and the Netherlands, each with 4% (ABS 2006).

This pattern roughly follows the Western Australian trend with the largest number of migrants in the State migrating from the United Kingdom, New Zealand and South Africa in 2006 (ABS 2006).

Skilled migration is one method the Commonwealth Government is using to address the issue of skilled labour shortages in regional areas. However, there are a number of issues associated with the long term effectiveness of this solution, including the willingness of migrants to remain in regional areas, inter-regional competition for migrants and the social match between migrants and their host communities (Davies and Tonts 2007a).

Education and training profile

Education and training services are delivered through a number of public and private organisations. Table 3.5 provides a breakdown of services in the Wheatbelt region.

The Department of Education also offers several youth transition programs in the region including:

- VET in Schools programs (VETiS) – The VETiS program is offered by most public schools, where students work toward either individual units of competence or full qualifications while enrolled at school. Students are required to complete both off the job training at school and on the job training in a real workplace in order to complete the qualification. Selection of industry areas for study depends on the schools' resources.
- School Apprenticeship Link (SAL) – The SAL program offers students the opportunity to either complete a pre-apprenticeship or try a number of different jobs in the same industry. The program provides a mixture of education, workplace learning and training over a two year period.

Table 3.5: Wheatbelt education and training services 2012

Education and training services	Numbers/description
Education districts	2 (Midlands and Narrogin)
Primary schools	43
Senior high schools	4
Agricultural colleges	2
District high schools	22
Education support centre	1
Non-government schools	6
Total schools	78
Boarding campuses (all co-education)	4
CY O'Connor Institute campuses	4 (Northam, Narrogin, Merredin and Moora)
CY O'Connor Institute satellite campuses	4
Tertiary campuses	2 (University of Western Australia and the University of Notre Dame operate the Rural Clinical School collaboration process and there is also Muresk Institute)

Source: Department of Education, Schools Online 2012.

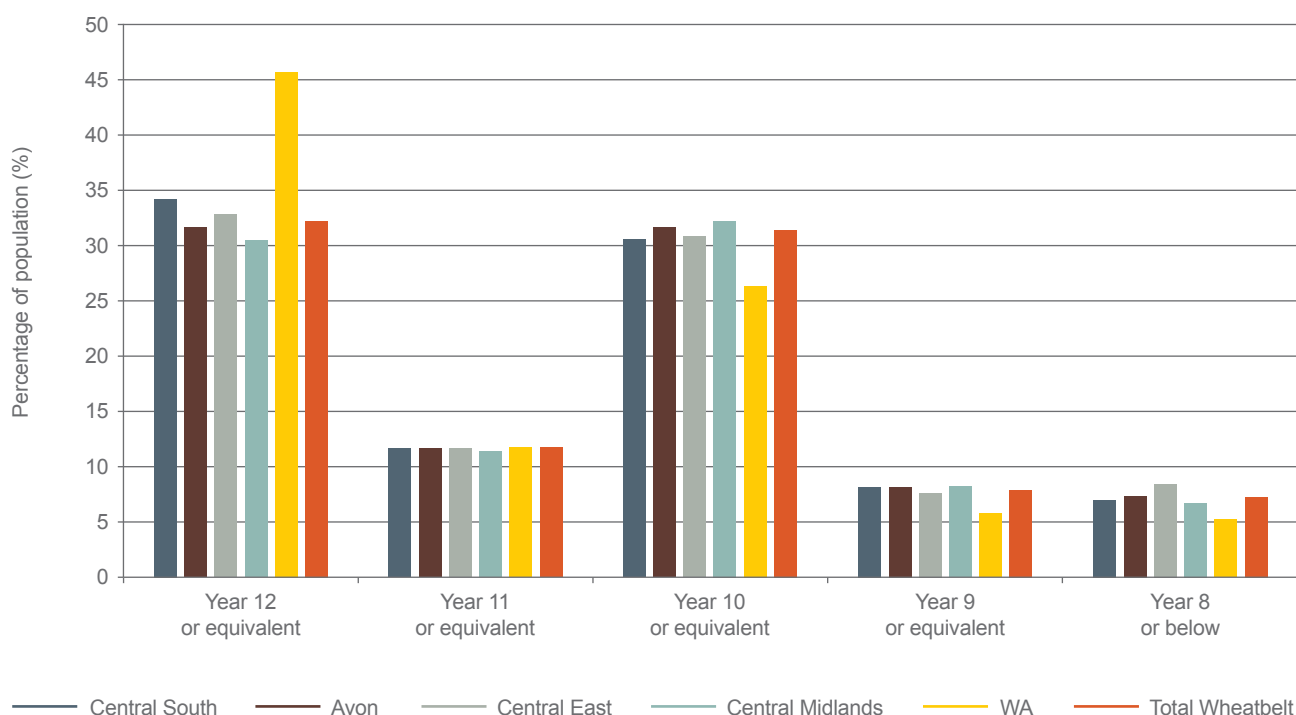
- School-Based Traineeship (SBT) – SBTs allow students to complete a Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and be employed with the same responsibilities as other trainees. Aboriginal School Based Traineeships (ASBT) provide opportunities for Aboriginal students in years 10, 11 and 12 to start training and has three phases: preparatory programs, pre-employment assessment and apprenticeship and traineeship options.

Other local education and training programs are run by locally based organisations such as Directions, Avon Youth, Community and Family Services and Holyoake Alcohol and Drug Service Team, which provide youth engagement programs for youth at risk, with programs such as Drumbeat. In addition to these programs, the Youth Connections (delivered by Regional Development Australia) and the School Business Community Partnership Brokers (delivered by Midland Joblink) programs, funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) are delivered in the region.

Highest level of schooling

As shown in figure 3.18, the Wheatbelt region has a lower proportion of the population whose highest level of schooling is year 12 or equivalent, compared to the Western Australian average. Correspondingly, it records a higher year 10 completion level. This is characteristic of regions with a high agricultural dependence as lower levels of formal education are demanded from leading industry sectors (Tonts et al 2008).

Figure 3.18: Highest average level of schooling 2006



Source: ABS 2006.

Post school qualifications

According to 2006 ABS Census data, the proportion of the population in the Wheatbelt with post school qualifications (29.4%) was significantly lower than the Western Australian average of 39.5%. Both the Central Midlands and Avon sub-regions had the highest level of post school qualifications, with 30.9% and 30% respectively, while the Central South and Central East were significantly lower, with 29.2% and 27.0% respectively.

Certificates III and IV were the most common qualifications undertaken in the region as shown in table 3.6, followed by a bachelor degree, which mirrors trends throughout Western Australia as a whole. The Central Midlands sub-region had the highest proportion of people aged over 15 with a post school qualification and a higher proportion relative to the Western Australian average of certificate III and certificate IV attainment.

Attainment of a bachelor degree in the Wheatbelt was around half the State average, while attainment of certificate level qualifications was on par with the State average. This reflects the structure of the economy in the Wheatbelt region and highlights the dominance of the trades and para-professional occupations in the region (Tonts et al 2008).

Table 3.6: Proportion of people over 15 years of age with post school qualifications within the Wheatbelt by sub-region 2006

	Sub- regional area			
	Central South	Avon	Central East	Central Midlands
Postgraduate degree	0.4%	0.7%	0.4%	0.6%
Graduate diploma and graduate certificate	1.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.7%
Bachelor degree	7.0%	6.2%	6.4%	5.5%
Advanced diploma and diploma	5.8%	5.4%	4.7%	5.4%
Certificate level, nfd	1.5%	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%
Certificate III and IV	12.4%	14.2%	12.2%	16.2%
Certificate I and II	1.1%	1.4%	0.9%	1.0%

Source: ABS 2006.

While there are no universities in the region, there are a number of tertiary study options including Muresk Institute, C Y O'Connor Institute which has four campuses across the region, or studying by correspondence.

As at July 2012, the Department of Training and Workforce Development took over the operational management of Muresk Institute. Muresk Institute is a multi-tenant, multi-functional facility which allows for a wide range of training providers and conference organisers to utilise the site for a range of industry, government and community groups. Muresk is looking to develop strategic partnerships or alliances with a range of training and higher education providers with key areas of delivery including agribusiness, agriculture and mining.

In addition, the University of Western Australia and the University of Notre Dame operate the Rural Clinical School collaboration process, which provides opportunity for fifth year medical students to study in the region (Ellis-Smith 2010).

Training delivery

The Department of Training and Workforce Development's vocational education and training (VET) enrolment data collection indicates that in 2011, 4615 students who reside in the Wheatbelt were enrolled in training under the National training agreement. This accounts for approximately 3.4% of the State's delivery under the national agreement.

Vocational education and training

Table 3.7 presents the number of students undertaking vocation education and training (VET) in the Wheatbelt region under the National Training Agreement. As shown in table 3.7, certificates II and III are the most common qualifications in which students are enrolled with 1751 and 1177 students respectively. Between 2010 and 2011 there was a slight increase in the number of students undertaking certificate I, II and IV level training.

State level trends in VET data differ somewhat from those seen in the Wheatbelt. Across Western Australia in 2011, the largest proportion of students were enrolled in certificate III level training with 51 372 students, followed by certificate IV (26 424 students) and certificate II (24 791 students).

Table 3.7: Wheatbelt VET students in training by qualification level (2008–11) under the National Training Agreement

Qualification level	2008	2009	2010	2011
Diploma and above	147	148	208	261
Certificate IV	350	561	551	680
Certificate III	932	1210	1141	1177
Certificate II	1549	1586	1503	1751
Certificate I	463	403	464	622
Non certificate level*	359	278	165	125
NTA client count	3800	4186	4032	4616

Source: Department of Training and Workforce Development, VET Enrolment Data Collection.

* Level of education figures inflate the client counts due to clients enrolling in courses in more than one level of education.

Apprenticeships and traineeships

Table 3.8 indicates the number of students undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships in the Wheatbelt region as at December in the years 2008 to 2011. Reflective of the high uptake of apprenticeships in the region, certificate III level qualifications were by far the most widely utilised qualification in the region (over 71%). Comparatively, the proportion

Table 3.8: Apprentices and trainees in training who live in the Wheatbelt by AQF certificate level

Qualification level	As at 31 Dec 2008	As at 31 Dec 2009	As at 31 Dec 2010	As at 31 Dec 2011
Certificate I	14	0	0	0
Certificate II	174	155	123	104
Certificate III	837	815	903	866
Certificate IV	30	99	89	113
Diploma	9	15	18	21
Total	1064	1084	1133	1104

Source: Department of Training and Workforce Development, TRS December 2011.

of apprentices and trainees in training over the same period of time was approximately 50% of those in training across Western Australia.

Many of the Wheatbelt apprentices and trainees in training as at December 2011 were undertaking trades in the following categories: automotive; metals, manufacturing and services; finance, property and business services, followed by community, health and education; and building and construction.

Education and training issues

Education is an important issue for labour force attraction and retention, with families often leaving regional areas as children transition to high school or tertiary education. Perceptions facing rural areas include (Pelusey, Hatch and Tonts 2010):

- limited education opportunities after year 10;
- more limited year 11 and 12 course options than metropolitan schools;
- limited tertiary education options; and
- higher rates of teacher turnover and less experienced teachers in rural areas.

Changing these perceptions in the Wheatbelt region will be important in assisting with labour force attraction and retention and reducing the high level of youth migration.

Another key labour force challenge in the Wheatbelt region is a mismatch between the skills available and those that are needed. Education and training will be a key tool into the future to ensure students' skills are matched to current and future labour needs (Davies and Tonts 2007a).

Aboriginal participation

Aboriginal employment is a significant issue in the Wheatbelt as it is in all regional locations in Western Australia. Aboriginal unemployment rates are higher than the non-Aboriginal population, and participation rates and levels of socioeconomic wellbeing are lower (Tonts and Davies 2008).

Aboriginal demographics

In 2008, Aboriginal people represented 4% of the Wheatbelt population, higher than Western Australia (3%) and Australia (2%). The Central Midlands has a lower resident Aboriginal population (3.7%) than Avon (5.2%), Central East (5.3%) and Central South (5.2%) (ABS 2010).

The Aboriginal people of the region mostly identify as Noongar and are dispersed throughout the region. Despite the largest populations being found in the major centres of Northam, Narrogin, Moora and Merredin, the shires of Brookton (Central South sub-region) and Tammin (Avon sub-region) have the largest proportion of Aboriginal people (14%) (Department of Regional Development and Land 2006).

Age structure

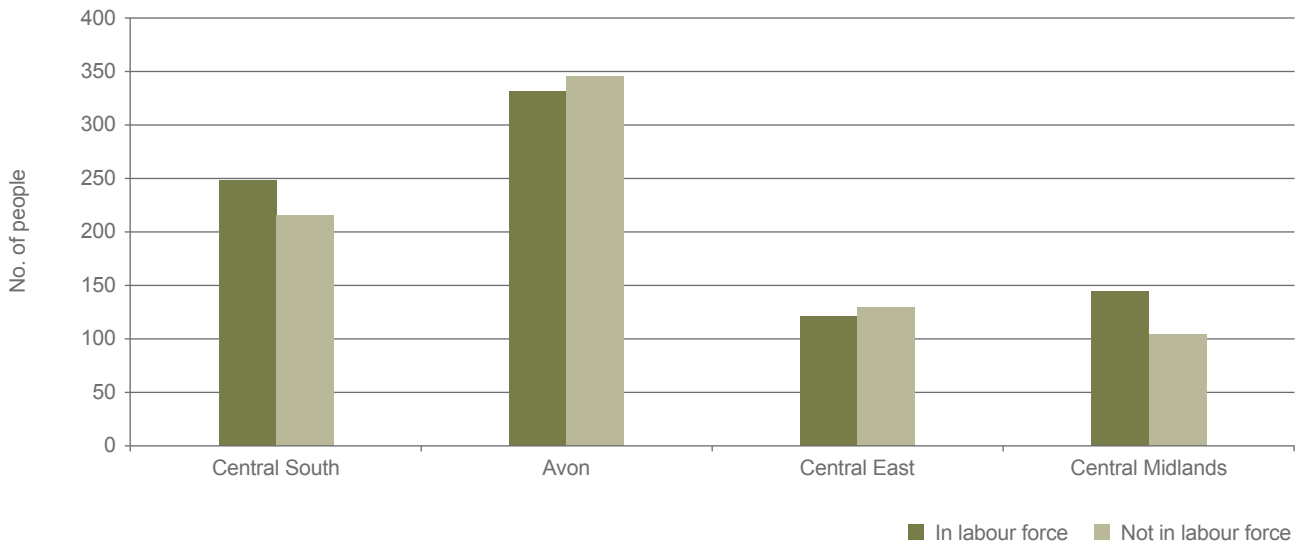
Figure 3.9 presented the age structure of the Aboriginal population in the Wheatbelt. The Aboriginal population had a significantly different age structure to the population of the Wheatbelt and Western Australia. The Aboriginal population is characterised by an over-representation of people in the 0–4 and 5–14 age cohorts and an under-representation of those 25 years and older.

This reflects the lower life expectancy of the Aboriginal population compared to the non-Aboriginal population (Tonts and Larsen 2002) and is a consistent pattern throughout Western Australia.

Aboriginal participation in the labour force

Figure 3.19 shows the level of Aboriginal participation in the labour force in 2006. Not surprisingly, the Avon and Central South sub-regions had the highest level of Aboriginal labour force participation, at 332 and 248 Aboriginal people participating in the workforce respectively, as they have the highest Aboriginal populations. In the Central Midlands and Central East sub-regions there were only 145 and 119 Aboriginal people in the workforce, respectively.

Figure 3.19: Participation of Aboriginal people in the labour force in Wheatbelt



Source: ABS 2006.

Figure 3.20 compares the labour force participation rates of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people across all sub-regions. Labour force participation of Aboriginal people is lower than that of non-Aboriginal people at a State level and the Wheatbelt is no different in this regard. The Central Midlands sub-region records the highest Aboriginal participation level, at 55.6% and is higher than the participation rate of the Aboriginal population of Western Australia (49.3%).

Figure 3.20: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal labour force participation rates 2006



Source: ABS 2006.

Although figure 3.21 indicates significant under employment of Aboriginal people, due to the small numbers of Aboriginal people in the region, increases to Aboriginal participation rates are unlikely to impact on labour shortage issues in the area. Increasing Aboriginal labour force participation rates will, however assist in improving Aboriginal economic and social wellbeing (Tonts and Davies 2008).

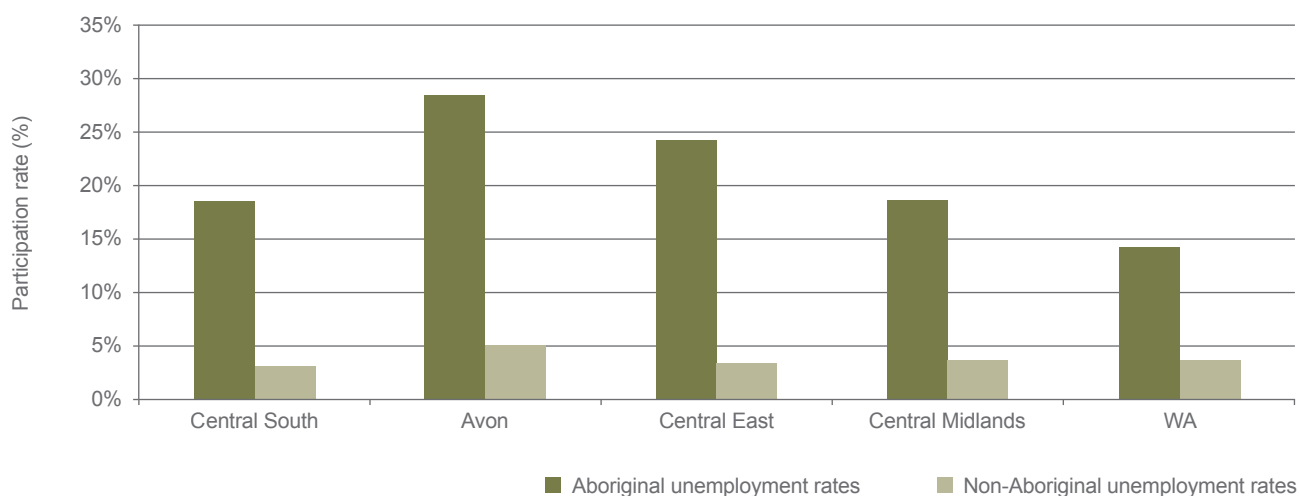
Aboriginal unemployment rates

Participation rates and unemployment rates have an inverse relationship, where high unemployment rates often cause a fall in participation rates, as people withdraw from the labour force as a result of being unable to find work (Siegal and Swanson 2004 cited in Tonts and Davies 2008). Additionally, while low participation rates reflect 'self-exclusion' from the workforce, low unemployment rates often reflect 'external exclusion' where external factors prevent a person, willing to be employed, from gaining work. The high Aboriginal unemployment rates in the Wheatbelt therefore indicate a number of external factors which may be contributing to the issue, such as racism, lack of qualifications and sociocultural differences.

Consistent with lower labour force participation rates, the Aboriginal unemployment rate in 2006 was much higher than the non-Aboriginal rate. The Avon sub-region recorded the highest Aboriginal unemployment rate of 28.6% (and also the highest non-Aboriginal unemployment rate). In all Wheatbelt sub-regions the Aboriginal unemployment rate is higher than that of the State average (14.2%).

As with labour market participation rates, due to the relatively small Aboriginal population in the Wheatbelt, decreasing Aboriginal unemployment rates is unlikely to have a significant impact on labour shortages (Tonts and Davies 2008).

Figure 3.21: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal unemployment rates 2006



Source: ABS 2006.

Employment by industry

Not surprisingly, given the overall size of the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry in the Wheatbelt, the majority of the Aboriginal labour force (16.3%) are employed in this industry. Other significant employers of Aboriginal people include education and training (13.6%), public administration and safety (9.1%) along with manufacturing (8%) industries as shown in table 3.9.

Table 3.9: Aboriginal employment across industry sectors, Wheatbelt 2006

Industry	Avon	Central South	Central East	Central Midlands
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	20	37	18	31
Mining	10	3	9	0
Manufacturing	18	18	8	8
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	4	0	0	3
Construction	16	8	0	13
Wholesale trade	4	7	0	3
Retail trade	16	8	9	5
Accommodation and food services	13	0	0	5
Transport, postal and warehousing	5	3	11	0
Information media and telecommunications	0	0	0	0
Financial and insurance services	3	0	0	0
Rental, hiring and real estate services	0	3	0	0
Professional, scientific and technical services	6	3	0	0
Administrative and support services	16	27	3	3
Public administration and safety	32	16	0	11
Education and training	36	24	11	17
Health care and social assistance	15	18	4	9
Arts and recreation services	3	0	0	3
Other services	6	6	4	3
Inadequately described/Not stated	15	23	10	6
Total	238	204	87	120

Source: ABS 2006.

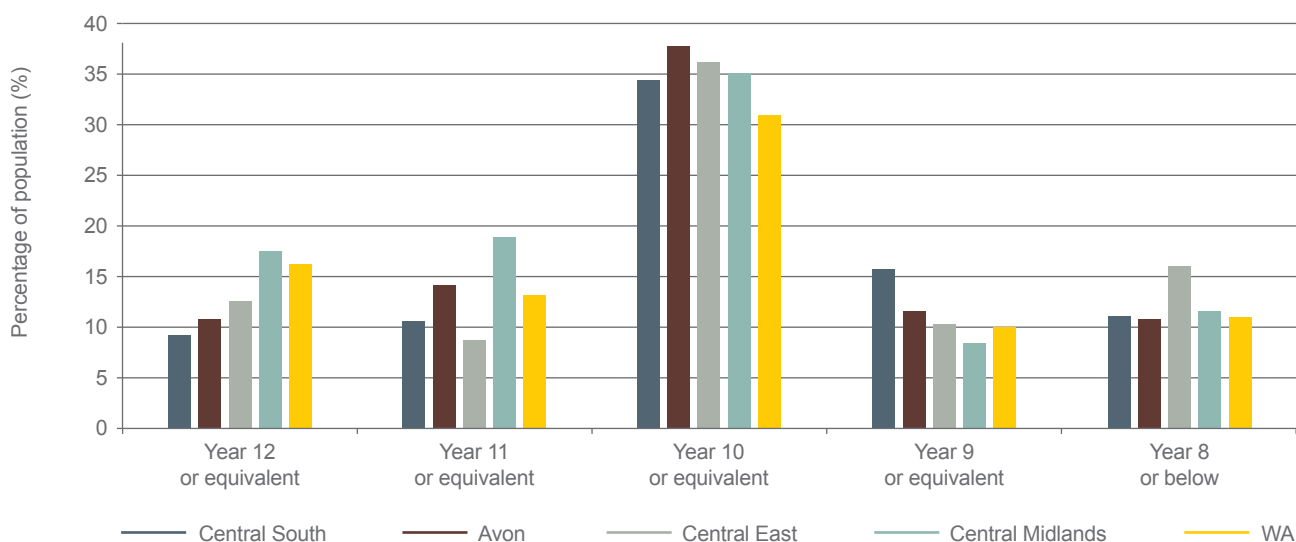
In all sub-regions excluding Avon, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries records the highest number of Aboriginal employees. By comparison, Avon records relatively higher numbers employed in public administration and safety and education and training.

Aboriginal education and training

Education and training services are delivered for Aboriginal students primarily through mainstream providers (Ellis-Smith 2010). Figure 3.22 records the highest level of schooling among Aboriginal people in the Wheatbelt region in 2006. The majority of Aboriginal people in this region completed year 10 or equivalent (36%) which is higher than the Western Australian average of 31%. However, within Western Australia, 16% of the Aboriginal population completed year 12 or equivalent compared to just 12% in the Wheatbelt region. The Avon sub-region has the highest Aboriginal year 10 or equivalent completion rate at 38%.

In the Central Midlands, a higher proportion of Aboriginal people (60%) recorded year 10, 11 or 12 attainments, compared to the Western Australian average for Aboriginal people. This is also true for the Avon (63%).

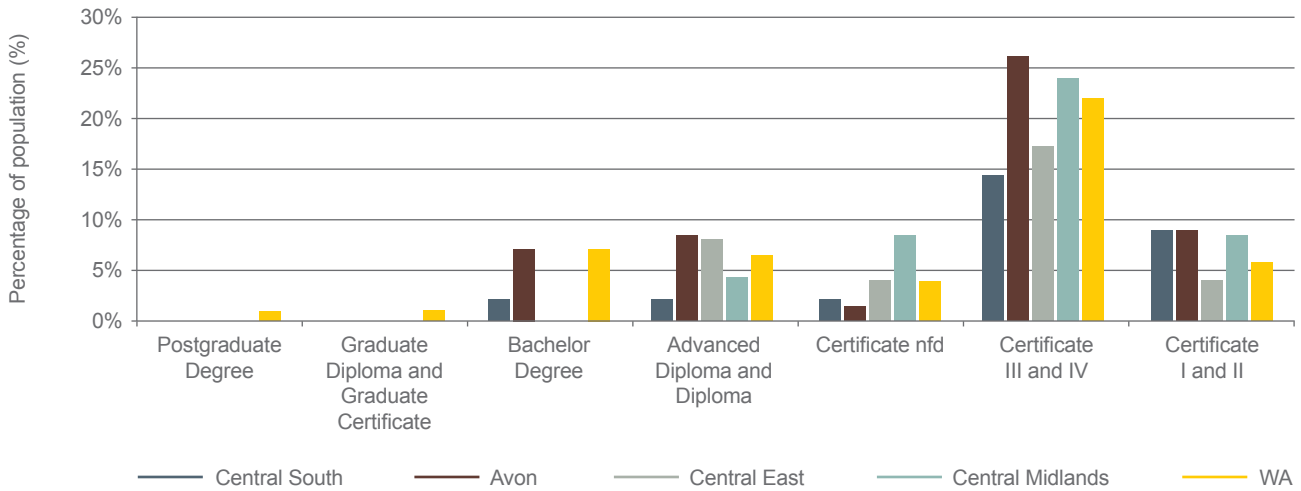
Figure 3.22: Aboriginal highest average level of schooling, by sub-region 2006



Source: ABS 2006.

Figure 3.23 shows the highest level of post school qualification achieved among Aboriginal people in the Wheatbelt. Of the people undertaking post school qualifications certificate III and IV qualifications were the most frequently undertaken in all sub-regions. Due to low numbers of Aboriginal people completing year 12 in the region, it is not surprising that the proportion of people going on to university education was low (Tonts and Davies 2008).

Figure 3.23: Highest post school qualification of Aboriginal people, Wheatbelt 2006



Source: ABS 2006.

NCVER (2010) statistics indicate that in 2009, 280 Aboriginal students were studying vocational education and training (VET) courses in the Wheatbelt region.

The *Training together – working together* strategy launched in 2010 aims to provide better outcomes for Aboriginal people by removing barriers to participation in the workforce and encouraging participation in the State’s training and job opportunities. The strategy recognises that a ‘one size fits all’ approach does not work and by engaging local knowledge and capacity, providing quality mentoring and other support services, raising awareness of Aboriginal employment opportunities and promoting new Aboriginal role models will help individuals progress through the various transitions towards sustained employment, thereby reducing long term welfare dependency. The overarching theme is one of making connections and joining the dots between employers, job seekers, communities, service providers and government.

The Training together – working together committee found that organisations operating in regional areas of Western Australia were more likely to employ Aboriginal workers. It was clear from the responses that while some employers are already successful in recruiting and retaining Aboriginal employees, many businesses, critically small and medium sized enterprises, need more support. The largest number of Aboriginal workers were employed by organisations with operations in the Wheatbelt, with respondents employing an average of 136 Aboriginal workers (State Training Board 2009).

Regional infrastructure

The infrastructure of a region is an important determinant of regional development as without provision of effective infrastructure towns will deteriorate, forcing populations towards the metropolitan area. Key areas of infrastructure in the Wheatbelt include road, rail, aviation, electricity, telecommunications, water, waste and social infrastructure. Upgrading and maintaining regional infrastructure is essential to ensure regions meet current and future population needs (Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt 2010).

Roads

The Wheatbelt has a comprehensive national, State and local road network, which includes Brand Highway, Great Northern Highway, Great Eastern Highway and Albany Highway. This network plays an intra and inter-regional transport role, linking the Wheatbelt with the South West, Great Southern and metropolitan areas, as well as with the rest of Western Australian and the eastern states. Despite the extensive nature of the road network, the Wheatbelt is characterised by network deficiencies and ageing regional roads (Western Australian Planning Commission 2010). There are 43 000 km of road in the region, of which less than 30% are sealed (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

As a result of the rising cost of freight rail transport, roads in the Wheatbelt undertake most of the freight tasks in the region causing conflicting demands between local and tourist traffic and freight haulage.

The region also faces competition for road funds from other Western Australian regions, with a large part of road planning and maintenance funding coming from Main Roads Western Australia (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Rail

Freight

The Wheatbelt region currently has two rail systems, a standard gauge line, which runs from Fremantle to the Eastern States and a narrow gauge network, consisting of 2300 km of rail lines, which forms the grain rail network. Both rail systems connect to the four export grain ports of Fremantle, Albany, Geraldton and Esperance (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Traditionally, approximately 65% of grain transport was on rail. However, more recently, changing market conditions, such as the use of road for grain transportation and the deregulation of grain marketing, has made grain transport by rail less viable (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009). The Strategic Grain Network Committee report (2009) found that rail services in Quairading (in the Avon sub-region) and Corrigin, Kondinin and Kulin (in the Central South sub-region) have become uncompetitive with road transport, thereby causing them to be unsustainable. Western Australia's Premier Hon Collin Barnett (2010) announced that the State Government has committed \$352 million over four years to upgrade the grain freight network as well as undertake some road upgrades to allow them to be fit for use by heavy grain haulage trucks. There will be a greater focus on road

infrastructure in the Wheatbelt and the tier three rail lines on the grain network will become non-operational in 2013.

Public transport

There are three rail services that offer public transport in the Wheatbelt region. The Avon Link provides a commuter service between Northam and Midland weekdays, while the Merredin Link operates three days a week and provides services between Merredin and East Perth. The Prospector provides services between Kalgoorlie and East Perth (with a number of stops in the Wheatbelt) seven days a week (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009). Transwa also operates coach services to and within the Wheatbelt region.

The *Regional Development Australia Strategic Regional Plan (2010)* identifies lack of public transport as a significant issue impacting growth in the region, as it limits population mobility, particularly in light of the projected population growth in the Avon and Central Midlands sub-regions.

To support the growing fly-in fly-out population in the region, better transport options are also needed from key regional towns, such as Northam, Toodyay and York to the Perth airport.

Aviation

There are over 35 air facilities in the Wheatbelt region and key aviation industries in the region include aviation training, general aviation, tourism aviation and use of air facilities by emergency services (including the Royal Flying Doctors Services and Fire and Emergency Services Authority).

Aviation training is centred in the airports at Cunderdin, Merredin, Northam and Wyalkatchem and includes pilot and engineering training, while tourism aviation such as skydiving, ballooning and gliding are centred in Northam, York and Beverley (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Electricity

The Wheatbelt offers many renewable energy resources, but is yet to fully utilise them.

The Wheatbelt region is serviced by the South West Interconnected Network, which consists of 88 000 km of power lines servicing the area bordered by Kalbarri, Kalgoorlie and Albany. The network is divided into the bulk transmission network and 13 distribution load areas. The north and east country load areas service the Wheatbelt region. The east country load area covers areas to the east of Perth and provides power for a mixture of uses including mining, residential and water pumping. The north country load area services the northern area of the Wheatbelt and supplies power for mining and industrial uses, as well as many rural centres. Western Power is planning a number of reinforcements to both load areas over the short and long term, with the north country currently having zero capacity to connect new large industrial customers.

The South West Interconnected Network currently derives around 5% of total electricity supply from renewable energy, including wind (79%), bioenergy (21%) and solar photovoltaic (0.4%). For example, one area currently generating renewable energy is Emu Downs Wind Farm near Cervantes which generates enough electricity to power 50 000 homes per year and reduces carbon dioxide emission by about 280 000 tonnes per year (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Telecommunications services

Telecommunications services also influence the attractiveness of a region, as they contribute to a region's social development, which underpin the quality of life for many (Regional Development Australia 2010).

Access to mobile phone and broadband internet services are an essential element in continued regional development, business activity and job creation.

Unreliable mobile phone services and broadband coverage connectivity is a significant issue to the Wheatbelt, as while the National Broadband Network rolls out throughout Australia, the majority of the Wheatbelt is in the 10% of Australia that will be serviced by the significantly slower satellite coverage.

The Wheatbelt also has unreliable service coverage in some areas. These issues limit business growth in the region (Regional Development Australia 2010).

Water

Supply of public drinking water

The integrated water supply system delivers reticulated drinking water to 1.5 of the 1.9 million people living in Western Australia, including the majority of the Wheatbelt, Perth, the South West and Kalgoorlie-Boulder. Water supplies this system from dams on the Darling Range, groundwater and the Perth sea water desalination plant in Kwinana. Other reticulated supplies in the Wheatbelt primarily come from groundwater sources (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

In many areas in the Wheatbelt, groundwater resources are already over allocated, particularly in areas where there are competing interests for water. For example, in Gingin, water resources have been over allocated, resulting in the need for future urban supply to come from water trading with irrigators. This will increase the value of water in the area and will affect the viability of water intensive horticulture land uses (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009). In order to protect the supply of drinking water available and ensure adequate allocations for competing demands, restriction may need to be placed on further planning and development in areas such as Gingin until solution strategies can be initiated (Western Australian Planning Commission 2010).

In the future, local governments and water agencies may need to work together to develop innovative ways to ensure water allocations are sustainable. Potential options may include making smarter use of existing water, creating low water use areas and creating settlement hierarchies (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Future water supplies may come from a variety of sources including desalination, groundwater and surface water as well as catchment management, on site collection, water recycling, smarter use of water and water trading with irrigators (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Water supplies in the Wheatbelt region are also in need of upgrades in a large number of local government areas (Regional Development Australia 2010).

Wastewater

The Water Corporation is the largest wastewater licence holder in the State, however, the shires of Brookton, Dalwallinu, Dowerin, Dumbleyung, Goomalling, Koorda, Lake Grace, Moora, Victoria Plains, Wickepin and Yilgarn also hold sewerage and non-potable water licences. As reticulated sewerage is considered the superior method for treating waste water, over septic tanks and leech drains, the intensity of development in areas without reticulated sewerage is limited.

In many areas of the Wheatbelt, treated wastewater is discharged through irrigation of public spaces and ovals. Alternatively, in other towns, the Department of Water has created artificial wetlands to strip nutrients from treated wastewater, before discharging it into river systems (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

There is concern that limiting the intensity of development, in areas where there is no reticulated sewerage may be an obstacle to growth (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

The Western Australian Planning Commission is responsible for identifying further water management issues in the Wheatbelt Regional Strategy.

Waste disposal

Waste management is split into 10 areas which cover the 43 local government regions in the Wheatbelt. These groups include²:

- Central Midlands Regional Organisation of Councils – Shires of Chittering, Dalwallinu, Moora, Victoria Plains (lead) and Wongan-Ballidu;
- Goomalling group – Shires of Dowerin and Goomalling (lead);
- Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils – Shires of Bruce Rock and Kellerberrin; Merredin (lead), Tammin, Westonia and Yilgarn;
- North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils – Shires of Koorda, Mt Marshall; Mukinbudin, Nungarin, Trayning (lead) and Wyalkatchem;
- Avon Regional Organisation of Councils – Shires of Northam (lead) and Toodyay;
- ROE Regional Organisation of Councils – Shires of Corrigin (lead), Kondinin, Kulin and Narembeen;
- South-East Avon Regional Organisation of Councils – Shires of Beverley (lead), Brookton, Cunderdin, Quairading and York;

² As grouped by Western Australian Planning Commission, 2009, Towards a Wheatbelt Strategy.

- 4WD Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils – Shires of Cuballing, Dumbleyung, Lake Grace, Narrogin, Town of Narrogin, Shires of Pingelly, Wagin (lead), Wandering, West Arthur, Wickepin, Williams and Woodanilling;
- Shire of Dandaragan; and
- Shire of Gingin.

Key waste disposal issues in the region include the practicality and viability of waste collection and recycling services, particularly in remote areas and areas with a small population (Western Australian Planning Commission, 2009). The *Regional Development Australia Strategic Report* (2010) highlights the increasing importance of sub-regional land fill sites for commercial and household waste, as existing facilities have not been able to keep up with community needs.



Social infrastructure

Education infrastructure

Education facilities are a critical piece of social and community infrastructure. In 2009 there were a range of education facilities in the Wheatbelt region including:

- 47 public and seven private primary schools;
- four public senior high schools;
- 22 public district high schools;
- two public and one private agricultural college; and
- Muresk Institute.

Tertiary and vocational education services are available through C Y O'Connor Institute with campuses in Kondinin, Merredin, Narrogin, Northam, Pingelly, Kellerberrin and Moora. Muresk Institute operates near Northam, offering facilities for courses in agribusiness, applied biosciences and environmental biology.

Despite the range of educational services available in the region, declining populations in the Central South and Central East sub-regions have resulted in low enrolments, with approximately 17 schools in the region closing in the last 10 years. This highlights the need for delivery of education services to respond to regional demand.

Health infrastructure

The provision of health services and other infrastructure is a significant issue for the Wheatbelt. There are 24 hospitals (approximately 430 hospital beds) in the Wheatbelt region, with major hospitals located in Narrogin, Merredin and Northam, supported by 20 smaller hospitals and 13 health centres throughout the region (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Services delivered include emergency, medical, rehabilitation and aged care services, while larger hospitals also deliver services such as paediatrics, pathology, radiology (X-ray) and palliative care. Specialised health care services are most often delivered by visiting specialists. Issues relating to health services are discussed further in chapter four.

Sporting and community facilities

Most towns in the Wheatbelt region have sporting facilities for recreational purposes (including football ovals, basketball courts and swimming pools), however other entertainment and recreational facilities are limited. The regional centres of Northam, Merredin, Moora and Narrogin have the largest array of facilities. The *Regional Development Australia Strategic Regional Plan (2010)* highlights the need for upgrades of sporting and community facilities in many local government areas, to enable them to meet current needs.



The Wheatbelt region also lacks adequate day care facilities for children, making it difficult for women with children to enter or remain in the workforce, as well as affecting the attraction of families to the region. In regions where day care is provided, the low number of providers means that it is relatively expensive compared to the metropolitan area, thereby adding to the cost of living in regional areas (Pelusey, Hatch and Tonts 2010). This is a significant workforce development issue, particularly in the Central East and Central South sub-regions, as it not only restricts the available supply of labour for local employers, it also decreases the economic multipliers associated with additional income in the local economy (Pelusey, Hatch and Tonts 2010).

Settlements and land supply

Settlements

The Wheatbelt area is divided into four main sub-regions: Avon, Central Midlands, Central East and Central South within which are located the four main regional centres of:

- Northam (Avon sub-region);
- Moora (Central Midlands sub-region);
- Merredin (Central East sub-region); and
- Narrogin (Central South sub-region).

Historically, the majority of the Wheatbelt population has been based in the inland areas of the Central East and Central South, due to the prominence of the highly labour intensive agricultural industry in these areas. However, changes in the farming industry, brought about by a decline in rainfall in the region and an increase in farming technology, have resulted in farmers leaving the area. This trend is likely to continue, resulting in families moving away from these areas, thereby affecting community numbers, school enrolments, local businesses and health services (Davies and Tonts 2009).

In contrast, as a result of the proximity of the Avon and Central Midlands sub-regions to the metropolitan area, as well as the coastal developments and affordability of land occurring in these sub-regions, those areas are experiencing the ‘tree change phenomenon’ (Davies 2007).

Additionally, higher rainfall levels in these areas is contributing to a shift in the production of fruits, vegetables and other agriculture products, further contributing to the declining population in the Central East and South sub-regions and the growth in the population in the Avon and Central Midlands sub-regions (Department of Regional Development and Land 2006).

As a result of changing population distributions within the region, Western Australian Planning Commission (2009) is predicting a change to the settlement patterns of the region. While the four main regional centres will remain dominant, it is predicted that Lancelin and Jurien Bay will emerge as regional centres as a result of strong growth in these areas, the availability of water, growing industry and planned settlement expansion.

Land supply

Agricultural land

As cited previously throughout this report, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry is a key industry in the Wheatbelt however declining rainfall in the Central East and Central South sub-regions will increasingly affect the ability of these regions to produce agriculture products, particularly cereal. In order to ensure national food security, some production will need to be moved to areas with a higher rainfall, such as the Avon and Central Midlands sub-regions, particularly Toodyay, Northam, York and Wandering. However, these areas are currently under pressure to accommodate non-agricultural land uses. Western Australian Planning Commission (2009) indicates that in order to ensure the viability of cereal production in these areas, key agricultural land needs to be protected from incompatible land uses such as housing and rural living settlements.

Residential land

The largest growth in residential lot approvals in the Wheatbelt occurred in Jurien Bay and Northam between 2004–05 and 2008–09. Table 3.10 illustrates residential approvals by locality and local government area.

Table 3.10: Residential approvals 2004–05 to 2008–09

Top 5 localities (suburbs)	Top 5 local governments
Jurien Bay (725)	Dandaragan (749)
Northam (172)	Northam (172)
York (130)	York (130)
Gingin (45)	Gingin (51)
Narrogin (38)	Merredin (36)

Source: Western Australian Planning Commission 2009.

Future growth is expected to occur in Lancelin and south of the Moore River in the next two to five years, contributing up to 3000 dwellings to the Wheatbelt region. Additionally, ongoing land releases in Jurien Bay are expected to provide up to 8000 dwellings over the next 20 to 30 years (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Existing planning strategies establish the upper population limits for Jurien Bay as 25 000, Lancelin 12 000 and Guilderton 5000 (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Rural residential land

Rural residential lots are bush blocks, ranging in size from 1 ha to 40 ha, and have been a key trend in a number of sub-regions including Chittering, Northam, Gingin, Toodyay and York in recent years. These types of lots provide affordable alternatives to traditional urban subdivision, as it is often not necessary to provide access to footpaths and kerbed roads, and connection to deep sewerage. Table 3.11 shows the number of special rural approvals between 2004–05 and 2008–09. An increase in rural residential land in peri-urban areas such as Gingin and Toodyay can be attributed to the ‘tree change phenomenon’ (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Table 3.11: Special rural approvals 2004–05 to 2008–09

Top 5 localities (suburbs)	Top 5 local governments
Lower Chittering (299)	Chittering (422)
Jurien Bay (246)	Gingin (260)
Nilgen (108)	Dandaragan (246)
Chittering (93)	Toodyay (70)
Karakin (69)	Wandering (58)

Source: Western Australian Planning Commission 2009.

Industrial land

The main industrial area in the Wheatbelt is the Avon Industrial Park, however there are a number of light industrial areas within the region which also help meet the needs of industries servicing the rural, resources and mineral processing markets.

The Avon Industrial Park is 18 km east of Northam and is in close proximity to major transport routes, the Great Eastern Highway and the metropolitan area. Some of the industrial and training organisations located at the Avon Industrial Park include:

- Bushy Tanks – manufacturers of a range of polyethylene tanks for rural and industrial uses;
- Interquip – services machinery for the resources sector;
- Western Power – operational and training site;
- Master Projects – kit home manufacturer;
- DE Engineers – the largest manufacturer of grain seed cleaners in Australia and one of the largest grain silo and field-bin manufacturers in the State;
- C Y O’Connor Institute – training centre;
- Hutchinson Builders – modular accommodation manufacturer;
- Tesla Pty Ltd – power generation facility; and
- HutCity Group – manufacturing company of a wide range of transportable buildings.

Planning is underway for the Muchea Employment Node which is situated 45 km from Midland. The area is set aside for service based usage such as transport, livestock, fabrication, warehousing, wholesaling and general commercial use. In conjunction with the Department of Planning, the Western Australian Planning Commission has developed a 20 year land use planning framework for the Muchea Employment Node. The new development will provide a concentration of employment opportunities in and around the Chittering Shire (Western Australia Planning Commission 2011).

Table 3.12 shows the number of industrial approvals in the Wheatbelt region, between 2004–05 and 2008–09.

Table 3.12: Industrial approvals 2004/05 – 2008/09

Top 5 localities (suburbs)	Top 5 local governments
Dalwallinu (11)	Northam (21)
Grass Valley (11)	Dalwallinu (11)
Merredin (10)	Merredin (10)
Northam (8)	Dandaragan (6)
Cervantes (5)	Narembeen (4)

Source: Western Australian Planning Commission 2009.

Land use growth

On average, over the last 20 years, approximately 170 residential, 150 special rural and 15 industrial lots were created annually in the Wheatbelt region. However, greater growth was experienced over the last five years, with an average of approximately 330 residential lots and 200 special rural lots created annually. This increased growth reflects improved market conditions over this time (Western Australian Planning Commission 2009).

Subdivision levels have also increased over the last 20 years with substantial increases recorded between 2003 and 2008.

Land supply planning implications

The Wheatbelt region is currently experiencing a housing shortage across many regions, with a lack of volume and diversity of land and a lack of affordable accommodation for young people, due to increasing populations, competition for land uses and inadequate land planning strategies.

In order to cope with these issues, and to enhance regional development, local governments need to ensure that an appropriate supply of lots is available to the market to meet demand. This should primarily be achieved through the identification of housing land in local planning strategies. However, the availability of affordable land on its own is not enough to attract growth to the region.

Western Australian Planning Commission (2009) highlights the importance of applying a number of measures in achieving sustainable, consolidated towns in the Wheatbelt, such as:

- limiting the release of new housing land where sufficient land is available and where the release of new land could undermine the development of existing areas;
- ensuring an adequate balance between the supply of urban, industrial and commercial land;
- ensuring the provision of a variety of lot sizes to the market to cater for different market segments;
- ensuring access is available to services, facilities and employment;
- ensuring a flexible planning approach in areas with less conflicting land use pressure; and
- minimising the impact of new developments on existing land uses.



Mechanisms to meet future labour needs

In keeping with the Department of Training and Workforce Development's *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia* (Skilling WA) it is important to consider the priority issues related to the Wheatbelt region by identifying strategies and actions that relate to the five key mechanisms identified in diagram 4.1.

Diagram 4.1: Key mechanisms of the Wheatbelt workforce development plan



Within this context it is also necessary to be cognisant of the information identified in chapter three 'Profile of the region', research undertaken by the 10 training councils and the Department's *State priority occupation list* (SPOL).

These mechanisms in turn relate to the strategic goals identified in Skilling WA provided in the following shaded boxes.

Workforce participation

This mechanism relates to addressing issues which act as barriers to people entering or remaining in the workforce, including those who are under-employed and those disengaged from the workforce. In the Wheatbelt region this includes the following issues:

- Population growth trends in the Avon and Central Midlands sub-regions, coupled with lower participation rates and higher unemployment rates point to the need to address labour and skill shortages resulting from an under utilisation of resources.
- Declining populations in the Central South and Central East sub-regions, coupled with higher participation rates and lower unemployment rates indicate a lack of capacity, which constrains the growth of the region's economy, as well as creating severe skill and labour shortages. However, population demographics also indicate that addressing issues related to the under-employment of women could provide an opportunity for additional capacity and diversity to the region.
- An ageing population, across all sub-regions, reduces the proportion of the population available to participate in the workforce and increases demand for community and health services, particularly aged care.
- Increasing Aboriginal labour force participation rates will assist in improving Aboriginal economic and social wellbeing.
- High Aboriginal unemployment rates in the Wheatbelt indicate a number of external factors, such as lack of qualifications and sociocultural differences, contribute to the high unemployment rate and low participation rate in the region.

Skilling WA: Strategic goal 1

Increase participation in the workforce particularly among the under-employed and disengaged, mature-aged workers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other under-represented groups.

Migration

This mechanism relates to addressing issues which impact on the growth and composition of the State's population including overseas and interstate migration. In the Wheatbelt region this includes the following factors.

- There is a need for a flexible skills migration policy to enable industry to recruit suitably qualified employees.
- Youth out-migration in the Wheatbelt is occurring primarily due to a perceived lack of educational, employment and social opportunities in the region.
- There is an increasing trend of out-migration of young people, particularly from the Central South and Central East sub-regions has significant ramifications for the Wheatbelt as it creates difficulties in attracting young people to fill skilled job vacancies and apprenticeship positions. A declining youth population also has social ramifications, as it reduces the community's capacity to replenish its skills base and social networks, including sporting clubs and community organisations. This trend is of particular concern given the ageing population of the region. Consultation feedback highlighted that the recent in-migration of 'tree-changers', including mature-aged workers and young families, could bring additional workforce capacity and diversity to the region.
- Research indicates that distance from the metropolitan area is a key determining factor in willingness to relocate to regional and remote areas (ie the further away a person lives from the metropolitan area, the more willing they would be to relocate to regional and remote towns).
- There are implications of the Dalwallinu Repopulation Project in relation to possible strategies to attract and retain migrants in the region.

Skilling WA: Strategic goal 2

Supplement the Western Australian workforce with skilled migrants to fill employment vacancies unable to be filled by the local workforce and address those factors which support a growing population.

Attraction and retention

This mechanism relates to addressing issues affecting the attraction of people into Western Australia, especially in regional areas and encouraging them to stay. In the Wheatbelt region this includes the following factors.

- Over 80% of businesses in the Wheatbelt region, employ less than five staff members. Research indicates that smaller businesses, particularly those with less than 10 employees are more acutely affected by skilled labour shortages than larger organisations and face issues including the rising cost of wages, attraction of new staff and high staff turnover.
- The Wheatbelt region as a whole has significantly lower incomes compared to Western Australia thereby contributing to population out-migration as people seek greater employment opportunities including higher incomes.
- There is a need for suitable housing and infrastructure as effective attraction and retention tools which contribute to regional development, business activity and job creation.

- A large number of employers across the Wheatbelt region have reported difficulty in recruiting employees (DEEWR 2009) indicating the need for more effective attraction and retention strategies in the region.
- Just under two thirds of employers in the DEEWR (2009) *Survey of Employers Recruitment Experiences* research in the Wheatbelt did not have a staff retention strategy. Of those employers who did have a staff retention strategy, the most common strategies were to increase wages (44%), allow flexible working hours (43%) and provide training and development (22%).

There are a number of other important attraction and retention issues that face the Wheatbelt region, though these vary in their impact and significance across the sub-regional areas. The availability and quality of education facilities is an example of one of these issues. Indeed, numerous studies point to the transition to high school, especially senior high school, as one where rates of out-migration tend to be high. The availability of education facilities is often a key component of decision making with regards to migration.

In many regional areas, the availability of child care is a key constraint, not simply in terms of attraction and retention, but also labour market participation. The absence of child care can prevent individuals from taking up work, thereby reducing the potential availability of labour.

Skilling WA: Strategic goal 3

Attract workers with the right skills to the Western Australian workforce and retain them by offering access to rewarding employment and a diverse and vibrant community and environment to live in.

Skills development and utilisation

This mechanism relates to addressing factors impacting on the level of training participation by those in the workforce and those yet to enter the workforce. In the Wheatbelt region this includes the following factors.

- The region has a significantly lower year 12 or equivalent completion rate (32%) than Western Australia (45%), which is a concern, as lower education levels can potentially limit employment opportunities and thereby constrain the growth of the region.
- Availability and access to quality education in senior secondary schooling and higher education are perceived to be issues in retaining young people in the region.
- Availability and access to quality education and training for potentially under-employed women and 'tree change' mature age workers are perceived to present additional issues and opportunities for the region.

Skilling WA: Strategic goal 4

Provide flexible, responsive and innovative education and training which enables people to develop and utilise the skills necessary for them to realise their potential and contribute to Western Australia's prosperity.

Planning and coordination

This mechanism relates to addressing issues which impact on the ability of the State, industries and enterprises to strategically manage the development of their workforces. In the Wheatbelt region this includes the following issues.

- A mechanism is needed to connect and support local businesses and enterprises in planning for their workforce needs, sharing of vacancies and committing to assist in retaining young people in the region.
- Supporting regional development, local governments need to ensure there is an appropriate supply (volume and diversity) of housing lots available to the market to meet demand and town planning needs.
- Providing affordable accommodation for young people will help reduce out-migration of some young people, thereby contributing to the replenishment of local skills bases and social networks (including sporting clubs and community organisations) of regional communities.
- Improved coordination of local and State governments is required to upgrade and maintain regional infrastructure (particularly transport, telecommunications and social infrastructure) to improve accessibility and movement throughout the region and support current and future population needs, regional development and business activity.
- There is a need for further diversification of regional economies which have an over reliance on industries such as fishing or agriculture. This could include investigating farming alternative crop varieties (ie pulses) and investing in additional markets such as grain processing, aquaculture, tourism and food processing.

Skilling WA: Strategic goal 5

Plan and coordinate a strategic State Government response to workforce development issues in Western Australia.



Priority issues for the Wheatbelt

Summary of priority issues

The following sub-sections provide a commentary on the regional priority issues identified across the Wheatbelt region. These are outlined in table 5.1 and based on the research and analysis undertaken for the *Wheatbelt Historical Statistical Snapshot* which forms the regional profile of this plan and the outcomes of the sub-regional forums and further consultations.

Table 5.1: Comparative analysis of Wheatbelt and sub-regional priority issues

Wheatbelt region				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor regional perceptions • Loss of young people • Lack of career pathways • Lack of suitable housing 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability and quality of education • Availability of health services • Access to technology 		
Merredin	Narrogin	Northam	Jurien Bay	Moora
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of competitive wages • Ageing workforce • Sustainable social and cultural opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative size of firms • Ageing workforce • Issues of 'mono-industry' (agriculture) • Affordability of education, accommodation, etc • Aboriginal engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downturn in regional economy • Lack of transport access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative size of firms • Out-migration • Seasonality of jobs/workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of competitive wages • Lack of driver's licences • Drugs and alcohol • Aboriginal engagement

Regional perceptions

External perceptions and stereotypes of regions and localities can have an important impact on the capacity to recruit staff. Numerous studies have shown that perceptions about factors such as the cost of living, level of social opportunities, facilities and services and so on play an important role in the decision making processes of potential investors and migrants to a region.

It will be useful for the Wheatbelt to examine the importance of its activities with neighbouring regions. One example provided was the impact on the Wheatbelt of growth in the mining industry, in particular, the Gorgon and North West Shelf projects and associated workforce requirements. Another was the relationship between future growth of the Wheatbelt and growth and development pressures affecting the Perth metropolitan area.

It will be important to harness opportunities presented through the Heartlands WA initiative which promote opportunities, employment prospects, infrastructure benefits, community connectedness, lifestyle choices, land package varieties, business and industry developmental possibilities, social service facilities including education and health, tourism and a vast array of products, services, events, festivals, food and wine.

Local Government Authorities are ideally placed to change the perceptions of the region and promote their local assets and competitive advantages.

Young people

There has been considerable research into the demographic shifts affecting the region and how this might impact on the labour market. The key demographic changes include a net loss of young people, particularly in the 15–25 age cohort and to a lesser extent the 25–30 cohort. A recent study of the perceptions of students at Perth based universities indicated the following (Davies and Tonts, 2007):

- the region was perceived as one in decline with little economic future;
- career pathways are likely to be limited if they relocated to the region;
- earning capacity was very poor when compared to other regions;
- social opportunities are minimal; and
- the region is remote and isolated.

Clearly these perceptions need to be overcome or challenged in order to ensure a steady supply of labour into the region. The perceptions of these potential employees suggest a lack of knowledge about the characteristics of the region, its diversity and the range of career and other opportunities. There were, however, a number of positive perceptions noted, such as:

- the low cost of living, in particular housing;
- a good region in which to get experience in senior roles sooner than might be the case in other regions;
- high quality sporting facilities and numerous opportunities to engage in sports;
- the region is a good/safe place to raise a family; and
- the scenic environments and historic towns.

While changing perceptions about places is difficult, it is clear that the region's attributes, particularly those relating to employment, need to be strongly promoted.

Career pathways

One of the barriers to attraction and retention in regional areas is a view that opportunities for career progress are often limited. Employees often see regional employment as a 'stepping stone' in the workforce ladder, rather than a place to build a long term career. As a result, employment is often transitory. This has significant implications for employers in terms of recruitment costs, as well as training.

It would be useful for regional businesses to consider signing up to a charter of commitment to youth to create apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships and scholarships as a means of providing career opportunities for young people in the Wheatbelt. In addition, existing agencies could be encouraged to assist with this issue by providing better connections between employment services available in the region.

It is worth noting that the public sector is the single largest employer within the Wheatbelt. There are also opportunities to capitalise on emerging career opportunities, for example, in sustainable farm practices related to carbon reduction and related environmental issues.

Housing

The Wheatbelt region is currently experiencing a housing shortage. This is discussed in detail in chapter 3 under the heading 'Land use growth'. For nearly two decades housing has been a major constraint in terms of labour attraction and retention in parts of the Wheatbelt. There are a number of significant issues, including:

- The diversity of housing is often very low, with relatively little medium density and higher density accommodation. The main housing form tends to be the detached home on a 'quarter acre' block. While this is well suited to families, it is less than ideal for other groups, such as single persons with no children, young people and the aged.
- The quality of the housing stock for rent and purchase is often of a relatively poor standard.
- In many towns, there is a lack of availability of land for subdivision and development.

These issues may need to be the subject of greater policy scrutiny particularly in light of Northam and Jurien Bay being included in the SuperTowns initiative. This Royalties for Regions funded initiative aims to help strategically identified towns take advantage of the expected doubling of Western Australia's population over the next 30 to 40 years through the creation of new infrastructure, business opportunities and jobs and the enhanced regional investment. They could be given further consideration in town planning schemes as part of a wider set of responses to labour attraction and retention issues. In addition, immediate rental affordability issues may be addressed by promoting opportunities presented through the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) being implemented in Western Australia by QUANTUM Housing.

More recently a key barrier to purchasing a home highlighted during the consultation has been the need to meet mortgage insurance requirements. Further investigation included possibilities associated with promoting opportunities presented by the State's Affordable Housing policy which provides exemption from mortgage insurance based on certain criteria in both metropolitan and regional areas. In particular, the development of a regional housing policy that builds on existing initiatives and addresses the issues identified warrants consideration.

Education

Education facilities are a critical piece of social and community infrastructure as well as an important issue for labour force attraction and retention, with families often leaving regional areas as children transition to high school or tertiary education. Perceptions facing rural areas include (Pelusey, Hatch and Tonts 2010):

- limited education opportunities after year 10;
- more limited year 11 and 12 course options than metropolitan schools;
- limited tertiary education options; and
- higher rates of teacher turnover and less experienced teachers in rural areas.

Changing these perceptions in the Wheatbelt region will be important in assisting with labour force attraction and retention and reducing the high level of youth out-migration. Another key labour force challenge in the Wheatbelt region is a mismatch between the skills available and those that are needed. Education and training will be a key tool into the future to ensure students' skills are matched to current and future labour needs (Davies and Tonts 2007a).

Despite the range of educational services available in the Wheatbelt region, declining populations in the Central South and Central East sub-regions have resulted in low enrolments, with approximately 17 schools in the region closing in the last 10 years.

It will therefore be important to develop and implement a sustainable strategy which promotes and provides confidence to families in the Wheatbelt or planning to move to the region, in the quality of education opportunities available.

Consultations also emphasised the need to investigate the provision of suitable access to higher education opportunities and this forms part of the actions for the Wheatbelt workforce development plan.

To help address low higher education participation rates in regional areas the Department of Education Services will give consideration to the Regional Development Council's higher education strategy and implementation plan for regional Western Australia. Two key elements of the strategy will be to:

- stimulate supply by creating incentives for universities to develop higher education in the regions and provide a stronger regionally based higher education presence; and
- stimulate demand by raising the aspirations of people living in the regions to participate in higher education.

When completed it is expected that the strategy will be used to coordinate the development and delivery of higher education services in regional Western Australia.

As highlighted earlier, the Wheatbelt region has a lower proportion of the population whose highest level of schooling is year 12 or equivalent, compared to the Western Australian average. It has also been noted that the proportion of the population in the Wheatbelt with post school qualifications was significantly lower than the Western Australian average.

Further research is warranted to investigate options to increase participation in education and training in the region, particularly among disadvantaged groups. The research should also examine the capacity of the education and training sectors to undertake skills development in the region.

Health services

The provision of health services and other infrastructure is a significant issue for the Wheatbelt, as identified in chapter three. Issues for the delivery of health services across the region include³:

- an ageing population (extent and or availability of aged care services and accommodation);
- the under utilisation of many of the beds in the smaller local hospitals;
- the attraction and retention of doctors, nurses and allied health professionals – many GPs in the region are nearing retirement and are difficult to replace;
- the proximity to services – transport across the district to access health services is an issue;
- access to specialist services – many residents are accessing specialist services in Perth;
- a changing demand for services, delivery models and practices; and
- a lack of access to accident and emergency facilities.

It is important to acknowledge the introduction of the Southern Inland Health Initiative funded under the Royalties for Regions program to improve medical resources and 24 hour emergency coverage. Currently operating in Merredin, Narrogin and Northam, the aim of the initiative is to:

- deliver safe and effective emergency services and good access to general practice;
- encourage private GPs to return to country towns, supported by visiting specialists and health practitioners backed up by 'e-technology' such as TeleHealth; and
- provide better support to nurses who, due to the lack of doctors in this region, carry greater responsibilities.

Any strategies resulting from this initiative in attracting and retaining health care workers or improved service provision could be useful in addressing issues related to provision/access of health services in other areas of the Wheatbelt region.

Technology

Technology and telecommunications services influence the attractiveness of a region, as they contribute to a region's social development, which underpins the quality of life for many. Unreliable mobile phone services and broadband coverage connectivity is a significant issue to the Wheatbelt. While the National Broadband Network (NBN) rolls out throughout

³ Western Australian Planning Commission 2009, *Towards a Wheatbelt Regional Strategy – Directions Paper*.

Australia, the majority of the Wheatbelt is currently in the 10% of Australia that is serviced by the significantly slower satellite coverage. The unreliability of service coverage in some areas limits business growth in the region (RDA Wheatbelt 2011).

A particular concern raised during the sub-regional forums was the extent to which the roll out of the NBN would, in reality, advantage/disadvantage local towns in the region. Further consultations, however, revealed that the key to harnessing the opportunities presented by the new technological platform is a need for the region to understand its preparedness to utilise and capitalise on its availability. It was suggested that the region undertake a 'digital benchmarking' exercise to assess the Wheatbelt's capability, capacity and current type and usage of technology for personal, social and business purposes with a view to developing a vision for how the NBN could support future social and economic growth.

Priority issues for Wheatbelt sub-regions

In order to harness the richness and diversity of views expressed across the Wheatbelt region this report also includes additional sub-regional themes for consideration.

Competitive wages

One of the major challenges facing the public and private sector in attracting and retaining labour is the capacity to pay competitive wages. This was identified as a priority issue in the Merredin and Moora forums.

Wages and salaries tend to be lower in the Wheatbelt than the State average particularly in comparison to some of the resource regions such as the Pilbara, the Mid West and Goldfields-Esperance. This income disparity impacts in a number of ways including:

- the inter-regional competition for labour, with some employees choosing higher wage regions ahead of the Wheatbelt as a place of work or residence;
- Wheatbelt enterprises and employers find it difficult to offer the wages or salaries provided in other regions largely because the structure of the economy is vastly different and the scale of individual businesses and projects are generally smaller; and
- attempting to compete with wages elsewhere erodes profits and the viability of enterprises, further weakening the regional economy.

It is important to note that the region has a number of competitive advantages in this area, notably:

- Lower wages are coupled with a lower cost of living than many other regions. Thus, in real terms employees can be better off when the cost of housing, goods and services are taken into account.
- The Wheatbelt's 'financial wage' is often coupled with a substantial 'social wage' in terms of more flexible working arrangements than that offered in some mining regions. Examples of this can include flexible hours, job sharing, part time work, deferred salary arrangements (eg 80% salary for four years with 12 months paid leave in the fifth year) and salary sacrificing arrangements.

The declining relative incomes are the outcome of a number of factors.

- Farm incomes have decreased in relative terms across Australia over the past two decades which has major direct impacts on median incomes in regions with a heavy dependence on farming.
- Many businesses in the Wheatbelt, because of their close links to agriculture, have not been able to increase their wages in line with the State average.
- There has been a shifting geography of trade in agricultural regions with increasing amounts of business being conducted in larger regional centres, often bypassing local economies. This has led to a contraction of many private enterprises and restricted wages growth.
- Rapid increases in wages elsewhere, particularly in those regions with strong resources sectors, has contributed to a strong increase in the Western Australian average when compared to the median incomes received in the Wheatbelt.

The declining relative incomes in the Wheatbelt pose a major regional development challenge. Given the importance of competitive incomes as a means of attracting high quality, skilled employees, the inability to pay wages and salaries commensurate with other regions (especially those immediately adjacent to the Wheatbelt) places firms and organisations at a disadvantage in the labour market. While other factors, such as lifestyle, environmental, amenity and cost of living are also important, the international and national evidence indicates that wages and salaries are an important determinant in staff attraction and retention.

Relative size of firms

In the Wheatbelt, the situation is made all the more complex by the relative size of the firms, raised as a priority issue in Narrogin and Jurien Bay. In terms of both employees and turnover, Wheatbelt enterprises are generally very small and subject to the vagaries of international markets, climatic conditions and ex-regional processes. It is these small firms that also face significant challenges in terms of attracting and retaining staff but are not necessarily in a position to offer wages equal to, or even approaching, those paid in other regions.

Ageing workforce

One of the other major areas of concern identified through the forums in Merredin and Narrogin is the relative ageing of the workforce. The sectors with the oldest age structures include agriculture, forestry and fishing; manufacturing; transport, health care and social assistance; and utilities. In almost every sector, the workforce is older than the State average. This poses significant risk to the region, since there is a need to find replacements for these workers to fill the gaps emerging in the labour market. However, this need comes at a time when comparable sectors in other regions are offering higher wages.

Clearly one of the most important issues associated with this theme is the impending retirement of many baby boomers from the labour market. Over the next 10–15 years much of this generation will leave the labour force and need to be replaced. This raises questions

about how they might best be replaced and also ways of retaining this generation's engagement in the labour force for longer periods, such as on part time or flexible workplace arrangements.

Lessons learned from the current Dalwallinu Repopulation Project may contribute to attraction strategies that could be used elsewhere in the Wheatbelt to assist with regional workforce development requirements.

In addition, undertaking a skills audit of the significant number of self employed farmers and those employed on farms would help inform future re-skilling and up skilling needs as well as identify potential transferable skills that would support the Wheatbelt's aspiration for greater business diversification.

Aboriginal employment

The need to improve Aboriginal employment was identified as a priority issue in Narrogin and Moora. Aboriginal participation and unemployment are examined in detail in chapter 3 under the headings 'Aboriginal participation in the labour force' and 'Aboriginal unemployment rates'.

It is possible that education and training opportunities provided in culturally appropriate environments where pedagogical practices take into account Aboriginal learning styles could improve the engagement of the unemployed and lead to greater availability of 'work ready' labour in this under-represented group.

Social and cultural opportunities

Most towns in the Wheatbelt region have sporting facilities for recreational purposes (including football ovals, basketball courts and swimming pools) however other social and cultural facilities are limited. The regional centres of Northam, Merredin, Moora and Narrogin have the largest array of facilities but are not easily accessible by youth in the outlying areas of the Wheatbelt. The Regional Development Australia Strategic Regional Plan (2010) highlights the need for upgrades of sporting and community facilities in many local government areas to enable them to meet current needs. Addressing the limited social and cultural opportunities is an important factor which needs to be considered in attracting and retaining young people in the region.

Transport

It has been identified that there are limited public transport services available in the region. The *Regional development Australia strategic regional plan* (2010) identifies lack of public transport as a significant issue impacting the growth of the region, as it limits population mobility, particularly in light of the projected population growth in the Avon and Central Midlands sub-regions.

To support the growing fly-in fly-out population in the region, better transport options are also needed from key regional towns, such as Northam, Toodyay and York to Perth airport.

Lack of driver's licences

Issues associated with under-representation in the workforce that emerged during the consultations, particularly in Moora, highlighted that residents without access to vehicles or driver's licences were potential labour force participants. While statistics of the number of people unable to drive in the sub-regions who are potentially dependent on access to a vehicle to travel to and from work are not available, anecdotal evidence suggests that a good proportion of the long term unemployed might fall into this category.

In addition, the introduction of new laws requiring the accumulation and recording of a minimum of 25 hours supervised driving experience and a mandatory six month waiting period after passing the Practical Driving Assessment for youth seeking to obtain their licences presents difficulties for parents or guardians who may be facing multiple challenges of their own.



Future workforce needs for the Wheatbelt region

Future labour force demand

Future labour force projections indicate that many sub-regions within the Wheatbelt are likely to experience increased labour demand in the short to medium term (Tonts et al 2008).

Supply/demand projections

The Western Australian Planning Commission (2012) has reported that the Wheatbelt's annual average growth rate from 2006 to 2026 is projected at 0.8%, compared to the Western Australian average of 2.0%. Table 6.1 shows the projected population of the Wheatbelt region compared to Western Australia.

Table 6.1: Projected population in Wheatbelt and Western Australia 2006–26

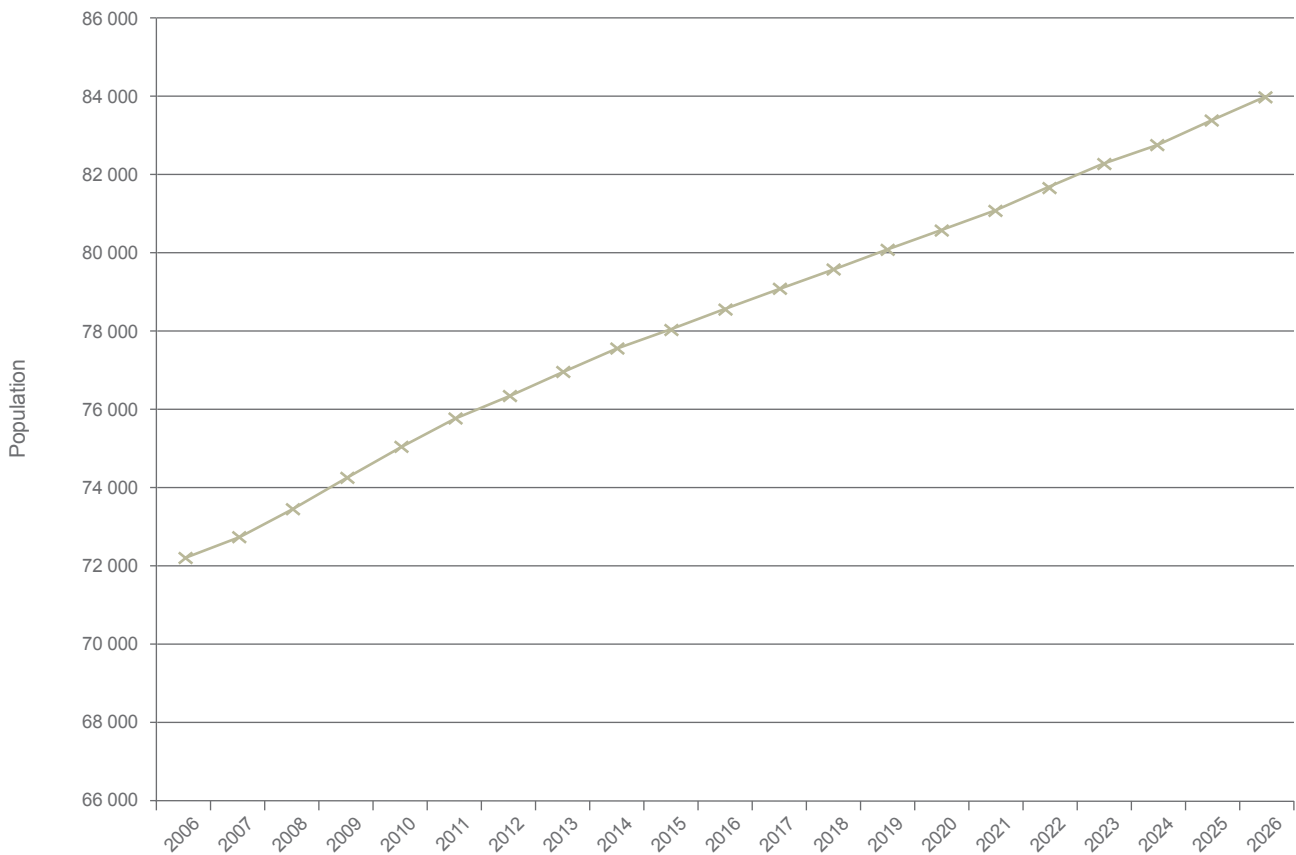
	Wheatbelt	Wheatbelt as a % of WA population	Western Australia
Projected population 2016	78 600	3.0%	2 612 300
Projected population 2021	81 100	2.9%	2 834 000
Projected population 2026	84 000	2.7%	3 060 500
Average annual growth rate 2006–16	0.8%	na	2.4%
Average annual growth rate 2006–21	0.8%	na	2.1%
Average annual growth rate 2006–26	0.8%	na	2.0%

Source: Western Australia Planning Commission 2012.

Figure 6.1 presents the population projections for the Wheatbelt region to 2026. Current projections indicate that a steady increase in the Wheatbelt's population is predicted to reach approximately 84 000 by 2026 (Western Australia Planning Commission 2012).

Between 2011 and 2026 the majority of projected growth will be limited to less than half of the local government areas (LGAs) within the Wheatbelt region, with Chittering, York, Narrogin, Northam, Wandering and Toodyay projected to experience the largest increases across the

Figure 6.1: Population projections for Wheatbelt Region 2006–26



Source: Western Australia Planning Commission 2012.

region. Of note, a large proportion of the increases in population in these shires are expected to be aged 65 years or older. While the working age (20–64 years) population is expected to increase it will be at a much lower rate compared to those aged 65 years or older.

In contrast, the LGAs of Cunderdin, Dalwallinu, Wyalkatchem, Yilgarn, Narembeen, Dowerin and Lake Grace are predicted to experience a significant decline in population. These shires are expected to experience sizable population losses in both the working age and younger (0–19) age groups (Western Australia Planning Commission 2012).

Population projections in the majority of the Central Midlands and the Central East LGAs are projected to decline with only four LGAs expected to increase in population between 2011–26, including Chittering, Dandaragan, Gingin and Mount Marshall (Western Australia Planning Commission 2012).

According to the Western Australia Planning Commission (2012) approximately half of the LGAs in the Avon and Central South areas are projected to experience an increase in population to 2026. These LGAs include York, Northam, Toodyay, Goomalling, Koorda, Beverley, Narrogin, Wandering, Corrigin, Cuballing and Pingelly.

According to Tonts et al (2008) the Avon sub-region is expected to grow between 2007–15, particularly in the peri-urban areas, which are experiencing economic growth and rising populations. However areas further inland in the Avon sub-region are likely to experience a decrease in demand, particularly in the agriculture sector. Industries that are likely to experience growth in this sub-region are mining, retail, education and training as well as health care and social assistance. Table 6.2 shows the occupations that are expected to grow between 2007–15, by sub-division. (See Appendix B for a map showing these sub-divisions.)

Table 6.2: Growth occupations by sub-division 2007–15

ABS statistical sub-division*	Growth occupations
Avon	Personal carers and assistants; sales assistants and sales persons; cleaners and truck drivers
Campion/Lakes	Truck drivers; mobile plant operators; stationary plant operators and auto electricians and mechanics
Hotham	Labourers; truck drivers; construction labourers; midwifery and nursing professionals and fabrication engineering and trades workers
Moore	Truck drivers; mobile plant operators; cleaners; auto electricians and mechanics

* It is noted that there may be slight variations between area covered by the ABS statistical sub-division and the sub-region identified throughout this plan.

The majority of growth in the Campion/Lakes area is likely to be in the resources sector, particularly Yilgarn and Westonia while growth in the rest of the region is expected to be very slow (Tonts et al 2008).

Hotham is also characterised by a significant amount of resources activity due to its proximity, particularly to Boddington in the Peel region. This resources activity has stimulated the expansion of ancillary services in the region thereby increasing lifestyle in-migration to the region. Growth is projected in the mining and health care and social assistance industries (Tonts et al 2008).

Moore is also expected to experience growth in the short to medium term due to rising populations in coastal areas, as well as the emergence of new industries including tourism, manufacturing and services. Growth is projected in the mining, construction, retail and health care and social assistance industries (Tonts et al 2008).

While not reflected in table 6.3, the Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre in Northam will have a significant impact on the town, particularly in terms of jobs associated with the operation of the detention centre including other auxiliary services.

Table 6.3 identifies several major projects that have been either completed or planned for the Wheatbelt region. These projects are expected to have an impact on workforce and regional skill requirements.

Table 6.3: Major Wheatbelt projects

Major Wheatbelt projects	Location
Avon Industrial Park	Avon
Upgrade of Grain Freight Network	Wheatbelt
Collgar Wind Farm	Merredin
Kellerberrin Recreational and Leisure Centre development	Kellerberrin
Tootra Street industrial Park Extension	Moora
Single site consolidated – C Y O'Connor Institute	Narrogin
Construction of Stage Two of Indian Ocean Drive	Cervantes and Ocean Farms Estate
Upgrading of Great Northern Highway	Muchea and New Norcia
Construction of a passing lane on Brand Highway	Cervantes
Re-alignment of Brookton Highway	Brookton
Eastern Wheatbelt District Health Redevelopment	Eastern Wheatbelt
Upper Great Southern Health redevelopment	Central South

Source: Wheatbelt Historical Statistical Snapshot 2010.

Until late 2008, the Western Australian labour market was characterised by strong labour market conditions, a decrease in the unemployment rate and an increase in the proportion of people participating in the labour force. This resulted in severe skill shortages across many industries, particularly across the professions, associate professions and trades areas. By 2009, market conditions weakened as the economy started to feel the effects of the global financial crisis, causing a rise in the Western Australian unemployment rate. Research into employers' recruitment experiences in the Wheatbelt region in 2009 (DEEWR 2009) identified the issues facing employers in the Wheatbelt.

While the Western Australian economy started to feel the effects of the global recession in 2008, the unemployment rate in the Wheatbelt region (2.7%) remained lower than the Western Australian (3.0%) and Australian (4.2%) unemployment rates (ABS 2006). Correspondingly, research indicates recruitment activity was strong in the public administration and safety; wholesale trade; transport, postal and warehousing; and professional, scientific and technical services industries, where all vacancies in the research sample were filled. Additionally, unfilled vacancies were low for the agriculture, forestry and fishing, retail trade and manufacturing industries. Within these industries, all vacancies for managers and professionals; clerical and administrative workers; and machinery operators and drivers, in the research sample, were filled (DEEWR 2009).

In contrast, the construction industry experienced a high level (50%) of unfilled vacancies, particularly for labourer occupations. Furthermore, although many employers were able to fill their vacancies, a significant proportion of employers in each industry experienced difficulty in recruiting. The results also reported that 100% of employers in the construction industry reported difficulties in recruiting employees, followed by wholesale trade (71%), health care and social assistance (67%) and public administration and safety employers (65%).

At the local level, particular projects, locational attributes, attraction and retention issues drive occupational needs. Given that these will differ considerably from place to place, an important part of the forums was to identify these needs at both regional and sub-regional levels for the period 2013–16.

The Department of Training and Workforce Development prepares a *State priority occupation list* (SPOL) which is an annually produced list of skilled occupations in high demand or considered industry-critical in Western Australia.

As part of the preparation of the regional workforce development plans, the Department is keen to complement this State level information with an assessment of occupations at the regional and, where possible, the sub-regional level.

Table 6.4 presents a summary of the occupations identified during the sub-regional forums and consultations.

While there will be further refinements required as part of the ongoing review of the regional workforce development plans, table 6.5 provides a starting point. This table has been developed through analysis of qualitative and quantitative research undertaken for this project.

Table 6.5 provides a comparative analysis and triangulation (at the six digit ANZSCO level) of:

- regional and sub-regional occupations identified by participants in sub-regional forums;
- occupations identified in the regional profile prepared as background to the Wheatbelt workforce development plan and utilised as the starting point for discussion at the sub-regional forums; and
- priority occupations identified in the SPOL released in September 2011.

Table 6.4: Wheatbelt regional (and sub-regional) community identified occupation list

Wheatbelt region				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aged care workers • Bricklayers, carpenters and joiners • Fabrication engineering trades workers • Health and welfare support officers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT technicians • Midwifery and nursing professionals • School teachers 		
Merredin	Narrogin	Northam	Jurien Bay	Moora
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agri and business managers • Agricultural technicians • Automotive electricians and mechanics • Building and construction trades • Clerical workers • Farm workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaners and laundry workers • Clerical and administrative workers • Doctors • Horticultural trades workers • Hospitality workers • Labourers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agricultural business support workers • Building and construction trades • Child care workers • Doctors • Mobile plant operators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction, distribution and production managers • Horticultural trades workers • Industry trainers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automotive electricians and mechanics • Business managers • Child care workers • Health and welfare professionals – GPs, dentists, physiotherapists • Labourers

It is worth noting that the SPOL contains:

- State priority 1 (SP1) occupations characterised by a combination of one or more of the following factors:
 - very large levels of employment;
 - high forecast growth and evident wage pressures; and
 - consistent identification across a range of indicators as an industry-critical occupation.
- State priority 2 (SP2) occupations characterised by:
 - notable levels of employment;
 - medium level forecast employment growth; and
 - identification across a range of indicators as an industry-critical occupation.

Of the 30 community identified occupations⁴ (excluding the three digit ANZSCO level) identified in the Wheatbelt regional community identified occupation list (RCIOL), 22 (73%) are also included in the SPOL with 11 (47%) of them included as SP1 occupations. Similarly, almost 40% of them (10) appear in both the Wheatbelt Historical Statistical Snapshot and the SPOL. Seven of them do not appear on either and most possibly reflect the local need

⁴ Further research will be required to identify priority occupations within these areas.

Table 6.5: Wheatbelt regional community identified occupation list (RCIOL)

ANZSCO	Occupation	Consultation location	Identified in regional profile	SPOL
133111	Construction project manager	Jurien Bay		SP1
133512	Production manager	Jurien Bay		
241213	Primary educator	Regional		
241411	Secondary educator	Regional		
242211	Vocational education teacher	Jurien Bay		SP1
252312	Dentist	Moora		SP2
252511	Physiotherapist	Moora		SP2
253111	General medical practitioner	Moora Narrogin Northam		
254111	Midwife	Regional	✓	SP1
254411	Nurse practitioner	Regional	✓	SP2
254412	Registered nurse (aged care)	Regional	✓	SP1
311111	Agricultural technician	Merredin		SP2
313199	ICT support technician	Regional		SP2
321111	Automotive electrician	Merredin Moora	✓	SP1
321211	Motor mechanic (general)	Merredin Moora	✓	SP1
331111	Bricklayers	Regional		SP1
331212	Carpenters	Regional		SP1
331212	Joiners	Regional		SP1
411711	Community worker	Regional		SP1
421111	Child care worker	Northam Moora		SP1
423111	Aged or disabled carer	Regional	✓	SP1
423312	Nursing support worker	Regional	✓	SP1
423313	Personal care assistant	Regional	✓	SP1
431999	Hospitality worker	Narrogin		
512111	Office manager	Moora		SP2
599999	Clerical and administrative worker	Merredin Narrogin		SP2
811211	Commercial cleaner	Narrogin	✓	SP2
811511	Laundry worker (general)	Narrogin		
821111	Builder's labourer	Regional	✓	
841412	Nursery hand (horticulture)	Narrogin Jurien Bay		
121	Farmers and farm managers	Merredin Northam		
322	Fabrication engineering trades worker	Regional	✓	
721	Mobile plant operator	Northam	✓	

for educators and doctors which emerged as part of the priority issues identified as regional or sub-regional concerns. The others were sub-regionally specific and warrant noting for further research into local workforce implications. This variation, together with the alignment between the Wheatbelt Historical Statistical Snapshot and the SPOL, highlights the value of undertaking research at the local level.

While the Wheatbelt RCIOL has been recognised by local stakeholders as a desirable tool and an innovative approach to workforce development, the methodology underpinning it is in its early stages of development. As recommended in this plan, further refinement of it will occur to assure the robustness of the methodology.

Action plan

The following action plan is based on a series of priority issues that emerged during the consultations undertaken in the preparation of the *Wheatbelt workforce development plan 2013–2016*. These strategies fall into two broad categories as indicated below.

Direct employee incentives

- Wages
- Housing loan support
- Accommodation subsidies
- Relocation allowances
- Salary packaging
- Travel assistance
- Flexible working conditions
- Retention bonuses
- Education/training support
- Child care support

Indirect incentives

- Health services
- School education
- VET pathways
- Higher education opportunities
- Public transport
- Social and cultural opportunities
- Aged care facilities
- Land development
- Affordable housing
- Child care services

The recommended priority actions proposed provide practical solutions to a number of complex workforce development challenges. They have been designed to enable government to adequately plan and resource workforce related strategies and for the region's employers to advise government and implement workforce planning initiatives in their workplaces.

Please note that all of the actions are subject to further review. They have been allocated a lead agency and timeframe and mapped to the strategic goals in Skilling WA.

Priority issue	Recommended priority actions	Skilling WA – strategic goal(s)
1. Regional perceptions	1.1 The Wheatbelt Development Commission to build on the benefits of the Heartlands WA initiative and collaborate with the Local Government Authorities, both individually and collectively, where appropriate, to identify and promote their achievements and competitive advantages to assist with attracting skilled workers to their localities.	3.1 and 3.2
	Lead agency: Wheatbelt Development Commission	
2. Access to technology	2.1 The Department of Commerce, to collaborate with the Wheatbelt Development Commission to assess the anticipated coverage and strength of the National Broadband Network in order to ensure an appropriate level of online service to the Wheatbelt community and industry.	4.2
	Lead agency: Department of Commerce	
	2.2 The Department of Commerce to liaise with the Commonwealth Government, the telecommunications sector and local service providers to ensure adequate digital infrastructure is accessible across the Wheatbelt region capable of supporting online delivery of health, education and business services.	4.2
	Lead agency: Department of Commerce	
	2.3 Regional Development Australia – Wheatbelt to undertake a digital benchmarking project to assess the capability, capacity and current type and usage of technology with a view to developing a vision for how the National Broadband Network can support the Wheatbelt’s future social and economic growth.	4.2
	Lead agency: Regional Development Australia – Wheatbelt	
	2.4 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to work with providers of IT courses for technicians and software developers to support the business development and maintenance of online services for residents and businesses in the Wheatbelt.	4.1
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
2.5 Education, training and community organisations to extend IT skill development programs being offered in the Wheatbelt to encourage further take up and usage of future IT network opportunities by individuals and businesses, with particular attention to those involved in the agricultural industry, as a way of improving business efficiencies.	4.2	
Lead groups: Regional education, training and community organisations		

Priority issue	Recommended priority actions	Skilling WA – strategic goal(s)
3. Young people	3.1 Sorcit Ltd (Midland Job Link) in conjunction with Wheatbelt industry associations such as the chambers of commerce and stakeholders such as group training organisations to encourage regional businesses to sign up to a charter of commitment to youth to create apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships and scholarships as ways of providing career opportunities for young people living in the region.	1.2 and 1.3
	Lead groups: Sorcit Ltd (Midland Job Link)	
	3.2 Wheatbelt group training organisations to actively promote the charter of commitment to youth by assisting regional businesses (in particular, small businesses) to provide apprenticeships and traineeships and, where necessary, be the host employer.	1.2 and 1.3
	Lead groups: Wheatbelt group training organisations	
	3.3 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to review the existing apprenticeship and traineeship administrative requirements with a view to reducing the burden on business, with particular attention to small business.	1.2
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	3.4 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to co-host forums with regional industry associations, registered training organisations and group training companies with the aim of promoting the benefits of apprenticeships and traineeships to Wheatbelt employers.	1.2
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	3.5 The Small Business Development Corporation in collaboration with the Department of Training and Workforce Development and the Wheatbelt based Small Business Centres, to encourage regional businesses to provide flexible working arrangements to support their apprentices and trainees to attend off the job training.	3.1
	Lead agency: Small Business Development Corporation	
	3.6 The Regional Development Australia - Wheatbelt to form sub-regional Youth Action Groups to aid in the implementation of the actions identified in the Wheatbelt Youth Strategy which focus on youth specific issues and barriers which impact on the Wheatbelt region.	3.2
	Lead agency: Regional Development Australia – Wheatbelt	
	3.7 Government and private sector employers to consider employer contributions to the payment of HECS debt for graduates who agree to take up employment in the Wheatbelt.	1.2
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	

Priority issue	Recommended priority actions	Skilling WA – strategic goal(s)
4. Career pathways	4.1 The Wheatbelt Workforce Development Centre’s role will be reviewed with the intention of providing greater focus on connecting to existing regional education, training, career guidance and employment agencies as a means of promoting workforce development strategies including career pathways.	4.1
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	4.2 The Department of Education Services to give consideration to the Regional Development Council’s higher education strategy and how it may be resourced and applied in the Wheatbelt region to improve access to higher education courses and related career pathways.	4.3
	Lead agency: Department of Education Services	
	4.3 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to work with regional registered training organisations to provide agribusiness accredited skill set training programs which address skill shortages in the region’s agriculture industry.	4.3
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	4.4 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to investigate the need for Wheatbelt registered training organisations to provide training in carbon reduction methods to meet the emerging career opportunities in sustainable industrial practices with a particular focus on agriculture.	4.3
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	4.5 The Public Sector Commission to determine how the current and planned public sector career pathways, industrial awards and workforce development policies could better assist the Wheatbelt and, more generally, regional Western Australian public sector workforce needs.	3.2
	Lead agency: Public Sector Commission	
	4.6 The Public Sector Commission is to encourage the Commonwealth Government to undertake a similar review of workforce policies for Commonwealth public sector employees to that proposed in 4.5.	3.2
	Lead agency: Public Sector Commission	
	4.7 The Wheatbelt Development Commission to encourage and coordinate stronger engagement between Aboriginal residents and relevant agencies to develop specific employment strategies.	1.2 and 3.1
	Lead agency: Wheatbelt Development Commission	

Priority issue	Recommended priority actions	Skilling WA – strategic goal(s)
5. Availability and quality of education	5.1 Wheatbelt schools (government and non-government) to collaborate in the preparation and implementation of a sustainable strategy which aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify how education is best provided to meet the particular needs of students in the Wheatbelt; • promote and provide confidence in the quality of education for families contemplating moving to the Wheatbelt; and • encourage Wheatbelt families to support the use of regional educational opportunities. 	4.1
	Lead agency: Department of Education	
	5.2 The Department of Training and Workforce Development, in partnership with the Wheatbelt Noongar community to examine the feasibility of supporting the establishment of culturally appropriate education and skills training centres at the former Wandering and Mogumber Missions.	1.3 and 4.1
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	5.3 The Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council to appoint an additional Board of Management member with expertise and experience in sheep and broad acre farming.	4.2
	Lead agency: Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council	
6. Health	6.1 The Department of Health continues to progress the service planning and implementation of the Southern Inland Health Initiative.	1.3 and 3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Health	
	6.2 The Department of Health to evaluate the impact of the Southern Inland Health Initiative reform, including attraction and retention strategies for regional health care professionals in the Wheatbelt.	1.3 and 3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Health	
	6.3 The Department of Training and Workforce Development in collaboration with the Department of Education Services to investigate the demand for higher level nursing and other health care qualifications in the Wheatbelt.	4.1
Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development		

Priority issue	Recommended priority actions	Skilling WA – strategic goal(s)
6. Health	6.4 Give consideration to establishing a partnership between a Western Australian university and Wheatbelt registered training organisations whereby higher level nursing and health care education is offered utilising existing regional education and training infrastructure.	4.1
	Lead agency: Regional Training Providers	
	6.5 The Department of Health to continue to investigate the expansion of Telehealth services in the Wheatbelt, including mental health services.	3.1 and 3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Health	
	6.6 The Department of Health to support the Wheatbelt Development Commission to establish links with the Department of Health and Ageing to progress aged care service planning and delivery in the region.	3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Health	
7. Housing	7.1 As part of the implementation of the <i>Affordable Housing Strategy 2010-2020</i> , the Department of Housing to work with the Alliance to identify appropriate housing to determine whether a more targeted policy is required for the Wheatbelt region.	3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Housing	
	7.2 As a part of the implementation of the <i>Affordable Housing Strategy 2010-2020</i> , the Department of Housing to work with key stakeholders to investigate the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diversity of design and density of accommodation in the Avon such as smaller apartments and residential units and • Aboriginal housing needs in Moora and Narrogin. 	3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Housing	
	7.3 The Department of Housing to explore with the Australian Government changes to the approvals criteria for lender's mortgage insurance, to ensure that mortgage insurance does not continue to act as a barrier to residential construction and home purchasing in the Wheatbelt region.	3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Housing	
7.4 The Department of Planning in collaboration with Landcorp to provide timely availability of land in the Wheatbelt for residential, commercial and industrial purposes with particular attention to the SuperTowns of Northam and Jurien Bay.	3.2	
Lead agency: Department of Planning		

Priority issue	Recommended priority actions	Skilling WA – strategic goal(s)
8. Additional Sub - regional themes	8.1 The Wheatbelt Development Commission to continue to work with key stakeholders to determine how to provide further support for Wheatbelt businesses, taking note of the success of the recently established Wheatbelt Business Network (which is supported by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia).	3.2
	Lead agency: Wheatbelt Development Commission	
	8.2 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to undertake an assessment into the current and future workforce development needs of Jurien Bay, a recently declared SuperTown, giving particular attention to the maritime, hospitality, tourism and aged care industries.	4.3
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	8.3 Department of Training and Workforce Development to liaise with the Commonwealth Government (Department of Immigration and Citizenship) to determine the employment skills training needs and support that could be provided by regional registered training organisations for the occupants of the Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre in Northam who are to be given permanent residency within Australia.	4.1
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	8.4 The Department of Training and Workforce Development and the Department of Corrective Services to collaborate to determine respective responsibilities for the employment skills training to be provided for inmates of the Acacia and Wooroloo Prison Farm many of whom are Indigenous and on release will seek employment in rural areas including the Wheatbelt.	4.1
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	8.5 The Department of Transport to further progress identified options to increase public transportation services to Perth from the Wheatbelt, in particular the Avon Valley communities of Northam and Toodyay.	3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Transport	
	8.6 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to participate in the evaluation of the Dalwallinu Repopulation Project to help determine the extent to which the project's attraction and retention strategies for migrants could be used elsewhere in the Wheatbelt (and beyond) to assist with regional workforce development issues.	3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	

Priority issue	Recommended priority actions	Skilling WA – strategic goal(s)
8. Additional	8.7 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to support the extension of the Drought Assistance Program for self-employed farmers, those employed on farms and their partners, to help inform: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • future re-skilling and up skilling training programs; • the potential for transferable skills to support the regional development aim of future business diversification; and • the extent to which existing skills may be able to be more effectively utilised as part of the region’s workforce. 	4.1 and 4.2
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	8.8 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to review existing Aboriginal workforce development services in the Wheatbelt to ensure they are meeting the needs of the community.	4.1
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
	8.9 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to further refine the Wheatbelt regional community identified occupation list to help inform its market-led training and purchasing strategies and future infrastructure planning in the Wheatbelt.	4.1, 4.3 and 5.1
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
9. Governance and management issues	8.10 The Department of Transport to review the existing public transport arrangements which provide intra-regional services in the Wheatbelt.	3.2
	Lead agency: Department of Transport	
	9.1 The Department of Training and Workforce Development, with the support of the Wheatbelt Development Commission, to ensure the Wheatbelt Workforce Development Alliance has the appropriate levels of support to monitor and review the progress of the region’s workforce development plan.	5.2
	Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development	
9.2 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to review the Wheatbelt workforce development plan in the context of regional planning activities undertaken by the Wheatbelt Development Commission and training councils, including blue print, subregional, economic, SuperTowns and industry workforce development plans.	5.1	
Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development		

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Appendix A – Wheatbelt consultation list

Forum consultation*

Name	Organisation
Trevor Glassby	Ag Implements
Fiona Yeats	Bruce Rock District High School
John Scott	C Y O'Connor Institute
Ric Newman	C Y O'Connor Institute
Linda Bright	C Y O'Connor Institute
Sandra Randell	Central Coast Health Advisory Group
Peter Van Der Enile	Chamber of Commerce
Larry Davies	Directions
Sally Haslam	Directions
Paull Brown	Directions
Phil Eaton	Elders
Michelle Allardyce	Elders
Lyn Foord	Greenline Ag
John Trunfio	Hunter & Northey Sales
Denise King	Jurien Bay Community Resource Centre
Julie Greatbatch	Max Employment
Anthony Ryan	McIntosh & Son
Wayne Wallace	Merredin Senior High School
Trevor Saunders	Midland Joblink
Pat Francis	Northam Chamber of Commerce
Mark Cullen	Northam Senior High School

Name	Organisation
Susy Padfield	Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt
Kaye McGlew	Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt
Trevor Saunders	School Business Community Partnership (Wheatbelt)
Steve O'Halloran	Shire of Bruce Rock
Shane Love	Shire of Dandaragan
Tony Nottle	Shire of Dandaragan
Linton Thomas	Shire of Goomalling
Bec McCall	Shire of Moora
Susan Guy	Shire of Narrogin
Eileen O'Connell	Shire of Nungarin
Bill Fensome	Shire of Nungarin
Jeff Soviak	Shire of Westonia and Yilgarn
Olivia Melvin-Mains	Shire of Williams
Ray Hooper	Shire of York
Sal Marais	Small Business Centre
Mike Jose	Small Business Centre (Northam)
Ian Holloway	WA Country Builders
Fiona Fiegert	WA Country Health Service
Erik Anda	WA Country Health Service
Heather Garlett	WA Department of Child Protection
Sharon Wade	WA Department of Education
Lynne Guthrie	WA Department of Education
Alana Henderson	WA Department of Education
Heather Mahar	WA Department of Education
Heather Mahar	WA Department of Education
Gail Ward	WA Department of Education
Heidi Ashbury	WA Department of Education
Nikki Polding	WA Department of Education
Sharon Bray	WA Department of Education – Wheatbelt Region

Name	Organisation
Gemma Tuxworth	WA Department of Health
Dianne Hull	WA Department of Health
Lois Newsome	WA Department of Health
Vince Del Prete	WA Department of Sport and Recreation
Jenifer Collins	WA Department of Sport and Recreation
Rosemary Archer	WA Department of State Development
Melanie Irvine	WA Main Roads
Phil Cartledge	WA Police – Moora
Nick Skinner	WA Police – Northam
Russell Cox	WA Pork Producers Association
Caroline Robinson	Wheatbelt Business Network
Pip Kirby	Wheatbelt Development Commission
Carol Redford	Wheatbelt Development Commission
Rebecca Kelly	Wheatbelt Development Commission
Pip Shields	Wheatbelt Development Commission
Paul Tomlinson	Avon Industrial Park
Peter Weatherly	
Helen Bennett	Chair, Wheatbelt Workforce Development Alliance

* Please note that some registrants arrived late or left early (did not sign the attendance form) and some attended multiple forums.

Additional consultations

Name	Organisation
Paul Tomlinson	Avon Industrial Park
Alan Davis	Building and Construction Training Council
Ian Andrews	Community Services, Health and Education Training Council
David Love	Electrical, Utilities and Public Administration Training Council
Dave Hicks	Engineering and Automotive Training Council
Allan Jones	Financial, Administrative and Professional Services Training Council
Kay Gerard	Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council
Mal Gammon	FutureNow Creative and Leisure Industries Training Council
Jillian Dielesen	Logistics Training Council
Rebekah Burges	Regional Development Australia – Wheatbelt
Nigel Haywood	Resources Industry Training Council
Norma Roberts	Retail and Personal Services Training Council
Claire Purcell, Daniela Mattleys and Jim Wyatt	WA Department of Commerce
Stewart Kestel	WA Department of Housing
Mike Rowe	WA Department of Regional Development and Lands
Kim Schofield	WA Public Sector Commission
Richard Strickland	Department of Education Services
Sharyn O'Neill	Department of Education
Kim Snowball	Department of Health
Reece Waldock	Department of Planning
Stephen Psaila-Savona	Public Sector Commission
Reece Waldock	Department of Transport
David Eaton	Small Business Development Corporation
Ian Smith	WA Country Health
Trevor Saunders	Sorcit Ltd (Midland Job Link)



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