

KEY DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

Key issues for the Tourism industry in the Wheatbelt include:

- Lack of sub-regional or regional strategy for co-ordinated Tourism development across the region.
 - Low population density – making the viability of amenities businesses (retail, cafes etc) challenging.
 - Lack of skilled workforce – unemployment levels in the region are consistently below that of WA. In 2011/12 the region had the third lowest unemployment rate (2.5%) in the State behind the two major mining regions.
 - The Region’s economic reliance on Agriculture. The current challenges and increased technology utilisation in agriculture have resulted in a reduced workforce. This has resulted in either stable or declining populations in the eastern areas of the region. This contributes to a community mindset of people leaving the towns, not visiting and in turn impacts confidence in establishing tourism enterprises.
 - Small number of tourism operators and the lack of understanding of the benefits of the tourism industry within the wider community.
 - In some cases, lifestyle’s (semi-retirees) who operate small accommodation businesses generally have a limited desire to invest significant amounts of time and money to grow their business.
 - Due to the small numbers of industry operators, local government plays a significant role in delivering visitor facilities and services. This has resulted in provision of feature maps and brochures, caravan parks and drive trails, however there has been limited development of new tourism business, corporate ventures or commercial operations. It also limits visitor access to information outside of local government operating hours.
- One of the Region’s key attractors is its natural environment and the wildflower season. The seasonal nature of this opportunity affects the ability for operations to achieve year round viability. New or additional visitor experiences need to be developed to boost viability for operators.
 - The fear of litigation and associated increasing cost of insurance is affecting the establishment of new adventure-tourism operations.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

The Wheatbelt Region, as defined by the WDC is serviced by three different Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs); Australia’s Golden Outback, Australia’s Coral Coast and Experience Perth. The support and marketing opportunity offered by these organisations is fully supported by the WDC and the Region. However, they are limited by budgets and the extensive areas they cover.

There are a number of formal Regional Tourism Groups within the Region that work collaboratively across local government areas. For the most part, their work involves attending trade shows and delivering advertising initiatives. These include:

- NEWTravel
- RoeTourism
- Avon Tourism
- Dryandra Tourism

These groups are generally volunteer based or a combination of local government representatives and volunteers.

CENTRAL WHEATBELT TOURISM STRATEGY – EASTERN WHEATBELT

During 2013/14, the WDC facilitated the development of tourism in the Eastern Wheatbelt through the Central Wheatbelt Tourism Strategy project, a two year partnership between WDC, Tourism Groups and local governments.

In 2012, Tourism WA provided \$200,000 funding for the initiative, focussed on three key areas:

- Product development;
- Capacity building; and
- Marketing and website development.

The Eastern Wheatbelt was selected due to the economic pressures in the Region as a result of challenges to the Agricultural industry, and the significant work already completed by the local governments and volunteers to develop the Central Wheatbelt Tourism Strategy.

Product Development

A Tourism Product Development Officer (TPDO) worked across the 19 Shires in the Eastern Wheatbelt to:

- implement the Central Wheatbelt Tourism Strategy;
- deliver capacity building initiatives; and
- develop the tourism industry, product and experiences.

This TPDO worked closely with industry operators in the Region to improve their capacity and industry knowledge. In 2012, two familiarisation tours of investors and inbound tour operators were hosted. This resulted in the formation of a group of industry operators in the Region who are keen to work collaboratively to improve their personal businesses and

the quality of tourism product on offer. To date, three new tours have been initiated as a result of these visits.

Capacity Building

In recognising the immaturity of the industry in the Eastern Wheatbelt this funding was targeted to improve the understanding of the tourism industry in the Region and the importance of visitors to the Region's economy. Workshops have been held in 15 towns in the Sub-region. These have been well received with 221 attending the sessions and to date have resulted in:

- formation of three new, local community tourism groups, plus two sub-regional groups, who are identifying and acting on initiatives to attract more visitors.
- seven communities keen to hold further meetings to determine next steps for tourism development;
- eight proponents exploring the potential establishment of tourism businesses in the region; and
- over 35 individuals becoming involved with tourists coming to them or their business (such as Aborigines, farmers, artists, craftspeople, entertainment venues, collectors and those with knowledge of the environment, history and geology etc).

Marketing and Website Development

This funding was utilised to redevelop the Central Wheatbelt Tourism website (www.wheatbelttourism.com) and to develop and distribute a sub regional tourism brochure. The Eastern Wheatbelt Visitor Guide was produced and has been distributed through a distribution company for the past 12 months. Distribution numbers were positive and a reprint including advertising space was completed.

This project is funded until March 2014, beyond which WDC's ability to continue its involvement in the tourism industry development is limited.

PRODUCT IN THE EASTERN WHEATBELT

The Eastern portion of the Wheatbelt has a substantial number of services, facilities, features or products which are already available and in operation. They are detailed in the table at **Appendix One**. Wave Rock/Hyden is presumed well-known and, except where particularly mentioned, does not form part of the remaining commentary.

Accommodation:

The majority of establishments offer 12-24 beds. The standard (room condition, inside and outdoor appearance, service, basic facilities) ranges from poor to two-star, some just making three-star. Establishments in five of the larger centres (Merredin, Lake Grace, Kellerberrin, Southern Cross and Corrigin) with more rooms, enjoy satisfactory occupancy rates and repeat/regular bookings. These bookings mostly consist of merchandise reps (salespeople), mining industry personnel, government employees, and business people, rather than recognised tourists. Wave Rock is the only fully-tourist focused complex.

Information Centres:

- 2 accredited Visitor Centres (Merredin, Wave Rock)
- 2 non-accredited Visitor centres (Lake Grace, Wyalkatchem)
- 5 new centres being built/proposed
- The remainder are co-located, multi-purpose informational outlets, which include tourism information (eg: CRC, Shire Office, museum) with or without a telephone, and staffed only some days of the week.

OTHER SUB REGIONS OF THE WHEATBELT

Given the initial success of the work completed in collaboration with the tourism industry in the Eastern Wheatbelt, WDC are keen to encourage collaborative tourism development the in the remainder of the Region. Sub regional economic planning in the Wheatbelt has identified that tourism alone is not a strong economic driver but is an industry that compliments and enhances the provision of community amenity. There are instances where the tourism industry has been developed as an economic driver – namely Hyden.

Avon Tourism, a strong, volunteer based tourism group, with a great track record in marketing. They are currently seeking support to develop a regional plan for the development of the industry in this area.

Dryandra Visitors Centre is a volunteer based operation, supported by the Shires of Cuballing, Pingelly, Wandering, Town of Narrogin, Shire of Narrogin and Wickelpin. It currently has a paid manager although the future arrangements are uncertain. Without a paid manager the group is likely to suffer volunteer burnout.

There is significant potential for growth of the industry in the Central Coast region. A number of new businesses have been successfully established here, including Jurien Bay Sky Dive. At present there are no active regional tourism groups in the Central Coast, although the local governments have undertaken some planning for the development of the industry.

APPENDIX 1:

TOURISM PRODUCT IN THE EASTERN WHEATBELT

Town	Accommodation					Visit Information Centre	RV Dump	Displays				Art Craft Entertainment	Services					Trail	Event
	Hotel	Motel	Caravan Park	Backpacker	B&B			Farm Stay	Mus	Ciotion	Ittr Cntr		Cult Hrtg	Eat	Fuel	Pharmacy	Paper /Lotto		
Beacon			Green	Light Purple								Green	Light Green					Light Green	
Bencubbin	Yellow		Green									Green	Light Green					Light Green	
Bruce Rock	Yellow	Light Blue	Green	Light Purple	Orange		Brown	Light Orange		Grey	Light Purple	Green	Light Green	Light Blue	Light Orange	Yellow	Red	Light Green	Yellow
Carrabin	Yellow	Light Blue	Green									Green	Light Green					Light Green	
Corrigin	Yellow	Light Blue	Green					Light Orange			Light Purple	Green	Light Green	Light Blue	Light Orange	Yellow	Red	Light Green	Yellow
Doodlakine											Light Purple							Light Green	Yellow
Dowerin	Yellow		Green		Orange		Brown	Light Orange			Light Purple	Green	Light Green		Light Orange	Yellow		Light Green	Yellow
Hyden	Yellow	Light Blue	Green	Light Purple	Orange			Light Orange	Yellow	Light Green	Light Purple	Green	Light Green	Light Blue	Light Orange	Yellow		Light Green	Yellow
Karlgarin			Green															Light Green	
Kellerberrin	Yellow	Light Blue	Green		Orange			Light Orange		Grey	Light Purple	Green	Light Green	Light Blue	Light Orange	Yellow	Red	Light Green	Yellow
Kondinin	Yellow	Light Blue	Green	Light Purple	Orange							Green	Light Green		Light Orange		Red	Light Green	
Koorda	Yellow		Green	Light Purple				Light Orange			Light Purple	Green	Light Green		Light Orange			Light Green	
Kulin	Yellow	Light Blue	Green	Light Purple			Brown	Light Orange			Light Purple	Green	Light Green		Light Orange	Yellow		Light Green	Yellow
Kununoppin																	Red	Light Green	
Lake Grace	Yellow	Light Blue	Green		Orange	Light Orange		Light Orange			Light Purple	Green	Light Green		Light Orange	Yellow	Red	Light Green	Yellow
Lake King	Tvn		Green									Green	Light Green					Light Green	

	Accommodation							RV Dump	Displays				Art Craft Entertainment	Services					Trail	Event	
	Town	Hotel	Motel	Caravan Park	Backpacker	B&B	Farm Stay		Visit Information Centre	Mus	Clock ion	Itzp Cntr		Cult Hrtg	Eat	Fuel	Pharmacy	Paper /Lotto			ATM
Marvel Loch	Yellow	Light Blue											Green								
Merredin	Yellow	Light Blue	Green		Orange		Green		Light Orange		Grey	Purple	Green	Light Green	Blue	Light Orange	Yellow			Light Green	Yellow
Moorine Rock	Yellow	Light Blue	Green										Green			Light Orange				Light Green	
Mukinbudin	Yellow		Green		Orange		Green	Brown			Grey		Green	Light Green		Light Orange	Yellow			Light Green	Yellow
Muntadgin	Yellow			Light Purple									Green								
Narembeen	Yellow	Light Blue	Green		Orange	Orange	Green	Brown	Light Orange	Light Green	Grey	Purple	Green	Light Green	Blue	Light Orange		Red		Light Green	
Newdegate	Yellow	Light Blue	Green		Orange								Green	Light Green		Light Orange				Light Green	Yellow
Nungarin	Yellow		Green	Light Purple			Green	Brown	Light Orange		Grey		Green	Light Green		Light Orange				Light Green	Yellow
Quairading	Yellow	Light Blue	Green				Green	Brown		Yellow			Green	Light Green	Blue	Light Orange	Yellow	Red		Light Green	Yellow
Shackleton												Purple								Light Green	
Southern Cross	Yellow	Light Blue	Green	Light Purple	Orange	Orange	Green		Light Orange	Yellow	Grey	Purple	Green	Light Green	Blue	Light Orange	Yellow	Red		Light Green	Yellow
Tammin	Yellow						Green	Brown					Green	Light Green		Light Orange				Light Green	Yellow
Trayning	Yellow		Green				Green	Brown					Green	Light Green		Light Orange				Light Green	
Westonia	Yellow		Green				Green	Brown	Light Orange				Green	Light Green		Light Orange				Light Green	
Wyalkatchem	Yellow	Light Blue	Green	Light Purple	Orange		Green	Brown	Light Orange			Purple	Green	Light Green		Light Orange		Red		Light Green	Yellow
Yelbini									Light Orange											Light Green	