

CENTRAL COAST EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY 2011 - SUMMARY



Developed by
ARDROSS GROUP
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS



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This employment strategy provides an analysis of the industry and employment opportunities in the Central Coast subregion of the Wheatbelt as a response to the greater awareness of and accessibility to this stretch of Western Australia's coast line for visitors, potential residents, and investors. Capturing industry and business opportunities, directing government investment, and preparing coastal communities for anticipated economic and social change is vital for the subregion's development. With this in mind, the Wheatbelt Development Commission (WDC), Shire of Dandaragan, Shire of Gingin, LandCorp and Ardross Group of Companies commissioned The University of Western Australia to conduct an analysis and make recommendations to guide local communities, industry bodies, and the government sector.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Population and Visitor Growth

- Population and visitor growth experienced in most coastal towns in the subregion will provide opportunities for “population driven” jobs, growth for existing local businesses, and securing better social infrastructure
- This growth is resulting from northern urban expansion and amenity migration attracting high percentages of retirees, holiday homeowners and lifestyle seekers
- There are select individuals with leadership abilities enabling change through establishing new patterns of action and belief
- Growth in visitor numbers with the opening of the Indian Ocean Drive has the opportunity for seasonality to “flatten”

Economic and Employment Diversification

- Relative even distribution of employment across sectors in the coastal locations, as opposed to the local governments as a whole, reflects a degree of diversification in those economies
- Increased competition amongst businesses is likely to improve quality and consistency of local goods and services with greater ability for business clustering to develop a coordinated local and regional product
- Niche industries and “footloose” businesses are establishing (i.e. businesses which are characterised by people who choose where they want to live first and establish a business later)
- Great opportunities to attract knowledge-based initiatives alongside consumption-based enterprises
- There are positive economic and social multipliers associated with growth in the tourism and recreation sector with room to consolidate and market Turquoise Coast as a regional brand and quality “stop over” and activities-based destination
- Well established tour companies connected to the international tourism market are operating in the subregion
- Growing horticulture and viticulture development is making a significant economic contribution both from value of product and associated support ventures
- There is a presence of mineral resources in the subregion

Land and Infrastructure/Services Development

- There is availability and affordability of residential, commercial and industrial land
- Private property developers have considerable interest in the larger coastal towns in the subregion
- High percentage of employment in the construction sector is often indicative of current and future population growth and building/infrastructure investment
- A larger catchment area is now presented for a commuter labour force with the decrease in drive times provided by the Indian Ocean Drive
- There are opportunities to attract fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) workers as a potential group to invest in real estate in the subregion
- Subregion is well positioned for creative solutions for key infrastructure development (e.g. water supply and reuse facilities and alternative energy enterprises)
- Jurien Bay's role as the subregional centre is increasing with a concentration of government services in the town
- Increased in education, training, and health facilities to what is deemed to be a growth area will not only meet demand but will foster a growing area of employment





WEAKNESSES AND THREATS

Population and Visitor Demographics

- Under representation of people aged 15-34 years and an over representation of older age cohorts which has local social and economic impacts, particularly on labour force participation rates
- The Shire of Coorow has not experienced the same level of population, visitor, and employment growth or emergence of new enterprises
- Lifestyle or retirement-led migration does not guarantee employment generation
- Difficulty accurately capturing the percentage of population that are transient workers or absentee landowners
- Fluctuations and seasonal changes in demand can be difficult for small businesses to manage particularly in terms of staffing and offering consistency of product
- Self-drive and self-sufficient tourists either not staying in for extended periods or spending little money in towns
- Conflicts can arise where retirees, holiday homeowners and lifestyle seekers expect the same service provision offered in metropolitan areas but do not regularly use those services
- Seasonal demand is not always viewed by government as justification for new infrastructure or population facilities

Development Characteristics

- There is a risk that new investors, developers, and government taking reactive rather than proactive approach to forecasted population increase which will not translate in immediate regional economic growth
- Smaller communities struggle to attract private property developers
- Slow conversion of sold lots to dwellings can result in economic involution and land being “locked away” for investment purposes with little impact on population and economic stimulus
- There is a strong perception that the government planning system for land release and development approval is confusing, slow, and off-putting for developers and small business owners
- There is a lack of strategic land use planning in a number of coastal communities in the subregion
- Headworks costs can be a disincentive for private developers, investors and local governments
- Upgrades to key development infrastructure, such as telecommunications, water and power are needed for industry attraction and expansion

Industries in Flux

- Establishing businesses under financed with limited knowledge of the market and seasonal fluctuations can result in high turnover of operations in the subregion
- Attracting private capital and securing financial loans for tourism investment and small businesses can prove difficult
- Businesses competing rather than cooperating with each other
- Lack of understanding and difficulty quantifying opportunities in the tourism and recreation sector and benefits associated with the opening of the Indian Ocean Drive
- Consumption-based industries (i.e. tourism and hospitality) can be characterised by low wages, low-skill requirements, and seasonal employment
- Restructure of the Western Rock Lobster Fishery is likely to result in decrease local employment in the sector and negative multipliers for local businesses
- Mining in the area is volatile in terms of commodity prices, mineral quality and mining lifespan which has resulted in a number of recent mine closures and downgrading
- Dependent on overseas markets for key industries including fishing, agriculture, mining, and tourism



RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

IDENTIFIED GROWTH INDUSTRIES

- Tourism, hospitality, and recreation (particularly activities/adventure-based and nature-based ventures, accommodation facilities, recreational aviation and niche industries)
- Alternative energy initiatives (e.g. wind and concentrated solar power generation)
- Diversification and intensification of agriculture (e.g. alternative livestock and horticulture operations and associated processing and management services)
- Aquaculture ventures
- Population driven services (e.g. immediate demand for aged care services)
- “Footloose” ventures where people relocate first for lifestyle choices and establish business later
- Construction and land development sector
- It is recommended that a Central Coast Economic Alliance is established to coordinate infrastructure investment and project delivery. It will be important for such a group to have a subregional focus and encourage local industry and community groups to act collaboratively, avoiding local fragmentation. The Central Coast Economic Alliance will be responsible for prioritising and overseeing activity generated from the actions listed below (please refer to the full report for more detail).

SECURE INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS INVESTMENT

- Effective marketing of investment opportunities to national and select international industry groups
- Wider provision of business support services (e.g. accessing capital, up-skilling and training opportunities)
- Streamline State and local government planning processes
- Tourism and hospitality sector specific – refer to Central Coast Strategic Tourism Planning Study (MacroPlan 2008)

BETTER UTILISE SUBREGIONAL POPULATION AND LABOUR FORCE DYNAMICS

- Offer employment flexibility (e.g. work hours, remuneration, transport, housing)
- Effective marketing for the subregion targeting FIFO investment
- Enhance linkages with vocational education and training (VET) and school-based apprenticeships
- Advocate for greater TAFE services in the subregion offering courses tailored for local industry needs (e.g. flexible delivery, build facilities, quality teaching staff)
- Enhance linkages with metropolitan tertiary education and training providers and regional apprenticeships, traineeships and career pathways to attract younger age cohorts to work in the subregion
- Take advantage of high labour mobility and the wider labour force catchment area provided with increased accessibility from Indian Ocean Drive (particularly relevant to areas adjacent to the northern metropolitan suburbs)
- Adjust local government grant funding model to accurately capture population dynamics (e.g. full time residents, part-time residents, visitors, and transient labour force)

FACILITATE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

- Negotiate with developers, LandCorp, Department of Planning, and Regional Development and Lands to keep pace with demand for residential, commercial, and industrial purposes
- Maintain, and where appropriate expand, incentive programs to encourage high conversion of sold lots to built infrastructure
- Encourage innovative housing development with a diversity of design and density, such as smaller apartments and residential units

SECURE GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- Advocate for supply upgrades of telecommunications, water, sewerage and power (e.g. meet population demands and industry/commercial expansion; peak government corporate bodies to be receptive to exploring alternative and creative supply and reuse options)
- Advocate for construction of new cross-sector government agency building to address lack of office space for growing capacity (particularly relevant to DEC)
- State service providers to adjust methods of strategic planning and resource allocation (e.g. consult external sources, consider seasonal demand, timely reaction)
- Promote adoption of alternative service delivery models and expand facilities tailored to the service needs specific to the subregion
- Resource investment in tourist infrastructure (e.g. car parks, foot paths, public toilets, access to underutilised potential tourist attractions such as Stockyard Gully caves, information centres particularly in Lancelin and Jurien Bay, signposting)
- Advocate for increased capacity of aviation infrastructure in the subregion (particular emphasis at Jurien Bay as the subregional centre to service WA's labour requirements, recreation aviation, and fire emergencies)