

STRATEGIC PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils (WEROC) Inc. is an incorporated not-for-profit organisation whose membership is comprised of representatives from the Eastern Wheatbelt Shire's of Bruce Rock, Kellerberrin, Merredin, Tammin, Westonia and Yilgarn.

WEROC Inc. exists to support the growth and development of the Eastern Wheatbelt through:

Leadership: Taking an active interest in and being a strong partner and voice on all matters impacting on the people and industry of the Eastern Wheatbelt.

Action: Delivering projects and services considered beneficial to the whole of the Eastern Wheatbelt region.

Promotion: Gaining greater recognition of the Eastern Wheatbelt as an ideal place to visit, do business and live.

Collaboration: Achieving real outcomes for the Eastern Wheatbelt through strengthened partnerships and understanding that we work smarter and better together.



OUR REGION

The WEROC region covers an area of 43,136km² in the Central Eastern Wheatbelt, encompassing six Local Government areas and several townsites and smaller settlements. The estimated resident population of the WEROC region is 7,412[1]. Merredin as the largest town within the WEROC region, acts as a hub for government, population services and commerce.

The WEROC area is a region of small businesses with 52.4% of registered businesses being non-employing and a further 45% employing less than 20 people[2]. Agriculture is the largest industry by volume of registered businesses (44% of all registered businesses are classified as agricultural) and is also the principal industry of employment across the WEROC region. While agriculture is still an important employer within the Shires of Yilgarn and Westonia, as a percentage of employed persons mining (gold and iron ore) is the largest industry of employment.

The WEROC regions Gross Regional Product (GRP) is estimated at \$1.605 billion (24% of the total GRP for the Wheatbelt)[3]. Bruce Rock contributes \$67.676 million, Kellerberrin \$74.834 million, Merredin \$299.110 million, Tammin \$28.440 million, Westonia \$132.301 million and Yilgarn \$1.003 billion.

Unemployment across the region has typically remained lower than the state average (6.1% for Western Australia in the June quarter 2021 compared to the Shire's of Merredin 3.4%, Kellerberrin 5.1%, Bruce Rock 3.4%, Westonia 2.6%, and Yilgarn 2.4%)[4].

At an estimated \$909.743 million, mining is the largest value-added contributor to the WEROC region's economy. Mining in the WEROC region accounts for 78% of the mining value-add for the entire Wheatbelt region. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing is the second largest value-adding industry with a contribution of approximately \$118 million.

The population of the WEROC Region is expected to both decline and age over the coming decade. The WA Planning Commission predicts that by 2031 the population will have reduced by 6.9% down to 6,900 persons and that the proportion of persons aged 65+ will increase from 18.2% to 25.2% [5]. The greatest population decline is projected to occur in the Shire's of Westonia and Yilgarn. Conversely Merredin is expected to experience moderate growth (up 4.5% to 3,515 persons).



7,412

POPULATION



1.6 BILLION

**GROSS REGIONAL
PRODUCT**



44%

**OF BUSSINESSES
ARE AGRICULTURAL**



**\$909
MILLION**

MINING INDUSTRY

[1] ABS Regional Population Growth, Estimated Resident Population, LGAs, WA for 2019

[2] ABS (2020), Counts of Australian Businesses, including entries and exits June 2015 to June 2019.

[3] REMPLAN Economy Profile, Wheatbelt Region, data accessed on 13 December 2021

[4] Department of Education, Skills and Employment, LGA Data Tables Small Area Labour Market, June Quarter 2021

[5] Western Australian Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (2018), Western Australia Tomorrow Population Report 11

Risks & Opportunities

OPPORTUNITIES

INTERNAL

- Broader collaboration through better engagement with other Regional Organisations of Councils.
- A strong voice for our region by having a clear direction and pathway forward for WEROC Inc.
- Improved two-way communication with Local Members of State and Federal Parliament.
- Deliver cost savings and greater efficiencies to Member Councils through aggregated procurement and shared resources/ infrastructure.
- Funding driven opportunities to enable action on priority projects.

EXTERNAL

- Continued provision of essential aged care services and accommodation through CEACA.
- Capitalising on the momentum created by COVID-19 for local buying and intra-state travel by supporting local businesses and enhancing tourism product and amenity in the region.
- Improved digital coverage and connectivity creating greater opportunities for e-commerce and efficiencies in service delivery.

RISKS

INTERNAL

- Changes in Local Government structures and/or key personnel could alter the focus and commitment to WEROC Inc.
- Boundaries for regional groupings are not the same for all Member Councils (e.g. regional roads groups, tourism groups).
- Potential for WEROC Inc. to lack direction and have limited impact as an advocate for the Eastern Wheatbelt.
- Communication gap with stakeholders resulting in limited understanding of what WEROC does and why it exists.

EXTERNAL

- The population of the WEROC region is in decline.
- Opportunities to source funding for priority projects are diminishing.
- Limited appeal of the Eastern Wheatbelt as a place to live, work, visit or invest.





STRATEGIC CONTEXT

STATE PRIORITIES

The State Planning Strategy 2050 is an overarching strategic document that provides direction for all State, regional and local planning strategies, policies and approvals.

The State Planning Strategy identifies five interrelated strategic goals to support the vision of “sustained growth and prosperity” for Western Australia:

1. Global competitiveness will be enhanced through continued economic diversification.
2. Strong and resilient regions will be built through economic expansion and inter-regional collaboration.
3. Sustainable communities will be enhanced by investment in infrastructure and social capital.
4. Infrastructure planning and coordination will achieve efficiencies and synergy in pursuit of economic growth.
5. Conservation of the environment will be enhanced by sustainable development and efficient resource use.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

The Wheatbelt Development Commission's Strategic Plan 2020-2023 identifies a vision for the Wheatbelt to have a “diversified and growing economy with vibrant and dynamic communities, creating a prosperous and sustainable future for Western Australia.

To achieve this vision, the Wheatbelt Development Commission has identified the following strategic priorities:

- Enabling infrastructure. Focusing on water and power infrastructure, digital connectivity, transport and logistics investment and land assembly.
- Diversify the economic base. Focusing on economic diversification, local procurement and employment, and regional collaboration.
- Entrepreneurship and innovation. Focusing on entrepreneurship in industry development and innovation in regional development.
- Sustainable landscapes and communities. Focusing on environmental entrepreneurship, environmental and economic resilience and supporting new industry opportunities.
- Organisational excellence. Focusing on leadership and partnerships, governance, and workplace diversity and inclusion.

The Strategic Plan has a strong focus on facilitating economic diversification, building environmental and economic resilience, and advocating for enabling infrastructure.

LOCAL PRIORITIES

The following Local Government priorities have been extrapolated from a desktop review of the WEROC Inc. Member Council's Strategic Community Plan's. The priorities have been grouped into four key themes:

Theme	Priorities
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local business and employment growth • New industry development • Tourism • Roads/transport networks • Telecommunications • Housing
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shire owned facilities and public spaces • Population services (health, education, childcare, aged care/accommodation, youth services) • Arts, culture, and heritage • Support for volunteers and community groups • Safety and emergency management
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste management • Renewable energy • Protection of the natural environment • Water reuse
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement • Regional partnerships • Council leadership • Advocacy/lobbying • Compliance

FUTURE DIRECTION

Vision

For the Wheatbelt East to
grow and prosper

Mission

Working together to enhance
the regions sustainability
through investment and
innovation



Values

Commitment to our Region: We will ensure that in everything we do, we consider the best interests of the people that live and work in or visit the communities of the Eastern Wheatbelt.

Collaboration: We will work together as a united group to prioritise and address important issues impacting on our region, and to achieve outcomes that cannot be accomplished individually.

Accountability: We are committed to good governance and accountability in delivering outcomes for our region. We will ensure our stakeholders have genuine involvement in decision making and that we communicate openly, accurately, and effectively with all those who are impacted by the decisions or actions that we take.

Innovation & Excellence: We value innovation and strive for continuous improvement in delivering positive outcomes for our region.

Integrity: We will act with integrity, building lasting partnerships based on honesty and trust.

Regional Leadership: We will be a strong partner and voice representing our region.

ACTION PLAN

The Board of WEROC Inc. have identified five strategic priorities which will guide the actions and activities of the organisation over the near term (one to three years). These were determined based on alignment to identified state, regional and local priorities, and the capacity for WEROC to influence and create change for the better.

Priority 1: Sustainability

Objective

Progress toward using resources in a socially and economically sustainable way to protect the natural environment and adapt to a changing climate.

Actions

1. Complete the WEROC Strategic Waste Management Plan and Landfill Rationalization Study
2. Identify opportunities to support local sustainability initiatives including the 'Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub' in Merredin
3. Monitor the Regional Climate Alliance Program pilot and apply for future funding opportunities as they arise.

Desired Outcomes

- Consolidated waste management equipment/ infrastructure
- Improved resource recovery
- A region that is responsive and resilient to a changing climate
- Leveraging existing programs and funding opportunities facilitates more ambitious climate action

Priority 2: Tourism Product Development

Objective

Increase the WEROC regional visitor economy.

Actions

1. Implement priority actions arising from the 2021 WEROC Tourism Product Audit.
2. Continue to work with the Central Wheatbelt Visitors Centre and other regional tourism groups on cooperative marketing initiatives.
3. Investigate the potential to establish a destination development officer as a dedicated tourism resource across the WEROC Local Governments.

Desired Outcomes

- New tourism products
- Increased visitor numbers
- Increased visitor spend in local tourism, hospitality, and retail businesses
- Improved tourism product reviews and traveller ratings

ACTION PLAN

Priority 3: Strengthening our Economy through Local Business Development

Objective	Actions	Desired Outcomes
Sustained economic recovery post COVID-19.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Facilitate the delivery of the Customer Service Institute of Australia's, Customer Service Excellence Program. 2. Lend support to initiatives of regional chambers of commerce and the Wheatbelt Business Network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased business turnover • Retention of businesses • Improved customer satisfaction

Priority 4: WEROC Digital Connectivity

Objective	Actions	Desired Outcomes
High capacity telecommunications network and linkages that support digital access and connectivity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish partnerships to collaboratively address deficiencies in digital connectivity and capacity across the Eastern Wheatbelt. 2. Liaise with key stakeholders including the Wheatbelt Development Commission, NEWROC and ROEROC. 3. Work with telecommunications providers (e.g. Telstra, Optus, NBN Co.) to target improvements in fixed and mobile connectivity. 4. Lend support to existing initiatives that have the potential to improve digital connectivity across the WEROC region (e.g. Crisp wireless). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to affordable and reliable digital communications technology across the WEROC region. • Reduction in mobile communication black spots.

ACTION PLAN

Priority 5: Inter-Council Cooperation

Objective

Achieve greater efficiency and cost savings for WEROC Member Councils through resource sharing.

Actions

1. Develop a suite of record keeping policies aligned to the new Standard for Records Management.
2. Develop a regional Public Health Plan that links to local Public Health Plans
3. Investigate the feasibility of establishing a workplace health and safety advisor position to support WEROC Local Government's in meeting compliance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*
4. Investigate a designated area migration agreement (DAMA) for the Eastern Wheatbelt.

Desired Outcomes

- Greater efficiency and cost savings to Member Councils.
- Compliance with legislative requirements.
- Members are provided with value for money from collaboration on projects

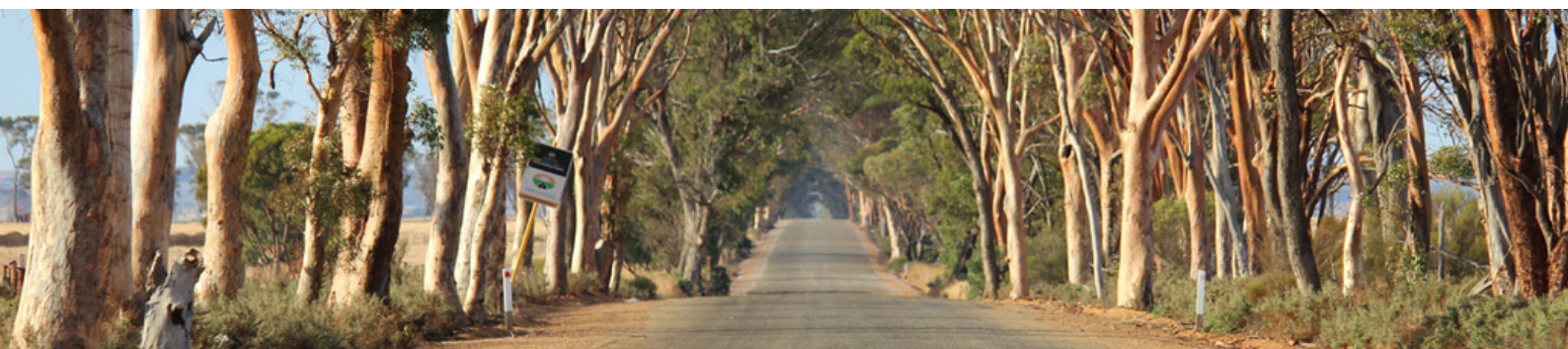
IMPLEMENTATION

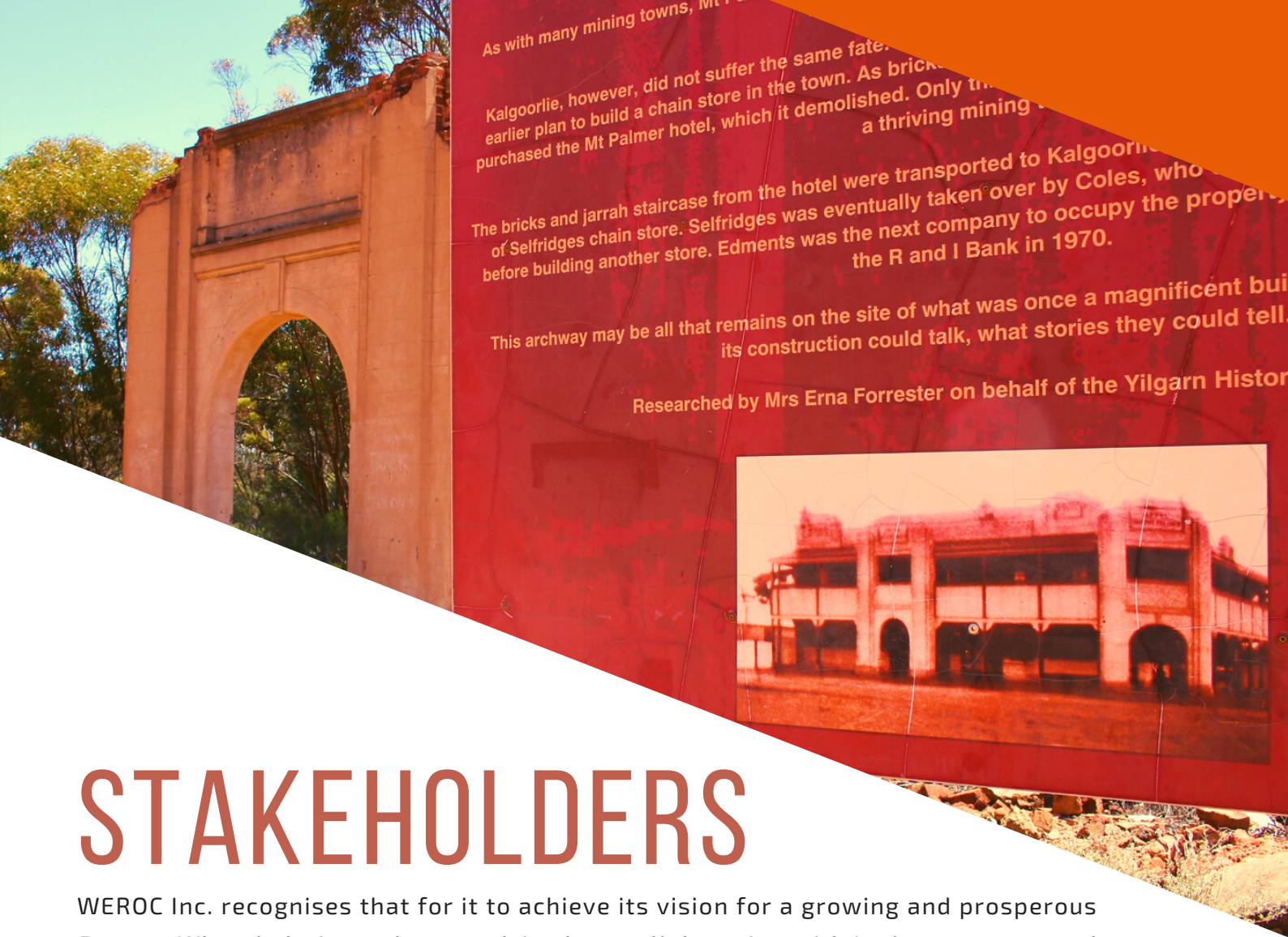
The Strategic Plan is intended to guide the programs and activities of WEROC Inc. over the next three years.

The WEROC Inc. board will direct the implementation of this Plan including setting priorities and milestones for specific activities and providing accountability for implementation.

The Board will monitor progress toward implementation of this Plan and adjust the plan as needed in response to changing context and opportunity.

To activate these opportunities the Board will seek to build strategic partnerships and leverage funding opportunities from government and corporate sponsors.





STAKEHOLDERS

WEROC Inc. recognises that for it to achieve its vision for a growing and prosperous Eastern Wheatbelt, it needs to work in close collaboration with its key partners and stakeholders. WEROC Inc. also recognises that close engagement, regular communication and support of its stakeholders will lead to more successful outcomes for the Eastern Wheatbelt.

The WEROC Inc. Board have identified the following people and organisations as key partners and stakeholders:

Community	Government	Industry	Peak Bodies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sporting Bodies • Special interest groups • Educational Institutions (e.g. school, TAFE) • Community Resource Centres • Local media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Member for O'Connor • State Member for the Central Wheatbelt • Members for the Agricultural Region • Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development • Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries • Regional Organisations of Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheatbelt Business Network • Chambers of Commerce • Regional Tourism Groups (e.g. Central Wheatbelt Visitors Centre, Australia's Golden Outback) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WALGA • Wheatbelt NRM • Wheatbelt Development Commission • RDA Wheatbelt • CEACA • LG Professionals • Landcare Groups