

Prepared for Shire of Wickepin



Agribusiness Pre-Feasibility Study

Stage One Report

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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1 Background

The Shire of Wickepin (SoW/the Shire) has identified the need to take a proactive approach to business attraction and development to allow the local economy to remain viable into the future. As an initial measure, SoW has engaged the services of a consultancy consortium, led by Whitney Consulting in collaboration with Anna Dixon Consulting and the Wheatbelt Business Network, to undertake a feasibility study to understand the current context and high-level exploration of options to strengthen the local economy.

This report represents the first stage of the project – considering the current local context, consulting with key organisational stakeholders and exploring potential opportunities for the Shire and community to consider further.

2 Current Context

The Shire of Wickepin is situated in the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia, 38km east of Narrogin and around 220 kilometres southeast of Perth. The Shire covers an area of 2,042 square kilometres, and its seat of government is the Town of Wickepin.

Within the Shire are five distinct areas – Wickepin, Yearlaring, Harrismith, Tincurrin and Toolibin. This report amalgamates the data for the whole shire (does not differentiate the contribution of the various distinct areas).

The Shire has an estimated resident population of 730 persons (modelled estimate based on 720 resident population at the time of the 2016 census) with a per worker gross regional product of \$161,596 (below the Wheatbelt Region average of \$204,884 and the State average of \$226,476)



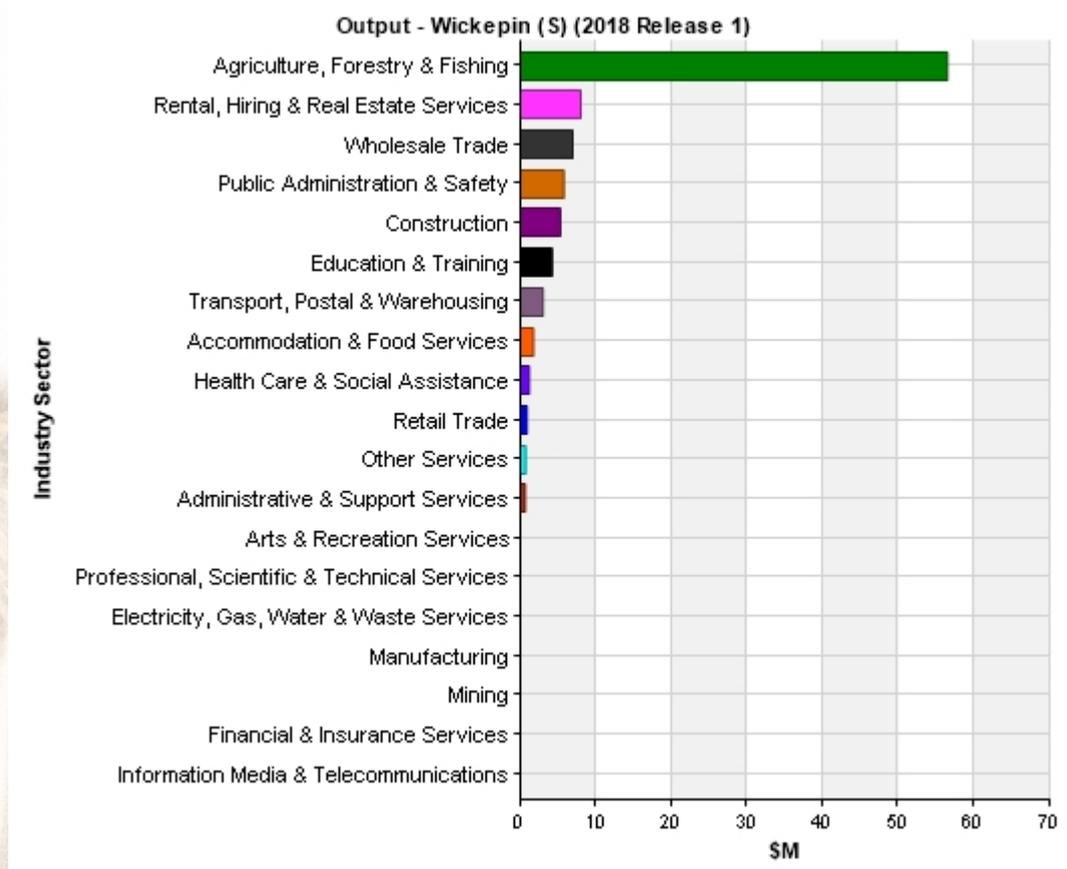
3 Economic Context

3.1 Contributions by Industry Sector

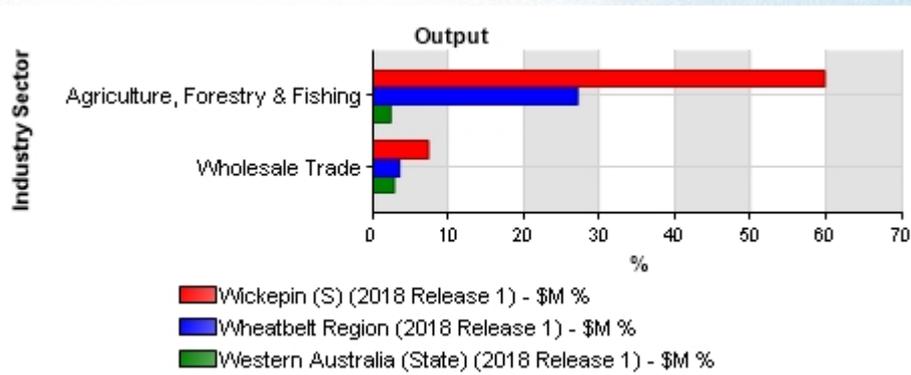
3.1.1 Output

This report shows the gross revenue generated by businesses and organisations in Wickepin at a 19-sector summary level. Output data represents the gross revenue generated by businesses/organisations in each of the industry sectors within Wickepin. Gross revenue is also referred to as total sales or total income.

The total output estimate for the Shire is \$94.557 million. The **Sheep, Grains, Beef & Dairy Cattle** sector contributes \$51.643 million (54.6%) of total output.



The agricultural sector is THE dominant sector for Wickepin, contributing \$63.404 million (67.1%) of total output. This is significantly above the contribution of agriculture in percentage terms to the Wheatbelt Region (27%) and Western Australia (2.3%) and represents both a comparative advantage and a dependency.



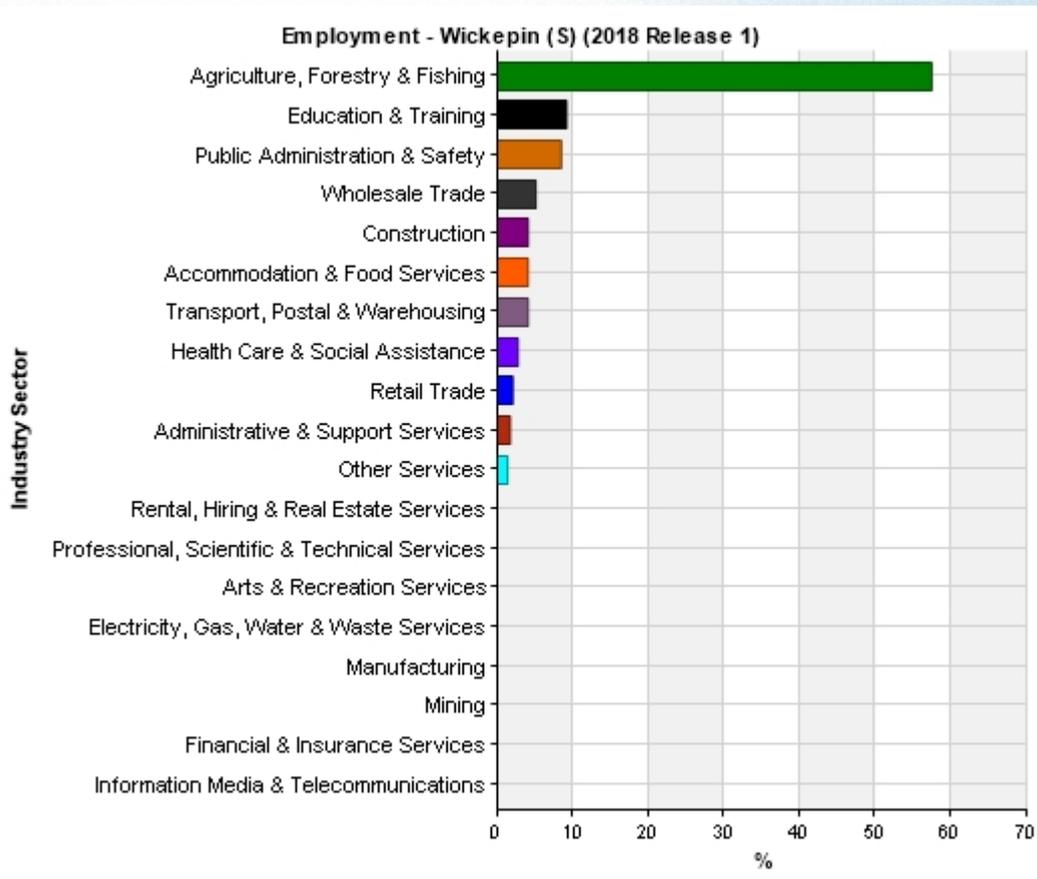
3.1.2 Enterprise concentrations:

Analysis of Australian Bureau of Statistics Table 8165.0 - Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, June 2014 to June 2018 by Local Government Area in turnover sizes shows that the 2018 Shire of Wickepin business community is distributed predominantly in the Agriculture, Forestry and Food sector, with ninety one of the total 131 registered businesses operating in this segment. By comparison, the 2016 register noted a total of 142 registered businesses, highlighting a decline in the number of local businesses. Analysis of the Australian Business Register Data would provide more detail on entries and exits.

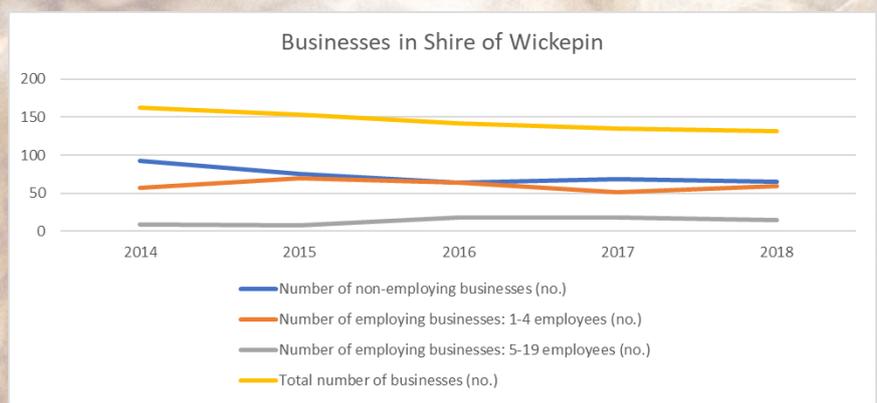
3.1.3 Employment

The total employment estimate for Wickepin is 296 full time equivalent jobs with agriculture predictably the dominant employer (170 jobs or 57.4% of the workforce). Education and Training is the next highest employment sector, providing 27 jobs or 9.1% of the workforce. Cross checking with the myschool website indicates that 10 of these jobs come from the Wickepin Primary School. ABR data would indicate where the balance is coming from.

This sector is closely followed by Public Administration and Safety with 25 jobs. Cross checking against the Shire of Wickepin annual report indicates that these jobs are generated through Shire employment. That is, the business of the Shire is the third largest industry sector within the shire of Wickepin. This is unsurprising given the relatively small size of the Shire and the need for the Shire Council to provide many services that, in a larger shire, would be provided by external organisations.



Business numbers in the Shire of Wickepin have declined from 163 in 2014 to 131 in 2018. The majority of the decline has been in non-employing businesses, reducing from 93 in 2014 to 65 in 2018.

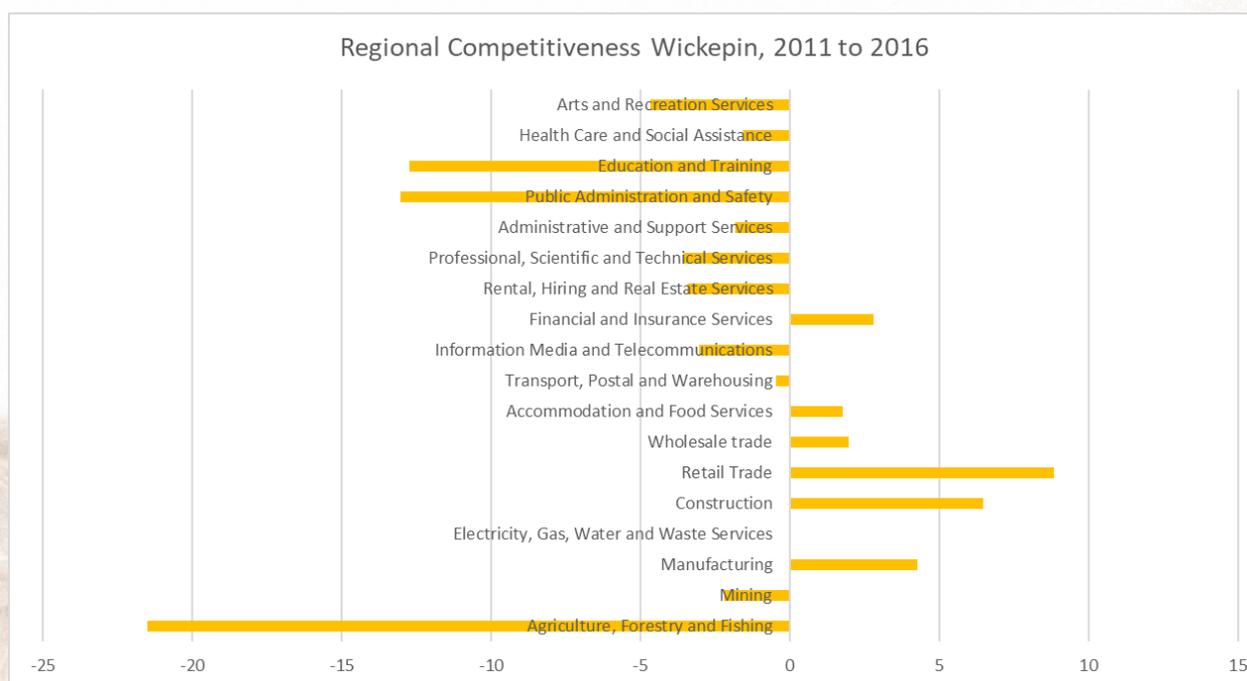


A shift-share analysis was undertaken using Census data from Wickepin (LGA) in 2011 and 2016, compared to national growth rates. The results should be used with caution due to the small population size, however, may give a general guide to industries with a regional competitive advantage.

Shift share analysis attempts to determine how much of regional job growth can be attributed to national trends and how much is due to unique regional factors, highlighting areas of competitive advantage or disadvantage in Wickepin.

The results show that between 2011 to 2016 Wickepin had regional competitiveness in Retail Trade followed by Construction, Manufacturing and Financial and Insurance Services. This growth was above what is to be expected based on national trends and suggests Wickepin has attributes which are conducive to growth in these sectors.

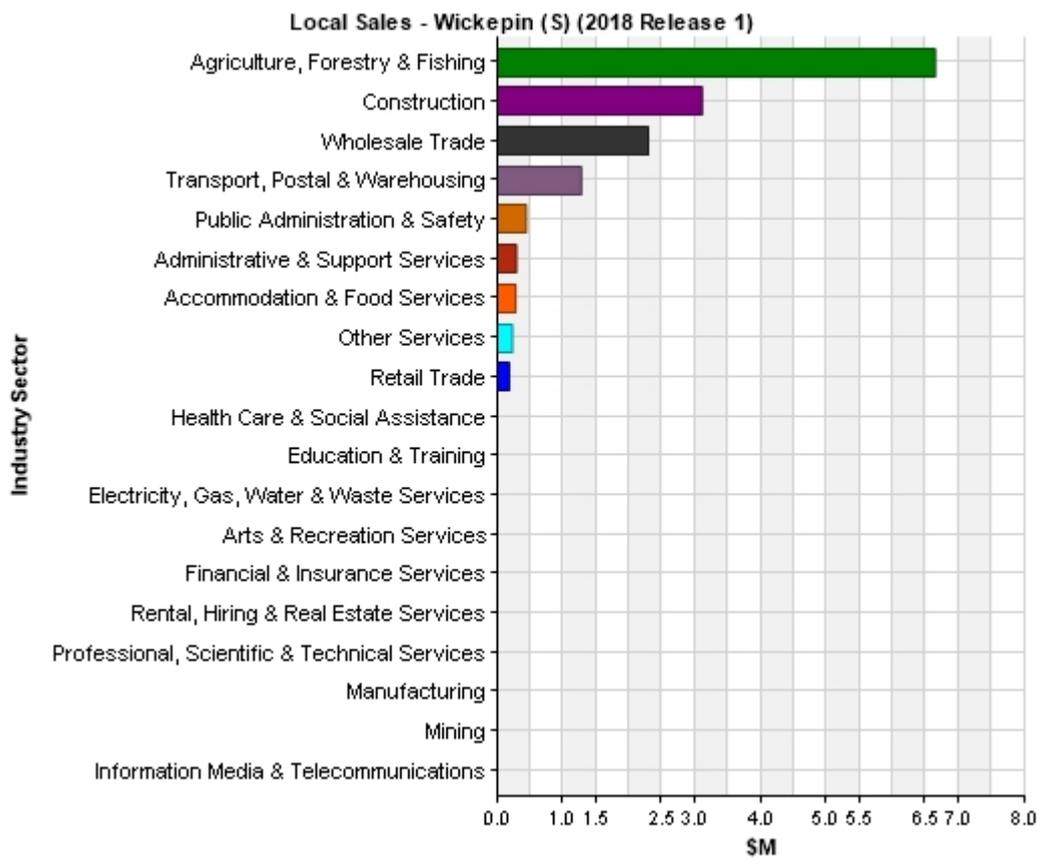
Most notably, it showed the industries of Agriculture, Public Administration and Safety, Education and Training and Arts and Recreation are declining in Wickepin against national trends. Employment decline in Agriculture is a trend seen in many areas of the Wheatbelt over this time period.



3.1.4 Local Sales

Local Sales data represents the value of goods and services produced in the Shire which are sold to local industry sectors as intermediate inputs into production and for further value-adding. The total value of local sales for an industry sector relative to exports provides insights into the degree to which the industry is dependent on local demand versus demand from outside of the region.

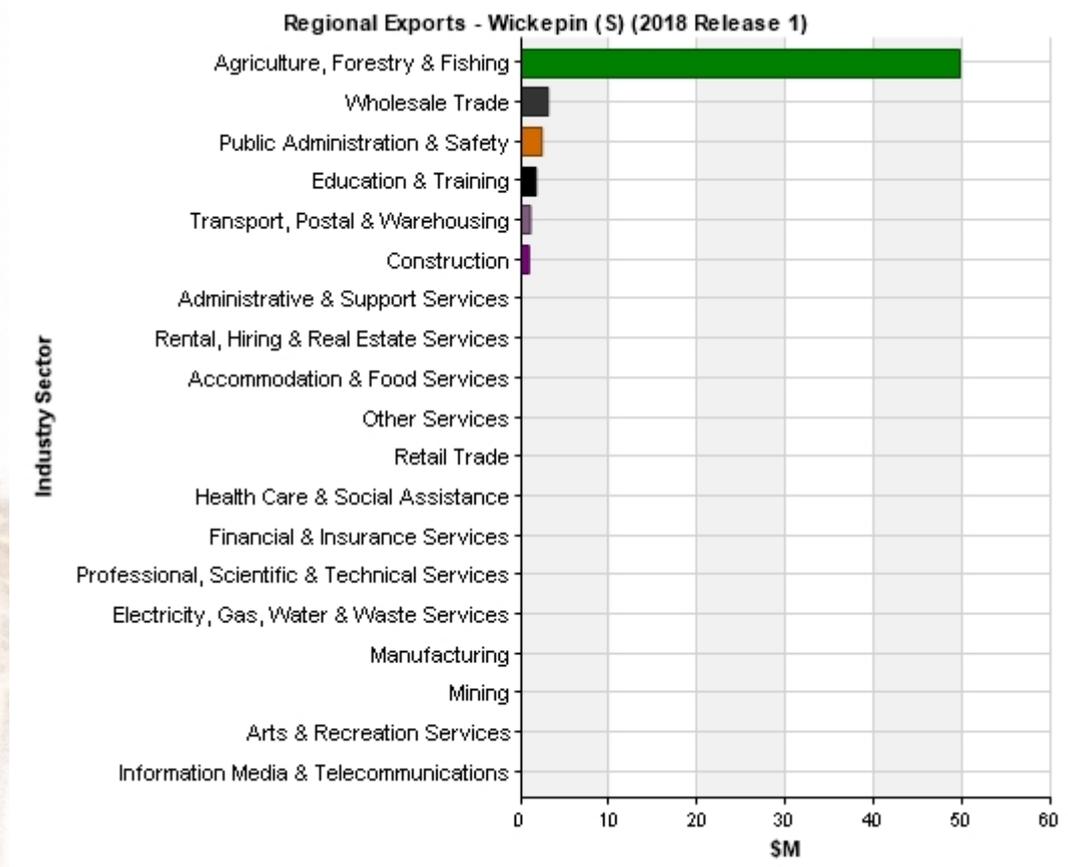
The total local sales estimate for Wickepin is \$14.714 million:



3.1.5 Regional Exports

Regional Exports data represents the value (\$) of goods and services exported outside the Shire that have been generated by businesses / organisations in each of the industry sectors within the region. Another way of defining exports is as an inflow of money into the region, i.e. Motels have an inflow of money from people who live outside the region’s boundaries thus they are earning export dollars. No distinction is made between domestic (to other towns within the region or Australia) and international exports.

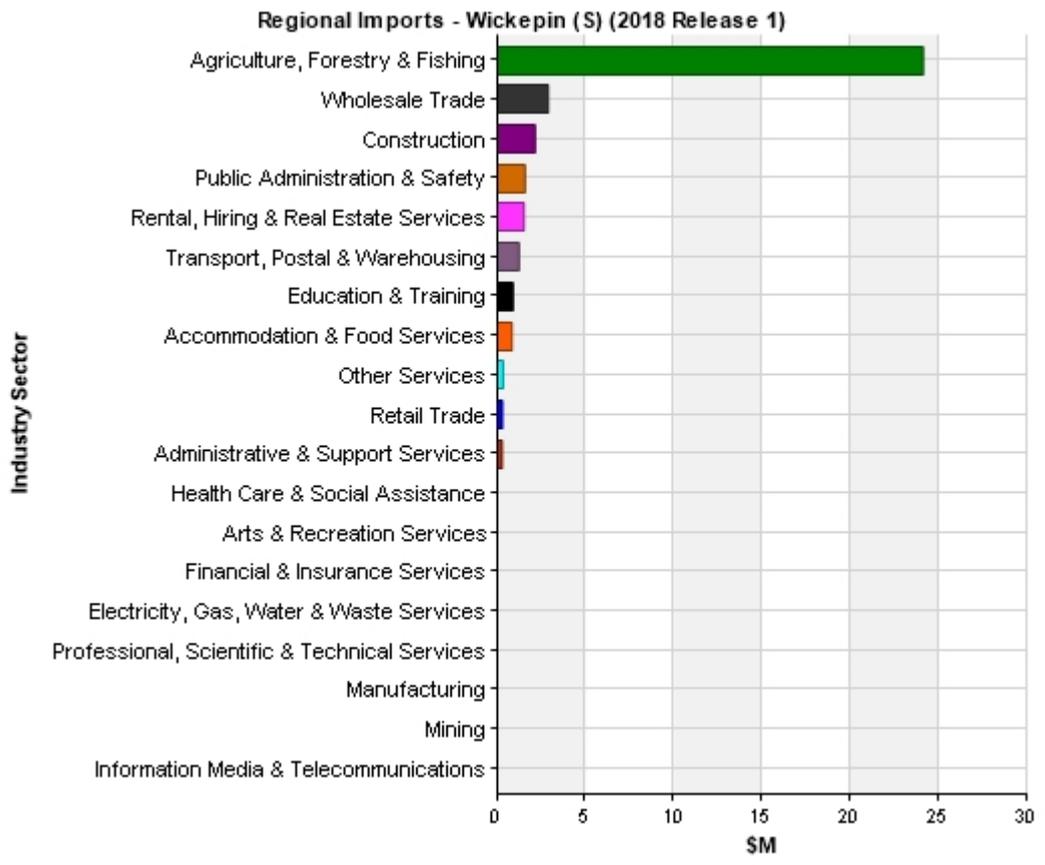
The total Shire export estimate for Wickepin is \$59.295 million, most of which is predictably agricultural (83.9% of total regional exports).



3.1.6 Regional Imports

Regional Imports data represents the value (\$) of goods and services imported into the Shire by businesses / organisations in each of the industry sectors. Another way of defining imports is as an outflow of money from the region, i.e. A local business outsourcing accountancy services to a firm in another region which results in an outflow of money thus they are importing services. No distinction is made between domestic and international imports, and no indication is given as to the type of imports.

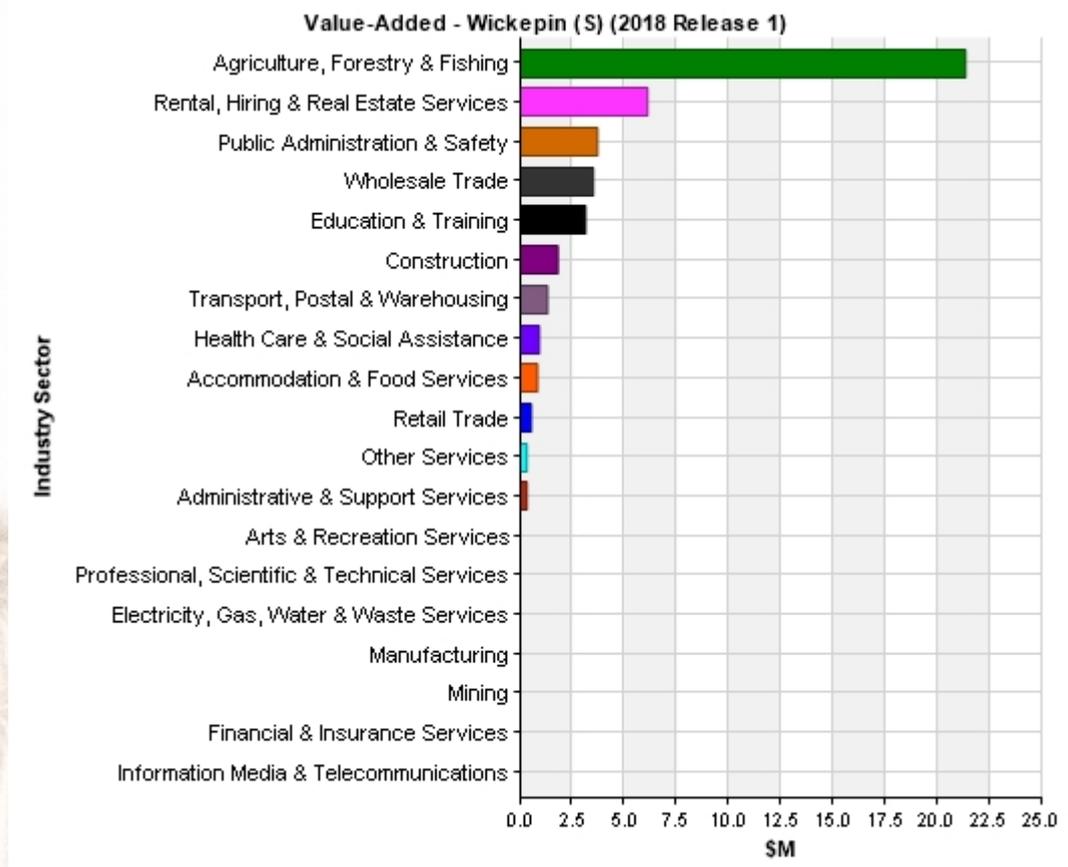
The total regional import estimate for Wickepin is \$36.163 million.



3.1.7 Value Add

Value-Added data represents the marginal economic value that is added by each industry sector in the Shire. Value-Added can be calculated by subtracting local expenditure and expenditure on regional imports from the output generated by an industry sector, or alternatively, by adding the Wages & Salaries paid to local employees, the gross operating surplus and taxes on products and production. Value-Added by industry sector is the major element in the calculation of Gross Regional Product / Gross State Product / Gross Domestic Product.

The total value-added estimate for Wickepin is \$43.68 million.



3.1.8 Gross Regional Product

GRP is the total value of **final** goods and services produced in the Shire over the period of one year. As can be seen from the table, this includes exports but subtracts imports.

GRP can be measured by adding up all forms of **final** expenditure

- consumption by households
- consumption by governments
- additions or increases to assets (minus disposals)
- exports (minus imports)

This calculation does not include intermediate expenditure as this would lead to double counting (the wheat and flour in a loaf of bread).

GRP Expenditure Method	\$M
Household Consumption	\$42.335
Government Consumption	\$12.852
Private Gross Fixed Capital Expenditure	\$13.841
Public Gross Fixed Capital Expenditure	\$3.155
Gross Regional Expenses	\$72.183
plus Regional Exports	\$59.848
minus Domestic Imports	-\$83.193
minus Overseas Imports	-\$1.005
Gross Regional Product	\$47.832
Population	720
Per Capita GRP (\$'000)	\$66.434
Per Worker GRP (\$'000)	\$161.596

3.2 Key Propulsive Sectors

This analysis considers the industry sectors and their contribution to economic activity in Wickepin in relation to backward linkages, exports, employment, and value-added, in order to determine which industry sectors are the key sectors propelling the economy.

The principal industry sectors which are the key drivers of the Wickepin economy in terms of regional exports, employment, value-added and local expenditure on goods and services (backward linkages) are agriculture and public administration and safety.

Industry Sectors	Backward Linkages	Exports	Employment	Value-Added	Total
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Mining					0
Manufacturing					0
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services					0
Construction	✓				1
Wholesale Trade		✓	✓	✓	3
Retail Trade					0
Accommodation & Food Services					0
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	✓	✓	✓		3
Information Media & Telecommunications					0
Financial & Insurance Services					0
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services				✓	1
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services					0
Administrative & Support Services	✓				1
Public Administration & Safety	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Education & Training		✓	✓	✓	3
Health Care & Social Assistance					0
Arts & Recreation Services					0
Other Services					0

Value-Added - represents the marginal economic value that is added by each industry sector in the Shire. Value-Added is calculated by subtracting local expenditure and expenditure on imports from the output generated by an industry sector. Value-Added by industry sector is the major element in the calculation of Gross Regional Product.

Employment - the key social outcome of economy development; employment data represents the number of people employed by businesses / organisations in each of the industry sectors in Wickepin.

Regional Exports - represents the value of goods and services exported outside Wickepin that have been generated by local businesses / organisations. Another way of defining exports is as an inflow of money into the region, i.e. Motels have an inflow of money from people who live outside the region's boundaries thus they are earning export equivalent dollars.

Backward Linkages - details the industry sectors which spend the most on locally sourced intermediate goods and services per dollar of output. These industry sectors may not necessarily make the largest contributions to the Shire's economy at present however due to well-developed local supply chains these sectors have a significant capacity to deliver broad based economic benefits for the region.

3.3 Economic Analysis

The above data demonstrates that the key industry in the Shire of Wickepin is agriculture, forming the core of the local economy. This sector offers a competitive advantage in terms of the highly established nature of the businesses in this sector, along with the level of expertise these businesses have developed. At the same time, this high reliance on a single sector is also a disadvantage for the region, particularly where established businesses may be less inclined to explore new ways of working, potentially leaving them open to the impact of changing external forces.

There is a heavy reliance in the Shire on agriculture and public administration (such as the Shire, Police, Health etc) as the major employers. The ability of agriculture to ride the seasonal fluctuations is a risk to the local economy, without further diversification of the agricultural industry or other key sectors.

The economic data shows that a focus on the agricultural, public administration, education and wholesale trade sectors is likely to have greater impact on the Shire economy because of their impact on other sectors within the economy.

Tourism has potential to increase local employment in the food and accommodation sectors especially. However, a very significant increase in additional visitor nights (plus circa 2000 nights annually) would be needed to support a single full-time equivalent position within the Shire.

Competitive advantage could be improved/retained with a focus on education (primary school and life-long learning), particularly in technology related fields associated with agriculture, as well as

an investment in current SMEs rather than attracting new business (large amount of effort, which on many occasions does not result in economic return).

4 Social Context

Between 2011 to 2016 the Shire of Wickepin experienced minor population growth over the 10-year period with a population of 716¹ in 2006, 750 in 2011 to 730 in 2016².

The most recent population profile shows a working population of 60.1% (lower than the state average at 65.7%), a lower median equivalised total household income compared to the state, but significantly lower average monthly rent or mortgage.

The population profile is older than the state average, with all age groups from 45 to 84 years above the state average. Of particular note are 55-64 years at 16.6% of the population, compared to 11.3% in WA and 15-24 years only 3.8% of the population, compared to 12.6% in WA, highlighting the outward migration of high school students and youth.

Family households are the most common household type, representing 67.4% (55.3% of these couple families without children), followed by lone person households at 30.8%. There was virtually no 'mortgage stress' or 'rent stress' in the Shire of Wickepin, with mortgage and rental payments less than 30% of household income.

Census data and anecdotal reports suggest high levels of volunteering, this is tempered by the likelihood of increasing volunteer burnout if the population base dwindles and the same level of volunteer-run services are required.

5 Environmental Context

Wickepin lies on the eastern edge of Gnaala Karla Booja³ and the claim for Native Title on this area was made in 1998⁴. Most information readily available on this booja relates to the Narrogin and Dryandra areas, where Noongar have lived since the Nyittingy – creation times. The name Narrogin is derived from a Wilman Noongar name Narroging.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017), 2006 Census of Population and Housing, Wickepin LGA. Accessed from:

https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2006/quickstat/520059100?opendocument

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019), Wickepin LGA. Accessed from:

https://itt.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary®ion=59100&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA2018&geocodconcept=LGA_2018&maplayerid=LGA2018&measure=MEASURE&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS2016&datasetLGA=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA2018®ionLGA=LGA_2018®ionASGS=ASGS_2016

³ SWALSC. About the Gnaala Karla Booja Region. Retrieved from

<https://www.noongarculture.org.au/gnaala-karla-booja/>

⁴ National Native Title Tribunal. Gnaala Karla Booja.

http://www.nntt.gov.au/searchRegApps/NativeTitleClaims/Pages/details.aspx?NTDA_Fileno=WC1998/058

According to Landgate, Wickepin is also an Aboriginal name, first recorded for a spring by a surveyor in 1881, although the area around the spring was first leased in the early 1870's. Toolibin is also an Aboriginal name, derived from the name of the nearby lake, first recorded by a surveyor in 18925. Further interpretation of the Wickepin area's cultural and environmental significance would be important for increasing both cultural understanding and as a tourism catalyst, if interpreted in conjunction with traditional owners.

The Shire of Wickepin is located in the south-west WA biodiversity hotspot, one of only 15 national hotspots with a range of endemic plants and animals at threat or stress from issues such as fragmentation of vegetation and salinity caused by land clearing. Wetlands in this region, some of which are internationally recognised, are at threat from sedimentation, salinization, water diversion and pollution⁶. Areas of great environmental risk in the Shire of Wickepin are also the foundation for much of its social and economic opportunities, so warrant a particular focus of resources. There are also significant opportunities to integrate and promote the Shire of Wickepin as part of Dryandra country, again based on environmental assets, eco-tourism and interpretation of Aboriginal culture.

An environmental focus is also consistent with the Shire of Wickepin Strategic Community Plan 2018-2028 which references several priority areas that relate to the environment⁷:

- Lake Yealering, Toolibin Lake and the areas wildflowers are listed as opportunities for the Shire.
- Growing the economic impact of Lake Yealering is a high priority.
- Tourism product development is a medium priority.
- Protecting, enhancing and receiving value from the natural environment is a council priority.
- Partnering with neighbouring Shires on tourism promotion and initiatives and reviewing engagement with the Dryandra Visitor Centre are also action areas.

The Local Planning Strategy (LPS) 2006/07, which includes the Shire of Wickepin, outlines many environmental issues including exposure of acid sulfate soils, protection of biodiversity, erosion and sedimentation, vegetation clearing and its effects on environmental values and hydrology, habitat destruction and fragmentation, eutrophication, protection of wetlands, floodplain management, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions and surface water quality. The LPS

⁵ <https://www0.landgate.wa.gov.au/maps-and-imagery/wa-geographic-names/name-history/historical-town-names#T>

⁶ Commonwealth of Australia. Australia's 15 National Biodiversity Hotspots. Department of the Environment and Energy. Retrieved from: www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/conservation/hotspots/national-biodiversity-hotspots#hotspot10

⁷ https://www.wickepin.wa.gov.au/profiles/wickepin/assets/clientdata/document-centre/shireofwickepin_strategicplan_v5.pdf

recommends the need to improve integration of natural resource management issues, considerations and principles into the Shire's land use planning and decision making⁸.

Toolibin Lake is a significant asset for the Shire of Wickepin and the Atlas of Living Australia shows over 200 species recorded at Toolibin Lake⁹, one of the last remaining freshwater lakes in the Wheatbelt. Since 1990 it has been listed as a wetland of international importance under the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands (site 483). It is the only remaining example in Southwest Australia of a wetland with extensive living thickets of swamp oak *Casuarina obesa* - one of the principal natural characteristics of wetlands there prior to agricultural development¹⁰.

The Yealering Lakes System is recognised as a major drought refuge for waterbirds, with Yealering Lake recording significant numbers of waterbirds. The area may also contain suitable habitat for threatened and priority species. These include the endangered Carnaby's Cockatoo, Peregrine Falcon, Western Barred Bandicoot as well as migratory species under the International Agreement under the WC Act and Migratory under the EPBC Act, such as the Common Sandpiper, Great Egret, Rainbow Bee-eater and Pectoral Sandpiper¹¹.

The wetlands of the Shire of Wickepin present significant opportunities to attract tourists. Building on the very small scientific and technical services employment in the Shire, there are opportunities to build links with metropolitan-based universities, for both undergraduate field camps and postgraduate studies, a demographic currently under-represented in the Shire of Wickepin.

6 Land Availability

Currently there are no vacant buildings available in the industrial zone, although there are four lots available (Richter St, Wickepin St). There is a fully developed zoned industrial area available. Based on recent interest, the Shire of Wickepin considers there is no demand with existing supply underutilised. There are no power or water restrictions on the land available, although existing land would need to be cleared. Shire of Wickepin has some affordable residential options should demand for housing stock be realised.

7 Telecommunications

The Shire of Wickepin has access to the NBN, however this is limited to satellite service only which is slower, more expensive and offers less data than fixed and wireless NBN. It is unlikely that the region would have access to fixed or wireless NBN in the future given the NBN rollout maps.

The Facey Group is currently partnering with Pivotel, a telecommunications provider to build network infrastructure amongst farms for improved data speeds and communications. The project

⁸ https://www.dplh.wa.gov.au/getmedia/10e45590-58b4-4af1-99f0-273ecbde7d65/LST-Wickepin_Local_Planning_Strategy_Part_2

⁹ https://regions.ala.org.au/feature/5724950#group=ALL_SPECIES&subgroup=&guid=&from=1850&to=2019&tab=speciesTab&fq=

¹⁰ RAMSAR - <https://rsis.ramsar.org/ris/483>

¹¹ DWER (2017) Clearing Permit Decision Report. October 2017.

is funded externally and is aimed at providing farming businesses with access to higher data packages and speeds for on farm monitoring, artificial intelligence initiatives and improved cloud business activities. It is currently in build and trial phase but has potential to be expanded in the near future.

8 Transport Networks

Air Transport

The Shire of Wickepin has two unsealed gravel airstrips at Harrismith, which are managed by the Shire¹².

Road Transport

Wickepin is not on a national or state route, however Wickepin-Harrismith is a regional distributor.

The following information has been derived from Shire of Wickepin and Main Roads documentation, however it has not been cross-checked with actual road conditions and usage.

Pingelly- Kulin Route: The route is used by heavy traffic for farmers and transport operators to access the grain installation to the west of Yealering, in the north of the Shire. The route is also part of the main transport route for local operators to access the hay pellet operation in Brookton and is the connecting route between the towns of Kulin and Yealering. This route is an alternative journey to Perth, for both light and heavy vehicles, for Kulin and surrounding areas.

Wickepin- Corrigin Route: Provides a direct link between Corrigin and Wickepin and links Yealering and Bullaring. It provides access to the farming and general community as well as tourism and school buses. MRWA consider traffic is expected to grow on this road in both normal traffic and RAV combinations.

Wickepin-Tarin Route: Links the south eastern wheatbelt through Wickepin to the Albany Highway or through Brookton to Perth. It carries agricultural produce, grain, fertiliser, livestock and general freight, as well as being part of a tourist route. It also has a significant usage by heavy traffic accessing the Nomans Lake Receival Point, designated as a strategic receival point by CBH. Needs to be widened to cater for the volume and type of vehicles using this road. MRWA anticipate an increase in heavy vehicles and recreational/tourist traffic.

Rail Transport

Much of the railway in the Wheatbelt is linked to CBH receival points and Wickepin CBH is linked to the railway line.

¹² WDC (2014) Wheatbelt Snapshot Series: Aviation. Wheatbelt Development Commission.
https://www.wheatbelt.wa.gov.au/files/2514/0686/2539/Wheatbelt_Snapshot_Series_-_Aviation_-_Version1_-_09072014.pdf

9 Brand Position & Promotion

The Shire of Wickepin appears to have an ad hoc approach to the development of their brand and the promotion of their local area. The Shire’s key branding element is the logo which is a traditional badge style logo featuring local flora. Beyond this logo, no other visual devices have been devised and, based on documents supplied by the Shire, there are no modern corporate templates for presentation of marketing material.

The Shire has invested in the redevelopment of their website in recent years, with a modern, functional website, which provides basic information about the organisation and the area. There is not a strong link between the Shire’s logo and the look and feel of the website.

Social media platforms Facebook and Instagram are utilised by the Shire to disseminate operational and community information. There is the potential to better leverage these platforms to showcase the area’s attractions and opportunities, although the current method of use is not dissimilar to other small local governments in the regions.

The Shire does not have any formal material designed to attract new businesses or residents to the area. There is a Community Profile that is currently provided to people enquiring about the region, however it has clearly been produced many years ago (based on the typography choices and presentation style). While accurate, the document does not present a compelling case for people or businesses to choose to visit or relocate to the area.

10 Stakeholder Consultation

10.1 Project Steering Committee

It is noted that the Shire of Wickepin advertised for community members to join a Project Steering Committee in June 2019.

No interest was expressed from the Wickepin community in response to the above advertisement, which was placed in the Narrogin Observer and the local Watershed newsletter. As a result, formation of the Project Steering Committee was delayed until the completion of this first stage of the project, with the Shire Council filling this role.





EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Wickepin Shire Growth and Innovation Steering Committee.

Are you passionate about ensuring the growth and success of the Shire of Wickepin for future generations?

Do you have innovative ideas to grow and attract businesses and jobs?

Can you contribute to reinvigorating the Shire of Wickepin?

The Shire of Wickepin are seeking innovative, passionate and proactive community members to join the Wickepin Shire Growth and Innovation Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee will provide context, information and advice on the development of projects, activities and strategies which will support existing businesses, explore options for innovation and promote the development of new business and industry within the Shire.

The Steering Committee will meet on a monthly basis commencing in July 2019. Committee members will be expected to attend the monthly meetings and network with the community to gather feedback and opinions on proposed strategies and ideas. The appointment is for 1 year until the 30 June 2020. This is a voluntary position.

Expressions of Interest should detail why you are interested and what skills/experience you will bring to the Steering Committee. Expressions of Interest can be submitted to Mark Hook at ceo@wickepin.wa.gov.au by Monday 24 June 2019. The Steering Committee Terms of Reference can be provided upon request.

Help to establish the Shire of Wickepin as a thriving locality for future generations.

Item 1: EOI Issued by Shire of Wickepin

10.2 Shire of Wickepin

To be completed on 18th September 2019, with the presentation of this draft to the Council.

10.3 Wheatbelt Development Commission

Phillipa Kirby from the Wheatbelt Development Commission was consulted as to the organisation's thoughts regarding opportunities for the Shire of Wickepin as explored in this study. Phillipa was supportive of the recommendations proposed by the consulting team and considered they aligned with the intent of the Wheatbelt South Sub-Regional Economic Strategy (which was considered in the development of this study).

Outside of the scope of Agribusiness but relevant to the liveability of the community, Phillipa also suggested that the Shire might give consideration to the development of a concierge style service whereby the Shire act as a 'signpost' to services related to aged care and NDIS. Phillipa noted that some local governments have identified specific services needed and seek to attract a provider to

deliver locally or remotely. She also highlighted the Regional Economic Development Grants on offer through the commission and emphasised that those projects with direct job creation outcomes would be viewed most favourably.

10.4 RDA Wheatbelt

Regional Development Australia – Wheatbelt advised that they are not currently working on anything in the agricultural industry and do not have anything on the horizon.

RDAA did advise that they are a Federal conduit and would be happy to work with the Facey Group and the Shire to assist in any future plans.

10.5 Grower Group Alliance

Annabelle Bushell, CEO of the Grower Group Alliance (GGA) was supportive of the recommendations proposed by the consulting team and also provided a number of comments for consideration:

- The projects she is aware of that are diversifying the agricultural industry are predominantly being driven by an entrepreneurial individual or team. The Shire would do well to identify entrepreneurs in the Shire and work with them to support and connect them to drive industry innovation. In addition, consideration could be given to mapping the entrepreneurial spirit in adjacent Shires and determine if there is anything that visitors would travel through or nearby i.e. is there an opportunity to link into another's effort.
- There is a current gap between the agricultural industry and the traditional bush foods. Connecting Aboriginal culture and history back into the landscape by exploring the traditional foods and ways on managing the land would align to the current trend toward localisation, acknowledging culture and embracing traditional foods and diversity. There could be options to connect tourism, agriculture and culture by developing an understanding of Aboriginal bush foods and how to find them in the Wickepin area.

10.6 Facey Group

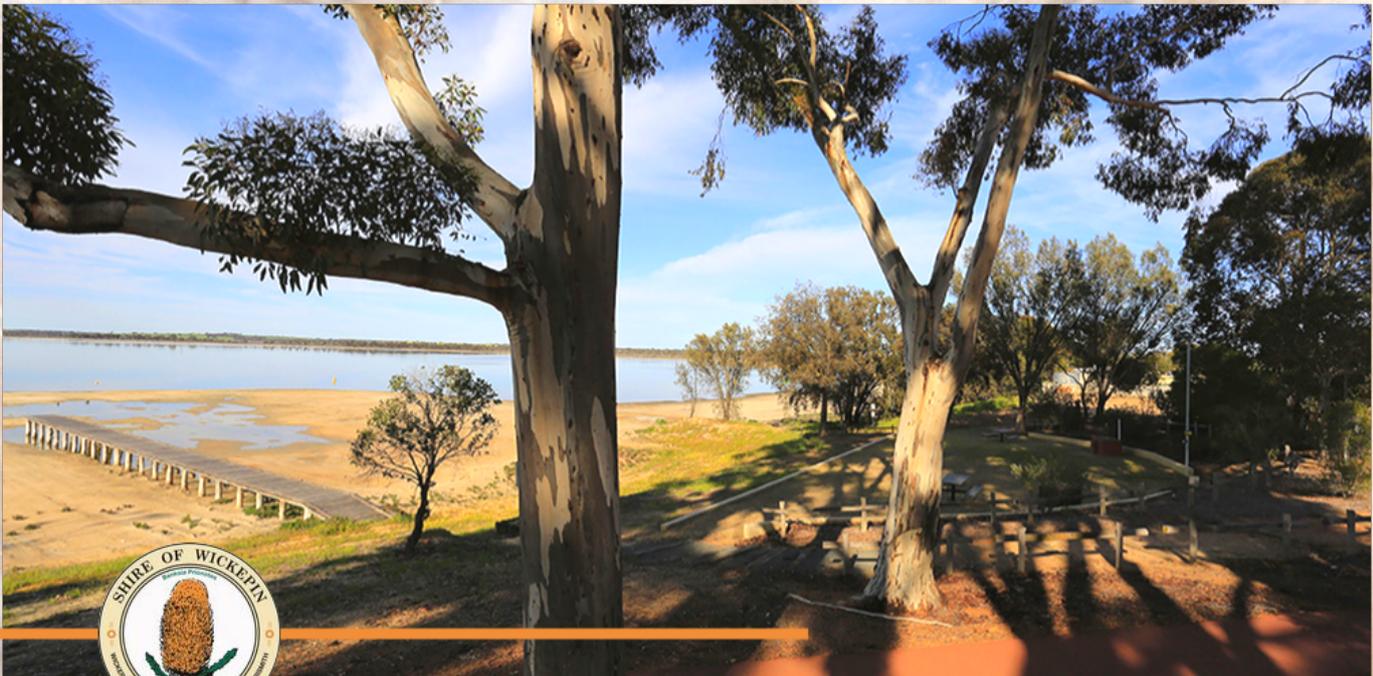
The Facey Group advised that EO, Sarah Hyde, is currently participating in the AgriStart program in Northam. Through this program, a number of strategic and large-scale projects have been identified for Facey to potentially develop, including value-adding to local commodities as well as education and training programs to name a few.

Sarah is also working with Andrew Outhwaite in a mentoring, start-up assistance capacity, which will assist in providing Facey with the entrepreneurial drive to get something off the ground.

Facey Group will undertake their strategic planning in early 2020 and encourages the Shire to be contribute towards the future direction of the member-based group.

10.7 Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Jackie Jarvis, Manager Agribusiness Development – Agribusiness, Food and Trade Branch outlined her team’s role, which includes working with local governments and proponents to build capacity to navigate regulatory processes related to agribusiness development. Their branch is able to work with local governments to identify and implement ways for them to signal to the business community that their Shire is ‘open for business’. i.e. it is supportive of existing businesses developing new opportunities and welcoming of potential new businesses to the area.



11 SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Established agribusiness sector</p> <p>Access to fuel within townsite</p> <p>Facey Group based in Wickepin (employment, expertise and profile)</p> <p>Basic health services available locally, regional hospital nearby</p> <p>Sport and recreation facilities</p> <p>LGA in positive financial position</p> <p>LGA with council with solid range of skills and experience</p> <p>CBH receival point</p> <p>Available industrial land</p> <p>Available affordable residential properties</p>	<p>High dependence on one sector to support local economy</p> <p>Comparative competitive weakness of agribusiness sector</p> <p>Small population base</p> <p>Lack of direct access to national and state transport routes</p> <p>Lack of high-speed internet access (Satellite NBN only)</p>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Industrial and residential land development</p> <p>Regional Organisation of Council / collaboration</p> <p>Lifestyle blocks for DIDO workers in Narrogin</p> <p>Caravan parks/nature-based tourism</p> <p>Natural features: Lake Yealering, Toolibin Lake, wildflowers</p> <p>Historic features: Facey House, heritage trails</p> <p>Facey Group – potential to expand</p> <p>Koalin Mine and Processing Facility</p> <p>Alternate farming practices</p> <p>Economic gardening</p>	<p>Potential impact of climate change and global economic conditions on agriculture</p> <p>Declining retail sector in Narrogin</p>

12 Case Studies & Research

To assist the Shire of Wickepin to begin considering options, some short case studies and initial research have been completed to highlight how similar challenges and opportunities are being tackled in other locations, along with emerging trends that could be relevant. These aren't intended to be 'solutions' for Wickepin, rather as a basis to think about 'what's possible' and develop locally appropriate strategies.

12.1 Agricultural Innovation

As outlined in 3 Economic Context, while the Wickepin area is highly reliant on the agricultural sector, the competitiveness of this sector compared to national trends is significantly lagging (this being mirrored in the analysis of the Wheatbelt economy more broadly). Much of the agriculture industry in Wickepin, and the Wheatbelt more generally, operates on a monoculture basis using traditional farming methods (although with increasing technological aides).

Emerging farming practices, particularly regenerative agriculture, seek to adopt farming techniques to improve soil health and increase resilience to changes in climate. RegenWA is a network of Western Australian farmers seeking to support the adoption of on-farm sustainability practices, collaborating with Natural Resource Management groups around the state to achieve this. In addition to evaluation of practices, RegenWA seeks to provide support to:

- identify locally relevant research priorities;
- establish trials and demonstration sites;
- develop case studies;
- run field days; and
- host a website and support social media.

Encouraging the local agriculture sector to consider alternate ways of working offers the opportunity to improve the competitiveness of the sector and reduce the risk of decline into the future. Wheatbelt enterprise, Wide Open Agriculture, highlights the opportunity to leverage regenerative farming techniques to develop a viable business, growing jobs while delivering strong environmental outcomes.

The cost of entry into the farming sector is prohibitive for most aspiring farmers. Current farming practices rely on large scale cropping or livestock programs to gain economies of scale, locking out new businesses who are unable to purchase existing farm businesses. 'The Farm' in Byron Bay, New South Wales, offers an innovative approach to facilitating the development of new agriculture-based businesses through a cooperative scheme. This farm sees a range of micro-business collocating on a single farm (think co-working for agriculture) to enable enterprises to share resources and develop businesses that would otherwise be too costly to establish.

There are a range of potential emerging agricultural industries that are leveraging futuristic technologies, trends and innovations, with potential to expand and grow Australian agriculture. AgriFutures¹³ has identified 24 of these emerging industries with development potential including medicinal marijuana, hemp milk, hydroponic berries, Asian vegetables, hydroponic hops, Australian edible natives, insect farming, wild camel and goat harvesting. Emerging technologies were identified in robotics and artificial intelligence, data, biotechnology, genomics, business models, renewable energy, and advanced materials. Rural and regional locations already heavily

¹³ AgriFutures, 2019, Horizon Scanning: Opportunities for New Technologies and Industries

involved in agriculture could take advantage of their existing infrastructure to diversify into these budding industry areas. However, what is needed is an entrepreneurial and innovative community member or members to pick up the idea and develop it. The Shire's role could be to facilitate and support this occurring.

Similarly, the potential to tap into the burgeoning Asian market presents a range of high-value opportunities for Western Australian agriculture. In response to this, the Western Australian Government has developed the Asian Market Success Project. As part of this body of work, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development¹⁴ commissioned the Target Market Opportunities Report which identifies 20 high-value premium opportunities sought by Asian consumers that Western Australia could respond to. Opportunities identified included: animal feed, apples, avocados, beef, beer, carrot, chocolate, citrus, honey, lobster, milk, olives, pork, prawns, processed ham, rolled oats, sausage, sheep, wine and yoghurt. A barrier to exploiting these opportunities is a lack of access to capital and WA Government has produced Investment Ready: WA Agribusiness¹⁵. This report is targeted at investment ready agribusinesses however it provides aspirational targets for businesses not at the investment stage but see the potential for their business to move to this position.

According to census data the electricity, gas, water and waste industry sector is non-existent in the Shire of Wickelpin. With abundant space and a heavy reliance on agriculture the opportunity exists for exploring sustainable waste management. One example of this is composted waste¹⁶ - with Smart Farm grants available to look at plentiful local sources of compostable waste, with the potential to use this to regenerate soil health and reduce synthetic fertilisers. There are also Smart Farming Partnerships funding rounds available, to "improve the protection, resilience and productive capacity of our soils, water and vegetation, in turn supporting successful primary industries and regional communities"¹⁷.

Examples of innovation in the agricultural sector are provided in the case study below.

Case Study Jorobi Natural Fertiliser – Dalwallinu, Western Australia

Jorobi Natural Fertiliser is a family owned business operating the northern Wheatbelt, producing premium quality agricultural, landscape and garden fertiliser. The Harris family has been in broad acre and sheep farming over the last four generations, but after attending a workshop on composting the family identified the opportunity to develop a compost production business.

¹⁴ Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2019, Target Market Opportunities.

¹⁵ Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, 2019, Investment Ready: WA Agribusiness

¹⁶ WNRM. Composted waste – an opportunity for Wheatbelt farmers. Smart Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management. <https://www.wheatbeltprm.org.au/whats-happening/news/sustainable-industries/composted-waste-%E2%80%93-opportunity-wheatbelt-farmers>

¹⁷ <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/natural-resources/landcare/national-landcare-program/australian-government-investment-in-landcare>

The Harris family now focus exclusively on the large-scale production of compost, including specialist formulas and are currently working on the process for certification to the Australian Organic Allowable Inputs Certification Standards.

The compost produced by Jorobi Natural Fertiliser is a “humified, fully matured” product, which differentiates it from many other products on the market. Jorobi have identified there is significant interest in their product and is currently developing strategies to meet demand and build further interest.

Director Joanne Harris reflected on the process for establishing the business and noted that the approach of the local government to the approvals process was very straight forward, with local government officers providing a clear pathway for them to follow in order to secure the appropriate authorisation to proceed with their project.

Reflecting on how a local government in another area could foster the development of new business enterprises, particularly existing businesses looking to diversify or change direction as they did, Joanne considered that a similar approach to enabling would be important. Local government processes can seem (and sometimes are) onerous and confusing to those not experienced in dealing with them, so having officers who are able to guide applicants through the process is important.

Similarly, having staff across the organisation aware of how the local government could respond a business or individual seeking advice or assistance in a consistent, efficient manner is important. A business-like approach to responding to correspondence and taking a service focused attitude would make a real difference to businesses seeking to adopt a best-practice approach, rather than ‘short-cutting’ to avoid dealing with bureaucratic processes.

A formal ‘buy local’ policy for local governments was also identified as an important opportunity to retain spending within the local economy. Joanne noted that more than just having a policy in place was important, other critical strategies included having a process for identifying local suppliers and establishing buying relationships (particularly to address the issue of staff members moving on and their corporate knowledge of where products and services can be locally sourced being lost). The ‘buy local’ policy should also be extended to contractors operating Shire projects – with the Shire acting as a linkage to potential suppliers when a contractor is awarded work.

In order for this approach to work, Joanne identified that local governments would need to undertake regular environmental scans to understand the products and services offered locally. Having a clear conduit within the Shire for businesses to feedback about their capability would also allow local businesses to educate the local government about the nature of their business and identify opportunities to grow their market. Where a local government area does not have an active Chamber of Commerce, Joanne felt there was a coordinating role opportunity for the local government to bring businesses together to network and potentially access training opportunities.

Case Study: Sundrop Farms – Port Augusta, South Australia

Sundrop Farms is a globally unique operation that grows tomatoes using sunlight and seawater. Established in Port Augusta, South Australia in 2016, Sundrop did what others might conceive as impossible – developed a technique to grow fresh produce in a harsh environment devoid of fresh water and with degraded pasture land. Their vision was to respond to a growing need for food in a world where traditional agriculture is becoming more challenging and resources dwindling.

This facility harnesses the sun's energy with over 23,000 mirrors that direct it to a central receiver at the top of a 115-metre 'power tower'. This system generates the energy required to operate a 20-hectare greenhouse system. Seawater taken from the Spencer Gulf is passed through the thermal desalination plant before being used to irrigate the crops.

The facility produces about 17,000 tonnes of truss tomatoes a year and holds a 10-year supply contract with Coles Australia.

12.2 Telecommunications

Reliable, affordable and fast internet access is becoming ever important with many facets of business now relying on applications and tools that connect to the internet. Similarly, with the contraction of services in the regions and a trend to government agencies to push clients to online services, individuals also have similar needs for internet access. This is further enforced by the high degree of reliance on internet-based services for communication, entertainment, education and information.

While the NBN represents an opportunity for those in populated areas to secure fast internet access at low cost, those in sparsely populated regions have largely missed out as the cost of deploying the required infrastructure was not feasible. As such, those regions have the existing challenges of remoteness compounded by poor access to telecommunications, impacting on their ability to be competitive, innovative and to access services considered as standard in areas with better internet service.

To address this inequity, there are examples of businesses and local government groups across regional Australia developing alternate supply options with new technological solutions. A local example is the North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils (NEWROC) in collaboration with Shire of Merredin who have engaged a provider to deliver point-to-point broadband data communication based on a fixed wireless technology across their Shires. This has allowed businesses and individuals to access the quality of internet service they need to be competitive on a global scale and to access the services they need as individuals. It also ensures that their region continues to be attractive to businesses looking to start-up or relocate and families seeking to move to the area.

12.3 Nature-Based Tourism

Nature-based tourism (NBT) is tourism centred around an experience of natural assets. NBT tends to attract people under the age of 30, across the spectrum international or domestic visitors ranging from day-trips to longer stays.

Western Australian regions, such as Margaret River, have prioritised investing in establishing strategies to develop NBT. The Margaret River Busselton Tourism Association recognised the economic benefit to the region as well as the state in fostering NBT and has developed a strategy identifying the 'hero assets' of the region and guides decision making and development around these attributes. This also includes managing the care of these assets so that the enjoyment of them is sustainable.

NBT offers the opportunity to grow smaller regional towns and strengthening sense of place, identity and ultimately create a more resilient local economy. State and federal funding is available to establish NBT projects. Eco Tourism Australia is a not-for-profit organisation focused on inspiring environmentally sustainable and culturally responsible tourism and are a possible partner and resource to local governments seeking to take on an NBT project. Tourism WA is a State Government statutory authority and part of the broader economic development portfolio of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation. The agency works in partnership with industry, private sector and government to develop and promote WA's iconic tourism experiences, to attract events to the State and to help the tourism industry thrive.

"Regional Australia is suffering from declining resource sector jobs and investment, a dwindling revenue base and demographic shifts as people move to seek employment opportunities in cities. The Nature-based tourism industry can assist regions to grow sustainable employment, resilient economies and incentives for growth."

The Nature-Based Tourism in Australia Manifesto, 2016

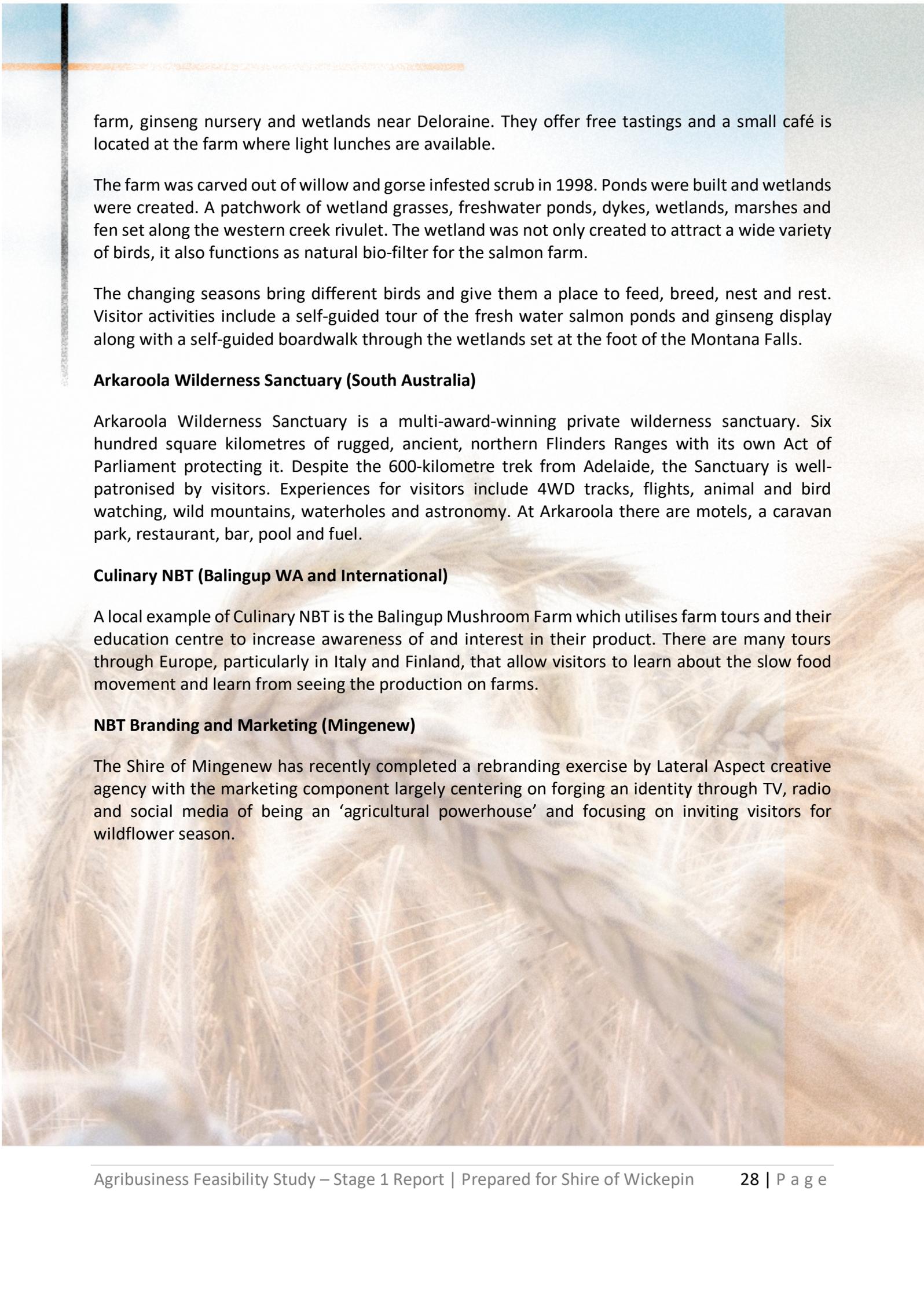
The Nature-Based Tourism in Australia Manifesto suggests the following strategic priorities and focus areas to strengthen and establish NBT:

- Marketing and promotion
- Existing and new experience development and delivery
- Regional and destination planning and management
- Leadership

New experience development or identifying NBT assets can be sought through looking at case studies and precedents and learning indirectly from what others have done.

41 Degrees South – Salmon and Ginseng Farm (Tasmania)

41° South Tasmania is a unique tourist attraction located in the UNESCO approved Tasmanian World Heritage Area. A 45-minute drive from Launceston or Devonport brings you to the salmon



farm, ginseng nursery and wetlands near Deloraine. They offer free tastings and a small café is located at the farm where light lunches are available.

The farm was carved out of willow and gorse infested scrub in 1998. Ponds were built and wetlands were created. A patchwork of wetland grasses, freshwater ponds, dykes, wetlands, marshes and fen set along the western creek rivulet. The wetland was not only created to attract a wide variety of birds, it also functions as natural bio-filter for the salmon farm.

The changing seasons bring different birds and give them a place to feed, breed, nest and rest. Visitor activities include a self-guided tour of the fresh water salmon ponds and ginseng display along with a self-guided boardwalk through the wetlands set at the foot of the Montana Falls.

Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary (South Australia)

Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary is a multi-award-winning private wilderness sanctuary. Six hundred square kilometres of rugged, ancient, northern Flinders Ranges with its own Act of Parliament protecting it. Despite the 600-kilometre trek from Adelaide, the Sanctuary is well-patronised by visitors. Experiences for visitors include 4WD tracks, flights, animal and bird watching, wild mountains, waterholes and astronomy. At Arkaroola there are motels, a caravan park, restaurant, bar, pool and fuel.

Culinary NBT (Balingup WA and International)

A local example of Culinary NBT is the Balingup Mushroom Farm which utilises farm tours and their education centre to increase awareness of and interest in their product. There are many tours through Europe, particularly in Italy and Finland, that allow visitors to learn about the slow food movement and learn from seeing the production on farms.

NBT Branding and Marketing (Mingenew)

The Shire of Mingeneew has recently completed a rebranding exercise by Lateral Aspect creative agency with the marketing component largely centering on forging an identity through TV, radio and social media of being an 'agricultural powerhouse' and focusing on inviting visitors for wildflower season.

12.4 Economic Gardening in Regional Communities

Economic gardening is an economic development strategy focused on strengthening local businesses, particularly established small to medium sized firms that have growth potential. As a strategy, it looks to grow the economy from the inside rather than 'hunt' new businesses outside and bring them in.

As a strategy there are three main components. The first is to review the town's basic infrastructure, with a view to improving it for business. The second, investment in community focused initiatives designed to enhance the quality of life of the town. This includes upgrading parks and public open spaces, recreation facilities, libraries and sponsoring community events. The third area of focus is the identification and support of local businesses with growth potential.

"We have all these economic development agencies running around hunting for businesses. They really should just stay at home and work with local entrepreneurs. They should get out of the economic hunting business and into the economic gardening business."

Phil Burgess, Centre for the New West, 1987

The Edward Lowe foundation and the National Centre for Economic Gardening in the US focus on second stage businesses already operating in a community and run programs to help them grow larger by providing customised information they need to address strategic issues. Second stage companies have advanced beyond the start-up phase but haven't reached maturity. They typically have 10-99 employees and generate between \$1-50 million in annual revenue. The goal here is to have these businesses create more jobs. These businesses represent the best value for attention as they represent over a third of sales and jobs. In addition, they often have national and global markets, meaning they are bringing outside dollars into their communities.

Case Study: Garden of Flavor - Chagrin Falls, Ohio

Reproduced from: edwardlowe.org/garden-of-flavor/

A manufacturer of cold-pressed organic juices, Garden of Flavor debuted in 2012 as a juice bar in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. Since then, founder and CEO Lisa Reed has been scaling the Cleveland-based business by wholesaling products to regional grocery chains. Yet as Reed strove to expand her company's footprint, marketing became a greater challenge.

"It was easy to grow at first by doing in-store demos and regional events in Columbus and Cleveland where everyone knew me as 'the Juice Lady'" Reed explains. "Yet I wasn't sure how to present my products in places where they don't know my story or anything about our brand."

Reed initially reached out to marketing firms for help, but quickly found them beyond her price range. Taking investor money wasn't an option either, because she didn't want to relinquish any control over her products. Then Reed learned about the City of Cleveland's Economic Gardening initiative and was accepted into the program in August 2017. This enabled her to work with the National Strategic Research Team (NSRT), a group of experts in commercial databases, geographic information systems and digital

marketing at the National Center for Economic Gardening. Among deliverables, the NSRT provided Reed with:

- An overview of the juicing industry and trends, from both a regional and global perspective.
- Scientific studies about the benefits of juicing, ranging from improved digestive and immune systems to disease prevention and weight loss.
- A demographic snapshot of her customers.
- Keyword and social media strategies to generate buzz about her products.

As a result of the data, Reed learned her target customers were older and better educated than she assumed. And she was happy to discover juicing fans prefer to make purchases in grocery stores rather than specialty juice shops. “At the time, I was considering franchising juice bars as a way to expand,” Reed explains. “But the researchers’ findings reinforced that I was doing the right thing, to go forward full force and be confident about it.”

The data also gave Reed greater confidence about maintaining her niche audience and prices, which range from \$5.99 to \$7.99 per bottle. One particularly important takeaway, Reed learned people’s primary reason for buying cold-pressed organic juice was health-related. “I always had a gut feeling, but nothing I could substantiate,” Reed says. “Rather than anecdotal comments from customers at the juice bar, this provided concrete research and scientific studies I felt comfortable using in my marketing efforts.”

Armed with the data, Reed revamped her company’s social media postings. For example, instead of broad activity-related terms, such as #yoga, Reed has been using hashtags that are more health oriented and highlight ingredients in her products (e.g., #alkaline, #juicecleanse, #turmeric, #wheatgrass and #probiotics).

Another change suggested by the researchers, Reed is taking a more prominent role as the face of Garden of Flavor. “My competition is very large companies,” she explains, referring to BluePrint (Hain Celestial), Naked Juice (PepsiCo) and Suja Life (Coca-Cola). “In contrast, I continue to be involved in every single bottle of juice made in our production facility. We’re tasting every batch and checking every veggie that goes into our juice.” To help communicate this hands-on approach, Reed has begun to use more images of herself and staff in marketing efforts.

Reed credits the strategies she’s implemented from Economic Gardening for boosting sales in Whole Food’s mid-Atlantic stores — which led to expansion in the retailer’s Rocky Mountain region. To help get the word out to this new audience, Reed invested in six ads in a Denver magazine, and incorporated information gleaned from Economic Gardening about the health benefits of aronia berries. “We began with four flavors in this market, and normally I would have predicted aronia would have been the least popular,” she says. “Yet by educating people on its benefits, the aronia juice is in second place. What’s more, it’s beating our popular turmeric elixir, which is unheard of!”

Reed is also using the data and information from Economic Gardening to redesign her website, which will feature a B2C component for the first time. “I don’t think I would have ever tried this because our product needs to be shipped overnight, which is costly,” she says. “Yet the researchers found data that shows our consumers not only like to have products delivered to their homes, they also embrace subscription-based platforms.”

As a result of her Economic Gardening engagement, Reed expects to double Garden of Flavor’s revenue to \$6.5 million in 2018, up from \$3.2 million in 2017. To keep up with the growing sales, she’s added three full-time positions and one part-time, increasing staff to 14 full-time and two part-time employees.

“The Economic Gardening experience was fantastic!” Reed says. “I’m still in shock that such qualified individuals cared so much about my business. The effort they put into the research and information was amazing, and I really looked forward to my calls with them. Having that team behind me gave me such confidence. It’s made all the difference in the world to me.”

13 Recommendations

On the basis of the above information, it is recommended that the Shire of Wickepin consider further investigation into one or a number of the below opportunities.

ENCOURAGE EMERGING AGRICULTURE BUSINESS TRENDS

There is an increasing interest in a range of potential emerging agricultural industries that are leveraging futuristic technologies, trends and innovations, with potential to expand and grow Australian agriculture. Additionally, organisations in the climate ready space are growing in Western Australia and seeking opportunities to help the local agricultural industry prepare for the future.

As a regional location already heavily involved in agriculture, the Shire of Wickepin could take advantage of their existing infrastructure to diversify into a budding industry area. However, what is needed is an entrepreneurial and innovative community member or members to pick up the idea and invest the time, funds and effort to develop a new area. The Shire’s role would be to facilitate and support this occurring.

In close partnership with the Facey Group, the Shire could work to develop partnerships with organisations to provide information and encourage the local agriculture sector to consider alternate ways of working. They could identify entrepreneurial community members and work with them to investigate opportunities. This would provide a form of economic gardening for the farming businesses in town by encouraging them to grow their business through innovation and expanding in to value adding industries.

Another opportunity with the Facey Group would be to collaborate with them on one of their strategic projects, with the organisation having identified a number of agriculture strategic projects through their involvement and participation in the AgriStart program. The Shire could provide the funding or human effort required to assist the Facey Group to progress these projects earlier than would have been possible without additional Shire support.

A further possible opportunity to explore in collaboration with the Facey Group, and one which may link in to Nature Based Tourism could be to build links with metropolitan-based universities, for both undergraduate field camps and postgraduate studies into the biodiversity of Wickepin. A

university may consider investing in infrastructure or engaging services/products from businesses in Wickepin in order to conduct research into its unique environment.

EXPLORE TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

Shire of Wickepin could investigate opportunities to integrate and promote the Shire of Wickepin as part of Dryandra country and/or integrate with other tourism drawcards in the region, based on its environmental assets, eco-tourism and interpretation of Aboriginal culture. There is significant scope to strengthen the branding of the Shire of Wickepin and develop its key tourism story lines.

This could be done in a way that integrates the traditional bush foods in the Wickepin area with the agricultural industry. The current demand for Aboriginal food is well known and meeting that demand is an opportunity that could be explored. Options to connect tourism, agriculture and culture by developing an understanding of Aboriginal bush foods and how to find/grow them in the Wickepin area could be considered.

ECONOMIC GARDENING APPROACH

The Shire of Wickepin could consider investing in economic gardening to grow existing business in the shire. One option in this area is to utilise the Wheatbelt Business Network's (WBN) GROW program. This program is a tailor-made growth program for established businesses, designed to solve a distinct problem or create a specific system to help an individual business to grow. The Shire of Wickepin could consider mapping existing businesses to identify suitable candidates and then providing sponsorship for a certain number of businesses to cover the cost of the program.

Another opportunity to invest in economic gardening is to consider offering matching funding for existing local businesses (including farming businesses) who engage in training/development or seek professional advice to make changes to improve the viability or profitability of their business. This could be done in a grant funding program, where the Shire can assess the type of training/advice to determine if they are willing to provide 50% of the costs of that work to be completed. It is noted that the WBN SURGE program or the AusIndustry Entrepreneurs Program would be options to consider for this professional advice.

DEVELOP AN ENABLING APPROACH

With a view to fostering growth and diversification of local businesses, the Shire of Wickepin could look to review its own approach for supporting businesses to navigate approval processes and its strategies to support local businesses. This is not a matter of reducing requirements to meet approval and governance requirements, but rather understanding how local governments can assist businesses to navigate bureaucratic processes effectively, along with signalling to existing and potential new businesses that the Shire is 'open for business'.

Work could be done to identify gaps and opportunities to better enable business to connect with local government when they have a business enterprise concept. Having a clear conduit within the Shire for businesses to feedback about their capability would also allow local businesses to educate

the local government about the nature of their business and identify opportunities to grow their market.

The Shire could then investigate the business opportunities and/or sectors that currently exist in the Shire. A mini-prospectus designed to respond to the priorities of businesses could be developed to market these opportunities.

ENCOURAGE CITIZEN-LED INITIATIVES

The Shire of Wickepin could drive the establishment of a 'Town Team'. Whitney Consulting has consulted with the Town Team Movement about the Shire of Wickepin. The Town Team Movement are interested in discussing this possibility of establishing a Town Team in Wickepin with the Shire. Town Teams are positive and proactive organisations that include businesses, landowners and residents working collaboratively with their local government to improve a place or area. Town teams are focused on building relationships and practical actions. They:

- Provide vision and leadership for their place
- Are positive and proactive
- Are non-political in their approach
- Get stuck in and have a go rather than waiting for "someone else" to do "something"
- Independent from governments
- Supportive of high-quality, environmentally sustainable development that provides for current and future residents, businesses and communities
- Run *by* the community *for* the community

Each team has different priorities and focuses, but all share this common approach. Town teams are catalysts for change in their local area. The town team model breaks down the barriers that often divide businesses, residents and local governments, and helps everyone to better understand the challenges and the opportunities to improve places. For more information on Town Teams, see <https://www.townteams.com.au/>.

The Town Teams movement could help the local organisations leverage their current activities and strategic directions in a more coordinated way and reduce volunteer burnout

UTILISE LOCAL CAPACITY

Asides from the agriculture sector, economic analysis of the Shire identified public administration as the other key propulsive sector. Given the local importance of this sector, identifying ways to utilise untapped skills within this workforce and in the local community could yield benefit.

During the course of this study, an anecdote was given of a Great Southern local government who undertook a skills audit and discovered their loader driver (who was living locally because of a partner taking up a role in the area) was an experienced IT specialist and that a Shire office administrator had a background in graphic design. The skills of neither were being used but the

Shire regularly outsourced work they could in fact have had completed in-house. Wickepin could be in a similar situation or have local people with skills that are outsourced but could potentially be sourced locally through a contract position or other arrangement.

Being aware of all the local businesses and their abilities would enable the Shire to 'buy local' more often but would also allow it to communicate the capabilities within the Shire to others. This would be particularly important in identifying entrepreneurial community members to drive the change that may be needed, through a Town Team, for example.

LEVERAGE MINING SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES

With an understanding that the mining sector is highly dependent on the market and may not provide sustainable growth in the longer term, the Shire of Wickepin could consider opportunities to capitalise on the Kaolin mine opportunity and similar resource sector opportunities that could emerge in the future.

The development of the mine will create the need for support services and products that will likely be provided by businesses based in Perth. The Shire of Wickepin should consider working with the mining company and local businesses to maximise the services and products that could be provided by existing businesses, either by simply connecting the business to the mining company or by assisting the business to expand its products and services to cater for the mining company's needs.

Additionally, the placement of mining workers could be discussed with the mining company and assistance provided to workers to locate themselves and their families in Wickepin. This can be provided in the form of a package that contains all the necessary information about purchasing, building or renting a property in Wickepin and highlights the school, community groups and services available and the benefits living in Wickepin offers. The Shire could also consider incentive packages to encourage mining workers to move to Wickepin, such as reduced rates or vouchers for the local shops.

Irrespective of whether the Shire of Wickepin is able to gain traction with the proponents of the Kaolin mine currently in development, it should consider how it can position itself to be 'mine ready' and capitalise on future opportunities that may arise by being in a position to take an enabling approach while ensuring good outcomes for the local economy, community and environment.