The Mid West has the highest level of economic diversity of all WA regions. Global, national and regional trends are having a profound impact on the economic development and sustainability of regional Australia. In addition to new possibilities for growth, this also increases competition for investment between regions. This increase in competition has highlighted the need for the Mid West to capitalise on its strengths and identify new sources of future growth.

In order to achieve sustained growth and a goal of around 71,500 jobs by 2050, the region needs to enhance its global competitiveness and create resilience to changing economic conditions. The Blueprint proposes further economic diversification and an increase in innovation to drive productivity growth in existing areas of regional advantage.

This chapter identifies the Blueprint’s key Economic Development focus and priorities.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MINING IN THE MID WEST

Given its significance in the region’s economy, the resources sector features in several other elements of the Blueprint eg infrastructure, trade, business and industry, land development etc. As a result, a number of specific strategies that interconnect with the resources economy may be dealt with in those respective sections. In some cases these may be reiterated within this section.

Mining is a dominant industry in the Mid West economy.

- The Mid West is a diverse minerals province with 58 producing mines and three others proposed (December 2014).[1][2]
- The combined production value of Mid West minerals grew to a record of $3.46 billion in 2013-14.
- Around 38% of the region’s estimated GRP was attributed to mining (2012-13).
- Mining dominates the Murchison subregion’s economy, accounting for around 85% of its estimated GRP.
- Mining provided around 9% of direct jobs in 2011 [2,151] and is easily the largest employer in the Murchison subregion, directly providing 35% of local jobs (725 workers).[3]
- Mining also indirectly supports a large number of jobs in sectors such as manufacturing, construction and logistics.
- Of almost 2,700 FIFO / DIDO workers in the Mid West, around 51% were employed in mining.
- Of the 5,000 Mid West residents travelling outside the region to work, around 21% were employed in the mining sector.[5]

Iron ore; copper, lead and zinc; and gold are consistently the largest categories by production value in the Mid West. Most commodities saw notable increases in production value since 2009-10, particularly natural gas; iron ore; and copper, lead and zinc [Figure 54].[4] Natural gas saw the largest percentage growth (166%) during this time and despite small recent volumes is an area of significant regional potential. More detail on past Mid West resource values and growth trends is provided on page 29 of the Blueprint.

Significant growth in global iron ore supply and slowing economic growth in China are major causes of the steep decline in iron ore prices in recent times. The lower iron ore price has already resulted in some:

- higher cost producers cutting back or ceasing production; and
- existing or aspiring producers “shelving” plans for proposed new developments eg new mines.

This includes several operations and proposed developments in the Mid West.

CHALLENGE: Infrastructure bottlenecks need to be identified and private sector investment, in response to increased transport loads.

CHALLENGE: Investment in multi-user transport infrastructure, including private sector investment, in response to increased transport loads.

CHALLENGE: Infrastructure bottlenecks need to be identified and resolved to optimise the flow of resources and enhance project viability.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Chamber of Minerals and Energy of WA (CME) has highlighted:

- the resources sector relies on a range of public and private infrastructure to deliver successful projects, including transport, power, water, accommodation and social infrastructure; and
- quality infrastructure built and operated efficiently can be a key driver of the financial viability of resources sector projects.

The latter is of particular relevance for transport infrastructure for bulk commodities such as iron ore – due to transportation costs being high relative to the commodity’s sales value. This point was confirmed during Blueprint consultation, with some Mid West miners indicating that transportation represented more than 50% of their operating costs.

The region has reasonably well developed infrastructure, which largely meets current and near-term needs. However, the capacity and location of existing infrastructure, including port, road, rail and power, will not be adequate for the region to realise its aspirations for resources sector growth in the medium to longer term.

This was demonstrated in the most recent mining boom, where limited infrastructure capacity and availability negatively impacted plans to develop several Mid West resource projects.

Accordingly, if the Mid West is to become a major iron ore (magnetite and hematite) producing region it needs options to:

- significantly increase the capacity of the Geraldton port and / or the development of the proposed deepwater port at Oakajee and associated supporting infrastructure eg the Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor;
- provide additional power capacity via local power generation and / or upgrade and / or extension of the SWIS; and
- expand the region’s rail network to service the proposed development of remote iron ore deposits in areas such as the Murchison, North Midlands, Yilgarn and beyond.

Infrastructure is discussed more broadly in the Movement of People and Resources element (page 51), which also includes a number of strategies relating to infrastructure planning and development.

CHALLENGE: Strategic infrastructure planning, coordination and funding is critical to the financial viability and future development of Mid West resource projects.

CHALLENGE: Investment in multi-user transport infrastructure, including private sector investment, in response to increased transport loads.

CHALLENGE: Infrastructure bottlenecks need to be identified and resolved to optimise the flow of resources and enhance project viability.

Figure 54. Combined Mid West minerals and petroleum production values (2009-10 - 2013-14)

MID WEST RESOURCES PROSPECTIVITY

According to the State Planning Strategy 2050, the Mid West region has more than $8 billion of prospective resource projects, focused mainly on magnetite, copper and uranium. The region continues to have strong resources prospectivity, which could result in further significant growth in the industry.

To the extent that Chinese steel mills favour magnetite as a feedstock, the Mid West may still hold a comparative advantage given its extensive magnetite reserves in the Pilbara produces mainly hematite. Magnetite is typically more resource intensive by comparison to hematite, which presents both an opportunity (more jobs created) and challenge (servicing resource demands) for the Mid West.

The potential increase in global demand for uranium, given initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, presents both opportunities and challenges for the development of the Mid West’s substantial uranium deposits. The region’s thorium deposits may also present a new opportunity once technology is developed to process it as a safer alternative to uranium.

Recent gas discoveries [conventional and unconventional] in the northern section of the Perth Basin reinforces the region’s potential to also maintain or grow its role as one of the State’s oil and gas producing regions.

Karara Mining Ltd, Perenjori (magnetite core)
Port
The Geraldton port is the primary export facility for Mid West minerals. Of the 17.7mt of total exports from the port in 2013-14, around 15.6mt was in the form of minerals (88%). These included various mining concentrates, mineral sands, talc and iron ore, with iron ore being easily the largest at 14.4mt (92%). Iron ore exports in particular have increased significantly in recent years up 170% in five years since 2008-09. Export of minerals in 2013-14 represented an increase of 28% from 2012-13 and 145% in the last five years. As a result of the growth in resource exports, the Geraldton port was nearing its practical capacity in 2013-14 having exported 18.5mt. The port’s current capacity is around 25mtpa with its existing infrastructure and potentially up to 30mt+ if Berth 6 was developed as a third iron ore berth. Residual port capacity at Geraldton is inadequate to service the export needs of all of the proposed resource projects (particularly iron ore). For example, Asia Iron’s Extension Hill project has environmental approvals to export 10mtpa from Geraldton and if commissioned, would require all of the port’s remaining export capacity.

In addition to berth capacity, there are also other infrastructure bottlenecks at the port including:

• road trains hauling bulk freight into the port can experience significant queuing delays;

• the rail line approach to the port is mainly single line and even when it branches into additional lines it only provides limited capacity to accommodate two-way traffic into and out of the port; and

• the port is also only provided with curtailable power, meaning its supply can be ‘switched off’ during peak local demand periods.

The proposed deepwater port at Oakajee is principally intended for export of bulk products such as iron ore and is potentially a prerequisite for the development of some of the region’s magnetite deposits. A series of studies were commissioned by the Department of State Development (DSD) to consider options for developing the Oakajee port project and to better inform future related decision making.

Roads
Heavy haulage of minerals and mining consumables, as well as movements of freight for the North West, grain and livestock, places pressure on Mid West roads and creates challenges in some Mid West communities. Areas of recent focus and investment have included Wubin Mullewa, Meekatharra-Wiluna and Geraldton-Mount Magnet roads. Movements of minerals on the road network around Geraldton primarily include:

• longer distance traffic from outside the region moving north-south through the region along the Brand Highway – North West Coastal Highway; and

• trucks carrying bulk commodities to the Geraldton port, generally from the south via Midlands Road and from the east via Geraldton-Mount Magnet Road and the Southern Transport Corridor.

As at June 2014, Main Roads WA estimated around 155 net daily truck movements on the Geraldton road network that transported minerals, with trucks up to 53.5m in length.

A possible change of the Restricted Access Vehicle Regime is foreshadowed in the State Freight Network Plan, which would permit High Wide Load and Restricted Access Vehicles (53.5m and longer) south of Carnarvon on the North West Coastal Highway. If this eventuates, further Mid West road pressures would be expected through the allowance of longer vehicles.

Rail
Mid West rail volumes have more than tripled in recent years, from around 4.67 mt in 2009-10 to 15 mt in 2013-14. Minerals represented 94% of rail volumes in 2013-14 (14.06 mt).

In 2013-14 there were 3,410 individual ‘loaded’ rail movements in the Mid West (principally to the Geraldton port), with 88% carrying minerals. These recent traffic increases have been enabled by an extensive rail infrastructure upgrade in 2012, which increased capacity of the rail infrastructure from Morawa to the Geraldton Port (via Mullewa) to 25mtpa (upgradable to 75mtpa). Train movements are expected to increase further as Karara ramps up to full production.

Air
Most Mid West aerodromes are used to support FIFO services at various inland mine sites, some of which also have their own private airstrips. Growth in resource sector activity has seen strong increases in passenger movements at several Mid West locations. CME expects that the transition of WA mines from construction to operational workforces will put continued pressure on regional aviation infrastructure. This is due to shorter operational roster cycles, which results in increased total passenger movements. By 2020, the number of resource sector workers using the Perth airport to fly to regional WA is expected to increase by more than 300,000 above 2014 levels. A proportionate increase in Mid West passenger movements might be expected.

Local governments often find it difficult to invest in the necessary aerodrome infrastructure to support variable increases in air traffic and aircraft size. CME has advocated for the consideration of private sector investment and management of regional aerodromes.
Utilities
Access to utilities infrastructure (e.g., water, power, communications) is also vital to the sector. As with transport infrastructure, this presents a particular challenge when the location of mineral deposits and utilities aren't aligned. Given the volumes often required (particularly water and power), this can create competition with other users.

CME has also forecast increases in the 2020 demand for electricity and water abstraction for mining from 2013 levels. Meeting the growth in demand for these in a cost-effective and sustainable manner is an important consideration for the Mid West.

Given the scale and cost of utilities for many projects (particularly where significant testing and/or capital contributions are required), some Mid West proponents have chosen to develop their own servicing infrastructure rather than pay commercial rates to utility providers. Karara mining funded a $270 million / 180km extension of the 330kV transmission line from Eneabba to its site.

The provision of localised water or energy solutions may require further development of public infrastructure networks, such as the extension of the 330kV transmission line that currently terminates at Three Springs.

**CHALLENGE:** Achieving cost-effective and secure access to services and utilities to enhance the viability of new resource sector projects and expansions.

**STATISTIC**
- **330kV transmission line, Three Springs**

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STRATEGIC LAND USE

- **Provision of project-ready industrial land to meet the needs of the resources sector is critical.** The Mid West is fortunate to have large areas of industrial land available, including the active Narngulu and Weebah industrial estates and the fully structured planned 6,500ha OIE. However, headworks infrastructure and provision of services to some industrial lands are an impediment to development. Industrial lands (employment lands) are discussed further on page 83.

- **Potential growth in resource sector activity creates an ongoing need to define, plan and protect transport and service infrastructure corridors and buffers that provide access to export facilities and industrial areas.**

- **Planning, development and future protection of alignments such as the Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor (ONIC), Geraldton Outer Bypass, PortLink, Dongara to Northampton Strategic Corridor and the connection to the Central Lands remain important for the future of the region's resources economy.**

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**CHALLENGE:** Preservation of buffers / corridors and provision of serviced industrial lands to ensure the broader benefits from the resources sector (and other industries) can be realised through efficient future transport networks.

- The Mid West has a range of important natural resources such as extensive land and water, radio quietness and unique biodiversity and environments. Balancing opportunities for mining and other land uses is vital to maintain the integrity of important natural assets while enabling growth and development.

- The Australian and Western Australian Governments have established a Radio Quiet Zone (RQZ) in the Mid West to protect the Murchison Radio-astronomy Observatory (MRO) and its projects including the Square Kilometre Array and ASKAP, and to allow for coexistence with other activities in the region. A number of legislative, regulatory and policy instruments impact the RQZ, including instruments under the Radiocommunications Act 1992 and Mining Act 1978 (WA).

- The RQZ comprises a 70km radius Inner Zone in which radio astronomy activities have primacy and coordination zones from 70km up to 260km (depending on frequency). Outside the 70km Inner Zone, a coexistence principle applies whereby a potential applicant for a radiocommunications transmitter must consult with the MRO manager with the purpose of ensuring that radio astronomy receivers are protected from harmful interference while maximising the opportunities for other spectrum use.

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**CHALLENGE:** Radio quiet protection and coexistence are critical to the balanced development of the Mid West.

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PROJECT FACILITATION

- As with other industry sectors, regulation, compliance and approvals processes can create delays and significantly impede the timely progression of resource sector projects, as well as adding greatly to the cost of development ie red / green tape. This occurred during the recent mining boom while the iron ore price was at its peak, with a number of projects deferred due to regulatory / compliance delays.

- Without diluting the importance of regulatory and administrative controls, minimising and streamlining existing red / green tape is a priority for future resource sector development to the region.

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**CHALLENGE:** Effective, transparent and efficient administrative and regulatory systems are essential to the development of resource sector projects.

- In addition to the diverse range of minerals already extracted in the Mid West, the region is also highly prospective for resources such as uranium, thorium and unconventional gas. Exploration and development of such resources can invoke negative public reaction and are subject to various regulatory processes and controls.

- The resource endowment of the Mid West is a significant area of regional advantage. The Blueprint advocates for the responsible development of these resource opportunities, in keeping with broad community values and various social and environmental controls.

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**CHALLENGE:** A delicate balance exists between the region's resource prospectivity and social and environmental expectations.
INVESTMENT AND INDUSTRY RELATIONSHIPS

The high capital cost of mining is a major consideration in the development of projects and places significant onus on producers to minimise expenses and maximise returns to investors / shareholders. A streamlined and cost effective resources sector environment (with efficient transport networks, access to workforce etc) will assist Mid West miners seeking further direct foreign investment.

Recent foreign direct investment resulted in significant improvements to Mid West infrastructure and enabled development of several important resource projects.

CHALLENGE: Many small and mid-tier miners do not have projects of sufficient operational scale or the financial strength needed to fully fund essential major transport and energy infrastructure on a standalone basis.

CHALLENGE: Government’s capacity to fund major common user infrastructure (eg deepwater port and new inland rail networks) is constrained and flexible, innovative financing solutions may be required.

An Australia China Business Council (Mid West chapter) has been established in the region and a number of important relationships have been forged with China, including sister city relationships. China in particular places strong emphasis on trust and mutually beneficial business relationships. It is essential the region continues to foster these productive dialogues with trading and investment partners (including governments and companies).

CHALLENGE: A financially attractive, reliable, welcoming and cost effective resource sector environment is essential to build effective global relationships and attract investment to the region.

The ability of proponents to adjust operations in response to changing market conditions is also important. Downstream processing is an option for some resource proponents to increase returns from their commodities. Little downstream processing occurs in the Mid West and may be an area of further investigation and future expansion.

Downstream processing is often capital intensive and can provide significant employment and other regional development benefits.

The region has significant undeveloped magnetite reserves of varying scale and quality. Magnetite is emerging as a preferable product to some overseas markets as it results in lower carbon emissions and a higher export sales price. As countries such as China look to reduce environmental impacts, this may present further opportunities for magnetite miners. Unlike traditional iron ore producing regions such as the Pilbara, the Mid West has extensive magnetite resources.

The Mid West also has significant direct Chinese investment in various iron ore and magnetite mining operations. This vertical integration along the ore supply chain creates further opportunities for development of additional mining interests in other locations throughout the region.

OPPORTUNITY: Identification of opportunities for additional downstream processing in the Mid West resources sector.

RESOURCE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Mining workforces in the Mid West are expected to remain fairly constant through to 2020. Although Mid West residents fill a relatively high proportion of the region’s mining and related jobs, it is a priority for the region to:

- minimise reliance on external labour forces;
- reduce negative FIFO / DIDO impacts; and
- potentially offer the Mid West as a FIFO / DIDO service hub for other mining regions.

This places a strong emphasis on local workforce development, which responds to industry needs and engaging with mining companies to employ locals as a preference.

Initiatives such as the Durack Institute of Technology’s Centre for Resources Sector Workforce Training (CRSWT) [which commenced construction in 2014] will help the region increase its skilled and flexible labour pool and create a strong regional labour supply.

Based at the City of Greater Geraldton’s Airport Technology Park, the CRSWT is a “Centre of Excellence” for the oil, gas and mining sector training in the Mid West and Gascoyne regions. The CRSWT will enable Durack to build on its expertise established at its existing facilities at Fitzgerald Street Geraldton in the areas of Heavy Duty Automotive training, Civil Construction, Mining, Occupational Health and Safety, Transport and Logistics.

Ultimately, mining companies will recruit in a manner that is most financially viable and provides them with the necessary workforce controls. Working with the sector to provide a regional labour force and environment that supports industry’s needs is important.

Technology and innovation is fundamental to the resource sector.

Embracing technology / innovation and investing in the development of regional human capital through education, training and development is important to position Mid West workers for future opportunities in mining.

OPPORTUNITY: The region is well placed to provide leading resource based education and training infrastructure and programs.

OPPORTUNITY: Utilising the region’s strong mining, construction, manufacturing and logistics sectors, education and training system and lifestyle advantages to become a residential base for FIFO / DIDO workers in the Mid West and to other regional areas.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Given their significant impact on regional areas mining companies have an important corporate social responsibility that affords them a ‘social licence’ to operate. This is particularly important in smaller Mid West communities where a strong and supportive mining presence can provide significant local business benefits and population stability.

Equally, mining may also bring challenges to regional communities. Mining presence can drive local prices up and attract workers away from lower paid yet essential positions. A sudden influx of mine workers can also place increased pressures on available social infrastructure and services, presenting challenges for local providers eg local governments.

This emphasises the importance of proactive planning and timely communication and collaboration between resource companies and nearby communities.

Some Mid West communities have been able to negotiate mutually beneficial relationships with mining companies regarding local purchasing, residential workforces and local training opportunities. These relationships can also deliver important community development and engagement outcomes.

OPPORTUNITY: Enhancing relationships between mining companies and communities throughout the region is vitally important and can deliver significant mutual benefits.

Karara Mining Ltd, Perenjori
## GOAL:
To realise the growth and development potential of the region’s minerals and energy resources and extract maximum regional value from resource sector activity

### 2050 OUTCOMES
Regional Aspirations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>TERM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INFRASTRUCTURE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional supply chains provide all Mid West producers with cost effective access to domestic and overseas markets</td>
<td>Strategic infrastructure planning, coordination and funding is critical to the financial viability and future development of Mid West resource projects.</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment in multi-user transport infrastructure, including private sector investment, in response to increased transport loads.</td>
<td>Engage miners with an interest in the Mid West (ie resources or infrastructure) to strategically plan for infrastructure provision to meet future needs of multiple users.</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure bottlenecks need to be identified and resolved to optimise the flow of resources and enhance project viability.</td>
<td>Support collaborative industry and government planning efforts to resolve priority bottlenecks eg port access and capacity.</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of north-south and east-west freight and bypass solutions to support the development of stranded mineral deposits and help reduce congestion and risks between resource sector and other road users.</td>
<td>Support collaborative industry and government planning efforts to determine the viability of cross-regional business and contract servicing links eg proposed Musgrave corridor initiative.</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achieving cost effective and secure access to services and utilities to enhance the viability of new resource sector projects and expansions.</td>
<td>Work with stakeholders to examine ways of lowering the cost of power access, generation and transmission eg the Electricity Market Review Stage 2.</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STRATEGIC LAND</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Land is well planned and developed for present and future resource sector needs and opportunities</td>
<td>Preservation of buffers / corridors and provision of serviced industrial lands to ensure the broader benefits from the resources sector (and other industries) can be realised through efficient future transport networks.</td>
<td>![ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio quiet protection and coexistence are critical to the balanced development of the Mid West.</td>
<td>Advocate for a consultative and cooperative approach to radio quiet protection and coexistence that supports continued economic growth and development in the Mid West.</td>
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**THE RESOURCES ECONOMY CONT’D**
# 2050 OUTCOMES

## Regional Aspirations

### CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT FACILITATION</th>
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<th>STRATEGIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory and administrative controls are streamlined to encourage future resource sector development</td>
<td>Effective, transparent and efficient administrative and regulatory systems are essential to the development of resource sector projects.</td>
<td>Work with relevant authorities, developers and local governments to reduce the lead times and costs of regulatory requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A delicate balance exists between the region’s resource prospectivity and social and environmental expectations.</td>
<td>Encourage development in line with community and sustainability values.</td>
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### INVESTMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Mid West is a region of choice for resource sector investment

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many small and mid-tier miners do not have projects of sufficient operational scale or the financial strength needed to fully fund essential major transport and energy infrastructure on a standalone basis.</td>
<td>Encourage collaboration between resource companies and government to identify effective financing solutions for Mid West infrastructure that facilitates the development of what would otherwise be stranded mineral deposits.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Government’s capacity to fund major common user infrastructure (e.g. deepwater port and new inland rail networks) is constrained and flexible, innovative financing solutions may be required.</td>
<td>Continue to develop and strengthen effective relationships with global business interests and build investor confidence in the Mid West resources sector.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A financially attractive, reliable, welcoming and cost effective resource sector environment is essential to build effective global relationships and attract investment to the region.</td>
<td>Investigate potential opportunities for downstream processing of resources in the Mid West.</td>
<td>📅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identification of opportunities for additional downstream processing in the Mid West resources sector.</td>
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### RESOURCE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

The Mid West is a region of choice for resource sector workers and their families

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The region is well placed to provide leading resource based education and training infrastructure and programs.</td>
<td>Continue to promote the Mid West as a region of choice for resource sector workers and families due to its location, lifestyle, affordability and other benefits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Utilising the region’s strong mining, construction, manufacturing and logistics sectors, education and training system and lifestyle advantages to become a residential base for FIFO / DIDO workers in the Mid West and to other regional areas.</td>
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### CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

All Mid West miners have mutually beneficial relationships with their local communities

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhancing relationships between mining companies and communities throughout the region is vitally important and can deliver significant mutual benefits.</td>
<td>Work with local governments and communities to consider the basis for ‘cooperation agreements’ to be negotiated with mining companies that align with collective interests and focus on shared outcomes and priorities.</td>
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MID WEST TOURISM POTENTIAL

The world economy will significantly change over coming decades. Rapid income growth within emerging economies will grow the number of tourists but also create new tourism markets and new sources of competition. Major growth opportunities are associated with attracting new tourists from Asia and other developing nations, as well as attracting greater domestic tourist numbers to the Mid West. The latter includes the recreational vehicle (RV), caravan and camping visitor market, which continues to grow in Australia and represents an ideal opportunity for increased visitation to the region.

Recent and ongoing upgrades to the Geraldton foreshore, Wildflower Way Kalbarri National Park, and Dongara–Port Denison have potential to increase visitation. Similarly, several Mid West local governments are working towards becoming recreational vehicle friendly towns in anticipation of this growing visitor market. The City of Greater Geraldton is keen to position itself as a major events and sporting destination and has sought advice from professional sports marketing consultants in a bid to move towards this aim.

The Mid West forms part of the Australia’s Coral Coast (ACC) and Australia’s Golden Outback (AGO) tourism regions. The ACC includes the Batavia Coast and coastal area of the North Midlands, with the balance of the North Midlands and Murchison forming part of the AGO region. A Mid West Tourism Alliance was established in 2013 to drive a collaborative approach to tourism development throughout the region.

The long term aspiration of this Blueprint is for the Mid West to attract one million overnight visitors (annually) by 2050. The Mid West would be highly developed as an inspiring nature based destination, that offers a one million overnight visitors (annually) by 2050. The Mid West would be highly developed as an inspiring nature based destination, that offers a wide range of high quality, year round experiences.

ICONIC ATTRACTION AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

The region’s tourism has evolved unevenly and irregularly as a result of human resource constraints and haphazard approaches to infrastructure development, marketing and visitor servicing. Although the Mid West has popular destinations that bring seasonal holidaymakers, many travellers transit through the Mid West en route to farther destinations, thus reducing tourism impacts in the region.

The Mid West’s unique natural, cultural and heritage assets are its competitive advantages and present opportunities for iconic tourism experiences and attractions, including the following:

- The Houtman Abrolhos Islands, with world class fishing experiences, protected islands and coral atolls, significant heritage and interpretation potential and under utilised infrastructure;
- Expansive coastline (340km) including protected beaches, dramatic cliffs, surf coast, reef lined shores, ports, safe anchorages, untouched coastal scrub, dunes and stretches of isolated beaches and shoreline;
- Geological diversity including world scale mineralisation (eg mining, prospecting, fossicking), unique landforms, significant gorges and ranges and the oldest rocks on earth;
- Extensive land area including large swathes rich in seasonal wildflowers, native flora and fauna, extensive river and creek systems and large areas of conservation reserves. These areas are well linked by road network and a variety of airports. Sound management of these assets and their values is essential, with various agencies playing an important role to facilitate access to, and use of, these areas;
- A network of large and small communities spread throughout the region. This facilitates a ‘hub and spoke’ approach to travelling across the region all year round. The region’s central geographic location makes it accessible from practically all points on the compass; and
- Established tourism destinations include coastal locations of Kalbarri, Dongara–Port Denison and Geraldton, with capacity to host significant additional visitation year round.

OPPORTUNITY: The Mid West region does not have a critical mass of tourism product and needs to focus on developing the areas in which it has a competitive advantage. In time this development would increase visitation to the region and build demand for infrastructure and services eg accommodation, air services.

PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

As incomes grow, discretionary expenditure will shift towards experiences as opposed to products. The experiences that future tourists will seek will be authentic, personalised and often involve social interaction.

Tourism products in the Mid West are uniquely challenged with its main towns at a mature phase of the tourism lifecycle and seeking renewal and rejuvenation, whilst smaller towns are generally at early development phases and seeking initial investment, awareness and visitation. The Mid West also lacks the numbers and variety of tourism operations and accommodation and a tourism culture that translates into a suitable level of customer service experiences for visitors.

CHALLENGE: Gaps in the region’s tourism product and experiences that need attention include:

- varied approaches to visitor servicing and mixed standards of information for way finding (ie navigating to places of interest);
- accommodation, which is generally aged, of mixed standards and at times below visitor expectations, with supply limitations during peak seasons;
- limited recreational vehicle and traveller amenities and accommodation options, such as low cost / freedom camping for travellers transiting or stopping overnight;
- the potential Batavia experience is not fully developed;
- regional produce is not highly promoted in hospitality venues; and
- food, wine and culinary experiences are under represented.

INVESTMENT READY ATTRACTION

Increased investment in tourism infrastructure to exploit the region’s unique opportunities is necessary to deliver positive visitor experiences, resulting in longer stays, higher visitation and increased expenditure.

Compared to many other wealthy countries, Australia and the Mid West are expensive destinations. However, the high price tag may also come with the perception of boutique and exotic status, which is something the Mid West can build on through increased investment in its iconic assets.

CHALLENGE: Targeted investment strategies are needed to support tourism development in the region. There is role for MWDC to play in attracting investment to generate a wider range of affordable and accessible tourism and cultural experiences.
CONNECTION

Models of human communication and decision making are changing over time. Information flows much more rapidly and via widely distributed channels and the perceived credibility of information sources is also changing. Growth in connectivity and the use of technology presents opportunity for tourism businesses development.

The tourism industry is witnessing significant growth in visitor use of the Internet, with social media playing an intrinsic role in every aspect. Tourism Research Australia indicates that 46% of total holiday travellers to Australia are booking some aspect of their trip online prior to arrival. During their holiday, some 50% of travellers upload comments and photos on social media outlets using smart phones.[1] Furthermore, 53% of travellers upload photos and post comments regarding their experience on either social media or a blog. This feeds into the desires of people around them and the process of ‘E-word of mouth’ begins.

Concurrently, smart phones have advanced significantly with ‘apps’ that greatly expand their functionality whilst smart phones and GPS in cars are commonplace and widespread. There are naturally gaps in the Mid West with large areas without phone coverage, reliant on satellite. Physical signage is not always reliable or extensive, although the use of preloaded apps and GPS systems driven largely by satellites can support wayfinding. Regional information on places of interest and routes are presented across a range of platforms by visitor centres, two regional tourism organisations and local Governments. There are distinct opportunities to improve technology supported way finding through the region whilst promoting a connected Mid West.

OPPORTUNITY: Digital information for tourists is variable across the region, with promotions by several tourism organisations, visitor centres and local governments. Opportunity exists for technology collaboration to ensure marketing across the whole Mid West while retaining individual community identities.

CHALLENGE: Most towns in the Mid West have access to mobile broadband, but coverage between towns continues to be an issue with black spots throughout the region. There are also limited public WiFi hotspots, which are generally expected in a modern (digital) world.

DIVERSIFICATION AND AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

There are a number of growing trends in niche tourism markets that could be developed, or further developed in the Mid West, including farm and country stays, game based tours / safaris, backpacking, education / research, bird watching, cycle tours as well as geo, eco, food and Aboriginal based tourism.

Aboriginal tourism is a growing niche market for Australia. It can provide significant economic development and social benefits for regional and remote communities and provide opportunities for unique and tangible cultural experiences.

Tourism Western Australia has indicated that 59% of WA visitors are interested in Aboriginal tourism experiences, but only 26% actually participate.[2] Aboriginal tourism is underdeveloped in the Mid West.

Some of the oldest rocks on the planet have been found in the Murchison and as a result, the Mid West has significant potential to develop geo-sites and geo-tourism as a new niche market.

The Mid West has a unique natural environment and is one of only five places in the world with both marine and terrestrial biodiversity hotspots of international significance. Through targeted promotion to students worldwide an opportunity exists for the development of research / educational tourism in the region.

OPPORTUNITY: By diversifying through niche opportunities such as Aboriginal tourism, geo-sites, geo-tourism and research tourism, the Mid West has potential to create authentic connections with visitors and increase visitation to and across the region.

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**GOAL:** The Mid West attracts one million visitors each year that stay in and enjoy the region for longer

### 2050 OUTCOMES

**Regional Aspirations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ICONIC ATTRACTION AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT</strong> The Mid West region does not have a critical mass of tourism product and needs to focus on developing the areas in which it has a competitive advantage. In time this development would increase visitation to the region and build demand for infrastructure and service eg accommodation, air services.</td>
<td>Invest and support in the establishment of iconic tourist attractions and destinations in order to grow the visitor market and build a stronger profile for the region eg the Houtman Abrolhos Islands, Kalbarri skywalk and conservation estates.</td>
<td>![clock]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT** The Mid West region is a highly accessible tourism and major events destination offering unique and quality visitor experiences. Gaps in the region’s tourism product and experiences that need attention include:  
• varied approaches to visitor servicing and mixed standards of information for way finding (ie navigating to places of interest);  
• lack of distinctive ‘iconic’ activities, events and experiences compared to neighbouring regions;  
• accommodation, which is generally aged, of mixed standards and at times below visitor expectations, with supply limitations during peak seasons;  
• the potential Batavia experience is not fully developed;  
• limited recreational vehicle and traveller amenities and accommodation options, such as low cost / freedom camping for travellers transiting or stopping overnight; and  
• regional produce is not highly promoted in hospitality venues and food tourism is under developed. | Support initiatives for tourism operators and associated service providers to enhance the quality, value and appeal of experiences for visitors to the region ie skills and workforce development and product to cater for the specific needs of visitors. | ![clock] |
| **INVESTMENT READY ATTRACTION** The Mid West is a competitive region in attracting investment from community, private and public sources. Targeted investment and strategies are needed to support tourism development in the region. With much of the region’s natural assets dependent on the nature and conditions of land tenure, there is role for MWDC to play in enabling and attracting investment to generate a wider range of affordable and accessible tourism and cultural experiences. | Advocate for and facilitate the de-risking of investment opportunities such as ensuring planning and zoning are in place, streamlining approval processes, provision of investment ready sites and projects, provision of headworks funding to enable investment attraction. | ![clock] |
## CONNECTIVITY

Telecommunications and Internet services are accessible to tourists throughout the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital information for tourists is variable across the region, with promotions by several tourism organisations, visitor centres and local governments. Opportunity exists for technology collaboration to ensure marketing across the whole Mid West while retaining individual community identities.</td>
<td>Support consistent and collaborative promotion of Mid West tourism on a common technology platform.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most towns in the Mid West have access to mobile broadband, but coverage between towns continues to be an issue with black spots throughout the region. There are also limited public WiFi hotspots, which are generally expected in a modern [digital] world.</td>
<td>Encourage innovative, targeted communication to improve visitor experiences, including WiFi zones, push marketing and regional apps.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage the promotion of sites and places of interest on Google Maps, powered largely by satellites rather than mobile phone networks.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitate the rollout of digital communications infrastructure and services throughout the region to maximise the potential of the growing trend towards using online information distribution channels for research, bookings, marketing and social networking.</td>
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</table>

## DIVERSIFICATION AND AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

The Mid West product is diverse and attracts new visitors and promotes repeat visitation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES</th>
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<th>TERM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By diversifying through niche opportunities such as Aboriginal tourism, geo-sites and geo-tourism and research tourism, the Mid West has the potential to create authentic connections with visitors and increase visitation to and across the region.</td>
<td>Strengthen and diversify the region’s tourism and destination appeal by supporting the development and promotion of niche tourism opportunities unique to each subregion’s authentic brand.</td>
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</table>

Proposed Kalbarri Skywalk (concept plan)
The Mid West is a significant agricultural region supplying 22% of the State’s wheat production, 10% of the State’s canola and 83% of the State’s lupins. Almost all Mid West crop production is exported, which highlights the importance of global trading relationships to the region.

The Mid West is strategically placed for exporting grain as the closest agricultural port zone in Australia to major Asian and other markets. This gives the Mid West a potential geographic advantage that could be further leveraged in the long-term. The Mid West could become the key grain export logistics point for WA in the future (noting the region already has the largest receival point for grain in the southern hemisphere). The Mid West should therefore continue to strategically modernise all grain export facilities and maintain highly competitive transport links for agriculture.

The China-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) announced in November 2014 presents significant opportunities for Mid West agriculture and food producers.

The CGG has a several formal relationships with various Chinese provinces (details in the Trade element on page 88). The region also has a Mid West chapter of the Australia China Business Council (ACBC) and an International Relations Development Advisory Committee. There may be opportunities to leverage off these relationships to grow / create new markets.

**OPPORTUNITY:** There is an opportunity to lever the existing relationships to a greater degree. The region can develop products for specific price points in developing markets, and hence will be undertaking a “market pull” approach in its agricultural development.

End users with religious or ethical values, or with various medical conditions, may demand greater segmentation of the foods they eat. Equally as more food is processed, manufacturers seek food ingredients with specific properties that carry out functions in the manufacturing process eg that coagulate, separate, thicken, solidify or liquidise. As the market segments grow, there may be opportunity for Mid West producers to target them individually. The ability to capitalise on some of these opportunities may require a sophisticated understanding of food science.

**OPPORTUNITY:** There may be an opportunity for small food producers to develop local niche opportunities.

Mid West producers already have a reputation for producing high quality foodstuffs, such as protein quality of wheat, oil content of canola and western rock lobster. There may be opportunities to leverage off this reputation and expand the region’s profile as a quality food producer.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Opportunities may exist to build the Mid West’s profile as a producer of high quality food products and commodities.

**INTENSIVE AGRICULTURE / HORTICULTURE**

Horticulture production value in the region is currently $25 million / annum, with 80% derived from vegetables and 20% from fruit. Further development in this area holds great potential for the region. Globally there are strong demand pressures for food, water and energy (due to double by 2050). Hence, sustainable water use is critical. The Mid West region is believed to have significant groundwater, particularly through sedimentary aquifers within 100km of the coast. However, according to the Department of Water there is a ‘low understanding of the groundwater resources in the north of the region’ and in some areas, water quality is declining. It is also assumed that climate change will have a long term impact on groundwater aquifers within the region, and this needs to be monitored.

A mix of large and smaller developments in intensive agriculture is possible in the region. To achieve this, it could be necessary to develop community or regional water infrastructure to share the cost of water development over users and time.

**OPPORTUNITY:** The opportunity to develop more intensive agriculture or horticulture is of interest to the region. Future development requires appropriate land allocation and maximising the use of water through available technologies.

**CHALLENGE:** Climate change may reduce the availability of water and industry needs to investigate and invest in more water efficient production processes including hydroponics.

**PASTORAL INDUSTRY REVITALISATION**

The Murchison subregion currently has a pastoral industry that has experienced low profitability and is badly impacted by wild dog incursions. There is an opportunity to potentially combine water availability and vermin control to regenerate the pastoral industry and develop intensive agriculture. Pastoralists need to be able to intensify operations on a rotational basis, destock where necessary, and need flexibility in their leases to diversify.

**CHALLENGE:** The key constraints include the process of pastoral lease reform and vermin control. It is critical to advocate for the opportunity to diversify leases, making businesses scalable, and developing different business models or aggregation in the southern rangelands.

**SMART FARMING**

Telecommunications access is critical to farming as production and management efficiencies can be gained from new technologies. Digital communications are essential in a business operating environment where commodity price spikes last only hours and complicated risk products need to be factored in.

**CHALLENGE:** Mobile telephone and terrestrial based Internet access is poor across the majority of the region. This is a major constraint for applying some new farming technologies. Innovative mobile / Internet solutions are required for parts of the region.
### Goal:
A region built on a diverse, innovative, profitable and productive agriculture and food sector that services local and global markets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Markets Development and Value Adding</th>
<th>Challenges / Opportunities</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Mid West has extracted optimal value from its supply chains and has developed new markets through niche commodity products.</td>
<td>There is an opportunity to leverage the existing relationships to a greater degree. The region can develop products for specific price points in developing markets, and hence will be undertaking a “market pull” approach in its agricultural development.</td>
<td>Develop trading relationships by leveraging off existing investments in the region and identify market opportunities for Mid West products for which a competitive advantage can be exploited.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There may be an opportunity for small food producers to develop local niche opportunities.</td>
<td>Support initiatives for the development and marketing of niche food and alternative products.</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities may exist to build the Mid West’s profile as a producer of high quality food products and commodities.</td>
<td>Develop and support local food product and markets (including niche branding) by supporting local growers and retailers.</td>
<td>€</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Intensive Agriculture / Horticulture | | Maximise the use of available water by adopting sustainable technologies and production processes for intensive agriculture / horticulture, such as hydroponics. | € |
| | The opportunity to develop more intensive agriculture or horticulture is of interest to the region. Future development requires appropriate land allocation and maximising the use of water through available technologies. | Support the development of water infrastructure for food in inland communities. | € |
| | Climate change may reduce the availability of water and industry needs to investigate and invest in more water efficient production processes including hydroponics. | Investigate potential intensive agriculture / horticulture models. | € |

<p>| Pastoral Industry Revitalisation | The key constraints include the process of pastoral lease reform and vermin control. It is critical to advocate for the opportunity to diversify leases, making businesses scalable, and developing different business models or aggregation in the southern rangelands. | Advocate for key changes in the reform process that will support the Mid West pastoralism industry to diversify and become sustainable. | € |
| | Promote diversification of the industry through projects such as vermin control, utilising water from dewatering mines, business practices and working with Aboriginal land managers to build economic development. | | € |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES</strong></th>
<th><strong>STRATEGIES</strong></th>
<th><strong>TERM</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SMART FARMING</strong> Digital infrastructure is used to its fullest to optimise productivity and efficiencies gains in farming. Mobile telephone and terrestrial based Internet access is poor across the majority of the region. This is a major constraint for applying some new farming technologies. Innovative mobile / Internet solutions are required for parts of the region.</td>
<td>Ensure appropriate mobile telephone and Internet access is provided to support primary production. Create linkage to the E-connect grainbelt project and support other technology adoption to drive productivity and profitability of farming in the Mid West.</td>
<td>!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LAND TENURE REFORM IN AGRICULTURE</strong> The Mid West protects and enhances its high quality land and ensures its availability for food production. Conflicts over land use need to be identified and resolved at a local level.</td>
<td>Identify and protect land for current and future food production under local planning schemes. Ensure optimal land utilisation and tenure to drive economic development. Ensure land tenure enables all desirable land uses and titles.</td>
<td>!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INNOVATION</strong> The Mid West is renowned for its sustainable innovative practices in agriculture, aquaculture and horticulture with industry high levels of private investment in research and development. Innovation is driven by research and development investment, with overall levels in Australia falling. The region needs to continue to invest in research and development and support industry to contribute funds to this area of need.</td>
<td>Create a supportive environment for further research, development and extension in agriculture, with greater domestic and international collaboration. Support sustainable agricultural practices and innovations and support environmental groups to continue investment in good practices, knowledge and learning. Support ongoing innovation to address emerging market needs and positively profile agriculture within the region. Support industry innovators and develop young industry leaders and entrepreneurs through ongoing training, mentoring, capacity building and sharing knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AQUACULTURE</strong> The Mid West is a major area for aquaculture. There is an opportunity to establish a strong finfish aquaculture industry at the Abrolhos Islands based on YTK.</td>
<td>Confirm, and where viable, promote the region’s potential as an attractive investment opportunity for large scale aquaculture projects eg YTK. Further develop local expertise in fish health and husbandry in finfish aquaculture.</td>
<td>!</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
LAND DEVELOPMENT

Entities such as LandCorp work with local governments to release residential and employment lands to meet demand. Development proposals are currently being considered in a number of smaller Mid West towns.

There are no significant current residential or light industrial land availability issues constraining regional growth and development. However in the timeframe of this Blueprint (2025 and 2050) there will be issues in some communities and specific locations within the region that experience above average growth.

EMPLOYMENT LAND

‘Employment land’ consist of land zoned for industrial, commercial and community purposes.

The Mid West currently has around 2,453ha of employment lands. An additional 2,333ha have been earmarked for the proposed Oakajee Industrial Estate (OIE), making a total 4,876ha. OIE also has a large buffer zone (4,071ha).

Around 28% of existing employment land in the Mid West is vacant (excluding OIE), with each subregion having similar percentages of vacant land (between 27-29%).

The region’s largest industrial areas are located in the Batavia Coast, including:

- the undeveloped OIE: 4,404ha (includes heavy industry component and buffer area);
- Narngulu Industrial Estate: 705ha (not fully developed); and
- Webberton Industrial Estate: 287ha (not fully developed).

Geraldton airport freehold land comprises 532ha, which includes 67ha of landside area that has been formally structure-planned and designed for staged development as a Technology Park. The park is intended to accommodate a range of light industrial, technology, professional service and commercial activities that are compatible with continuing aviation operations on the airport-proper. There is capacity for airport land to also be used for a freight and logistics hub, including for storage and inwards / outwards movement of goods.

Several private land developments also provide industrial land within the region.

CHALLENGE: High development costs constrain the development of employment land in some Mid West communities.

HEAVY INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

The OIE includes a 1,134ha Strategic Industry Area (heavy industry) component. The OIE lacks headworks infrastructure and servicing. Planning for development of the OIE with alternatives (including staging scenarios) and cost estimates needs to be completed.

Land acquisition is required to enable the development of Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor (ONIC). A parcel of land 34km long and around 250m wide would need to be acquired to enable the development of the ONIC, which is necessary to activate the proposed Oakajee port and industrial estate and would also facilitate development of a proposed Geraldton heavy freight bypass.

CHALLENGE: Demand for industrial land needs to be established to confirm the viability of OIE and enable its timely development.

CHALLENGE: The OIE lacks headworks infrastructure and servicing, which is a disincentive for heavy industry to develop there.

RESIDENTIAL LAND

There is little evidence that there is insufficient residential land in the region to meet demand, although servicing costs are a significant constraint to its development. There may be areas where land demand outpaces supply and this should be monitored at a subregional level.

In 2008, there were around 6,254 ha of residential land in the Mid West, of which only around 33% had been developed. Although dated, this indicates large amounts of undeveloped residential land available in the region (particularly in Greater Geraldton).

The Greater Geraldton Structure Plan (2011) contains a broad analysis of the potential population capacity of the City of Greater Geraldton and Shire of Chapman Valley, under a range of scenarios. The Plan indicated a land ‘footprint’ that could under certain circumstances accommodate more than 190,000 people. These local governments currently house approximately 42,000 people.

CHALLENGE: In the event of strong population growth, development of additional residential land is likely to be necessary in key growth areas.

CHALLENGE: The cost of residential land development is a key constraint across the region (especially in the North Midlands and Murchison), which often inflates the cost of land to beyond market value. New and innovative ways of developing land will be required in these areas along with low cost housing options.

LAND USE OPTIMISATION

In some instances opportunities exist to rezone unused land for other purposes, rather than release new land and incur significant development / headworks costs. For example, unused commercial land could be rezoned for housing. Often referred to as ‘lazy land’ this option can be significantly cheaper than developing new land.

OPPORTUNITY: Reuse of ‘lazy land’ is a solution for reducing development costs in some communities with surplus vacant land.

OPPORTUNITY: Infill opportunities and higher density developments can help activate communities and improve vibrancy and liveability.

CROWN LAND OPPORTUNITY

The Department of Lands (DoL) is responsible for administration of Crown land within WA [92% of the State’s land area]. Much of the Mid West is located on Crown land. A sound understanding of the applicable administrative processes involved in converting Unallocated Crown Land and other existing Crown land tenures to alternative, “higher order” forms, will be particularly important to maximise the development potential of the region. These processes are complex and can involve lead-times of 2-3 years to successfully complete. Early consideration of and engagement with these processes is therefore critical to ensure timely completion of development proposals.

CHALLENGE: Pathways to convert Crown land to tenures more appropriate for development purposes are complex and can be time-consuming to complete in practice.

ABORIGINAL LAND AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A significant component of Mid West Crown land is held by Aboriginal pastoralists and by the Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT). The Trust currently holds approximately 32,480Ha (32,000Ha as Crown Reserves and 480 as Freehold) and is keen to transfer these (landholdings to the direct control of Aboriginal people in appropriate circumstances. The collaborative development of suitable land-related initiatives therefore represents a particular opportunity to improve social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people throughout the Mid West.

OPPORTUNITY: There are significant opportunities to improve social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people through initiatives that support effective management and better utilisation of Aboriginal held land throughout the Mid West region.

GOAL: Sustainable (available and affordable) supply of zoned land for future growth and development
## Employment Land

The timely, sustainable supply of employment land has enabled strong economic growth.

* Employment Land - land zoned for industrial, commercial and community purposes

### Challenges / Opportunities

- High development costs constrain the development of employment land in some Mid West communities.

### Strategies

- Work with relevant agencies to release additional residential and light industrial land on a timely basis to facilitate regional growth as demand occurs.
- Create innovative servicing options to lower the cost of land development and pursue policy changes to reduce barriers to development.
- Develop an industry attraction program to build demand for employment land.
- Investigate the feasibility of a business relocation scheme for the region.
- Advocate for the re-establishment of a headworks scheme for the region to lower the cost of entry for developers of employment land.

## Heavy Industry Development

The heavy industrial component of the Oakajee Industrial Estate (OIE) is fully serviced and operating to its optimum.

### Challenges / Opportunities

- Demand for industrial land needs to be established to confirm the viability of OIE and enable its timely development.
- The OIE lacks headworks infrastructure and servicing, which is a disincentive for heavy industry to develop there.

### Strategies

- Evaluate business case and funding model options for the OIE.
- Work with prospective industry proponents to drive the installation of headworks and services at the OIE.

## Residential Land

Residential land supply supports the growth needs of the region and a new model for land development has been created.

### Challenges / Opportunities

- In the event of strong population growth, development of additional residential land is likely to be necessary in key growth areas.
- The cost of residential land development is a key constraint across the region (especially in the North Midlands and Murchison), which often inflates the cost of land beyond market value. New and innovative ways of developing land will be required in these areas along with low cost housing options.

### Strategies

- Work with stakeholders and proponents [including the building industry] to develop residential land to meet demand using innovative land development models.
- Advocate for reduced development costs by maximising the reuse of vacant land, including land originally developed for other purposes.
- Advocate for appropriate higher density development in communities to reduce servicing costs, maximise land use and create vibrancy.

## Land Use Optimisation

Available land is used or reused to its optimum for new developments throughout the region.

### Challenges / Opportunities

- Reuse of ‘lazy land’ is a solution for reducing development costs in some communities with surplus vacant land.
- Infill opportunities and higher density developments can help activate communities and improve vibrancy and liveability.

### Strategies

- Advocate for reduced development costs by maximising the reuse of vacant land, including land originally developed for other purposes.
- Advocate for appropriate higher density development in communities to reduce servicing costs, maximise land use and create vibrancy.

## Crown Land Opportunity

The potential of undeveloped Crown land is maximised throughout the region.

### Challenges / Opportunities

- Pathways to convert Crown land to tenures more appropriate for development purposes are complex and can be time-consuming to complete in practice.

### Strategies

- Work with DoL to broaden understanding across the region of (1) the applicable administrative processes involved in converting Unallocated Crown Land and other existing Crown land tenures to alternative, “higher order” forms; and (2) the need for early engagement with these processes.
- Map aspirations, issues and opportunities for land development across the region.

## Aboriginal Land and Economic Development

Aboriginal land use is optimised for social and economic outcomes.

### Challenges / Opportunities

- To improve social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people through initiatives that support effective management and better utilisation of Aboriginal held land throughout the region.

### Strategies

- Work with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, ALT and Aboriginal stakeholders within the region, to identify and further develop land-related initiatives that will improve social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal residents of the Mid West.
At the heart of the region’s economy are more than 5,000 small businesses. They represent over 96% of Mid West businesses and employ approximately 45% of all private sector workers. Small businesses are the vehicle through which many people enter the workforce, with many having the potential to develop into the larger businesses of the future.

Small businesses operate in most Mid West communities and deliver a diverse range of goods and services across all industry sectors. They often complement the activities of larger organisations and are a key part of the supply chains of many larger regional projects. With a focus through this Blueprint on the development of key industries like tourism, agriculture, aquaculture and resources, there are significant future opportunities for small Mid West businesses.

Small businesses face a range of challenges including globalisation and a new digital business environment, increases in the cost of doing business, skills and labour supply issues and access to finance. These challenges impact on productivity and business survival, which in turn impacts on families and communities. To meet these challenges and capitalise on new opportunities, small businesses need to become more efficient, innovative, productive and competitive. A program of initiatives that help create and sustain the right business environment is required.

MAXIMISE BUSINESS POTENTIAL

Respondents in the State of Small Business Survey undertaken in 2012 indicated that the delivery and access to the following training would be of most benefit to them and their businesses:

- online marketing;
- business planning;
- employing staff;
- finance; and
- business processes.

A number of entities in the region are involved in the delivery of support services to businesses. This creates some duplication of effort and could be streamlined to provide a clearer pathway for businesses seeking to access services. Businesses located in the North Midlands and Murchison face additional challenges to access these support services, which are generally based in Geraldton.

CHALLENGE: A targeted approach is required to ensure that small businesses throughout the region have equitable access to the relevant capacity building programs.

INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES

Over the past decade a number of major construction projects were undertaken in the Mid West. Whilst it can be assumed that small businesses in the region would have reaped significant benefits, the REMPLAN Regional Imports Report (Jan 2014) showed that there was significant expenditure leakage out of the local economy.

The report estimated intermediate goods and services imported into Greater Geraldton totalled almost $1.2 billion. This indicates significant purchasing from suppliers outside the region resulting in business lost to local suppliers. Sectors in which the regional imports were highest included manufacturing, construction and mining.

OPPORTUNITY: For a range of initiatives to be put into place to help small businesses compete more effectively for opportunities in the region and maximise the benefit from future major projects planned for the Mid West.

ENCOURAGE INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Innovation is the way people and organisations generate new ideas and put them into practice. This often results in economic growth through the emergence of new businesses and new ways of doing business. Innovation is critical to growing world class businesses, particularly in regional areas.

According to the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science and Research (2011), innovative businesses are:

- twice as likely to increase productivity;
- 41% more likely to increase profitability;
- twice as likely to export, and
- up to four times more likely to increase employment.

Research indicates that highly digitally-engaged small businesses are:

- two times more likely to be growing revenue;
- likely to earn two times more revenue per employee than those with low engagement; and
- four times more likely to be hiring than those with low digital engagement.

In order for innovation to occur, a culture of entrepreneurship and preparedness to take on risk is required. Entrepreneurial activity is found in all communities across the Mid West, with notable examples found in the innovation and new technology space, including:

- major Internet provider Westnet was established in Geraldton and became one of Australia’s leading Internet service providers; and
- Pollinators, a Geraldton based NGO that nurtures people and innovations, particularly those likely to result in community benefit.

OPPORTUNITY: The region is well placed to foster more innovative businesses, product development and employment growth and should capitalise on these opportunities.

ABORIGINAL OWNED ENTERPRISE

Strong links have been developed with industry to gain better employment and training outcomes for Aboriginal people eg the Mid West Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre (MWAWDC) and Midwest Aboriginal Organisations Alliance (MAQA). However, much of the focus has been on solutions to overcome barriers to employment rather than the development of an enterprise culture within Aboriginal communities.

OPPORTUNITY: An opportunity exists to work with the representative groups, including native title claimants, to support and encourage the establishment of local / regional Aboriginal enterprises.

COLLABORATIVE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

The Mid West has a dynamic and diverse economy based on its traditional industries mining, agriculture and fishing. However, the region is faced with increased international competition and challenges to boost productivity and ensure continued economic growth.

Many regionally based industries have competitors with lower environmental, labour and safety costs. Strategies that create market pull to reduce costs or barriers to entry can help create a more attractive environment for industry.

Building upon existing natural and competitive advantages and areas of regional specialisation can encourage industry attraction and development. Industries already experiencing growth are likely to have existing or evolving supply chains, established demand, specialised labour requirements, appropriate infrastructure and a competitive business environment. Creating this environment across industries can be highly attractive to new businesses.

Some Mid West resource companies are adopting a collaborative approach to leverage their supply chains to get their products to market more cost effectively.

OPPORTUNITY: To create a platform for collaboration in strategic growth industries.

ATTRACT HIGH VALUE INDUSTRIES

High value industries have the potential to generate a range of employment opportunities for the community and also attract a workforce with high levels of knowledge and skills. Potential targets for the Mid West include mine servicing and value adding, education and research, renewable energy and digital technology.

Highly anticipated major projects in the Mid West will require considerable investment. A well planned infrastructure framework and industry and business development focus will provide the opportunity to expand the region’s industry base.

The region has a strong need (and opportunity) for continued support of its food based industries (agriculture and fishing / aquaculture). Although the resources sector has been a key driver of recent Mid West growth, agriculture remains a dominant industry with significant upside potential (particularly in the North Midlands subregion). Tourism is another industry earmarked as a potential source of economic growth for the region with investment into niche and iconic visitor attractions expected to yield benefits for regional businesses.

Value adding mining and resource activities and developing minerals processing are high value opportunities in which this region may have some comparative advantages.

OPPORTUNITY: Attracting and developing high value industries presents a potential opportunity to expand and further diversify the region’s economic base.
### GOAL:
An economically diverse and dynamic business sector that captures the productive capacity of the region and converts opportunity into employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2050 OUTCOMES</th>
<th>CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>TERM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAXIMISE BUSINESS POTENTIAL</strong></td>
<td>A targeted approach is required to ensure that small businesses throughout the region have equitable access to the relevant capacity building programs.</td>
<td>Work in partnership with key stakeholders to support and promote initiatives that assist business to grow.</td>
<td>2020-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A dynamic, globally competitive and connected small business sector.</td>
<td>Advocate for broadband communications access in all Mid West communities to enable all businesses to compete on the global digital business stage.</td>
<td>2023-2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES</strong></td>
<td>For a range of initiatives to be put into place to help small businesses compete more effectively for opportunities in the region and maximise the benefit from future major projects planned for the Mid West.</td>
<td>Maximise local procurement opportunities through the development of partnerships with key stakeholders and industry.</td>
<td>2025-2027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid West small business is the “FIRST CHOICE” for major projects.</td>
<td>Conduct supply chain analyses on key industries with growth potential and work with key stakeholders to identify and progress opportunities for local businesses.</td>
<td>2028-2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENCOURAGE INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP</strong></td>
<td>The region is well placed to foster more innovative business to encourage product development and employment growth.</td>
<td>Establish and strengthen linkages between businesses, university research institutions and government to drive innovation.</td>
<td>2031-2033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A region built on an entrepreneurial culture and innovation.</td>
<td>Develop regional industry and business hubs and precincts to increase collaboration, identify and build on areas of comparative advantage.</td>
<td>2034-2036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABORIGINAL ENTERPRISE</strong></td>
<td>An opportunity exists to work with the representative groups, including native title claimants, to support and encourage the establishment of local / regional Aboriginal enterprises.</td>
<td>Drive collaboration of private and other non-government sectors to encourage and facilitate Mid West Aboriginal business development.</td>
<td>2037-2039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A diverse and profitable range of Aboriginal enterprises and investment.</td>
<td>Investigate the Native Title landscape in the Mid West and work with claimant groups to utilise funds on an economic base for Corporations to achieve financial independence and community outcomes.</td>
<td>2040-2042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COLLABORATIVE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
<td>To create a platform for collaboration in strategic growth industries.</td>
<td>Establish joint round tables between relevant government agencies and industry leaders to scope priorities, solutions and options for industry development in the region.</td>
<td>2043-2045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New and existing industry development is enabled to ensure a strong future industry base.</td>
<td>Support industry development through programs and projects that leverage the competitive advantages of the region eg clustering.</td>
<td>2046-2048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH VALUE INDUSTRIES</strong></td>
<td>Attracting and developing high value industries presents a potential opportunity to expand and further diversify the region’s economic base.</td>
<td>Develop an investment and attraction prospectus for the region and follow up with active identification and attraction activities.</td>
<td>2049-2051</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Mid West is a commodity based region with heavy reliance on export markets and trade relations. The region is an important producer and supplier of high quality agriculture and seafood for international markets, already engaging positively with a range of global trading partners (as indicated by Figure 36 on page 33). As outlined in the ‘Trade Profile’ section of the Blueprint, the region exports almost all of its rock lobster, wool and grains (wheat, canola and lupins) and more than half of the cattle and sheep it produces.

**EMERGING TRENDS**

Some of the emerging trends in key regional markets are indicated below, which may present additional opportunities.

**Agriculture**

South Korea is emerging as a large buyer of feed grade wheat, with South East Asia (Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand) buying increasing volumes of milling grade wheat. European buyers (Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany) have traditionally dominated the buy side of the canola market, however China entered the market in 2012/13 and has the potential to take up to 3mtpa of canola.

Market forces, trade relations and compliance with the Australian Government’s Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) are integral to the future of Mid West livestock exports. The region’s live sheep export market is particularly susceptible to international pressures given its extensive reliance on the volatile Middle East market.

The lifting of trade quotas in Indonesia is having a bearing on the future of the region’s cattle industry (particularly live trade), with increasing demand but limited supply.

The WA government signed a memorandum of understanding with China early in 2013-14, which may facilitate live cattle exports to the country for the first time ever. This has the potential to provide significant new opportunities for the region’s cattle market.

**Minerals**

Economic growth in China has been extremely strong but is starting to slow slightly, which may see decline in demand for Mid West resources going forward. With China buying 95% of the region’s iron ore for its extensive construction program, this commodity appears most likely to be effected by any decline. However, China’s GDP maintains very high levels with consistent annual growth of around 7% projected.

Recent up scaling of operations in the Pilbara may place pressure on the emerging Mid West iron ore market as it works to further increase its market share. To the extent that Chinese steel mills favour magnetite as a feedstock, the Mid West may still hold a comparative advantage given its extensive magnetite reserves, whereas the Pilbara produces mainly hematite.

Fluctuating commodity prices is a consistent challenge for the resources sector and creates uncertainty for decision makers regarding investment.

The use of uranium as potential energy source presents both opportunities and challenges for the Mid West, which has substantial uranium deposits with some mines proposed for development. The region’s thorium deposits may also present an opportunity once technology is available to process it as a safer alternative to uranium.

**Aquaculture**

Decline in wild catch fisheries combined with a dramatic increase in demand for seafood presents significant potential for aquaculture. Research, knowledge and industry development has been a focus for the Mid West in recent years and given its natural advantages (fishing culture, expertise, warm clean waters etc) the region is well placed for growth in this sector. The establishment of a dedicated marine aquaculture zone in the Mid West will also support further development of the industry.

The decline in the wild fish catch compounded by increased regulation to preserve fish populations are challenges for the region’s significant fishing industry. Diversification into aquaculture, offshore oil and gas and other parallel industries may become more prevalent.

Input controls such as quotas imposed to support sustainability of the valuable rock lobster industry, along with rising demand for lobster from the growing middle class in countries like China, has seen markedly increased prices and returns to local fishers.

**GROW AND DIVERSIFY TRADE MARKETS**

To meet the food demands of a growing world population, global agricultural production will need to double by 2050. As a strong food growing region this presents some trade opportunities for the Mid West. Similarly, fish farming is anticipated to dominate the world seafood market as demand for fish increases by 37 million tonnes between 2009 and 2030. The Mid West has a potential comparative advantage in aquaculture that it may be able to leverage.

While agriculture, mining and rock lobster dominate Mid West exports, other niche trade opportunities exist and may emerge as areas of regional advantage. These can be explored for their export potential to further diversify the export base for the region.

**OPPORTUNITY: Focussing on Mid West comparative / competitive advantages to further diversify its economic base can open up new trade relationships that help buffer the region against fluctuations in demand from its traditional markets.**

1 State Planning Strategy, p52
2 State Planning Strategy, p52
It is important to note that trade has both export and import functions. Exports offer the greatest potential impact in terms of local economic activity and job creation, but understanding the regional import profile may help identify local supply opportunities and potential cost savings.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Understanding the regional import profile may help identify self supply opportunities and cost efficiencies.

The Mid West is also well placed to take advantage of emerging free trade agreements (FTA) or trade zone developments with Asian countries, in particular the recently announced China-Australia FTA (November 2014).

Importantly, the ‘rules of engagement’ for domestic trade are likely to change significantly as a result of FTAs. Supply of products into international markets that may have once been uneconomical due to trade restrictions or costs, may soon become viable and warrant closer investigation.

Most Mid West food products are exported in raw form ie grain, animals etc and typically attract lower market price. A reduction in import tariffs for processed food products presents significant opportunities for Mid West food producers, particularly in highly mechanised industries. This may enable the region to diversify into higher value processed goods, which in turn has potential to create additional local processing activity and new employment.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Assessment of the impacts of recent and proposed FTAs and tariff reductions may help identify global market opportunities that are now economically viable.

**BUILD STRATEGIC TRADE PARTNERSHIPS**

As a region that exports most of what it produces, positioning of the Mid West as an internationally-engaged region is important. The Mid West has a variety of key assets, perceived strengths and regional advantages that include:

- proximity to markets;
- the closest general cargo / agriculture port to the emerging South East Asian ‘food bowl’;
- extensive road and rail infrastructure;
- airport with infrastructure capacity for A330 / B737 operations;
- diverse minerals deposits;
- extensive land areas and large quantities of groundwater for agriculture;
- clean and warm coastal waters conducive to quality fisheries production;
- a Mid West chapter of the Australia China Business Council (ACBC);
- clean and green reputation; and
- innovative qualities and capacity to supply to niche specifications and requirements.

The region is also well placed to gain leverage from WA / Australia’s good trade standing, sharing a strong reputation for quality assurance, governance, safety and compliance standards.

Establishing strong business relationships and networks in regional, national and international markets helps businesses to expand trade, access new technologies and provides opportunities for foreign investment. Existing trade relationships will be strengthened through implementation of the Blueprint, with new opportunities also likely to be created.

The CGG has a formal sister city relationship with Zhanjiang in Guangdong Province, strategic partner relationship with Zhoushan in Zhejiang Province and a strategic partner City candidate Linfen in Shanxi Province. As well as the aforementioned Mid West ACBC, there is also an International Relations Development Advisory Committee.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Fostering ‘community to community’ and ‘region to region’ relationships can assist the development of long-term business and trade partnerships.

**TRADE FACILITATION**

Amongst other things, successful trade facilitation requires cost effective access to markets as well as effective business relationships and networks. It also requires a welcoming and supportive local business environment that assists external buyers and investors and provide them with the confidence to do business.

As indicated the region has a range of transport infrastructure advantages that support trade. However, transport costs represent a significant and growing proportion of the cost base of primary producers, particularly with bulk commodities such as iron ore and grain. Improving infrastructure provision and lowering the cost of doing business in the region can improve the competitiveness and / or profitability of Mid West businesses as trade partners.

It is essential that such initiatives look past the needs of individual projects or industries to focus on the overall productivity and investment requirements of regional supply chains.

**CHALLENGE:** A range of obstacles need to be overcome including the development of targeted, efficient infrastructure that supports the export of commodities and products (such as a deepwater port), by assisting producers to lower marginal export costs.
Development of networks and international relationships with buyers in key markets through the collaboration between government departments (such as DAFWA, which is increasing its market development focus), chambers of commerce, business associations and key businesses will assist the region in gaining international recognition providing a strong platform for trade.

**OPPORTUNITY:** To establish a regional trade and inward bound capital investment function to explore, develop and facilitate Mid West trade opportunities.

Globally, branding can be used to draw a positive connection between a product or experience and the identity of a geographical region. The Mid West has minimal global product or destination recognition, with minimal traction in global (or domestic) markets as a result.

With industries working together through combined marketing efforts, the region can build a positive reputation for its products and experiences and reinforce its unique qualities to attract and build consumer loyalty.

**OPPORTUNITY:** To positively position the Mid West based on its regional advantages by leveraging successful domestic branding.

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**GOAL:**

The Mid West will be a major trade link to a rapidly growing middle class in Asia and other developing nations

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### 2050 OUTCOMES

#### Regional Aspirations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>TERM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROW AND DIVERSIFY TRADE MARKETS</strong></td>
<td>Focussing on Mid West comparative / competitive advantages to further diversify its economic base can open up new trade relationships that help buffer the region against fluctuations in demand from its traditional markets.</td>
<td>Support the development of industries in which the Mid West has a comparative advantage to diversify its economic base and expand its export markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding the regional import profile may help identify self supply opportunities and cost efficiencies.</td>
<td>Analyse regional import data and trends to help identify opportunities for self supply and savings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of the impacts of recent and proposed FTAs and tariff reductions may help identify global market opportunities that are now economically viable.</td>
<td>Investigate new trade opportunities resulting from FTAs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BUILD STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS</strong></td>
<td>Fostering ‘community to community’ and ‘region to region’ relationships can assist the development of long-term business and trade partnerships.</td>
<td>Review, develop and expand programs, processes and relationships to improve the region’s trade performance and competitiveness with major global markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High level global connections on a ‘region to province’ basis with key countries.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRADE FACILITATION</strong></td>
<td>A range of obstacles need to be overcome including the development of targeted, efficient infrastructure that supports the export of commodities and products (such as a deepwater port), assisting producers to lower marginal export costs.</td>
<td>Continue to develop efficient transport infrastructure to enable competitive trade to key markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To establish a regional trade and inward bound capital investment function to explore, develop and facilitate Mid West trade opportunities.</td>
<td>Establish a trade and investment office in the Mid West as a connection point for all opportunities relating to trade, investment and development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To positively position the Mid West based on its regional advantages by leveraging successful domestic branding.</td>
<td>Build the region’s profile as a provider of quality products and experiences through an integrated marketing approach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STATE SECURITY

The development of WA, particularly the northern Pilbara and the Kimberley, is accompanied with an increased sense of vulnerability to existing, as well as emerging security threats. The Mid West has the business and industry capacity to support Australian Defence Force (ADF) operations in the northwest to protect WA’s people and strategic assets. As WA’s northwest becomes increasingly important to the nation’s economy, the focus of the ADF and the WA government has turned to potentially bolstering the security of this area. The recently released State Planning Strategy 2050, prioritises the security of WA’s strategic economic, ecological and social assets.

In its 2011 submission to the Defence Force Posture Review, the WA government reaffirmed its commitment to the nation’s strategic priorities. The WA government has offered support through its policies and programs, existing and projected facilities, infrastructure and skills base to foster greater synergies between the State and ADF.

WA has stressed the importance of developing a greater ADF presence in the State to meet potential security challenges and ensure ongoing national security and prosperity. It is suggested that the strategic location of supportive industry and infrastructure in the northwest of WA provides the opportunities for the ADF to consider the Mid West for basing, sustainment and servicing strategies. Through the Mid West Regional Blueprint consultation process, it was suggested that the region lobbies for the potential ADF basing, sustainment and servicing strategies.

GOAL: The Mid West has the business and industry capacity to support Australian Defence Force operations in the North West to protect WA’s people and strategic assets.

2050 OUTCOMES

Regional Aspirations

CHALLENGES / OPPORTUNITIES

STRATEGIC DEFENCE SUPPORT

The Mid West has infrastructure and services to support ADF operations in the north west of WA.

For the Mid West to build its business and industry capacity to support the ADF and ACBPS operations in the northwest to better manage disparate border security threats and increasing threat of biosecurity.

OPPORTUNITY: For the Mid West to build its business and industry capacity to support the ADF and ACBPS operations in the northwest to better manage disparate border security threats and increasing threat of biosecurity.

STRATEGIES

Build local business and industry capacity to service the north-west to support the ADF and ACBPS.

TERM

The recently released the Anketell Port Master Plan proposes a major, multi-user and multi-commodity deepwater port in the Pilbara. The Master Plan includes provisions for a substantial infrastructure corridor and more than 800ha of industrial land to support port activities and future mining operations. This project would most likely also support the presence of the ADF in the northwest.

Together with increased infrastructure development as a result of the ‘Pilbara Cities’ initiative, this provides Mid West businesses with a expanding market for the provision of goods and services. By contributing to the development of the Pilbara, the Mid West can play its part in supporting the State Government in its bid to attract ADF operations in the northwest.

Supporting the growth of the Pilbara

Situated south of the tropical cyclone zone, Geraldton is the largest regional centre north of Perth and is proximal between the ADF’s Fleet Base West at Garden Island and the State’s northwest. It is the services and logistics hub for the Mid West region and is supported by a diverse regional economy. There is sufficient critical mass to underpin the established health and education facilities and services, social and recreational amenities and affordable housing options. Unlike the Pilbara, Geraldton has significant stocks of affordable land for housing and industry.

Geraldton is the multi-modal transport hub for the region, located on primary coastal highway from Perth and being the northern-most limit of the State rail system. Geraldton has an established multi commodity sea port, with substantial mineral and wheat exports.

The city also houses the region’s primary airport, which is local government owned. It has land exceeding 500ha and full security facilities in place for jet aircraft passenger services and is currently serviced by both Virgin and Qantas Airlines. Significant landside and airside areas for defence purposes exist onsite with marshalling yards nearby.

A 2,600m Code 4E runway is in detailed design planning, with ultimate plans to 3,300m. This offers access potential for fixed and rotary winged ADF aircraft, as well as a heavy-lift logistics and fuel hub. Aircraft from the Royal Australia Air Force Base Pearce already use Geraldton Airport on a regular basis for training exercises and navy patrol vessels have been occasional visitors to the Geraldton port.

The Mid West coastline is monitored by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS). The Mid West region has a defence presence that includes the joint satellite communications base at Kojarena 30km east of Geraldton.

The city is also home to the HMAS Sydney II Memorial, which commemorates Australia’s most tragic loss of life at sea and is the burial site for the “Unknown Sailor”. Over the past decade there has been an increase in Geraldton based companies providing services into the Pilbara and beyond. There are indications that more are gearing up to provide additional services to the mining and natural gas industries in the northwest (eg catering, transport, work boats, steel fabrication).

It is recognised that in the northwest the ports of Broome and Dampier support both the ADF and ACBPS operations.