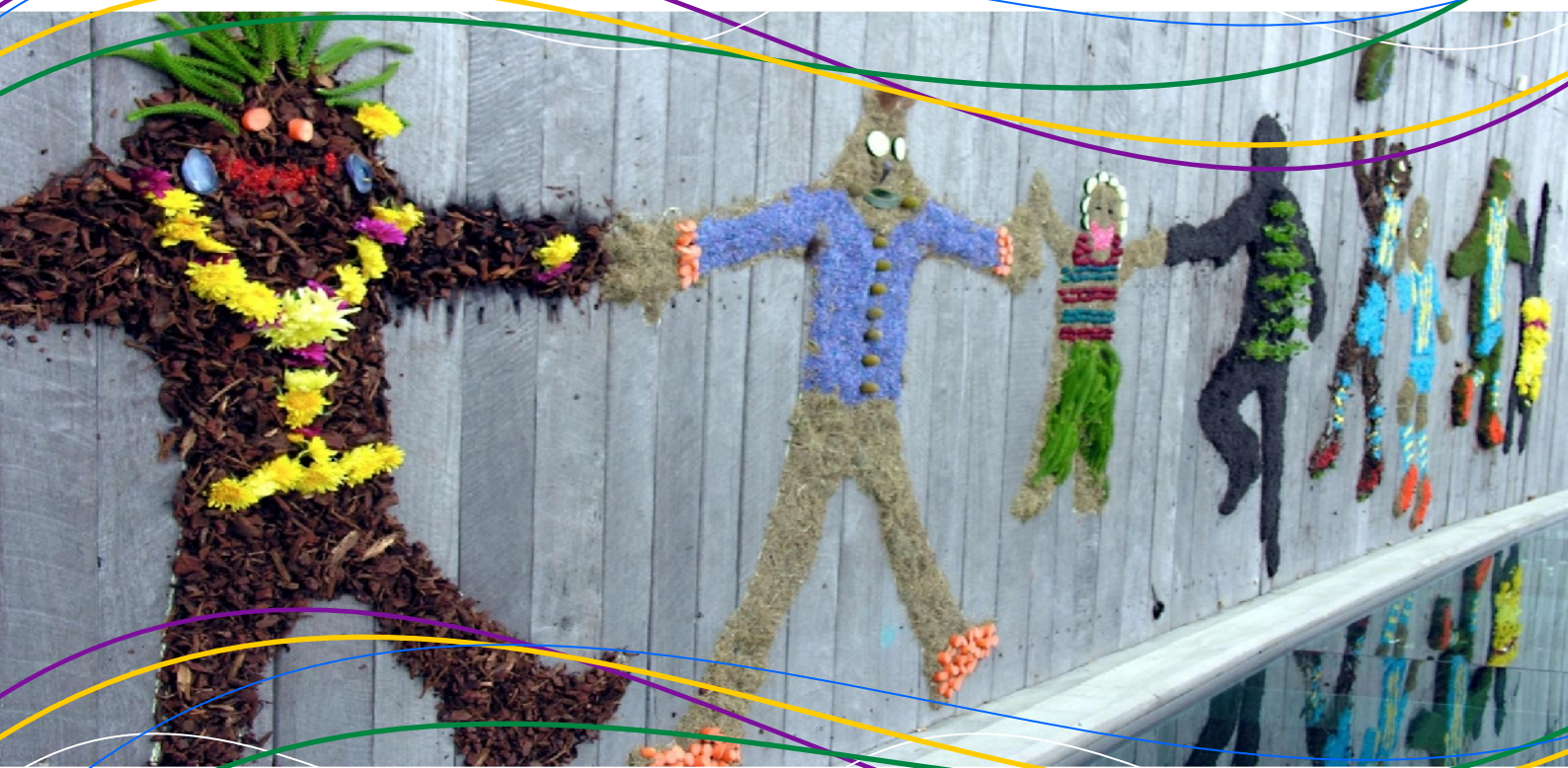


PEEL AWAY THE MASK II



Peel Away the Mask II

February 2012

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Preface

Over ten years on from the first publication of the landmark report on the social conditions of the Peel Region, "Peel Away the Mask," the Region still experiences a phenomenal rate of growth.

All the Local Governments in the Region are impacted by both the positive aspects that growth brings to a Region, and challenged by how to deal with the needs that the people, who are that growth, have when they are living in a regional community.

Historically, the communities in the Region have experienced an under resourcing in the social and community sector.

Residents in our communities often face very complex matters and frequently a combination of factors creates difficulties in managing their lives in the way they would like.

In the ten plus years since the original publication, many organisations and levels of government have heard the challenge set out in the document and have sought to work together to improve the condition of the people living in the Region.

This has been done in a way that is a hallmark of organisations operating in the Region, that is, a commitment to work together to produce a better outcome.

When the "Peel Away the Mask" report was first published it focussed the attention of decision makers in government and the community sector, so that the serious matters raised could be addressed through combined effort. There have been many successful outcomes from this approach.

It is important to now measure where we are in 2012. This is a very dynamic Region and obtaining the data is always challenging. However we now have further information on which to base our planning for important community solutions.

We have learnt that there cannot be a top-down approach but the solutions for a community lie within the community, with the support and backup of all levels of government.

The "Peel Away the Mask 2" brings together the updated statistical information and commentary on those issues that are still to be addressed.

It is important to read this document in the light of what already has been achieved. It provides us with information on where we now need to focus attention and how we need to advocate for those sections of the community who are still experiencing serious disadvantage.

The world has changed in so many ways since November 2001. The world we now operate in provides both significant opportunities with increased collaboration, but we are impacted by events external to our Region.

As a Region and as communities within that Region, residents have always shown a resilience and an ability to adapt. The purpose of this report is to provide information on which to base planning of solutions that will work in this community.

I congratulate all those who have worked so hard for so long on the development of the brief, the overseeing of the report and the great amount of work that has gone on to bring this report to publication.

It again has highlighted the enormous collaboration that is a feature of this Region. I commend this report to you and know that the increased awareness, information and data will help our communities find the solutions they seek.

Paddi Creevey OAM

Chair
Peel Community Development Group Inc

February 2012



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Introduction

Published in November 2001, *Peel Away the Mask: A Study of the Social Condition of the Peel Region* (PATM) provided an overview of socio-economic trends and drivers in the Peel region. The region has grown and changed substantially in the intervening decade.

This report, *Peel Away the Mask II* (PATM II), is a follow-up study to the 2001 document. It draws on official statistical sources and the findings of a qualitative research process throughout the region's five constituent local government areas to provide a contemporary view of socio-economic trends and drivers manifest in the Peel region.

Firstly, this report acknowledges Noongar prior possession and occupation of the Peel region. The Noongar people, comprising fourteen language groups, are the traditional owners of the entire south-western part of Western Australia (SWALSC nd: 2)¹.

Secondly, as did the first *Peel Away the Mask* report, this study invokes the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in this case as they apply to employment, education, participation in the cultural life of the community and, most importantly, from Article 25:

the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of [each individual] and of his [or her] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his [or her] control.

Study Scope and Methods

This research examines the "social condition" of the Peel region in terms of the five United Nations "quality of life" indicators considered in the 2001 PATM Report, and in addition addresses three further indicators. The resultant eight indicators are as follows:

- Community Diversity;
- Health and Community Services;
- Housing;
- Safety and Security;
- Education;
- Employment and Income;
- Environment; and
- Infrastructure, Transport and Telecommunications.

The scope of the 2001 PATM report is also extended through greater attention to each of the five local government areas (LGA) in the Peel region – Mandurah, Serpentine Jarrahdale, Murray, Waroona and Boddington – in terms of both developing an overall regional perspective and, simultaneously, capturing diversity across the region. While this study is underpinned by extensive local consultation with a wide range of community and service sector individuals and will highlight areas requiring attention, this breadth of scope means that it is not possible to comprehensively account for all service factors, drivers, perspectives and programs in the Peel.

Secondary Data

This report brings together the most recent, reliable and regionally coherent statistical data. In many instances these are 2006 Census data, thus updating the 1996 Census data presented in the 2001 PATM report. Consistent use of Census data enables meaningful comparison of stable data sets both within and across present and future iterations of this report. It should be noted however that Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) cannot be compared across time. Given the timing of this current report, 2006 data may

¹ Each of the fourteen different language groups are associated with a specific geographical area in the South West: the Yued; Whadjuk, Binjareb/Pinjarup and Wardandi are connected to the Swan Coast Plain, while the Whadjuk, Bindjareb/Pinjarup, Balardong, Wilman and Ganeang/Goreng are connected to the Jarrah Forest area (SWALSC nd).

offer only a partial representation of areas that have undergone rapid growth between then and now. It is thus recommended that future reports are timed to coincide with the release of Census data.

In addition to author collections, workshop and interview participants were invited to identify and/or contribute relevant reports and statistical data including, for example, minutes of interagency meetings and organisation/sector-level quantitative records or compilations. This material has been utilised when appropriate. Quantitative data not available in standard publications and/or which cannot be cross-checked is presented as “unpublished” data.

Primary Data

Extensive community consultation has been a core attribute of this current research: 244 individuals were consulted. This qualitative component, undertaken with the approval of the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee, consisted of six public workshops with a total of 98 participants, semi-structured interviews with 78 individuals, and a researcher-led public survey conducted in five sites across the region with 68 respondents. This qualitative data enables a nuanced understanding of complex social issues (Yin 2003) and in particular of lived experience (Herbert 2000).

Workshops

A publically-advertised open-invitation workshop was held during working hours in each LGA in the first half of 2011 with the exception of Serpentine Jarrahdale where two workshops were held, one in the morning and one in the evening. Workshop participants were self-selecting in response to the open invitation received principally through community networks and the local media. Participants, in the main, were “active” either as paid service staff or volunteers in their communities. A total of 98 people participated in the workshops.

Interviews

In conjunction with the workshops, a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 78 people identified through self-selection, snowballing and purposive sampling. Combining these selection methods ensures wide representation in the region while enabling exploration of issues identified in workshops and through secondary research. The majority of interviews were conducted face-to-face between February and August 2011, with an average duration of 45-60 minutes. A number of interviews were conducted over the telephone and through an email questionnaire and ensuing correspondence. Detailed notes were taken and transcribed in full, prior to analysis.

Participant Characteristics

Both within each LGA and across the Peel region, a robust cross-section of government agencies, not-for-profit organisations and community groups of varying sizes and focus areas were represented. The sample also captured substantial participant expertise in each of the seven research indicators. Health and Community Services was the most well represented category with comprehensive coverage of health, mental health, aged care, youth, welfare services, legal and financial counselling, community development and housing organisations, progress and sporting associations, church and environmental groups, migrant associations, art and heritage groups, emergency services and advocacy groups. As often happens, many participants had multiple community roles.

The sample further includes a balance of volunteer workers and paid staff across the region and also across workshop participants and interviewees. In terms of specific LGAs, however, Mandurah workshop participants included a strong majority of paid staff whereas Serpentine Jarrahdale workshops featured a majority of volunteer staff.

Importantly just over 50% of workshop participants and interviewees could claim over five years experience in the community and /or their given areas of focus. Just under 30% of participants could claim between five and ten years experience. The depth of local knowledge and experience thus captured in the community consultation provides a rich basis for understanding the social condition of the Peel region and its divergent lived experiences as signalled in the statistical data. This depth of expertise not only lends considerable weight to the findings presented, but is also a key strength of the Peel region.

Researcher observation was also conducted through interagency and progress association meeting attendances and on-site visits.

Public Survey

Informal researcher-led public surveys were conducted at five sites:

- “Crab Fest” on the Mandurah Foreshore;
- Moonlight Markets in Serpentine Jarrahdale;
- Boddington main street;
- Pinjarra Shopping Centre; and
- Yunderup Sport and Recreation Club.

A total of 68 members of the general public were thus surveyed, comprised of 20 visitors to the region and 48 Peel residents. While this is not a large data set it nevertheless is indicative of broader issues and is used to triangulate workshop and interview data.

Workshops and interviews focussed on three critical themes:

- issues and challenges facing the LGA / Peel region;
- strengths and advantages in the given LGA / Peel region; and
- innovative strategies and projects needed to address issues and make the most of existing strengths.

This approach empowers local community members and health and community service staff to determine what the issues and strengths are, as opposed to seeking perspectives on predetermined topics.

At the Mandurah and Serpentine Jarrahdale workshops data was recorded by participants on A3 sheets of paper. Working in groups, participants firstly identified and recorded key issues and challenges before collectively selecting and ranking the five most important issues/challenges. This process was repeated for key strengths and advantages.

Due to the smaller number of attendees at the Murray, Waroona and Boddington workshops these meetings were treated as focus group discussions and detailed notes were taken by the researcher.

Interpretation

Qualitative data has been interpreted collectively through an indexing approach identifying common themes and is presented here in a narrative discussion. This qualitative data has been examined collectively to enable an understanding of both experiences and perceptions of disadvantage, and also community strengths, at a regional level. Accordingly, the regional perspective on key issues and strengths incorporates data specific to each LGA.

In addition, separate chapters are offered on each LGA as a means to enrich understandings of regional diversity and points of difference in relation to current issues and strengths.

Interviewees are not named and where appropriate demographic data has been suppressed to protect participant anonymity. Research participant confidentiality is an important means by which open discussion of the region’s issues and strengths can be fostered.

Report drafts have been circulated in order to seek verification of the accuracy of researcher interpretation of the data. Feedback has also been received from members of the advisory group overseeing this research.

Report Structure

Part 1 of this report is organised into chapters each of which examines one of the eight indicators listed above. Each chapter provides a regional snapshot of the “current condition” of the Peel in regard to an indicator through reference to relevant contextual and statistical data, followed by primary research findings. Included in this discussion is a comparison to the findings of the 2001 PATM report in order, where possible, to identify changes across the intervening decade. This is in turn followed by a gap analysis and summary of respondent views on “What would make a difference”. Regional conclusions and recommendations are then

presented in a separate chapter highlighting the principal findings of this research for the Peel region and offering an indication of future requirements in terms of policy response, practical initiatives, and future research. These recommendations are offered in the interests of informing strategic and inclusive economic, social and cultural development in the region.

Part 2 of this report presents brief, separate chapters on each of the LGAs offering statistical and primary research specific to each Shire.

Peel in the Context of Western Australia

*The Peel is the second largest region in regional WA after the South West. In June 2010, its population of 108,560 accounted for 17.7% of the WA regional population of 614,657. Over **one in six** people living in regional WA, live in the Peel region.*

CURRENT CONDITION

The Peel is one of nine development regions in Western Australia (WA) and is bordered by the Perth and South West regions. It is the smallest geographic region in WA, yet has the third largest population. In June 2010 the Peel population was estimated (ABS 2011: August 2011 estimate) at 108,560 people, accounting for 4.7% of WA's population, and placing it behind the neighbouring regions of Perth (1,678,853) and South West (162,164). The Peel also has over 30,000 more people than the Wheatbelt which was only marginally less populated than the Peel in 2001.

This makes the Peel the second most populous region in regional WA after the South West. In 2010, its population accounted for 17.7% of the WA regional population of 614,657. Over one in six people living in regional WA, live in the Peel. Further, the region's share of WA's regional population is rising steadily. In 2005, the Peel region had 87,447 people or around 16.1% of regional WA's population (614,657), while in 2001, the Peel region had 76,420 people, accounting for 14.7% of a total regional population of 519,861 (Regional Development Council 2011).

Behind this growing importance has been an especially rapid population expansion in the Peel relative to the rest of the state, with growth since 2005 of around 24.1%, compared to state population growth of 13.7%; the Peel is the fastest growing region in WA and one of the fastest growing in Australia. This is especially true in relation to regional WA. Between July 2001 and 2010, the Peel region accounted for 33.9% of the *increase* in WA's regional population.

Table 1 Peel in Context: The WA Regions Compared - Population

Region	Current Population	Historic Population		Projected Population
	(June 2010)	(June 2005)	Population Growth (%) 2005-2010	(June 2031)
Gascoyne	10,016	9,662	3.7%	11,300
Goldfields-Esperance	59,070	55,005	7.4%	65,400
Great Southern	59,412	55,183	7.7%	63,800
Kimberley	35,706	31,867	12.0%	70,400
Mid West	55,584	51,172	8.6%	58,100
Peel	108,560	87,447	24.1%	188,400
Pilbara	48,610	42,757	13.7%	50,200
South West	162,164	139,003	16.7%	189,800
Wheatbelt	75,535	72,160	4.7%	89,900
Regional WA	614,657	544,256	12.9%	787,300
Perth	1,678,853	1,472,832	14.0%	2,013,400
WA	2,293,510	2,017,088	13.7%	2,800,700

Source: ABS (2011) for population data in 2010 and 2005; Planning WA (2005) for 2031 projections.

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Long-term population projections from Planning WA (2005) indicate that the Peel region's population is expected to increase to 188,400 people by 2031, constituting 6.7% of WA's total population and 23.9%, almost one quarter, of its regional population.

In line with this projected growth, the Peel region will account for 46% of the total expansion in WA regional population to 2031. In that year, the Peel region will rival the South West as WA's most populous region outside Perth, with nearly one in four people living in regional WA, living in the Peel.

A number of factors underpin this sustained, rapid growth, including:

- the historic availability of land in the region, particularly in Mandurah – an advantage which is being challenged by recent rapid growth;
- improvements in public transport linkages between Perth and the region, including the opening of the Perth—Mandurah Rail Line in 2007; and
- Mandurah's emergence as a preferred location by retirees, as evidenced by its high number of residents over 65 years of age.

The Peel region encompasses five local government areas (LGAs) – Mandurah, Serpentine Jarrahdale, Murray, Waroona, and Boddington.²

Figure 1
The Peel Region



Source: Provided by the Peel Development Commission (2011).

² These LGAs are classed in three Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistical sub-divisions (SSDs), contained within two statistical divisions (SDs). Mandurah and Murray are part of Mandurah (SSD), while Boddington and Waroona are both part of Preston (SSD). Both the Mandurah and Preston SSDs are located in the South West (SD). Serpentine Jarrahdale is part of the South-East Metropolitan (SSD) in Perth (SD).

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More so than any other region in WA, the Peel region spans the divide between the Perth Metropolitan region and regional WA. To this extent, the Peel shares common developmental issues with Perth (population growth, service provision and land development challenges) as well as the rest of WA's regions (smaller, more dispersed populations; funding service delivery over a wide geographical footprint; forced in-migration of displaced low income groups; and minerals extraction). For this reason, designing and implementing social policy in the Peel presents unique challenges.

Though it is geographically WA's smallest region, the main population centres are a long way from each other. The City of Mandurah, the administrative and service centre of the Peel region, is situated on the western coastal edge of the region. Waroona town, the principal population and administration centre of the Shire of Waroona, is 45 km from the City of Mandurah, while the town of Boddington, the principal population and administrative centre of the Shire of Boddington, is 95 km from both Mandurah and Armadale, the other nearest city. This has significant ramifications for, among others, service provision across the region, the development of a sense of regional identity, and intra-regional transport.

EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE PEEL REGION

The 2001 PATM report drew attention to social contrasts in the Peel which were not widely known, arguing that "the physical beauty and apparent affluence of the area masks a community that is increasingly under stress" (1).

On March 13th 2011, a survey was conducted with 31 attendees at the Mandurah Crab Fest to gauge contemporary perceptions of the Peel. The Crab Fest is a major, annual two-day tourist festival attracting up to 90,000 attendees. Of the 16 females and 15 males interviewed, 12 were from Fremantle and Rockingham, 18 were visiting from Perth, and 1 was visiting from interstate. The largest portions of interviewees were in the 18-30 year old age group (33%) and the 30-45 year old age group (36%); the remaining third were 45 years of age and above.

Survey respondents were asked three questions, namely what they perceived to be the key:

- issues and challenges for the Peel region;*
- strengths of the region; and*
- recent changes.*

The responses, summarised below, are thus indicative of nearby regional visitor perceptions of Mandurah (given this is the site of the Crab Fest) and potentially of the Peel region more broadly. Responses indicate an awareness of the regional population growth and the needs of youth in particular.

*The **key issue and challenge** most frequently cited by respondents was the fast growing population and attendant infrastructure stresses. Some expressed the opinion that there were now too many people in area which was thus no longer a "place to get away from the urban rush". Other frequently cited issues centred on local youth and related to lack of facilities for youth, unemployment and crime levels.*

*The **most cited key strengths** were tourism (not surprisingly in relation to the foreshore area), number and quality of restaurants, and holiday lifestyle.*

*The **most cited key changes** in the region were population growth and local development including high rise apartments, greater cultural diversity and a more pronounced youth presence.*

This small survey suggests a broad external awareness of Peel community stressors.

Changes Since 2001

In understanding the current social condition of the Peel it is important to keep in mind the following social and political changes impacting WA as a whole and the Peel in particular over the last decade:

- Ongoing WA regional population growth: 33% of this regional growth has occurred in the Peel. The scale and speed of this growth poses particular problems in terms of addressing gaps in health and community service delivery as identified in PATMI.
- Large scale urban development. In recognition of this both Mandurah and Serpentine Jarrahdale are members of the National Growth Areas Alliance.
- Expansion of mining and related socio-economic benefits and costs (in the Peel: Newmont Gold Mine and Alumina extraction; impact of fly-in/fly-out work practices).
- Transport inter-regional linkages (Perth-Mandurah Passenger Rail and the Perth Bunbury Highway).
- Climate change (in the Peel: lower rainfall and sea level threats).
- Hospital expansion.
- Growth in the Peel Education Campus (founded in 2000).
- The Global Financial Crisis (impact on families and increased pressures on social service providers).
- Falling unemployment rates in the State and in the Peel.
- Development of the *Peel 2020 Sustainability Strategy*.
- Decline in housing affordability: in the Peel in 2001 median household income was equal to 19.4% of the median house price. In 2010 median household income was equal to 10.8% of the median house price. Housing affordability on this measure has halved.
- Nation-wide decline in public housing stock.
- A shift toward government and NGO partnerships in health, social and community service delivery.
- Royalties for Regions: however, as this report demonstrates, the Peel region has received the lowest share of projected regional specific spending in 2011-12 of any region when calculated on a per capita basis (\$311 per capita versus a WA regional average of \$1742).
- Establishment of the Peel Community Development Group as a result of the first PATM report with a mandate to support community services operating in the Peel.
- Ongoing development of sport and recreation infrastructure in the region.

Community Diversity

If we want to be a better community we have to reach out and find out who is here and what it's like. (Interviewee involved in the migrant sector)

CURRENT CONDITION

Population and Demographics

The Peel region is broadly distinguishable from other regions in WA in terms of its rapid growth as noted earlier and its population dynamics.

Much of the growth in the Peel has been concentrated in Mandurah, which already accounts for 64.9% of the Peel's population (see Table 2), although it is the geographically smallest LGA in the Peel region (174 km²). In 1978 Mandurah was a town with an estimated population of 10,000 (City of Mandurah, 2009). Over the

thirty-two years to June 2010, Mandurah's population increased nearly seven-fold to 70,413. The City of Mandurah projects a further increase in Mandurah's population to 100,000 by 2020, with a potential doubling by 2031 (City of Mandurah 2009). By way of comparison, the City of Rockingham, which neighbours Mandurah and is located in the South West of the Perth Metropolitan Region, had 104,130 people in June 2010.

This continued rapid development brings a range of challenges (as discussed in later sections of this report) and, equally importantly, makes it doubly-difficult to "catch up" in terms of shortfalls in infrastructure and supply and demand gaps in health and community services.

Table 2 Peel Population and Demographics, June 2010, By LGA³

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>	<i>Current Population</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 15 to 25</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 65 and Over</i>	<i>2001 Population</i>	<i>Per cent Growth Since 2001</i>
Mandurah	174	70,413	12.1%	21.2%	48,877	44.1%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	1,461	17,212	13.1%	9.2%	11,704	47.1%
Murray	1,154	15,401	10.8%	18.3%	10,875	41.6%
Waroona	832	3,842	12.3%	13.2%	3,524	9.0%
Boddington	1,900	1,692	9.8%	13.8%	1,440	17.5%
Peel Region	5,521	108,560	12.0%	18.5%	76,420	42.1%
Rockingham	257	104,130	14.1%	12.6%	74,018	40.7%
Perth	5,385	1,678,853	15.1%	11.9%	1,393,725	20.5%
WA	2,531,563	2,293,510	14.4%	12.1%	1,901,159	20.6%

Source: ABS (2011) for area and population data; ABS (2009) for 2011 LGA population data.

The Peel region is also distinguishable among WA regions in terms of its unique demographic profile. In 2010, around 18.5% of Peel residents were 65 years or older, compared to an average for WA of 12.1%. The region has a high median age of 43 years, compared to a state average of 37 years. Conversely, residents between 15 and 25 years of age are underrepresented in the region in comparison to Perth, Rockingham and WA proportions.

Mandurah in particular has a large population over the age of 65, accounting for 21.2% of the city's population, a representation 75% higher than the WA average of 12.1%. Mandurah's youth population – those between 15 and 25 years of age – is around 12.1% of the entire population, compared with proportionally larger youth populations in Perth (15.1%) and WA (14.4%).

The next largest LGA, Serpentine Jarrahdale (17,212 people) has a considerably younger population, with only 9.2% of the population being aged 65 and over, while Murray, with a population of 15,401, has a demographic profile which is similar to that of Mandurah, although it has a relatively smaller youth population (around 10.8% of the LGA population). Waroona and Boddington are less populous LGAs with age profiles which are less pronounced than those of Mandurah and Murray.

Indigenous Population

The Peel region has a relatively smaller Indigenous population compared to WA. While 3.8% of the state's population is Indigenous (2006 Census data), the major population centre of the Peel, Mandurah, has an Indigenous population share of 1.5%, with lower rates of representation in Serpentine Jarrahdale (1%) and Murray (2.6%) and substantially higher rates in Waroona (2.6%) and Boddington (2.5%), although these LGAs still have Indigenous population shares below the state average.

³ Tables comparing LGA data throughout this report list LGAs in order from highest to lowest population.

Table 3 Indigenous Population Share in the Peel Region, 2006 Census data, By LGA

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Per cent of the Peel Region</i>
Mandurah	1.5%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	1.0%
Murray	2.6%
Waroona	2.6%
Boddington	1.3%
Peel Region	1.4%
Rockingham	1.5%
WA	3.4%

Source: ABS (2006a) Census Data.

Indigenous households in the Peel region tend to be larger than non-Indigenous units, at around 3.4 persons compared to 2.5 persons. A further feature of local Indigenous communities, commensurate with national trends, is the significantly higher proportion of youth in the population and the lower numbers of seniors making it the inverse of the non-Indigenous population demographic.

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

The Peel region has a lower proportion of overseas-born residents than WA as a whole: 22.6% versus 29.3% for the state. Waroona, Murray and Boddington in particular have relatively low levels of migrant settlement, whereas Mandurah (23.2%) and Serpentine Jarrahdale (24.5%) exceed the regional average but are still below the state average in terms of migrant population share.

The Peel region has a lower number of people who speak a language other than English at home – around 3.1% on average compared with 12.4% for WA as a whole. At the same time, some 2,606 people speaking languages other than English in the region self-identify in the ABS data as not speaking English well.

Table 4 Peel Population, Overseas Born and Language Spoken at Home, By LGA

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Per cent Overseas Born (2006 Census)</i>	<i>Per cent Speaking Language Other Than English at Home² (2006 Census)</i>
Mandurah	23.2%	3.2%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	24.5%	3.2%
Murray	20.3%	2.1%
Waroona	17.2%	6.3%
Boddington	14.2%	2.0%
Peel Region	22.6%	3.1%
Rockingham	30.6%	4.3%
Perth	33.7%	14.8%
WA	29.3%	12.4%

Source: ABS (2006a) for per cent born overseas and per cent speaking a language other than English at home.

Serpentine Jarrahdale, with 23.5% of the population born overseas, ranked 29th out of the 30 LGAs identified as having the highest proportion of “overseas born”, while Mandurah ranked 14th out of the 30 LGAs identified as having the highest number of overseas born (OMI 2011). Although the overseas-born population in the Peel represents a smaller portion of the population than for WA as a whole, it is nevertheless significant in terms of these individual LGA rankings. At one fifth of the local population in 2006 (that is, 17,858 persons), those born overseas represent a substantial proportion and one that is set to grow as a result of national labour trends and the presence of significant mining operation in the area.

This is a trend that is reflected at the national level. While natural increase has been the main source of population growth through most of the twentieth century, net overseas migration now contributes 60% of

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Australia's population growth (DoIC 2009). This migration underpins the economic expansion experienced during the last 15 years, in part meeting the demand, notably in the mining industry, for skilled labour.

Within the next few years overseas migration will be the only source of net labour force growth in Australia. Without immigration, Australian labour force growth will almost come to a halt in the next ten years (DoIC 2009). This is due to the ageing of the Australian population, itself a result of long term low fertility and increasing longevity. It is predicted that by the year 2036 Australians will be retiring from the labour force in larger numbers than those joining it (DoIC 2010).

Skilled migrants at present, and for the foreseeable future, comprise the single largest group of permanent migrants (ABS 2009). As part of the labour force "skilled migrants provide a substantial net contribution to Australia's economy initially and increasingly over time. Based on the 2006-07 migrant intake, it is estimated that this contribution is around \$580.7 million in the first year; \$955.6 million by year 10, and \$1.01 billion by year 20" (Access Economics 2008, cited in ABS 2009). In June 2009 those born overseas made up 25.6% of the estimated Australian resident population (DoIC, 2009), compared to 22.2% in the 2006 census.

Migrants are clearly important to regional Australia, particularly in areas with a pronounced ageing population. However, in a global context Australia is competing for migrants who, in addition, move internally to where the work is (ABS 2009). Furthermore, migrants from Asia and Africa account for an increasing number of overseas born residents while the proportion of European migrants, traditionally the largest component, is declining.

In the Peel, migrant and refugee service providers work with residents born in Poland, Croatia, Mongolia, Indonesia, Germany, South Africa, Sri Lanka, PNG and Malaysia, for example. In Boddington, migrants hail from an equally diverse range of countries including, for example, Surinam, Peru, Mongolia, Indonesia and South Africa. Waroona has a strong Italian community and local interviewees noted the presence of a Filipino population. Murray workshop participants made mention in passing about growing numbers of South African and Sudanese migrants.

Social Disadvantage

Employment and income outcomes for the Peel region and its underlying LGAs indicate a level of disadvantage compared with the rest of WA. This tends to be borne out in relation to standard measures of socio-economic disadvantage, one of which – the ABS's Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) – is reported in Table 5 for each of the Peel LGAs. This is based on 2006 Census data. The IRSD measures socio-economic disadvantage using a combination of factors, including income, employment and educational status. Results are reported around a national average of 1000, with two thirds of collection districts (CDs) lying between 900 and 1,100. Lower *IRSD Scores*, *IRSD Decile*, and *State Rank* measures indicate more pronounced levels of disadvantage in a local area compared with other CDs from Australia.

Table 5 Peel Region: Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD), 2006 Census Data.

<i>LGA</i>	<i>IRSD Score</i> ¹	<i>IRSD Decile</i> ²	<i>State Rank</i> ³	<i>Scores for Collection Districts in the area</i>	
				<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Mandurah	991	5	69	734	1184
Serpentine Jarrahdale	1048	9	126	938	1105
Murray	984	5	58	585	1089
Waroona	964	3	40	861	1059
Boddington	989	5	65	909	1037
Peel Region ⁴	996	6	77	585	1189
Rockingham	1,014	8	100	925	1107

Notes: 1. IRSD Score indicates the proportion of relatively disadvantaged people in an area, based on the IRSD variables, with a low score indicating that a LGA has greater levels of disadvantage. The average score across all Australian collection districts (CDs) is standardised at 1000, with two-thirds of all scores falling between 900 and 1,100.

2. IRSD Decile refers to where each LGA is located relative to other CDs in WA with a score of "1" indicating a ranking in the bottom 10% of CDs and "10" in the top 10%.

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3. State Rank refers to a ranking of local government areas (LGAs) in WA from 1 (most disadvantaged) to 142 (least disadvantaged).

4. This composite measure for Peel is an author calculation of the population weighted average of the five LGAs (using population weights from Table 2), with the corresponding decile and state rank measures being reported.
Source: ABS (2010b).

On this broad measure of disadvantage, three of the five Peel LGAs – Mandurah, Murray and Boddington – cluster around the Australian average on the IRSD index, with each of these lying within the fifth decile of all Australian CDs, placing them within the top half of the all 142 WA local government areas on this measure.

Waroona, with an index of 964 lies in the third decile on the basis of an Australia-wide comparison. Importantly it is ranked 40 in WA on the basis of this disadvantage measure where 1 equals the most disadvantaged LGA in WA and 142 the least disadvantaged. According to this measure Waroona is the most disadvantaged Peel LGA, and records greater levels of disadvantage than 70% of WA LGAs.

Serpentine Jarrahdale, with an IRSD score of 1048, reports a more favourable outcome on this basis and is located in the top 10% of Australian CDs and just outside the top 10% of WA LGAs (126 out of 142, where a *higher* ranking implies *lower* levels of social disadvantage).

Overall, the Peel region has a composite IRSD Score of 996 (see Note 4 in Table 5), placing the entire region in the sixth decile in a WA ranking and in a position equivalent to the 77th LGA in a ranking of WA 142 LGAs. Rockingham reports an IRSD score of 1014 (eighth decile in a national ranking and 100th LGA in a ranking of WA 142 LGAs) – which is similar to that of Serpentine Jarrahdale.

Using the IRSD scale, Peel LGAs can be ranked in a similar manner to that based on median weekly income estimates (Serpentine Jarrahdale first, with Murray and Waroona down the order), although a WA ranking of IRSD outcomes does indicate a level of measured disadvantage in the Murray LGA not readily observable on the basis of average income.

The difference between the minimum and maximum scoring CD in each LGA says much about *the uneven distribution of levels of disadvantage in each area*. While there are spatial concentrations of significant disadvantage in Murray, with the lowest minimum CD score in the Peel of 585, and also Waroona, Mandurah is home to both some of the most disadvantaged people in Australia and also some of the least disadvantaged in Australia. The minimum score of 734 for a CD in Mandurah is in stark contrast to its maximum CD score of 1184 (the highest for the region).

While the IRSD instrument approaches disadvantage as multi-dimensional it does not encompass the totality of indicators of socio-economic disadvantage. Aspects highly relevant to the Peel region are not included in this instrument, namely:

- access to schools, community services, shops, transport and medical facilities; and
- the remoteness of an area which also impacts on people's ability to participate in society (ABS 2008a)

These absences suggest that IRSD outcomes in the Peel represent a conservative measure of relative disadvantage.

PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Social cohesion describes "connections between people and between them and their community" (Vinson 2007b).

Social Cohesion

Community cohesion is evident in the high levels of volunteerism in the region and the numerous examples of local initiatives for the overall improvement of the community. With the exception of Mandurah, each LGA in the 2006 census recorded higher than state average percentages of the population self-identifying as involved in volunteer work in the community (see Table 6). In Boddington 34.8% of the population identified

as volunteers, a rate not only the highest in the Peel region but also almost double that of the state average of 18.7%.

Table 6 Peel Region: Voluntary Work, 2006 Census Data

LGA	Persons Undertaking Voluntary Work for Organisation or Group (% of population)
Mandurah	16.4%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	19.5%
Murray	20.2%
Waroona	25.2%
Boddington	34.8%
Peel Region ¹	18.0%
Rockingham	14.4%
WA	18.7%

Note: 1 Peel region estimate is a

population weighted estimate of the five LGAs.

Source: ABS (2011).

The number of volunteers and quality of commitment is exemplified in numerous statements made by a robust range of research participants, such as the following comment from an interviewee involved in collecting items for Christmas hampers: “we’ve never had anyone say no to us”.

Similarly, the long-running local “community car” initiative in Waroona is testimony to a high level of community cohesion.

The majority of local residents surveyed in Murray and Serpentine Jarrahdale highlighted “sense of community” and “community spirit” as key strengths.

Social Exclusion

“Social exclusion” describes a “lack of connectedness between individuals, the communities in which they live, and key economic and social processes” (Saunders et al 2011: 175).

Simultaneously with the above indicators of cohesion, significant exclusion of sections of the community on the basis of race and class is apparent in the primary research. This is neatly encapsulated in the comment from a Boddington participant: *“there’s a strong sense of community, but it’s a bit of a closed shop”*.

More specifically discrimination and racism emerge as issues in the Peel. The number and consistency of comments describing or reproducing discrimination in the primary data suggest that this occurs widely across the Peel. Exposure to direct racism, for example, was recounted by health workers describing the experiences of young Aboriginal mothers accessing mainstream services. Incidents were also described in which Aboriginal people were treated “differently once service staff realized that they were dealing with an Indigenous person” and “spoken to like we’re rubbish.” One interviewee described experiencing a higher level of racism in the Peel region compared to other places, notably the metropolitan area. Non-Indigenous interviewees also spoke of experiencing racism through working alongside Indigenous staff. As one person commented, *“I’m treated differently because I’m with Indigenous colleagues.”*

Importantly, social exclusion is often multi-dimensional with elements that relate not only to individual characteristics, but also to the “communities, and social and physical environments in which people live” (Saunders et al 2011: 178). Social exclusion can be further understood as occurring in three main ways: disengagement (lack of participation in customary and widely practiced activities); service exclusion (exclusion from public and private services used by a majority of the population); and economic exclusion (in addition to income, access to savings, credit, assets and the labour market) (Saunders et al, 2008). The primary research indicates extensive social exclusion across the Peel in each of these three modes as described in detail in ensuing chapters, and as confirmed in the IRSD scores elaborated upon above. A pervasive dimension of this exclusion is poor access to transport and thus participation in the local community and labour markets, and limited access to education and community services. For example, interviewees in

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Serpentine Jarrahdale make consistent reference to social isolation as arising from multiple factors as evident in the following comments:

In Serpentine Jarrahdale what I see is isolation for mums in particular, a lack of transport, minimal choices in child care options though there are 2 new ones in Byford.

Living in Mundijong] can be isolating and difficult if you don't drive.

Respondents and service providers across the Peel consistently note that this isolation is “made worse if you have need of mental health, aged, or disability support”.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Groups

Attention to the experiences and needs of the migrant population is important given the growing population share represented by this group (see above) and, in particular, likely rapid growth in migrant numbers in and around Boddington as the gold mine reaches its expected 650 operational staff, leading to an anticipated population increase of 1400 people by 2014 (unpublished data). Large numbers of staff and dependents are likely to come from non-main English speaking countries.

Workshop attendees and interviewees drew attention to the “migrant experience” across the Peel, indicating a need for further primary research in this area. Specifically, the findings presented here draw on interviews with 4 migrant women who have arrived as secondary applicants over the last four years, two Temporary Visa holders residing in Mandurah, and three service providers supporting, in various ways, the migrant population of the Peel region. These interviews provide important insights into the diversity of the migrant experience and the particular challenges they may face, along with contributing factors in the region, as outlined below

For many secondary migrants, that is dependents accompanying family members on skilled employment visas, this is their first time overseas. The move to the Peel region is described as “a big step”. Migrant interviewees also described an ongoing sense of being “a very long way from home,” and language, customs, food, and social networks are all “utterly different”. Interviewees highlighted being “far away” from family and experiences of intense alienation, of not belonging:

At first I felt very bad, especially in the first year. No one cares about me; every day I drive my child to school and then sit at home.

When I drop my kids at school I want to say 'hello' but people look me up and down. They look at me like I'm strange. I feel terrible. It's not all the people, but I'm afraid to say 'hello' in case they just walk away from me.

Those not yet feeling proficient in English were keen to take formal classes and hoped to undertake further educational courses following this. They actively sought opportunities to improve their English language skills. Such opportunities, however, are limited particularly in remote areas of the region. An important aspect for those who felt that their English was not “good enough” to enable social participation was gaining the “confidence to speak to people”.

Those involved in supporting migrants note that their clients struggle with many day to day needs simply because

“they don't know anyone. They are entitled to support but it's at the 'nitty-gritty' level of the opportunity to talk to a counsellor on the phone. What they need is a friend. Someone they can ask: "Can you come with me to the doctors? What does this letter from the bank mean?"

This is consistent with the ABS (2006b) finding that people born in non-main English-speaking countries “were less likely than other people to report that they 'could ask for small favours' and be 'able to get support in a time of crisis’”. As one service provider pointed out, in reference to a recent case, having no one to talk to can mean that those experiencing domestic violence, for example, have to “keep it all to themselves.” In addition, lack of knowledge of Australian laws and support networks puts some migrants at risk of manipulation and exploitation.

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A sense of geographic isolation was also highlighted. The long distances between places is confronting and unfamiliar; at the same time newly arrived migrants are not likely to have a driver's license which contributes substantially to their isolation when living in remote towns where there is no public transport.

The social exclusion/ isolation of migrants, evident in the above experiences of settling in the Peel, and attendant undervaluing and underutilisation of their skills has been shown to restrict opportunities for economic growth while at the same time contributing to a “host of social problems” which “compound the problems of both the migrant group and the community at large (Cultural Diversity, nd). Opportunities for the enrichment of local cultures through, for example, transfer of knowledge are reduced. At the same time, there are significant ongoing costs of exclusion including community division and loss of the potential for volunteering and other community contributions.

The more migrants there are in a given area and the longer they have been in the area the more they can support each other. As one service provider noted, “When new ones arrive they are welcomed and supported by those already here.” Interviewees also spoke of increasing confidence and a growing sense of community among themselves as their numbers increase. While this is a positive development it is unlikely to address exclusions from the broader community and has the potential to lead to entrenched separate migrant and non-migrant communities.

The challenges facing immigrants vary according to the specific circumstances associated with the various forms of immigration such as skilled migration, secondary migration, refugee, and temporary visa arrivals. For example, according to a local service provider many African and Sudanese refugee residents of Mandurah are now outside the five year support period for refugees yet continue to struggle with issues such as lack of work in the Peel. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship funds a two-day per week Settlement Grants Officer position in the Peel as a means to provide newly-arrived refugees, humanitarian entrants and migrants on eligible visa categories with orientation advice, information, advocacy, referral and capacity building services for a period of up to five years. As part of this, free English lessons are offered to this group; however, many are illiterate in their countries of origin and thus experience additional difficulties in learning English. Appropriate housing is difficult to find given large and/or extended family structures along with persistent difficulty in finding employment. This group experiences increasingly complex issues over time and, as a whole, in the view of service providers, is “severely disadvantaged.”

Difficulty gaining employment is also a significant issue for temporary visa residents despite high professional and educational qualifications. This difficulty is compounded by a lack of support, as outlined by a service provider:

These are skilled migrants—civil engineers, architects—who often have spent all their money to come to Australia, and now find that they have no money, no work, and they are not entitled to government support. Some are very depressed and upset; they've come to this wonderful country that needs skilled migrants, and they can't get jobs. People on temporary visas receive no assistance what so ever in terms of employment services and they're not eligible for any payments until they have a permanent visa. They do not fit the criteria for Centrelink support, English classes and so on.

One distraught interviewee from a non-main English-speaking country living in Mandurah on a temporary visa described being on the verge of returning home after having spent the family's life savings to make a new start in Australia. Despite the fact that both adults hold professional qualifications in short supply in Australia, and even though they had applied for “hundreds of jobs over a six month period”, neither had any luck securing work. They had come to the conclusion that racial and ethnic discrimination was an insurmountable barrier to their participation in the labour force. Two service providers confirmed that migrants faced overt racism, having directly witnessed it themselves.

All three service providers noted difficulty in acquiring funding to support the service offered including for wages. Those that are paid for their time consistently work more hours than those for which they are paid. Recruiting volunteers is thus also a challenge in that volunteers must be able to work for nothing and draw on their own resources to offer practical and emotional support, and, in some cases, financial assistance.

GAP ANALYSIS

As the above indicates, the Peel region, and each constituent LGA, registers significant diversity in terms of the proportion of aged residents (and flow on effects in relation to demand for services specific to this cohort), cultural and linguistic diversity, and spatial concentrations of relative lack of disadvantage alongside areas with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage.

While research participants cite community spirit as a prime regional and LGA strength there is at the same time evidence of social exclusion and disengagement based on discrimination.

A growing and increasingly important migrant population in the region has been identified along with a range of interrelated challenges and service gaps in relation to this diverse cohort, in particular those from non main English-speaking countries. These include:

- social isolation (and the risk of depression);
- limited institutional and community support;
- financial strain (for those on Temporary Visas in particular);
- direct and indirect discrimination;
- lack of recognition of non-Australian qualifications (and inability to finance further study to meet Australian requirements) along with underemployment; and
- accessing appropriate and ongoing English language education.

Addressing the lack of access to English programs is crucial not just for the economic and social well-being of those currently struggling to learn English but also for the broader community. The Characteristics of Recent Migrants Survey (CORMS) conducted by the ABS in 2007 (ABS 2009) found that both primary and secondary applicants are generally well qualified, however “English proficiency and education levels can impact on labour force participation, income and a wide range of other social and economic outcomes” (ABS 2009). As noted above, the number of migrants from non-main English-speaking countries is not only predicted to rise but is important to the economic growth of the Peel.

Importantly, English language programs are just one aspect: there is a need for concurrent informal support initiatives that enable new migrants to develop a sense of belonging.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- LGA-level events designed to bring together disparate community factions.
- Community education programs and campaigns addressing local discrimination.
- Events to highlight the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region.
- Improved access to English lessons at a range of proficiency levels.
- Cultural awareness training for health and community service providers working with culturally and linguistically diverse migrant groups.
- Recognition of place-based challenges for migrants and financial support for ongoing local inclusion programs.

Health and Community Services

The accelerated population growth since the first Peel Away the Mask report was released has not been matched by an increase in funding or resourcing for agencies in the region – services have been increasingly unable to meet demand. (Senior health and community services sector staff member with long-term involvement in the Peel)

While there are examples of outreach services and programs in outer-lying areas, in general providing such service is not feasible for the majority of service providers in the region because of the large travel distances, the time it takes, the stress on the budget, and programs are already overloaded just dealing with Mandurah. (Health and community services sector staff member involved in outreach service provision)

CURRENT SITUATION

Infrastructure

The Peel region has three hospitals: the Peel Health Campus in Mandurah with 197 public and 29 private beds, the Murray Hospital at Pinjarra with 18 beds and the Boddington Hospital with 16 beds. In addition, Rockingham General Hospital services populations from the Rockingham, Kwinana and Peel regions and has a current capacity of 229 beds, with plans for expansion to 300 beds by 2015.

Not all of these offer emergency departments: Waroona residents for example have to travel 45 km to the Peel Health Campus (or travel outside the region to Harvey Hospital) to access emergency services.

Statistics on health service capacity tend to indicate that the Peel is generally under-serviced compared to the rest of WA. In 2008, the Peel had around 2.3 public hospital beds for every 1,000 persons, compared to a regional WA average of 2.9 and a WA average of 2.7. In addition, the Peel had 2 licensed private hospital beds per 1,000 people compared to a WA average of 2.1 (Regional Development Council 2011).

Outside of its hospitals, the Peel region has 96 general medical practitioners (GPs). Of this group, 66 are based in Mandurah, 10 in Serpentine Jarrahdale, 1 in Waroona, 18 in Murray and 1 in Boddington. Table 7 reports on this distribution and the associated GP to population ratio (per 100,000 persons) for the region and individual LGAs in comparison with WA and Australia. The ABS (2008) indicates that on average across Australia, there are 178.6 GPs per 100,000 persons and around 157.2 GPs per 100,000 in WA, indicating an under-servicing in WA by at least 12% and much more on a regional basis.

The Peel has 91.5 GPs per 100,000 persons, which is 58% of the WA equivalent and around 51% of the Australian average. Among the LGAs, Murray (121.9) and Mandurah (96.7) have higher GP to population ratios; however these are still below the WA average – 39% below the average in Mandurah’s case. Serpentine Jarrahdale has a lower ratio still at 60.6 – around 33% lower than Mandurah, while Waroona and Boddington both have only one GP each. These figures tend to reinforce community perceptions that the Peel region is facing a pronounced GP shortage.

The number of GPs who “bulk bill” is a further component of levels of access to medical care of particular importance in the region given numerous pockets of high level socio-economic disadvantage present in the Peel. Related to this is the number of child and community health nurses in the region; research participants suggest that numbers are low—for example, 1 full-time-equivalent in Serpentine Jarrahdale for a population of over 17,000.

Table 7 General Medical Practitioner (GP) to Population Ratios, Practitioners per 100,000 of Population, 2008

LGA	Number of General Practitioners	GPs per 100,000 of Population
Mandurah	66	96.7
Serpentine Jarrahdale	10	60.6
Murray	18	121.9
Waroona	1	26.5
Boddington	1	63.3
Peel Region	96	91.5
WA	-	157.2
Australia	-	178.6

Source: Author calculations using: GP data for the LGAs from the Peel Development Commission (2010) and population estimates for the LGAs from Table 2; WA and Australia estimates from ABS (2008) *Selected Health Occupations: Australia*, Cat. No. 4819.0.

Ageing

The shortage of GPs is a critical issue in the Peel, not least in light of the relatively older population, whereby 17.2 % of the region’s population are 65 years or older (20.8% in Mandurah). ABS projections for WA indicate

that by 2021 the population share of people aged 65 and older will increase from 11.9% to 18.4%, an increase of 54%. If this demographic trend is replicated in the Peel, within the next decade the region will see its share increase from 17.2% to 26.6%. Mandurah will undergo a continuing demographic shift as almost one-third (32.2%) of its population are aged 65 or over under this scenario. All other LGAs, with the exception of Serpentine Jarrahdale, will see their relative population shares increase above 20%, which is Mandurah's current level. While a shortage can be expected in small rural communities a gap of this magnitude is less readily understandable in the City of Mandurah, just as Murray, with the third smallest population in the region, has the highest GP ratio.

Table 8 Actual and Projected Proportion of Resident Population over 65 Years of Age (%) in the Peel, 2009 and 2021

LGA	June 2010 (Actual)	2021 (Projected)
Mandurah	21.2%	32.2%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	9.2%	13.6%
Murray	18.3%	21.2%
Waroona	13.2%	28.0%
Boddington	13.8%	22.1%
Peel Region	18.5%	26.6%
Rockingham	12.6%	18.9%
WA	12.1%	18.4%

Source: Actual from Table 2; For WA: ABS 2002; For the Peel: Indicative calculations only, based on a constant rate of growth in the proportion throughout WA.

Disability

The Peel region has higher rates of measured disability and activity limitations than other regions in WA. As Table 9 shows, around 24% of the Peel's population has some kind of disability, compared with a Perth average of 19.5%, while 18.1% report a "core activity limitation" compared with around 15.1% of the population in Perth. Mandurah and Murray in particular have higher rates of disability and reported core activity limitation, in large part reflecting their ageing demographics profile.

Table 9 Percent of Population with Disability or Core Activity Limitation, 2003

LGA	Percent with Disability	Percent with Core Activity Limitation
Mandurah	25.3%	19.2%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	18.2%	13.2%
Murray	25.1%	18.9%
Waroona	21.9%	16.4%
Boddington	19.9%	14.2%
Peel Region	24.0%	18.1%
Perth	19.5%	15.1%

Source: Unpublished data based on ABS (2003) data. Ref: ABS (2003) *Disability, Australia*, Cat. No. 4446.0.

PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

As was also found in the 2001 PATM report, the resounding message from interviewees across the region and across the health and community services sector was that there are "not enough" services in terms of both number and range of services. As a result many in the region experience service exclusion. Importantly, poor access to health and community services essential for well-being because of a lack of transport is an enduring and critical regional feature. While clients living in central Mandurah may find services to be relatively well located, those living on the outskirts of the City of Mandurah and in the four other LGAs suffer from the tyranny of distance both informing, and imposed by, centralised services.

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In 2011 key areas of lack as reported by study participants include:

- mental health services;
- Indigenous health and social well-being;
- aged care;
- disability services; and
- youth services (in particular crisis care)

A further issue for those living in more isolated parts of the Peel linked to over-subscription of services is lack of choice. In Boddington, for example, local doctors are reported to be often fully-booked; similarly Waroona respondents note that it is often difficult to secure a timely appointment with the local doctor. At the same time interviewees pointed out that if you were unhappy with a particular service or felt it was inadequate to your needs there was no alternative—other than to travel considerable distances which is not an option available to all. Use of non-local services can involve travel times of 90 minutes or more.

Similarly, the range of services addressing a given set of social issues is important. For example a smaller community organisation identified its clientele precisely as those “*who fall through the cracks of mainstream charities*”. These smaller, often very ‘local’ services, also play an important role in helping clients access ‘mainstream’ services thus offering a form of ‘case management.’

Mental Health

Workshop participants and interviewees highlight mental health as an emerging significant area of concern, not least as a dimension of domestic violence, homelessness and social exclusion, for example. Mental health issues, whether cause or consequence, are reported to be a pervasive aspect of disadvantage in the region. In addition, service providers report a substantial increase in the number of people in the region presenting with mental health issues. This increase results in part from the high proportion of elderly residents, in particular in Mandurah and Murray, which means a higher number of people presenting with geriatric depressive illnesses. Furthermore, those with psychiatric disorders are living longer. Resources in the Peel for managing mental illness in the elderly, however, are reported to be very limited. The youth mental health sector on the other hand according to practitioners working in the area is better resourced but too expensive for the majority to use.

Resources in general have not kept pace with this local growing need for mental health assistance. In particular, service providers note a lack of staff and inadequate provision of after-hours support. Importantly, hospital emergency departments, the only after-hours option for those in need, don't have the resources to deal with mental illness. There is also a lack of mental health specialties in the area, while public assumptions about mental health stigmatize those who are unwell. Waiting time to see a clinical psychologist is between 6-8 months, and 4-6 weeks for medical appointments.

While Mandurah clients are relatively well served in terms of *getting to* appointments and services, those further afield often can't get to help. At the same time, mental health service providers struggle to get out to places such as Dwellingup where there is no public transport. Services in the Peel do not have the resources and funding to do this level of outreach. According to interviewees working in this area, “*this is in part because funding is “activity based.”*” Travel to Waroona, for example, takes time away from seeing clients. That is, fewer clients can be seen during a day spent in Waroona than could be seen in Mandurah. This drop in numbers reduces eligibility for funding. In addition, time spent collating statistics cuts into clinical time. Further, a lack of funding for emerging / new disorders means that these are incorporated into the existing framework and in turn reduce the resources available overall with the result that “*those with chronic mental illness are not getting anywhere near the amount of concentrated support that they deserve.*”

Service providers report that homelessness is a critical issue for mental health clients, and substance abuse in older age groups is increasing in part as a result of an ageing user population that isn't “*growing out of substance abuse as much as in the past.*” An increase in the need for emergency/ crisis service is “*partly because of an increase in the numbers presenting and partly because of limited resources across the board*” which “*means we are having to see people we might not normally see.*” The high demand for emergency care is also a result of limited resources for early intervention: in the words of a mental health worker: “*we rarely get to do prevention work.*”

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In the experience of an interviewee in this area: *“something needs to change or the service will implode”*.

Interviewees from this sector also commented on the fact that the Peel is no longer a separate service to Rockingham but is rather part of *“Peel and Rockingham Kwinana”*; this is seen to be an issue because the Peel region has different issues to those in Rockingham.

Indigenous Health

A 2003 study into the health needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the Peel region (Scougall et al 2003: 2) determined that *“The pattern of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mortality and morbidity in the Peel Region [...] was generally consistent with the national pattern.”* In this national pattern, three quarters of Indigenous men die before the age of 65; conversely three quarters of non-Indigenous men live to be older than 65 years of age; 60% of Indigenous women will not live to be 65 whereas 84 per cent of non-Indigenous women will live to be older than 65 (Walter 2008). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infant mortality is three times the rate of non-Indigenous Australians and more than 50 per cent higher than for Indigenous children in the USA and New Zealand.(NACCHO and Oxfam, 2007:3). Importantly, *“life expectancy”* is not a proxy for *“a long and healthy life”*: it is a measure of longevity and not quality (Burd-Sharps et al 2010).

The prevalence of chronic illness, social stress, and systemic multiple disadvantage characterising Indigenous lives makes it clear that Indigenous quality-of-life in general is far lower than that of non-Indigenous populations. Mirroring the national pattern, the Indigenous community in the Peel experiences a shorter life expectancy than the non-Indigenous population, and experiences higher rates of chronic illnesses and social stress.

The Nidjalla Waangan Mia Centre, dedicated to Aboriginal health and wellbeing, was officially opened in July 2010. Located on Lakes Road in Mandurah as part of the Mandurah Community Health Centre, the centre offers a range of programs including general practice clinics; chronic disease management and education services; sexual health; maternal, child and youth health; mental health and well being; dental services; outreach services; and referral and transport support. Provision of these services under one roof is a key strength together with the level of cultural safety the centre offers, not least in providing a comfortable physical space for Indigenous families along with *“walk-in”* appointments. An *“Aboriginal Grandmother”* is also based at the centre providing liaison between pregnant women and their families and various non-Indigenous services along with spiritual guidance and advocacy. Significantly, the centre offers a patient bus service described by health workers as *“a big step forward”* in terms of access to services:

Clients with a referral for xrays, for example, can be taken to get them done and then to pick up medicines on the way home. The driver has medical training.

Importantly this level of holistic care is made possible through the efforts of committed multi-skilled staff. The bus has been used to support patients as far afield as Boddington and Serpentine Jarrahdale. Health workers expressed concern about the lack of services for Indigenous communities in Boddington and Waroona.

The centre, from the outset, has been *“getting busier quickly”* and the building is already too small. This is both a signifier of success and of the high level of previously unmet health needs in local Indigenous communities. As one interviewee put it, *“It makes you wonder what they did before”*. Indeed the centre already cannot keep up with demand particularly as most services are currently offered part time; the dentist for example is available 1 or 2 days a week and has a waiting list of 2-3months. Similarly, according to health workers there is enough demand to warrant a full time doctor and after hours service.

Funding here too is an ongoing struggle. As those involved note: *“funding for different things is received at different times, and some positions from the outset have been temporary and already expired.”* Funding is also needed to establish the centre as a training site for Indigenous health workers.

Importantly, research participants identify a critical lack of attention *“to the social side of our community.”* This supports the findings of Wilkes and Horwitz (2004:6) who note that *“many of the Nyungar families living in Mandurah are socially stressed.”* Similarly, *“poor social and emotional well-being”* was identified in a 2003

health study of the needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the Peel region as one of eight priority health areas in the Peel region.

As highlighted by practitioners, provision of social support *“takes up a lot of time. As client relationships develop there are more requests for help with a range of social issues which include welfare support, and assistance with bill paying and housing.”* Attention to the social aspects of Indigenous communities is increasingly recognised in the Indigenous health literature as fundamental to long-term, substantial health improvements (Scougall 2003:4). The presence of an Indigenous social worker in the Peel region was stressed by interviewees as a key component of such attention. Support for the needs of the broad Indigenous community through funding and development of local Aboriginal community centres such as that managed by the Winjan Aboriginal Corporation in Mandurah and the rebuilding of an Aboriginal community centre in Murray⁴ is seen to be a further important aspect of the *“social side.”*

Interviewees also noted the importance of addressing family feuding in the area through mediation programs. While the Nidjalla Waangan Mia center is seen to be working to *“pull the community together”*, it remains a concern that *“the community has not pulled together as closely as it could”*.

Feuding and related violence is identified in the 2003 health study cited above as a *“significant issue that has a direct impact on the wellbeing of some families”* (Scougall et al 2003). Though it is said to involve a very small percentage of families, it nevertheless was found to have an *“adverse psychological and stressful impact on many Aboriginal people in the region.”* (Scougall et al 2003:A3). Moreover, associated publicity contributes to *“inappropriate stereotyping”* with damaging consequences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the region (Scougall 2003:A3.4).

Aged Care

Limited and insufficient-to-demand aged-care facilities and services are issues frequently highlighted by workshop participants and interviewees. In particular, participants identified a range of inter-related shortfalls around access to doctors, specialised clinics, home-help support and suitable *local* housing all of which reduce the quality of life for Peel seniors who are often *“forced to move out of their local areas”* with broader community consequences including a reduction in the number of local grandparents, volunteers and support networks. As one workshop participant noted, *“all my friends have left. Immediately you move it only takes 9 to 18 months before the link is broken.”* This in turn leads to what one participant referred to as a *“fractured society because youth leave at 17 [due to lack of education and employment opportunities] and the aged leave at 60 plus [due to lack of services and/or suitable housing].”*

Though the region has several aged-care facilities offering a range of independent and supported living options this supply does not meet the increasing demand. In Boddington, for example, the five beds associated with high level aged care in the local hospital are reported to be frequently full so that those unable to look after themselves are forced to leave the area. Similarly, there have already been 15 expressions of interest in relation to 11 independent living units expected to be available in early 2012 as part of a larger Boddington Shire project. Quambie Park Aged Care Facility in Waroona Shire which incorporates Pam Corker House Hostel currently consists of 37 Independent Living Units, 33 residential hostel beds offering ageing in place nursing facilities, and a 12 bed dementia wing. Employing 75 staff, it is one of the larger employers in the Shire.

Disability

The Peel region, as demonstrated above, features higher population rates of measured disability and activity limitation. At the same time, services for those in the Peel region living with disability are significantly over taxed. For example, Local Area Coordinators (LACs) in the Peel work with larger numbers of clients than elsewhere in the state. LACs assist people with disability and family members and others involved in supporting people with disability: in short, they organise access to services which enhance client community participation. LACs are located throughout metropolitan and regional WA. Each LAC works with between 50 and 65 people with disability, providing personalised, flexible and responsive support. In the Peel region, however, each LAC works with between 62 and 70 families.

⁴ According to *Peel Pulse* Sept. 2010 the Murray Districts Aboriginal Association has received \$81, 530 to undertake planning for the revival of the Binjareb community facility.

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The increasing demand for LAC support is seen to be a result of general welfare issues emerging from the Global Financial Crisis, from the growth in population (and thus in numbers of people with disability), and from the over-representation of aged residents (and thus high numbers presenting with age-related disability). Limited access to early intervention therapy for children, and the lack of affordable housing are also important factors contributing to the increasing level of demand.

Further, many people in the region are forced to access services in Perth due to the limited service provision in Mandurah.

In more isolated areas of the Peel, such as Boddington and smaller communities in Serpentine Jarrahdale for example, caring for disabled family members has additional challenges. Carers in these localities point out that it can be hard to get local help and that the available support “*changes from year to year.*” When staff leave it is difficult to attract new staff to the area which in turn means extended absences of service. One participant carer described how a lack of independent living options for those with severe disability meant that the young family member in her care, after 4 years at home with some carer support but mainly parental care, had to be housed in an aged care facility to be close to the family. In the words of this carer:

Living in this environment is soul destroying for a young person: no contact with people her own age made her so unhappy that she developed severe depression.

Youth Services

The term “*young people,*” referring in general to those between the ages of 12 and 25, tends to homogenise a richly heterogeneous group in the Peel reflective of the diversity of the adult population in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic backgrounds, sexualities and political dispositions let alone a variety of youth subcultures. While significant youth infrastructure and services exist in the Peel, respondents point out that this youth diversity may not be adequately captured. For example, according to a local Serpentine Jarrahdale resident with long-term involvement with local youth, “*Attendance at the currently available activities is from a ‘set clientele’. There is nothing targeting the at-risk youth, or even individuals who do not fit the ‘sport club’ mould.*” In Boddington also, though there is a well-patronised youth centre and a range of youth programs in place, the point was made that these “*service a limited cross-section of youth.*” Oft-expressed concerns about youth boredom in the region and a lack of “*things to do*” may be in part a product of limited community awareness of locally-available services and programs (Trowbridge 2009).

A “*one size fits all solution,*” according to respondents, is also not workable given that the youth from each community have their own needs and desires. At the same time, a reported difficulty faced in the semi-rural areas of the Peel is availability of trained mentors and coordinators to run youth programs.

While the region is well-serviced in terms of recreation infrastructure, local youth report a need for unstructured activities (Klymovich 2007; *Public Open Space* 2010, and primary research participants) and an attendant need for public open spaces designed as “hangout zones” or “gathering spaces”.

Support Services

Since 1999, the Peel has had a regional youth outreach service providing short term counselling, advocacy and referrals where needed along with educational programs to schools. Originally established in Mandurah, the service has recently moved to Pinjarra and undergone structural changes including the loss of a direct link to the police force. Unpublished data shows significant demand for this service with 593 contacts with youth in the second half of 2010 alone. Of these contacts 188 youth received significant support. The clientele has included members of Indigenous and also Culturally and Linguistic Diverse communities. Importantly, demand continues to exceed resources. In Mandurah the Billy Dower Youth Centre, supported by the City of Mandurah, offer a range of co-located services and community-based programs including for example, Peel Youth Medical Service offering free clinics.

In the experience of local youth participants living in Serpentine Jarrahdale, Boddington and Murray, there is a clear group in each area “*with drug and alcohol issues*” in need of access to social workers. One youth interviewee when asked “*Where would you go if you needed help or were in a crisis situation*” replied:

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“Nowhere. Maybe the school to see the chaplain or youth worker but that’s out of the area” and only available during the school term.”

In a 2007 City of Mandurah youth (11 to 18 years of age) survey, *“drugs and alcohol”* emerged as the fourth most prevalent response to the question *“what issues and problems as young people are the biggest concern for you?”* The highest ranking issue (47% of responses) was feeling *“unsafe in the community”* as a result of *“physical abuse and bullying, criminal activity”* and *“the use of drugs and alcohol”* (Klymovich 2007:14). Importantly, the report also identified the *“importance of consultation with youth”* (15): 68% of responses to the question *“would you like to be involved in the community and how?”* demonstrated a desire to be actively involved in the *“development and design of the community”* and 22% wanted to be *“consulted on future developments in the community”* (11).

In Waroona, while young people are catered for in a variety of ways, including a Youth Advisory Council and activities targeted at youth such as occur annually as part of Youth Week, the loss of a dedicated Youth Officer through changes in funding has had an impact on the delivery of holiday activities in the Shire and the capacity to deliver other youth support programs, advocacy and referral services. The Waroona Youth Centre offers a drop in facility and a range of activities on site for young people as well as access to information and support. Ongoing funding is required to continue this service or to allow it to expand. Some support is offered by regional providers including StreetNet.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SECTOR

As part of collecting qualitative data to shed light on regional challenges and strengths in relation to health and community services, information was also collected on the current health of the sector itself. Specifically, participants working in the sector were surveyed about levels of staffing, burnout, and integration of services. To this end, each workshop participant involved in the provision of health and community / social services was asked to rate, separately, the adequacy of staffing levels and the level of staff burnout on a scale of 1-10 with 1 representing *“excellent”* and 10 *“woeful”*. Participants were also asked to comment individually on the extent to which integration of services was occurring in or across the service sector. This section reports on responses to these questions.

In addition, this section offers an overview of the four central concerns to emerge in both workshop and interview settings regarding the current condition of the sector, namely:

- limited accommodation for not-for-profit organisations;
- funding levels and models;
- inability to undertake prevention and early intervention programs; and
- extent of outreach in the region.

Lastly this section summarises participant perspectives on health and community service sector strengths, before presenting sector suggestions regarding what would make a difference.

Staffing Levels

Not a single research participant identified staffing levels as *“excellent”*. Those who found the staffing of their organization to be *“good”* (grade of 3-4) were the minority. The majority of respondents described staffing numbers as *“average”* (grade of 5) while a substantial portion found it to be *“inadequate”* (grade of 7-9).

Participant comments attending this question of staffing levels in the Mandurah workshop, where the majority of participants were paid staff in the sector, without exception emphasised:

- a shortage of staff;
- the difficulties of funding both existing and new positions; and of
- recruiting *“good”* staff.

Volunteers

Volunteers are crucial to the levels of service provision and community support achieved in the Peel region; aside from concerns regarding burnout issues for the sustainability of many agencies and groups is ongoing

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recruitment, training and screening all of which are time consuming and costly. One respondent noted that the regional entry of the Samaritan telephone counselling service goes some way to addressing these challenges through its development of an accredited volunteer base.

According to unpublished local data from a volunteer recruiting service, volunteers encompass a wide-ranging demographic; however, women volunteers outnumber men 3 to 1 and the largest number of volunteers are in the over 55 age group. In 2010, 510 potential volunteers were interviewed with a take-up rate of 75%. Despite generally high levels of volunteerism in the region, with the exception of Mandurah, as evidenced in the 2006 ABS data, a conservative informed local estimate places the Peel volunteer shortfall at 50%.

Staff Burnout Levels

High levels of staff burnout for both paid and volunteer workers are noted in workshops and interviews, with a third of Mandurah workshop respondents noting very high levels of burnout. In Serpentine Jarrahdale workshops, where the majority of participants were volunteer workers, 80% rated the level of burnout as "high". Open-ended comments attending the responses to the question of staff burnout provide important insights:

- lower burnout levels are linked to staff resilience and "passionate enthusiasm" for the work;
- many staff are "dedicated but stressed";
- the level of burnout has much to do with the particular role a worker has;
- there is a lack of succession planning; and
- burnout is not an option when there is only one person in a position.

Interviewees also point out that "*volunteers are overworked and that in some cases poor management of volunteer staff contributes to burnout*". In Waroona, research participants expressed concern that volunteers were "*already pushed to capacity*," while the growing population was making it difficult for current pool of aging volunteers to cope. Similarly, in Boddington interviewees pointed out that "*80% of the work is done by 20% of the people*". Importantly, volunteers just "*have to keep doing it*" because there is no one to take over.

As recent research on job stress in the Australian and international health and community services sector demonstrates, high stress levels, let alone burnout, among health and community service sector staff is much more than an individual burden; it also jeopardises the viability of this workforce and its ability to deliver quality service (Dollard et al 2007). A widespread increase in both workload and staff stress levels in Australia is directly attributed to funding cutbacks and reduced opportunities for preventative work. In addition, the high level of emotional labour often expended in meeting the needs of clients, who are increasingly at crisis point as a result of resource constraints, contributes substantially to high stress levels in the sector. Significantly, a lack of resources was found to be the most significant stressor. Job stress is work-related and is in general not a product of individual traits.

Integration of Services

There is clear consensus around the importance of service integration in order to ensure that "*those who need help are less likely to slip through the net.*"

Participant opinions and experiences concerning levels of service integration are varied, as are the services and contexts. Three key points, however, emerge clearly (as encapsulated in the representative quotes below):

- a need to move beyond networking: "*services need to work together as well as meeting, consulting and coordinating;*"
- integration is made more complex as a result of competitive funding structures: it is difficult "*to work together where significant funding is at stake*" just as "*different / competitive funding*" is a challenge; and
- it requires a "*good natural networking environment like Lotteries House*" and / or a "*catalytic agent*" and funding to make it happen

As reported in Serpentine Jarrahdale, integration can be difficult for community groups in that:

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Integration of services applies to organisations and bureaucracies that have stability. Volunteers come and go and so an integration which is excellent one year may fall over a year or two later.

Lack of Accommodation for Not-for-Profit Organisations

A major concern to emerge in Mandurah workshops and interviews is a severe lack of office and consulting space for NGOs and not-for-profit organisations. Services in the area have outgrown existing premises in terms of both number and size of services. There are waiting lists for service accommodation. In the words of service providers (working in range of areas):

Our biggest obstacle is that we don't have a permanent facility from which to operate.

We need accommodation for services with public transport access and high visibility.

We could expand but do not have anywhere to operate from; we've been unsuccessful in tenders due to lack of accommodation.

This shortage of accommodation is reported to have a range of dire outcomes including:

- *Dispersion of service:* organisations have offices and facilities dispersed around a building or the region when it would be more effective for clients and the efficient delivery of service to have them all in one location;
- *Problematic co-location or mix of services:* for example victims and perpetrators of violent crime sharing a waiting room, or using the same entrance where the likelihood of meeting each other is high;
- *Reduced staff safety:* staff working in isolated offices may not have adequate support in the event of an incident, along with reduced capacity to ensure security across a range of locations;
- *Curtailment of service growth* (necessary to meet rising demand): as interviewees have noted “*there is funding we can access but cannot do so because there is no room to provide the service*” and “*we have had to stop applying for funding because there is nowhere to put staff.*”

Other participants note that there is concurrently, and for various reasons, a range of under-utilised facilities.

Funding

Not surprisingly funding is a crucial issue across the board:

The underlying critical issue for our service and the clients and communities we work with is the lack of adequate funding for social and community services in the region. (Senior health and community service worker with extensive local experience).

Funding is a major challenge for providers delivering services in the Peel region in five key ways:

- a lack of long term funding makes it difficult if not impossible to achieve sustainable service, undertake long-term planning, and deliver accrued client and community benefit;
- the prevalence of short term funding leads to fragmented programs and a substantial ongoing workload and high stress levels associated with a seemingly ceaseless round of grant applications and service uncertainties deriving from short term funding;
- service uncertainty makes it difficult to retain staff and contributes to high levels of burnout;
- insufficient funding in relation to service demand leads to limited outreach and/or early prevention programs;
- funding rules and frameworks which contribute to counter-productive competition between service providers and which in some cases actively limit service provision (for example as detailed above in the mental health sector).

In the words of service providers:

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We're constantly trying to have sustainable ongoing funding, and we've done so for 16 years, but it's always been a battle.

Even though people might be putting in their best effort there are less long term resources.

Some services report a rising demand for services together with *decreased* funding and *reduced* staffing levels. Participants consistently report examples of programs which “*had really good outcomes*” but were “*only ever a pilot program.*” There is widespread concern that services repeatedly “*get good programs up only to have the short term funding disappear.*” Importantly, services open “*without recurrent funding, which often works to the detriment of the group because it is ultimately not sustainable and a lot of energy is spent trying to secure funding rather than doing the work.*” Several interviewees described the need to produce “*endless grant applications*”.

There is at the same time increasing pressure on core services as a result of under-resourced or absent auxiliary services “*across the board*”: interviewees report an additional workload pressure through “*having to see people we might not normally see*” because they have nowhere else to go.

Competitive funding models work against collaboration and service integration: in the view of several interviewees involved in securing and managing funding, “*competitive funding has had an ongoing negative impact over the last ten years*”:

NGOs find themselves competing for funding. At first competitive funding seemed a fabulous idea, a good way to raise the bar and to fund areas on expertise, but it has had the effect of making everyone an “expert” in a wide range of areas.

In addition:

In the past one got funding and then could spend it where needed/ most appropriate but now funds are allocated to areas so that if there is money left over or carefully saved, or more important areas emerge, we must still spend the money on the area for which it was awarded.

In practice this can mean that “*if you are a good provider you bend the rules all the time.*”

Funding is seen to be “*more driven in terms of outputs and more micro-managed*”, and “*government contracts are more and more prescriptive*” just as a premium has emerged on “*innovation*’ as opposed to “*tried and tested*’.”

Importantly, limited service provision has profound consequences for staff who consistently need to provide assistance and emotional support which they are not trained for: “*we need more training to deal with the emotional labour and counselling we are often called on to provide through working with underserved clients.*” To compound matters

The pay is terrible, community service in general is underpaid, plus there is a need to maintain and update qualifications all leading to high staff turnover.

Perhaps most telling of all is a stoic acceptance of the fact that: “*when the funding runs out, we work for free.*”

Lack of Early Intervention Work

The value of early intervention programs is widely acknowledged in the region, yet a lack of opportunities to run early intervention and general education programs is equally widely apparent. This experience is encapsulated in numerous statements such as the following:

Our service has little capacity to undertake early intervention work, such as community education, aimed at minimising or preventing crises.

In addition many services note various aspects of what one interviewee describes as a general “*lack of understanding within consumer services, government services and the general community about the issues and barriers facing low socioeconomic classes*”. This includes general understanding of domestic violence

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and of individual rights and responsibilities. The lack of early intervention and education programs is seen to be largely a result of funding constraints as outlined by interviewees:

poor funding and limited resources lead to reactive services as opposed to prevention and much needed education program fails to eventuate.

Outreach Services

The provision of outreach service is a major challenge in the Peel region. The majority of services are centralised in Mandurah, Rockingham and Fremantle. While many Mandurah based services do provide some outreach service in the region, it is rare for a service to cover the full region. Region-wide coverage is hampered by:

- organisation catchments which may not necessarily align with the Peel region;
- the travel cost and time burden associated with servicing geographically distant communities; and
- many services are already “over-stretched” in servicing the Mandurah population.

The lack of outreach programs and the need for these is clearly articulated by workshop participants and interviewees from Serpentine Jarrahdale, Murray, Waroona and Boddington. It needs to be kept in mind however that Serpentine Jarrahdale outreach services may be delivered from Armadale.

In some instances funding models penalize outreach activity as described above in the mental health sector. One regional service which had relocated from Mandurah to one of the other Peel LGAs reported a growth in clientele from outer lying areas but also increased travel costs for staff. A general lack of public transport in the area means that service staff spend time, and often personal resources, transporting clients.

Service Sector Strengths

Within the sector key strengths are identified as:

- service flexibility, diversity, strong networks, and willingness to work together (seen as particularly important given the number of clients and issues requiring a “multi-service” response);
- staff (who are consistently valued for having long term experience and being dedicated, highly-skilled, and enthusiastic);
- recognition within community service workplaces of the nature of the work and the support from colleagues;
- a stable core of service providers;
- strong volunteer community and grass roots connection to people including community-based knowledge; and
- a client base which exhibits a “strong drive to achieve something better for themselves against the odds. Sadly, the lack of access to support and community services impedes these ambitions”.

The depth of local service sector and community experience is a core regional strength: it is people who make important contributions by recognising opportunities and creatively enhancing service provision despite low resource levels (Reynolds et al 2002). At present, however, this capacity is under threat as a result of sustained resource constraints and impacts of staff burnout as described above.

Points of Difference in the Region

The shortage of accommodation for health and community service sector agencies and groups is most acutely felt in the Mandurah area.

In Waroona, for example, the Community Resource Centre, just on the drawing board at the time of the first *PATM* report, is listed as one of the key strengths in the area for service provision. Interviewees note the benefits of service co-location along with the Community Resource Centre’s role in providing a space from which local community groups can operate.

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In Serpentine Jarrahdale respondents note that good facilities exist and in some instances are under-utilised. At the same time residents report difficulties in attracting home help services because the local hall kitchen requires upgrading to meet the needs of services such as this.

In Boddington also, the Medical Centre officially opened in April 2011 currently has space for an additional GP and other health professionals such as a dentist, physiotherapist, and others. Home and Community Care (HACC) is accommodated in the same building which also features a large activity room (available, for example, for indoor bowls), kitchen and showers.

On the other hand, Community Forums organized by the Murray Shire in 2011 identified, in all four communities consulted, a desire for facilities to house visiting health professionals and other outreach services—thus addressing the centralization of health care in both Pinjarra and Mandurah—along with buildings designed specifically to accommodate community groups. At the South Yunderup meeting a Shire wide “*One Stop Shop*” including a range of health, medical and social services (specifically Centrelink) was mooted to meet the needs of current and future residents (Coffee 2011:163).

Due to the distance from hospital emergency departments, respondents in Waroona, Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray highlighted community concerns around not only wait times but also stresses on those attempting to visit critically ill patients who are often as far away as Fremantle. Interviewees also noted pressure on local ambulance services and in Pinjarra were concerned about the absence of this service.

Place specific contexts for and challenges to the provision of outreach services include higher travel costs and time burdens according to distance travelled: it is more expensive and time consuming to provide outreach in Boddington and Waroona in comparison to Pinjarra in the Murray shire, for example. As pointed out by an external service provider, it is harder to run services in Waroona than other outreach areas in the Peel due to low attendance. While workshops in Mandurah are “impossible” to attend for many in Waroona, workshops in the Waroona town centre also present a challenge for those living further out of town with no access to private transport, such as is likely to be the case in single car families during working hours.

Attracting funding for some programs was seen to be particularly difficult in Waroona due to the small population base. In Serpentine Jarrahdale research participants highlighted a lack of awareness of funding sources and of skills to develop successful applications. Boddington’s current identification as one of nine “*super-towns*” and attendant opportunities to gain funding set it apart from the other LGAs in the region.

GAP ANALYSIS

An Assessment of Progress

PATM 2001 – PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED	ARE THESE STILL ISSUES?
“Lack of leadership and skills for community advocacy amongst most consumers of human services in the region”	An assessment of sector leadership and advocacy skills is beyond the scope of this report; however, the emphasis at present appears to be on a lack of opportunities for providing advocacy due to resource constraints and the reactive nature of much service provision along with a sense that service consumers are unaware of their rights and options.
“Generalist human services workers responding to people with acute problems.”	This appears to continue to be the case in terms of the trend towards “seeing people that one doesn’t normally see” as a result of insufficient services.
“Inadequate primary health care and support services, especially for mental health and well being.”	This continues to be a major concern. Indeed, mental health services in the region are increasingly stretched.
“Chronic ill health for aboriginal people.”	Indigenous chronic ill health is an ongoing issue though one that is currently addressed to some extent through Nidjalla Waangan Mia Centre. Attention to social stressors affecting local Indigenous communities is a significant gap in reducing this chronic ill health.

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<p>“Lack of appropriate early intervention and prevention programs (eg early childhood/family, juvenile offender programs; school leaver support programs; parenting programs; relationship support and counselling services; financial advice and advocacy services; community legal education; self-help and self-development programs and community and allied health programs).”</p>	<p>A lack of prevention and early intervention programs consistently emerges as a significant and enduring issue in the primary research across the health and community services sector.</p>
<p>“Programs specially for isolated people in neighbourhoods across the community to connect them to existing services.”</p>	<p>A limited capacity for outreach continues to characterise the region.</p>
<p>“Inadequate children’s services from school holiday activities (0-12 years, 12-15 years) to child care services for workers in smaller towns, to specialist family violence witness programs.”</p>	<p>Many respondents note a lack of youth activities. Child care services and assistance for child victims and witnesses of domestic violence, addressed in this report in a later chapter, were reported to be inadequate.</p>
<p>High levels of staff burnout</p>	<p>This too continues to be a significant issue for the sector and the region.</p>
<p>Lack of ongoing funding for successful programs. Specific funding challenges were perceptions of the Peel as a high income area with little need for services for low income families, and incompatibilities between “central planning boundaries” and “Peel regional boundaries” (p 17):</p>	<p>In adequate sustained funding remains a crucial issue; however the underlying challenges have shifted as described above.</p>

PATM II: Key findings

- Statistics on health service capacity tend to indicate that the Peel is generally under-serviced compared to the rest of WA.
- Key areas of under-servicing are: mental health, indigenous health, aged care, disability services, and specialised youth crisis care.
- The opening of the Nidjalla Waangan Mia Centre is a big step towards addressing the gap in Indigenous health services in the region, there is however a strong need for an Indigenous-driven regional social healing program along with outreach services to Boddington and Waroona.
- Insufficient funding, in particular a debilitating lack of longer-term funding in support of sustainable regional programs with the capacity for outreach. Overseas research foregrounds a need for *at least* 7 to 8 year timelines, as opposed to the current tendency toward 1 to 3 year timelines, if policies and programs addressing social disadvantage are to make a real difference (Vinson, 2007). A longer time frame is also associated with a reduction in the likelihood that previous problems will return (Vinson 2007b). Similarly, the 2020 Summit emphasised a need for funding reforms in the community services sector, including longer-term funding.
- Intervention programs: while there are clearly a range of prevention and intervention programs in the region, this remains a significant area of lack across all service areas consistently reported by research participants.
- Regional disparities exist: though many services located in Mandurah have a vision of servicing the region, multiple resource constraints and funding barriers mean that “In reality our clients are mainly from Mandurah and surrounding suburbs”.
- Health and community service sector staff and volunteers across the Peel demonstrate a high level of long-term regional and local experience, knowledge and commitment: this is an important regional strength unfortunately at risk due to long term resource constraints and attendant levels of burnout.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Health and Community Services

- Whole-of-Region sector mapping to facilitate local capacity building through greater integration of services while also ensuring a broad range (and meaningful client choice) of service types. This database should provide a clear sense of client bases, resources, individual service strengths and challenges. It will be effective only if it is current and includes data relevant to its stated goals. Such a map could be coordinated as a live digital repository constructed and managed by a committee *responsible to the sector*.
- Funding specifically for developing integration networks and strategies (a data base alone is likely to be insufficient given that the sector is under strain attempting to meet core service goals).
- Research to assess the future needs of the ageing population including both medical services and community support in terms of rising levels of geriatric disability and depression, for example.
- Research to determine regional features driving the shortage of GPs and follow-up strategies to attract more GPs in particular those with expertise in geriatric medicine.
- Regionally coordinated strategy to attract more services to the region, that is, to have more government services headquartered / located in the Peel rather than Rockingham for example. A regionally-developed hierarchy of needs determined in consultation with the not-for-profit sector. (As one interviewee pointed out, creating a Peel service in turn reduces the pressure on services in Rockingham, Fremantle and Perth which are attempting to “cover” the Peel.)
- Ongoing financial support in the service of both maintaining and extending Indigenous health services in the region in particular to include Indigenous initiatives to improve the social health of local indigenous communities.
- Regionalize: share services, facilities, staff, funding, equipment and access to information.
- Strategic work in the region to attract and accommodate ‘big players’ in the health and community service sector.

The key underlying need of the social and community service sector in the Peel region is an increase in resources so we can undertake a range of projects to improve our services and thus assist more of the most disadvantaged people in our community. (Interviewee with long-term involvement in the local sector)

The following specific strategies were suggested by workshop and interview participants.

- Improved integration of services through:
 - Memoranda of Understanding to formalise links between services so that there is a “responsibility to maintain connections regardless of who is in a given role whereas before it depended a lot on personalities and other commitments.” In addition, confidentiality issues can be addressed formally.
 - Improved communications networks between and among government, non-government agencies and private practice (including, for example, shared training, seminars, network meetings).
 - Development of a local referral and resource directory. It would be useful for every service in the region to have some kind of regularly updated directory with all the region’s resources, service providers and the services they offer listed and readily available.
 - Strategic response not just piecemeal approach.

- More human resources development and training opportunities for staff in human service agencies. It would be useful if this could be undertaken in collaboration with multiple services to promote a collegiate and cooperative atmosphere amongst agencies in the region.
- Early intervention and education, particularly around:
 - domestic violence and discrimination;
 - rights and responsibilities, for example in tenancy;
 - credit and debt;
 - parenting support; and
 - improving knowledge about and access to the services available.
- Coordinated advocacy, law reform and policy work to begin to address some of the causes of disadvantage and improve access to government services, including addressing language and cultural barriers, housing policy, indirect discrimination, etc.
- Programs directly involving youth
 - develop projects with youth/housing stakeholders to provide creative solutions
 - more funding for youth to encourage ongoing research and data collection
- Increased and longer-term government funding.

Housing

As enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to appropriate and safe housing as a core aspect of good personal health and quality of life. The links between sound, well-located and secure housing and community well-being in terms of stable and diverse workforces and resilient social and cultural capacity are well established. Equally well established are the inverse consequences of diminished housing affordability in local communities. Of importance is the difference between a “*house*” or other dwelling and having a *home*. The latter involves a sense of belonging, choice, and freedom.

CURRENT CONDITION

The sustained high population growth in the Peel over the last ten years is strong evidence that the region remains attractive to people due in part to its enhanced proximity to Perth and Bunbury as a result of improved freeway access and the Perth-Mandurah rail service. The lifestyle associated with coastal and rural living is also a major drawcard. A prime example of this is the growth of the Mandurah Ocean Marina owned and managed by the City of Mandurah and incorporating luxury waterfront apartment living, tourist attractions and cultural centre.

At the same time, the semi-rural areas in the region offer relatively lower priced housing for those pushed out by high housing costs in the Perth metropolitan area. This aspect is driving rapid and extensive housing development principally in Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray. As a result, young adults and families, along with retirees, are expected to continue to be a significant and growing proportion of the Peel population (Pendergast and Doran Wu 2007).

The last decade has seen a reduction in affordable housing not only in the metropolitan area but also in Mandurah as the in-migration noted above creates competition for local housing stock and reduces availability of lower cost housing while escalating house prices and rents. At the same time, affordable housing options traditionally available in Mandurah have been lost to redevelopment for luxury and holiday accommodation (Pendergast and Doran-Wu 2007). As a consequence, many Mandurah low income households have moved further afield in turn increasing the competition for affordable housing stock in outer-

lying communities and contributing to an ongoing ripple effect which sees those on the lowest incomes forced further afield into poor quality and / or isolated housing. The comparatively small size of some housing markets in rural and regional Australia (such as exist in Waroona and Boddington, for example) means that considerable change can occur in a relatively short time frame leading to rapid displacement of particular groups (Beer et al 2011).

A further factor shaping the region’s housing markets is the resurgence of mining activity exemplified by the re-opening and expansion of the Newmont Boddington Gold Mine. Such activity often leads to a swift and speculation-based increase in house and land prices, as occurred in Boddington. In 2008 Boddington was one of the ten most expensive non-metropolitan housing markets in the state (Beer et al 2011).

Moving further afield in the Peel region involves its own costs such as those associated with greater dependency on private transport, in particular high fuel and maintenance costs as a result of longer travelling distances to work, to purchase basic necessities and to access services. Those without private transport become reliant on limited public transport and, along with an increased risk of social isolation, may find themselves paying higher food costs in local outlets. At the same time, the need to re-establish personal and community networks as a result of (regular) relocation in pursuit of affordable housing undermines quality of life (Mee 2002).

Housing availability and affordability is a critical issue across the Peel region (Table 10). Home ownership across all LGAs is relatively stable at between 35.9% (Mandurah) to 39.7% (Murray) of all households. In terms of those households currently purchasing their house, rates vary from 31.8% in Mandurah to 45.2% in Serpentine Jarrahdale. Mandurah (26.8%) and Boddington (24.0%) both have relatively higher rates of renting, with Serpentine Jarrahdale reporting substantially lower rates than the rest of the region, with only 12.9% of households renting their present accommodation.

Table 10 Housing Occupancy in the Peel Region, By Nature of Occupancy, 2006 Census Data

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Fully Owned</i>	<i>Purchasing</i>	<i>Renting</i>	<i>Other</i>
Mandurah	35.90%	31.80%	26.80%	5.50%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	38.00%	45.20%	12.90%	3.90%
Murray	39.70%	33.90%	19.40%	7.10%
Waroona	39.30%	36.40%	19.40%	4.90%
Boddington	38.60%	32.30%	24.00%	5.10%

Source: ABS (2006a) Census Data.

Given the high levels of unemployment in the Peel together with median incomes 25% lower than that for the state rises in housing costs are keenly felt in the region. Indeed, in 2006 “The Peel region and the Southwest region” were found to “contain over half [53%] of all regional households experiencing post CRA [Commonwealth Rental Assistance] housing stress”⁵ (Anthony and Milson 2006: 5).

Home Affordability

Housing affordability has emerged as an issue in the Peel. Since 2000, the Peel region has seen a 14.2% increase in average house prices: at the top end Jarrahdale has experienced a 16.7% increase while Mandurah/Murray at 12.2% experienced the lowest, though still substantial, growth (REIWA data cited in PDC 2011:17).

One measure of home affordability developed by the Peel Development Commission is the ratio (percentage) of median income to median house price in a given LGA (see the *Peel Region Affordable Housing Plan*; Government of Western Australia 2007). As shown in Table 11, between 1996 and 2006, the ratio of income

⁵ Housing is considered ‘affordable’ in Australia when those with incomes in the lowest 40% of the income range can pay for it without spending more than 30% of their income in doing so. ‘True’ housing costs, however, need to include more than rents, mortgage payments and rates. Important ‘indirect’ housing costs include heating / cooling and those costs directly attributable to housing location namely travel costs to employment, community facilities, and shopping (Wood and Ong 2010).

to house prices in the Peel region more than halved from 22.7% to 10.8% (median income will purchase only 10.8% of a median house). Individual LGAs saw significant reductions, in particular Boddington (55.3% in 1996 to 18.2% in 2006) and Serpentine Jarrahdale (31.8% in 1996 to 13.7% in 2006).

Table 11 Housing Affordability Measure for the Peel Region

<i>LGA</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2006</i>
Mandurah	20.5%	17.5%	9.5%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	31.8%	29.0%	13.7%
Murray	20.4%	18.3%	11.1%
Waroona	33.0%	33.7%	14.5%
Boddington	55.3%	45.3%	18.2%
Peel Region	22.7%	19.4%	10.8%

Source: Government of Western Australia (2007).

In 2006, the percentage of tenant households in housing stress in Boddington was 15.2% (Beer et al 2011). In comparison, the percentage in Waroona was between 30 and 35%. Murray on the other hand was less than 5% (Beer et al 2011).

Even with slight declines in housing prices since March 2010, home ownership is still well out of reach for many low and moderate income households (Shelter WA 2011) in turn increasing pressure on the rental market. Those most severely affected by increases in the cost of housing are precisely those groups most highly represented in the Peel region, namely young people and families entering the market and retirees (Pendergast and Doran-Wu 2007). Further, those with disabilities, migrants and Indigenous people are severely affected by increasing housing costs (Peel Affordable Housing Plan 2011).

Recent research demonstrates that those experiencing lasting housing stress⁶ are most likely to be low income families with mortgages; importantly, escaping housing stress is closely linked to moving house which is increasingly difficult in the current slow housing market (Wood and Ong 2010). Those living in rented accommodation are found to be able to move more easily to cheaper accommodation thus escaping housing stress. However, in the Peel region, such a move increasingly involves moving further afield with a raft of associated disadvantages as described above. High, and rising, mortgage and rental costs, as the primary research demonstrates (see Employment and Income chapter), is driving a growing inability to make “ends meet” and a consequent increased demand for financial counselling and assistance with meeting housing costs.

Housing stress also takes a toll on mental and physical health through high levels of psychological stress and through cost-cutting in the areas of food, power consumption and medicines; many people experiencing housing stress are also trying to assist family and friends in the same situation (Shelter WA, Affordable Housing Strategy).

Social housing⁷, traditionally a major element of housing supply for those on low incomes, has been in decline for the last ten years, resulting in:

- long waiting lists;
- increased levels of rent stress as low income families struggle in the private rental market; and
- high rates of homelessness.

This decline and its impacts are evident in the Peel region, particularly for the most disadvantaged and for whom public housing is the only option. According to the Department of Housing, wait times⁸ in the Peel zone are up to seven years in some instances, while the average wait time in Waroona is four years.

⁶ A household is in housing stress when 30% or more of the weekly income is spent on rent or mortgage payments.

⁷ Social housing encompasses both government-managed public housing and community housing owned/managed by non-profit organisations and reflects the current emphasis on government and not-for-profit partnerships in the provision of affordable housing.

⁸ Wait times as at October 21, 2010.

Homelessness

Homelessness is relative to cultural perceptions of a minimum housing standard which in Australia is defined as “a small rented flat with a bedroom, living room, kitchen and bathroom” (Wensing et al, 2003). Relative to this minimum, tertiary homelessness includes those living in single rooms without kitchen, bathroom and security of tenure; secondary homelessness refers to those in temporary accommodation such as friends’ houses, refuges, boarding houses; and primary homelessness encompassing those without conventional accommodation. A fourth category of homelessness—covering those living long-term in caravan parks—has been added to these traditional categories (Chamberlain and MacKenzie, cited in Urbis 2009).

Alternative forms of accommodation (“*Other*” in Table 10) are quite common in the Peel, particularly in the Murray, where 7.1% of residents reside in such accommodation. Long-term caravan-park living is an important, though often highly unsatisfactory, option for a range of low income and otherwise vulnerable groups in Mandurah as recounted by several interviewees from agencies involved in sourcing transitional and post-crisis accommodation for clients. However, caravan park living is precarious for two reasons:

- long term caravan park residents are reported to be forced out to make room for seasonal holiday makers (Pendergast and Doran-Wu 2007); and
- many caravan parks are closing while none appear to be opening.

According to interviewees, closure of the Aqua Caravan Park, for example, is expected to displace 150 people. According to Peel service professionals interviewed as part of the primary research detailed below, a similar situation is expected to follow redevelopment of the 20 year-old Belvedere Caravan Park into high-rise residential apartments.

In addition, people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds, and with varying personal problems and social contexts, form the homeless population (Urbis 2009). Not surprisingly, the homeless population is difficult to measure.

The trend since 2001 is towards a younger homeless population (under 30), and although homelessness is predominantly experienced by individuals, the number of homeless single parents with children and homeless couple families with children is increasing (Urbis 2009). While the number of homeless youth (aged 12-18) has declined across Australia, seen to be a direct result of early intervention strategies (Urbis 2009), youth homelessness has increased in Western Australia (Liddiar et al 2009).

Recent research suggests that the female homeless population is substantially under-counted due to a heightened vulnerability to abuse, exploitation and assault. For example, homeless women are often expected to trade sex for a night’s accommodation (Reeve, Rionach and Goudie 2006, cited in Martin 2010). This leads homeless women to take great care to hide their situation (Martin 2010). Given the acute shortfall of crisis and post-crisis accommodation for women in Mandurah, a substantial ‘doubly hidden’ female homeless population is likely.

It is important to note that homelessness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is both multi-layered and multi-dimensional and may incorporate spiritual homelessness (Keys Young 1998). Similarly, “*it has been recognised that the definition of homelessness among particular cultural groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, may need to be widened to include people in ‘grossly overcrowded’ accommodation and people in ‘impoverished dwellings’*” (Urbis 2009). AHURI research examining Indigenous homelessness finds that Indigenous homelessness could be better defined to include losing one’s sense of control over, or legitimacy in, the place where one lives.

“*Insufficient supported crisis accommodation*”, “*insufficient medium and long term transitional accommodation*” and “*lack of access to housing in the private rental market*”, as described above, are key challenges for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the Peel region (Liddiar et al 2009). Further, homelessness in the Mandurah statistical subdivision increased by 16% in the five years between 2001 and 2006 (Liddiar et al 2009). The increase in homelessness in Mandurah to 2006 outweighed that of Metropolitan and Inner City Perth (Chamberlain and MacKenzie cited in Liddiar et al 2009).

An absence of boarding house style accommodation in the Peel region is noted to disadvantage youth and single men in particular (Pendergast and Doran-Wu 2007).

There appears to be a lack of data concerning Indigenous homelessness in the Peel region: neither unpublished local data nor the 2009 report *The Needs of Homeless Youth and Adequacy of Service Provision in Mandurah* make reference to Indigenous clients. Levels of Indigenous homelessness in the Peel can be conservatively expected to mirror national and state patterns which show that homelessness is more prevalent among Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people. For example, Indigenous clients made up 17% of all Supported Accommodation Assistance Program clients in 2005-06 and were substantially over-represented in each state and territory (ABS 2008; Cat 4704.0). Indigenous homeless people in the region thus potentially constitute a sizeable proportion of the homeless population. There is no advocacy body in Australia for Indigenous housing and at the same time there is evidence that social housing is inappropriately designed and managed for Indigenous clients a (National Shelter 2010).

PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Regional housing concerns can be grouped into two areas: features and consequences of rapid housing development and shortages of affordable and public/social housing.

Rapid Housing Development

This rapid development is most apparent in the Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray LGAs. In addition, communities in each LGA are experiencing vastly different levels of growth (see LGA sections). In Serpentine Jarrahdale where rapid housing development is well underway research respondents highlight the following concerns and issues:

- absence of, or 'time lag' associated with, infrastructure to support the rapid residential growth (including schools, retail outlets, transport, health facilities);
- small block sizes and affordability of local private housing stock;
- lack of rental properties;
- limited variety of types of properties in particular a lack of units and housing for single adults, and smaller centrally located properties for ageing residents wanting to downsize; and
- "very low levels of public housing stock."

The same issues were raised by Murray participants. This rapid residential growth is attended by a range of social issues and concerns about environmental impacts, and potential loss of rural character and amenity.

Indigenous Housing Needs

According to indigenous interviewees, housing is a main issue for two groups in the Peel region, namely:

Indigenous families who need larger homes for larger families, with granny flats to accommodate aged family members who, in the main, refuse to go into homes for the aged; and youth, who need flats and hostel accommodation in turn alleviating overcrowding.

Though Indigenous households are likely to be nearly twice the size of non-Indigenous Australian households, it is not a cultural preference to live in overcrowded conditions; rather, this is a consequence of limited housing options (Saggers, Walter and Gray 2011:2). Overcrowding may signify not only that more accommodation is required but also that larger houses are needed. Social housing released in 2011 in Lakelands and Meadow Springs does not include houses with more than three bedrooms. Of the social housing stock currently available in the Peel region (see Department of Housing 2010) houses with 4 bedrooms are by far the smallest portion.

A further problematic aspect of Indigenous housing in the Peel region is the practice of locating indigenous families close together despite family antagonisms which are in turn exacerbated. A related aspect is the correlation between "areas of higher Indigenous residence" and "areas of lower income and high public housing levels" (Walter 2008:14)

Affordable Housing

Community and service sector participants consistently confirm affordable housing as a crucial issue for the Peel region principally spanning a critical lack of:

- affordable private housing;
- public housing stock; and
- crisis and short term or transitional housing.

This shortfall underpins disadvantage in the Peel region for a growing number of residents including those on low incomes and those escaping domestic violence and other crisis situations, ultimately contributing to homelessness in the region.

Current high levels of housing and financial stress is evidenced by the number of people seeking help from agencies not directly concerned with housing. For example, a counselling service with a central Mandurah shop front experiences “a minimum of seven walk-ins each day seeking assistance with financial and housing issues.” A low stock of public/social housing is noted by interviewees in each LGA.

Crisis Accommodation

A severe lack of crisis accommodation is repeatedly emphasised by workshop participants and interviewees across all LGAs. Pat Thomas House continues to be the only refuge in the Peel region for those escaping domestic and family violence; due to space and other resource constraints this refuge continues to turn away double the number of people that can be accommodated. In addition, the lack of affordable housing makes the shift to post-crisis accommodation almost impossible. Many women and children are faced with the prospect of staying in / returning to unsafe accommodation or becoming homeless. Importantly domestic and family violence is one of the main reasons why women and children in Australia lose their homes; almost inevitably they become poorer and live in lower quality housing (Spinney and Blandy 2011).

However, this lack of accommodation is a factor and not the cause, which is the social inability to prevent domestic and family violence (Spinney and Blandy 2011). (See also Domestic and Family Violence section in the Safety and Security chapter.)

The lack of youth, drug and alcohol, and mental health crisis accommodation was highlighted by workshop participants and interviewees along with the need for flexible delivery of services, in particular the provision of after-hours support (nights and weekends) and access to crisis/short term accommodation. Many health and community service respondents in particular expressed concern over insufficient youth crisis accommodation and services in the region. There is certainly a high unmet demand for crisis accommodation as evinced in unpublished data concerning the number of youth turned away on a daily basis from a central service in the region. As this data demonstrates, the number of youth between the ages of 13 and 15 seeking crisis accommodation is increasing while at the same time accommodation is for those between 15 and 25. At the same time, youth with behavioural and severe mental health issues are unable to access crisis accommodation because of the absence of service staff with appropriate training and a lack of funding for this type of care.

A further complication in housing such clients is a difficulty in achieving timely assessment of clients when there are relatively long wait times for such things as drug and alcohol or mental health assessments.

Service providers thus emphasise the lack of specialised crisis accommodation and timely specialised crisis assessment services in the Peel designed to meet the needs of youth:

- under the age of 15;
- with mental health and / or behavioural issues; and/or
- drug and alcohol issues.

However, crisis accommodation, in the words of a long-term youth worker, is “*just a bandaid*”. An equally important, if not more pressing issue, is the lack of safe, affordable housing for those transitioning out of crisis

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care. Though there has been a recent increase in transitional units available in Mandurah and more accommodation for single people likely to become available to the youth service sector in the coming years, at present, in the words of a service provider “*we battle on a daily basis to find affordable housing for those about to leave short term crisis accommodation. Many 15, 16 and 17 year olds end up going from crisis centre to crisis centre.*”

Young people in this situation face additional challenges such as the absence of a rent history and referees, and the high cost of renting. At the same time it is very hard to get work or address emotional and mental health issues without stable accommodation. There is little point in increasing crisis accommodation without also increasing stocks of appropriate medium to long-term transition housing for youth.

The above shortages reinforce the need for effective prevention and early-intervention measures, something severely lacking in this area.

Homelessness

Unpublished data from a service provider in the region estimates that in the first half of 2011 there were 393 homeless people in Mandurah⁹ with over one third (128) of these between the ages of 12-25. In this youth group 23 are ‘rough sleepers’, the rest living with friends and relatives or in boarding houses and emergency accommodation. This data also reports 50 homeless children under the age of 12. There are between 40 and 50 people in each of the age groups: 26-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64. Around 28 homeless people in this count are over 65.

Indigenous health workers referred to large numbers of Indigenous people in the region living temporarily with families because there is no other choice.

Experienced staff working with the homeless, principally in the Mandurah area, report that:

- around 80% of the homeless population in contact with local agencies has “mental health problems” (which may be either/both a cause and consequence of homelessness);
- homelessness is often caused by family breakdowns, drug and alcohol abuse, inability to find housing, and unemployment;
- there is an “extreme ongoing need for accommodation;” in particular, there is a severe shortage of accommodation for women with children and also single men; and
- the quality and variety of support services declines the “further out in to the region” one goes where one is “more likely to be working alone, to be inexperienced, and to be underpaid” on top of being under-resourced.

Interviewees also highlighted the ongoing stigma of homelessness including community assumptions about levels of drug and alcohol abuse and an attendant high level of “*judgementalism*” experienced by homeless clients. Community prejudice compounds the already difficult job of sourcing accommodation.

Points of Difference in the Region

Rapid housing development and population expansion is most profoundly experienced in Murray and Serpentine Jarrahdale as noted above.

Levels of housing stress are unevenly experienced across the region: in 2006 30-35% of tenant households in Waroona were in housing stress while in Boddington housing stress was experienced by 15.2% of the tenanted population (Beer et al 2011). At the same time, Waroona interviewees noted the “*poor quality*” of public housing stock and expressed concern that families were relocated in Waroona as a last resort “*when there is nowhere else for them to go,*” indicating the end point of the ripple effect described above. Consequences include social isolation and disrupted support networks.

Population growth in Boddington and also Dwellingup is driven by the reopening and expansion of the Newmont Boddington Gold Mine and attendant demand/need for accommodation for mine workers, as opposed to those in search of affordable accommodation. In 2008 Boddington was one of the ten most expensive non-metropolitan housing markets in the state as a result of private speculation and a booming

⁹ There does not appear to be any data on the number of homeless people in the other four LGAs.

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resource sector (Beer et al 2011). Consequently, affordable housing is limited to substandard accommodation located beyond the town centre (Beer et al, 2011).

Positive Developments in the Region Since 2001

The provision of affordable housing in the region and in the state has recently become a policy and funding priority. This is demonstrated by the *Peel Region Affordable Housing Plan (2007)* and the *State Affordable Housing Strategy* announced in May 2011. In particular, the former offers a locally-specific strategy cognizant of the need for wide collaboration between government agencies, the not-for-profit sector and local community groups in order to secure sufficient, diverse and accessible affordable housing in the region.

Two social housing developments have been completed in 2011, one in Lakelands and the other in Meadow Springs (Centrecare 2011). Managed by Stellar Living, these provide “151 more affordable housing options in the Peel region” available to “seniors, singles, and families” on low to “moderate” income. Dwellings include 40 one-bedroom, 39 two-bedroom and 7 three-bedroom dwellings. These new properties are part of an upcoming “287 new affordable housing options for the Peel region, with other developments located at Coodanup, Greenfields and Mandurah.” Approximately 30 apartments under the management of Access Housing Australia are expected to be constructed on lots acquired in Allnut Street Mandurah, along with 9 units in Burley Street Mandurah (AHA 2011). The Department of Housing and Works has 355 units coming online in June 2011; the current waiting list is three years (MHNG 2011).

Peel Passages, a service offering homeless youth between 12 and 25 years of age access to qualified social workers along with, for example, access to washing machines, showers, internet and telephone services has in 2011 opened its doors in Mandurah. Provision of regular health, legal, financial and counselling services is anticipated.

The Mandurah Homeless Networking Group (MHNG), involving representatives from a cross-section of local agencies, was established two years ago and meets regularly to facilitate interagency service provision. This group had a key role to play in the arrival of Peel Passages (MHNG, Meeting Notes, 2011). The Group is also undertaking a review of homelessness accommodation models, developing a feasibility study and constructing a business plan to improve housing options for the Mandurah / Peel homeless population.

GAP ANALYSIS

An Assessment of Progress

PATM 2001 – PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED	ARE THESE STILL ISSUES?
<p>“Lack of access to crisis accommodation and attendant solutions:”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ “24 hour ‘safe, drying out’ shelter for drug and alcohol affected people ineligible for access to refuges (like Calvary House in Rockingham); ➤ “youth refuges and long term supported accommodation services”; ➤ “residential detoxification unit” and ➤ “family respite accommodation services” 	<p>Access to crisis accommodation continues as a major lack in the region for women, youth, families and indigenous communities. None of the suggested shelters and refuges have eventuated.</p>
<p>“High vulnerability of local residents to housing stress”</p>	<p>This remains the case as evidenced in both the quantitative data and primary research and is indeed likely to increase.</p>
<p>“Inadequate levels of social housing and lengthy waiting times”</p>	<p>This continues to be a major concern: there are at present limited crisis services for youth.</p>
<p>“Inadequate drying out houses (ie safe places for alcohol or drug affected people to sober up safely)”</p>	<p>This is currently being addressed through the current and planned construction of substantial social housing stock in the region.</p>
<p>“Overcrowding in Indigenous communities”</p>	<p>This is an ongoing issue.</p>

PATM II: Issues Identified

- While there are well-developed strategies to improve the levels of local affordable and social housing in the region in the short, medium and long-term, and additional social housing stock has been released, affordable housing/living remains a significant issue for a growing number of people in the Peel region. Increasingly, moderate income earners, particularly those just entering the market, are experiencing housing stress. Current market conditions are undermining the likelihood of escape leading to a downward spiral of disadvantage. The absorption of housing intended for lower income groups by moderate income earners is a developing national trend likely to impact on access to affordable private housing in the Peel.
- As research from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute demonstrates, while access to affordable housing is a critical aspect of addressing homelessness and socio-economic disadvantage it is not the complete solution. Support services that target non-housing needs are central to the prevention of homelessness in the first instance and to reducing the likelihood of recurrent homelessness. For example, clients with adequate support for what are often complex needs are more likely to remain in stable tenancies. The burden of care, in terms of financial and other costs, is reduced when working with clients in stable housing. Further, “the cost of providing crisis accommodation is often more expensive than providing housing support” (AHURI 2009). Both housing and non-housing support services in the Peel tend to be concentrated in the Mandurah area and are unable to meet demand. The ratio of unmet demand to supply in the other four LGAs is very high. The complex mix of needs and the diversity of personal, community and structural factors contributing to homelessness require intense interagency collaboration. Though services such as, among others, WestAus Crisis Centre, Calvary House, and Peel Passages offer important support, homelessness services in the region cannot meet the demand for assistance in particular in relation to sourcing either crisis, short-term, or affordable, appropriate long-term housing.
- While diversity and flexibility of accommodation is addressed in the Peel Affordable Housing Strategy, this is just one aspect of an effective housing and support service system. According to AHURI research, other crucial elements are provision of a variety of support options and opportunities for client self-determination and choice. The success of housing strategies is increasingly recognised to be dependent on the inclusion of client perspectives and responsiveness to varied individual needs and circumstances (Reynolds et al 2002). In the Peel region, there is a need to look at housing needs from the perspectives of those with mental illness, those on low incomes, those from non-main English speaking countries, and women experiencing / attempting to escape domestic violence in order to achieve greater understanding of local conditions and experiences.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Sustainable education and support programs designed to prevent moderate income couples and families from entering housing stress and also to enable them to escape this situation.
- Greater resourcing of services providing free financial services.
- Greater diversity of affordable and well-placed housing across the region including:
 - stock designed for retirees seeking smaller properties and which allow them to “age in place” (within this, attention to the housing needs of sole women over the age of 65 is crucial (AHURI 2011));
 - flats/apartments for single people; and
 - hostel or boarding-house style accommodation.
- Social housing developments and placement strategies sensitive to the needs of local Indigenous communities including an understanding of Indigenous connections to place and extended family and kinship networks.

- Processes and research which enable those at risk of or experiencing homelessness/ housing stress to express their view of the broader situation (spanning both personal and community contexts) and of what is required.
- Specialised crisis accommodation for:
 - youth under 15;
 - those suffering from mental illness; and
 - those experiencing drug and alcohol issues.

Safety and Security

One's experience of safety and security is determined by a range of interrelated factors including age, gender, health, ethnicity, living conditions, broader built and natural environment, and sense of belonging. It is also informed by one's access to legal assistance and level of trust in the community at large.

CURRENT CONDITION

The Peel region has lower levels of reported crime than WA as a whole across four of five major categories of crime for which the WA Office of Crime Prevention (now the WA Police Strategic Crime Prevention Division) reports statistics (see Table 12):

- *Other Theft* (all theft not including motor vehicles): in the Peel Region, there are 26 incidents per 1,000 persons compared with 28 incidents per 1000 persons for WA;
- *Property Damage*: there are 17.3 incident per 1,000 persons compared with 18.0 for WA;
- *Residential Burglary*: there are 11.7 incidents per 1,000 persons compared with 10.0 per thousand persons for WA; and
- *Total Acts Intended to Cause Injury*: there are 7.7 incidents per 1,000 persons in the Peel compared with 10.0 for WA as a whole.

However, the Peel region has a higher rate of reported drug-related offences (*Total Illicit Drug Offences*) at 8.5 incidents per 1,000 persons compared to 7.6 per thousand for the state.

Table 12 Peel Region: Crime Rates (Per 1,000 persons), 2009-10, By LGA

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Other Theft¹</i>	<i>Property Damage</i>	<i>Residential Burglary</i>	<i>Total Acts Intended to Cause Injury</i>	<i>Total Illicit Drug Offences</i>
Mandurah	30.4	18.6	13.7	9.0	7.0
Serpentine Jarrahdale	12.6	12.0	8.2	5.0	4.0
Murray	23.1	19.6	8.0	5.0	17.2
Waroona	22.4	10.9	7.7	6.0	7.0
Boddington	13.9	11.4	5.5	10.0	38.6
Peel Region²	26.0	17.3	11.7	7.7	8.5
Rockingham	23.4	16.0	8.8	10.8	4.8
South West Metro	27.7	17.5	10.0	10.9	6.0
WA	28.0	18.0	10.0	10.0	7.6

Note: 1. *Other Theft* refers to theft other than that of a motor vehicle. 2. The *Peel Region* average is a population weighted average across the five LGAs.

Source: Office of Crime Prevention (2010) and author calculations for *Peel Region*, where this is a population-weighted average across the five LGAs.

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Two other useful reference points are the Rockingham LGA and its broader sub-region, the South West Metropolitan Region in Perth. The Peel region has higher levels of *Other Theft*, *Property Damage*, *Residential Burglary* and *Total Illicit Drug Offences* (8.5 compared to 4.8 incidents per 1,000 persons) than Rockingham, but lower levels of *Total Acts Intended to Cause Injury*.

A somewhat similar pattern emerges in comparison with the South West Metro sub-region of Perth, with Peel having lower levels of person-on-person violence (*Total Acts Intended to Cause Injury* – 7.7 cases per 1,000 persons in the Peel compared with 10.9 for the South West Metro) and higher levels of *Illicit Drug Offences* (8.5 in the Peel compared to 6 per 1,000 persons in the South West Metropolitan area).

Within the broader picture for the Peel, there are differences in outcomes among individual LGAs:

- Mandurah has higher rates of crime across the first four categories relative to Peel as a whole, with the first three being higher than the state average, but records a lower level of offences in relation to *Total Illicit Drug Offences*, explicable by Mandurah's older population and substantially higher rates in the Murray and Boddington LGAs which raise the region's average rate of incidence;
- Serpentine Jarrahdale has consistently lower rates of crime across all categories except *Residential Burglary* where it is close to the regional average. In two instances (*Other Theft* and *Total Illicit Drug Offences*) Serpentine Jarrahdale has crime rates which are half that of the Peel average;
- Murray tends to track the regional average but sees 34% fewer instances of *Property Damage* relative to the regional average;
- Waroona has higher rates of offence in *Property Damage*, lower rates in *Total Acts Intended to Cause Injury* and more than double the rate of offence in *Total Illicit Drug Offences*; and
- Boddington has lower levels of theft (*Other Theft* and *Residential Burglary*) and *Property Damage*, substantially higher levels of *Total Acts Intended to Cause Injury*, and almost five times the regional (and over five times the state and seven time the Rockingham average) for *Total Illicit Drug Offences*.

A medium-to-long term perspective of crime rates within the LGAs can be gained by examining imprisonment rates, for prisoners with a 'known last address' (WA only). On the basis of a rate of imprisonment for *sentenced* prisoners per 100,000 persons, the Peel (131.7) has a lower overall crime problem than Rockingham (137.3) or WA (159.6) – a finding in keeping with recent crime statistics reported above. However, within the region there are quite marked disparities, with Waroona (78.1) having a relatively low level of imprisonment, Mandurah (120.7) and Serpentine-Jarrahdale (127.8) placing just under the regional average, while Murray (194.8) and Boddington (177.3) greatly exceed the regional and state averages.

An examination of *unsentenced* prisoners and detainees, paints a slightly different picture, with the Peel (27.6) still having lower rates than WA as a whole (33.7), but Rockingham recording dramatically lower rates of imprisonment at 11.5 unsentenced prisoners/detainees per 100,000 persons. Within the Peel, Boddington stands out with no unsentenced prisoners citing a home address in the LGA, with Serpentine-Jarrahdale also recording a low level of unsentenced prisoners/detainees per 100,000 persons (5.8). Mandurah and Waroona are close to the Peel average, while Murray (65.9) is more than double the regional average. This latter observation implies that Murray's total rate of imprisonment (sentenced and unsentenced) is around 259.7 persons per 100,000, compared to 193.3 for WA and 148.9 for Rockingham. The Peel's equivalent rate is 159.14, with only Boddington (177.3) also exceeding the regional average, while Mandurah (146.3), Serpentine-Jarrahdale (133.6) and Waroona (104.1) each exhibited rates of imprisonment beneath the regional average.

Table 13 Peel Region: Imprisonment Rates (Per 100,000 persons), 2010-11 (May 2011 Census), Sentenced and Unsented prisoners and detainees by last known address (known address and WA only), by LGA

LGA	Imprisonment Numbers, Last Known Address			Imprisonment Rates Per 100,000 Persons		
	Sentenced	Unsented	Total	Sentenced	Unsented	Total
Mandurah	85	18	103	120.7	25.6	146.3
Serpentine Jarrahdale	22	1	23	127.8	5.8	133.6
Murray	30	10	40	194.8	64.9	259.7
Waroona	3	1	4	78.1	26.0	104.1
Boddington	3	0	3	177.3	0.0	177.3
Peel Region	143	30	173	131.7	27.6	159.4
Rockingham	143	12	155	137.3	11.5	148.9
WA	36,60	773	4,433	159.6	33.7	193.3

Source: Department of Corrective Services (2011) Report produced by Executive Services Directorate, Performance and Statistics Branch, publicly released, 20 September 2011, Perth: Department of Corrective Services; and author calculations of imprisonment rates using population data from Table 2 and prisoner and detainee data from Department of Corrective Services (2011).

PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research participants' perceptions of safety and security across the Peel region in general tend to confirm the above region-wide lower levels of crime through a consistent emphasis on local areas as "safe places." As part of this people often emphasised a belief that their children could enjoy a level of freedom felt to be unavailable in more urban environments. For example, numerous participants noted that their children are able to roam the neighbourhood and play in the streets and in local parks without fear of "stranger danger."

Indigenous Safety and Security

As noted at the outset of this chapter, one's sense of safety and security is informed by personal characteristics such as gender, age and race along with sense of belonging in a given place or community. The above general sense of safety and of freedom is not something universally experienced. For example, cultural minorities may feel less secure, as may local residents facing an influx of newcomers to their community. For example those living in areas undergoing rapid expansion as evidenced in the Serpentine Jarrahdale public survey express concern over a potential rise in crime and loss of general safety.

Domestic Violence

While many find the region to be a "safe place", domestic violence was highlighted as a crucial issue throughout workshops and interviews across the Peel region. It is also one of three regional priorities identified by a group of representatives from 25 Peel health, legal and community service agencies. Importantly, it is a "huge issue and not just among young women. There are increasing numbers of older women experiencing domestic violence." This is in line with wider research which shows a range of new groups of women experiencing domestic and family violence including: "home owners, women with older male children, those living in rural and remote and mining communities, those in same-sex relationships, and those who have a disability or are elderly" (Spinney and Blandy 2011: 19).

According to unpublished data, the Peel Police District has the second highest incidence of domestic violence in WA, following just behind the South East Metropolitan district (of which Serpentine Jarrahdale is a part). In the Mundijong Police Area (which includes Mundijong, Byford, Hopelands, Mardella and Oakford), between July and December 2010 there were 42 reported incidences, 30 with intimations of physical violence (irrespective of charges pressed), and between Jan and June 2011 there were 42 reported incidences including 29 with assault offences.

The high local incidence of domestic violence has far reaching implications for the broader community and is also, as experienced professionals in the Peel point out, a "big issue in relation to a big number of services." Domestic violence and the lack of crisis accommodation, let alone longer term affordable accommodation for

women and children leaving abusive relationships, contributes for example to the rising number of homeless people in the region and thus impacts upon related services.

Support Services

The first *Peel Away the Mask* report highlighted the fact that Pat Thomas House was the only women's refuge in the Peel region (Lucks and Durack 2001). The refuge assisted 90 women and 123 children in 1999/2000 though had to refuse assistance to 245 women and 371 children. In 2008 Pat Thomas House provided accommodation and associated support to some 100-130 women and 200-250 children while having to turn away twice the number assisted (Goulding 2008: 2). As of 2011, Pat Thomas House is still the only women's refuge in the Peel region, and is still struggles to meet demand.

Though Pat Thomas House has been expanded over the last ten years and, as result of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, Domestic Violence Outreach Program, has funding for the "*one new full-time position*" for four years (McSweeney 2010) it has not received any real increase in recurrent funding. In addition given the continued high incidence of domestic violence and high population growth across the region this expansion may not represent any real gain in service capacity.

At the same time, a centralized bed allocation system which sees women and children placed wherever there happens to be room means that more local accommodation will not translate directly into more beds for women in the Peel region.

There is too the further issue of cultural safety: as an Indigenous health worker noted:

"We need our own Aboriginal refuge so that we can have rehabilitation for families to heal together."

This is supported in the wider literature which has demonstrated that Indigenous experiences and interpretations of domestic violence and homelessness can differ from those of the non-Indigenous population (Spinney and Blandy 2011).

It is also likely that migrant populations will have varying interpretations, experiences and contexts for domestic and family violence. The issue of choice, not possible where there is limited support and demand far outstrips supply, is crucial. There is also substantial evidence to show that there is a large cohort of women who do not seek refuge because of the waiting lists and concerns around limited choices and loss of autonomy (Spinney and Blandy 2011).

Support for those escaping family and domestic violence requires a range of inter-related services beyond and in addition to crisis accommodation, important as that is.

The range of services needed encompasses, for example, counselling (including child and perpetrator counselling), legal and financial assistance, advocacy, outreach programs, child care assistance and, perhaps most importantly, post-crisis accommodation. Indeed, as one senior, long-term refuge staff member noted:

The critical issue is housing, the lack of affordable accommodation once they have moved out of the refuge. As a result, they tend to stay longer, which impacts on the overall number of people that a refuge can support. Also, bed counts are linked to all other refuges and services, and if there is a bed available, then Crisis Care will send client to from the metropolitan area, or wherever, to Mandurah. They do not intend to settle in Mandurah, but often have to stay longer as homelessness is often an outcome of domestic violence, and affordable accommodation is a problem.

Lack of public and/or affordable housing as a "*critical issue for women and children escaping violent family situations in the Peel area*" has been an ongoing issue since at least 2008 (see Goulding 2008: 15). While the extent to which demand for affordable housing exceeds supply dramatically increases the likelihood that women and children escaping domestic and family violence will become homeless, it is deeply important to keep in mind that the lack of both crisis and affordable transitional and post crisis accommodation is not the cause of women's homelessness. Rather the cause is the social inability to prevent domestic and family

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violence (Spinney and Blandy 2011). Education is a key aspect of this prevention, and one which, though not entirely absent, is sorely lacking in the Peel and sorely needed.

Due to inadequate funding, services providing support for those experiencing domestic violence in the region struggle to meet the high demand. Those working in this area note that there is funding for only “7 hours per week for women’s counselling” across the entire region and “no government funding for children’s domestic violence counselling in Mandurah.”

Significantly, “the limited service on offer is community funded through donations”. Department of Child Protection funding for a sexual assault counselling service is clearly inadequate in light of the 3 month waiting list.

The consequences of inadequate funding, however, are not only damaging waiting lists; it also means that the “ongoing cycle of domestic violence” is rarely, and certainly not systemically, addressed. For example, while there has been some limited funding for programs for perpetrators, and despite the success of these programs, ongoing funding has not eventuated. One counsellor described the local experience of “violent men destroying a family and then moving on and destroying another family”.

Similarly there are limited services for children affected by domestic and family violence. This is a critical gap in that domestic violence is often witnessed by children with ensuing psychological, health and social impacts. There is also the “potential for intergenerational transmission of domestic violence” (Richards 2011). Adverse impacts on children include the normalisation of domestic violence, disruptions in education (through moving house or becoming homeless), the development of unhealthy survival and coping mechanisms, increased rates of depression and/or aggression: the experience of domestic violence and ensuing homelessness is a “double whammy” of disadvantage (Spinney and Blandy 2011). There is also some research to suggest that the childhood experience of homelessness makes homelessness as an adult more likely (see Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007).

Equally importantly, there is little opportunity for early intervention and education programs crucial to reducing the incidence of domestic and family violence in the region. Those working with victims of domestic violence in the Peel have expressed concern that “quite a few referred clients didn’t know that they were experiencing domestic violence”.

In particular, one counsellor with extensive experience in the Peel region noted a “normalization of high level abuse in the area” linked to “a lack of education leading to normalization of unacceptable and abusive behaviours.” Counsellors agree that there has been little educational growth in the area in terms of community and individual strategies for addressing domestic and family violence. This lack of education and resultant (and potentially wide-spread) community ‘acceptance’ of domestic and family violence is very worrying given that this violence is a learned behaviour, and prevention depends on the recognition that such violence is never justified by the victim’s actions just as “anger, stress, drug and alcohol or any other external factors” are not causes but are instead excuses (Spinney and Blandy 2011: 10).

While refuges are the backbone mainstream support service for women and children escaping domestic and family violence, there is growing interest in developing services and support strategies which enable women to safely stay in the family home where possible. Central to this is the reversal of the current practice in which victims leave the home as opposed to perpetrators being the ones forced to leave (Spinney and Blandy 2011). Components of programs to assist women in staying in their homes include “outreach and crisis intervention services” along with integrated police and support service responses to incidents of domestic violence.

As highlighted in the 2008 White Paper, *The Road Home*, it is crucial to understand that while a focus must be maintained on transitioning women and children from crisis accommodation to long-term safe housing, domestic and family violence “will continue to have a major association with homelessness unless rates of domestic violence fall significantly, or new strategies are found to keep victims safer in their homes, and that homelessness prevention services and [support] services are good investments of public money” (Spinney and Blandy 2011: 19).

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Women and children escaping domestic and family violence in the outer-lying areas of the Peel may also struggle to access services due to lack of transport. As an advocate in the Serpentine Jarrahdale area with over twenty-five years experience pointed out, many victims *“have no transport leaving them isolated with nowhere to go and not knowing what to do”*.

One outcome of the establishment of the Armadale Domestic Violence Intervention Project (ADVIP), has been the presence of a Domestic Violence Advocate (who sees a *“steady clientele”*) for one day a week at Mundijong Police Station. Other than this, according to experienced local domestic violence workers: *“Over the last 10 years there has been no sufficient change that would assist communities and individuals experiencing or escaping domestic or family violence.”*

Legal Assistance

There is only one free legal service in the region: the Peel Community Legal Service. As the only such practitioners they are consistently fully-booked at least two weeks in advance. This is deeply unsatisfactory given that clients are usually *“in a state of crisis and need urgent assistance”*. Significantly, given the poor public transport infrastructure in the region, this service offers regular outreach legal and advocacy clinics in Boddington, Pinjarra and Waroona, along with phone consultations. In addition, Mandurah is part of Community Legal Service’s catchment.

Assistance with legal issues is a major component of many support programs including those centred on domestic violence and poverty for example. These legal services report that many clients present with multiple issues, and that they are seeing:

a much greater percentage of clients presenting with mental health problems and/or drug and alcohol issues, and many, many more clients experiencing domestic violence, as well as an enormous spike in credit and debt issues over the last twelve months.

Further, the rapid population growth in Mandurah and the region has seen increasing cultural diversity within the community. Indeed:

many clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Indigenous communities, but also others with poor literacy skills, have little understanding of their rights and/or obligations. This can lead to, for example, debts being raised by Centrelink or landlords, Centrelink payments being suspended, or lack of understanding of legal processes leading to further problems. These issues can also be compounded by the lack of understanding within consumer services, government services and the general community about the issues and barriers facing low socioeconomic communities.

Importantly, *“all of these factors contribute to the inability of clients to communicate and/or comply with services and have their basic rights upheld.”*

GAP ANALYSIS

PATM 2001 – PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED	ARE THESE STILL ISSUES?
“Inadequate prevention and early intervention strategies.”	This remains a core issue for the region.
“Lack of accurate knowledge of how the legal system works and rights and responsibilities under the law.”	The presence of a region-wide free legal service goes some way to addressing this; however the service is over-subscribed and thus unable to provide the necessary education to address this gap

PATM II: Issues Identified

- Many of the challenges the Peel region faces in security and safety issues stem from its underlying challenge of accommodating a rapidly growing population in a culturally and geographically diverse

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region. Assessments of future population trends need to consider the implications of these for safety and security.

- In line with an assessment of potential issues emerging from the above, there is a need to undertake an assessment of likely infrastructure needs. These include police stations, visible legal institutions such as magistrate's courts, and resources that facilitate community policing.
- While the current relatively low level of recorded crime in the region is a major strength, there are substantial sections of the population who do not feel safe and secure, namely many youth, elderly residents, Indigenous residents and women experiencing or at risk of domestic violence. The perspectives of youth, the elderly and, to a lesser extent Indigenous communities are addressed to some degree in the safety and security plans produced by the individual LGAs.
- The expansion of Pat Thomas House since 2001, the establishment of a part-time domestic violence advocate in Mundijong, and the provision of a free legal service are significant regional gains in this area. However, the lack of transition accommodation, support services and prevention programs across the region are a critical shortfall in terms of improving domestic violence outcomes for victims, witnesses and perpetrators and also in terms of reducing incidence rates.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- A scoping study for security and safety issues in the Peel would be a good start in terms of making an assessment of likely developments across the region in totality, but also in regard to each LGA in the context of its projected growth.
- Increased crisis accommodation and specialisation in relation to ethnic diversity.
- Improved access to affordable transition accommodation.
- Funding and support for increased capacity to provide sustainable programs engaging with victims, perpetrators and witnesses.
- Dedicated funding for sustained community education/prevention programs.
- Development of local initiatives designed to enable women and children to stay at home.

Education

Young people in the area can tend to "lose a bit of heart for education; they ask themselves "what's the point when I can't afford to go on, don't have the means to travel further?" and so on. (Transition education provider in the region)

CURRENT CONDITION

In September 2010, the State Government consolidated the 14 Education Districts into 8 Education Regions effective throughout 2011. As part of this, the Fremantle-Peel Education District amalgamates with the Canning Education District to form the South Metropolitan Education Region (Wood 2010) encompassing 220 schools. Some interviewees have linked this amalgamation to a loss of local knowledge, authority and resources particularly in the case of critical incidents.

Attainment

The Peel region has a population with a higher level of trades qualifications than the WA average, as measured under the 2006 Census (the latest year for which data are available), with around 61% of the region's population possessing a certificate, ranging from 57.5% in Boddington to 67.6% in Murray. Around

18% possess a diploma, ranging from 16.3% of the population in Murray to 18.4% in Mandurah. These figures compare with WA averages of 33.1% and 13.9% respectively.

Table 14 Educational Attainment in the Peel Region, 2009-10, Per Cent of Residents with Qualification, By LGA, 2006 Census Data

Source: ABS (2010).

LGA	Certificate	Advanced Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Increase in residents' post school qualifications (% change since 2001)
Mandurah	61.4%	18.4%	16.4%	48.3%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	61.5%	17.9%	21.6%	27.9%
Murray	67.6%	16.3%	12.5%	22.7%
Waroona	64.6%	17.2%	15.4%	38.2%
Boddington	57.5%	17.5%	21.7%	28.4%
Rockingham	63.4%	18.3%	15.0%	37.8%
WA	33.1%	13.9%	20.8%	na

The Peel tends to lag WA in terms of university qualification attainment, with less than 17% of the region's population having a bachelor's degree – ranging from 12.5% in the Murray to 21.6% in Serpentine Jarrahdale. This compares with a WA average attainment of 20.8% in the adult population.

In comparison with Rockingham, Peel tends to have lower levels of educational attainment, particularly in regard to certificate and diploma qualifications, with Rockingham's population attaining bachelor degrees lying below the Peel's average rate of attainment and only exceeding that of Murray (15% attainment in Rockingham versus 12.5% attainment in Murray).

In general, the population of the Peel region has increased its level of post-school educational attainment since the 2001 Census, with Mandurah in particular seeing a 48.3% increase over that period. However, three LGAs – Serpentine Jarrahdale, Murray and Boddington – saw markedly lower rates in the increase in their level of qualifications, partly explained by Serpentine Jarrahdale and Boddington's higher level of attainment in general, while Murray's lower level of growth in post-school attainment comes on the back of existing under-performance relative to other LGAs in the Peel.

Education Infrastructure

The Peel currently has 30 government schools with 11,000 students and 11 non-government schools with 6,000 students accessing education services from pre-primary to secondary level. Over the next three years there are plans to open two new primary schools (Meadow Springs in 2012 and Byford in 2013) and a new secondary school in Byford in 2013, with Mandurah Senior College and Mandurah High to be amalgamated in 2012.

Post-secondary education in the Peel is centred on the Peel Education Campus, WA's first cross-sector education campus, founded in 2000. The campus is comprised of:

- A University Learning Centre managed by Murdoch University, which currently specialises in Nursing and Midwifery, but will launch a social work degree in 2012;
- Challenger Institute of Technology, which offers a broad range of pathways for training; and
- Mandurah Senior College, where students can progress to vocational or university study.

The campus has enabled dramatic impact on attainment among students at the College, with 70% of Year 10 students continuing to Year 12, compared with 45% in 2000 (a result also driven by state government policy

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on attainment), with 70% of all Year 12 students participating in a vocational education and training (VET) pathway, either to a Challenger course or university (Challenger Institute of Technology 2010).¹⁰

In 2009 and 2010 the Fremantle-Peel 15 to 17 Year Old Steering Committee undertook a regional needs analysis involving consultation with representatives from a range of government departments and community providers and agencies to determine ‘the current environment for youth at risk as well as the needs of disengaged youth or youth at risk of disengaging’ (Woods 2010). This analysis highlights that in the Peel region there is:

- limited access to programs and services for young people in remote parts of the region (eg Pinjarra/Waroona), partially due to limited transport options;
- a need for further interagency collaboration to meet young people’s needs; and
- insufficient diversity of options for young people.

Issues identified more broadly across the Fremantle-Peel Region include a “sharp rise in the incidence of mental health issues amongst individuals and families” (Woods 2010: 4). Importantly, one strategy identified for improving “access to education and training options for young people in remote areas of the region” involves supporting “local authorities to improve transport services (particularly relevant to the Pinjarra/Waroona area)” (Woods 2010:6). Interviewees also note that lack of public and/or private transport is a barrier to “accessing alternative courses and effects employment opportunities.

Children

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) reports on the health and wellbeing of children in their first full year of school. It is completed by teachers and provides measures on five domains covering a number of underlying factors:

- *Physical Health and Wellbeing*: Physical readiness for the school day, physical independence and gross and fine motor skills.
- *Social Competence*: Overall social competence, responsibility and respect, approaches to learning and readiness to explore new things.
- *Emotional Maturity*: Pro-social and helping behaviour, anxious, fearful and aggressive behaviour, hyperactivity and inattention.
- *Language and Cognitive Skills*: Basic literacy, interest in literacy/numeracy and memory, advanced literacy and basic numeracy.
- *Communication Skills and General Knowledge*: Storytelling ability, communication with adults and children.

Localities are classified on the basis of the percent of children who are ‘developmentally vulnerable’ where this includes all children assessed as being in the lowest decile (below the 10th percentile) of the national sample on the basis of a given domain. Table 15 (overpage) reports on findings for each LGA and for the state as a whole in terms of the per cent of children in each LGA classified as being developmentally vulnerable on each measure.

In Mandurah, the average assessment tends to track that of the state, with higher levels of vulnerability detected in two domains – Emotional Maturity, 9.5% of children classified as vulnerable compared with 8.8% for WA, and Language and Cognitive skills, 14.2% compared with 12.1% for WA. Overall, 26.7% of children in Mandurah are classified as being vulnerable in at least one domain, with 12.9% being viewed as being vulnerable in at least two.

Serpentine Jarrahdale has considerably more favourable outcomes than Mandurah across all five domains, with a lower level of assessed vulnerability in each case relative to the WA average (right column). Despite

¹⁰ Challenger Institute of Technology (2010) ‘Peel Education Partnership Earns Top Grades’, Challenger Institute of Technology media release, available at: <http://www.challenger.wa.edu.au/ChallengerMedia/mediareleases2010/Pages/PeelEducationPartnershipEarnsTopGrades.aspx>

this, around 21.1% of children in the LGA are classified as being developmentally vulnerable in relation to at least one domain, with 10.3% of the total population being developmentally vulnerable in at least two.

Table 15 % of Children Who Are Developmentally Vulnerable, Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) for the Peel Region, 2009, By LGA (Source: AEDI (2010)).

	<i>Mandurah</i>	<i>Serpentine Jarrahdale</i>	<i>Murray</i>	<i>Waroona</i>	<i>Boddington</i>	<i>WA</i>
<i>Number of Children (0-5)</i>	4,168	1,170	800	265	118	154,380
AEDI Domain						
Physical Health and Wellbeing	10.6%	6.9%	5.6%	9.5%	22.2%	10.1%
Social Competence	7.7%	3.9%	4.9%	16.7%	33.3%	7.7%
Emotional Maturity	9.5%	6.9%	4.9%	16.7%	27.8%	8.8%
Language and Cognitive Skills	14.2%	10.3%	15.7%	21.4%	38.9%	12.1%
Communication Skills and General Knowledge	8.3%	8.6%	5.6%	16.7%	16.7%	8.9%
Developmentally Vulnerable:						
One or more domains	26.7%	21.1%	19.4%	28.6%	50.0%	na
Two or more domains	12.9%	10.3%	8.7%	21.4%	44.4%	na

The Murray LGA has better outcomes than the WA average on the AEDI measure in all domains except Language and Cognitive Skills where 15.7% of children in the LGA are assessed as being developmentally vulnerable compared with 12.1% for the state as a whole. Around 19.4% of children are classified as developmentally vulnerable in at least one of the five domains. However, only 8.7% are classified as being developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains.

Waroona is assessed as having a relatively large population of developmentally vulnerable children, with 28.6% being vulnerable in at least one domain and 21.4% being vulnerable on the basis of two domains. Children in Waroona are marginally less vulnerable on average in the Physical Health and Wellbeing domain, but considerably more so elsewhere. For instance while only 8.8% of children in WA are ranked below the 10th percentile (developmentally vulnerable) on a national basis in Emotional Maturity, around 16.7% of children in Waroona are classified at that level.

Boddington has the most pressing requirement for assistance to address developmental vulnerability in the Peel region. The percentage of children in the LGA who are assessed as being developmentally vulnerable is at least double that of the WA average in four domains and approaching double in Communication Skills and General Knowledge. Around half of all children in Boddington are assessed as being developmentally vulnerable in regards to one domain and 44.4% are viewed as being vulnerable in two or more domains.

Child Care and Early Childhood Education

Parts of the Peel region are reasonably serviced by child care centres, with approximately 33 located in the region and surrounding areas such as Rockingham. Mandurah in particular benefits from this infrastructure and its proximity to well-established urban centres. Services are more sparse outside of Mandurah. However, Serpentine Jarrahdale and Boddington have each seen new centres being built to cater for their ongoing and expected population growth. One of the challenges in the Peel region is that as population increases – especially across Mandurah, Murray and Serpentine Jarrahdale – this will tend to increase demand for child care and related education services in a region whose recent history has seen it become relatively older on average than the state as a whole. While the Peel and its LGAs recognise this challenge, it is important that its significance is relayed to the Commonwealth and state governments.

The relative level of childcare services in the Peel is difficult to gauge given the lack of reported statistics on childcare at the regional level. However, the AEDI survey reports on children’s participation in early childhood education programs (see Table 16). This shows that children in the Peel are prepared for school via care or early childhood programs (85.9% participation) to an extent comparable with that of children in Rockingham (84.4%) and more so than is the case on average across WA (85.9%). However, this masks disparities within the Peel, with 81.3%. Serpentine Jarrahdale and showing above regional average levels of participation and Murray and Boddington showing levels of participation well below those of the WA average. This would tend to suggest that there are gaps in childcare and early childhood education programs in these two LGAs which need to be addressed as part of a broader regional strategy.

Table 16 Percent of Children Aged Five Who Have Been in Care or Early Childhood Education Programs (%)

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Have Been in Care or Early Childhood Education Programs (%)</i>
Mandurah	88.8%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	88.4%
Murray	69.1%
Waroona	93.0%
Boddington	77.8%
Peel Region	85.9%
Rockingham	84.4%
WA	81.3%

Source: AEDI (2010), various community profiles; Peel average constructed using population weights.

PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Concerns around education levels in the Peel region centre on:

- general literacy levels;
- secondary school retention rates and student disengagement; and
- levels of and access to tertiary education.

Significantly, providers of alternative transition programs in the Peel note that low numeracy and literacy levels in the region hinder participation. There is substantial anecdotal evidence to suggest that literacy levels are lower in the Peel region than elsewhere; for example, interviewees comment that programs working well in the Rockingham area are not working as well in Mandurah because participants do not have the necessary reading and writing skills.

Concurrently, lack of transport especially in Pinjarra, Waroona and Dwellingup is reported by interviewees working in this sector as a “huge” barrier to young people’s access to these programs.

In the words of a young person by necessity travelling outside the LGA to access public secondary education, getting to school

involves a bus, another bus and then train: I leave at 7.30 to get to school at 8.20am, finish 2.50 get home 4.15pm. It takes 40-50 minutes each way. It’s hard to see your friends from school; my best friend lives in Gosnells.

Primary research participants throughout the Peel indicate that this experience is common across the region. In addition, a cycle of educational underachievement is reported: “a lot of families move into the region because they can’t afford housing in the inner areas; affordability issues go hand in hand with educational disadvantage in that lower income parents are likely to be less educated and thus less likely to have the capacity to assist their children.”

A factor contributing to the lower numbers of youth pursuing education beyond Year 12 identified by those working in the sector is that the transition from Year 12 to university in the Peel region is made more difficult because there are not as many senior schools, that is, “less feeders in to university”. It is similarly noted that

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“Poverty is affecting social opportunities and schooling. For the last ten years high schools in Mandurah only serviced students to Year 10. Students then had to go to the Peel Education Campus to complete year 11 and 12 with no public transport.” The low percentage of students going on to university education has serious repercussions for the Peel region, not least in that “*higher levels of educational qualifications are associated with higher weekly earnings*” and also “*better health*” (Robinson et al 2010).

According to unpublished local statistics the following factors play an important part in student disengagement in the region (many youth experience a number of these):

- critical life events (for example, death of family member);
- diagnosed or emergent mental health issue;
- financial distress;
- low self esteem;
- bullying;
- homelessness/rough sleeping;
- lack of anger management skills;
- alcohol and drug use;
- abuse; and
- inadequate family support.

The main factors, however, are low self esteem and behavioural problems, low literacy and numeracy, and poor anger management skills.

Points of difference across the LGAs

In Waroona the lack of public transport is reported as the most significant barrier to the pursuit of tertiary education by local youth. Waroona District High School takes students to Year 10 only. Students travel by bus daily to Pinjarra Senior High School or to Mandurah and Harvey to attend a range of public and private schools in the region catering for Year 11 and 12 students. Outmigration of primary and junior high students reduces numbers and socio-economic breadth at the local schools.

There are a number of reasons for this outmigration including religious denomination and continuity of studies from year 8 through to year 12 at the same facility instead of having to change schools at the end of year 10. The proximity to other schools for students living in Lake Clifton and Preston Beach has also lead to change with the building of new schools south of Mandurah. Access to education in Waroona thus involves substantial travel, a daily outmigration of youth, additional costs for parents (not least in terms of travel and later housing near universities), along with a long term loss of youth. An important related issue is the loss of young people from the community: as one respondent put it, “people leave the area to go to university and then don’t come back”. In Murray lack of public transport is also identified as a major barrier to accessing out-of-shire opportunities” (SoM 2010: 8).

In Serpentine Jarrahdale, respondents report concerns over the lack of public secondary schooling in the area; those who can afford private schooling are believed to be well-served locally and to thus also avoid long commuting times experienced by public school students who must leave the area. This will be remedied with the planned construction of the Byford secondary school in 2014, as noted above. A further issue raised by respondents is overcrowding in local primary schools as a result of rapid population growth: again, a new public primary school is scheduled to open in Byford in 2013 as part of a management plan to cater to the population growth in the area. At the same time, those involved in the sector note that perceptions of overcrowding arise from a shift in school status from smaller rural school to larger, outer urban school.

Positive developments since 2001

Following legislation requiring those up to the age of 17 to be either in full-time study or meaningful full-time work, a number of youth engagement initiatives designed to provide alternative transitions for 15-17 year olds who have for various reasons moved away from mainstream schooling have commenced in the Peel region including Bilyidar and Coodanup Success Centre. The strength of these programs, in the words of a service provider, is their “*capacity to individualise pathways for disengaged youth.*” The region can boast an “increasing number of service agencies such as SMYL, Bridging the Gap, PVS Workfind, Anglicare,

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Community First, Fremantle Education Centre and the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Company provide additional opportunities for young people to gain skills, qualifications and receive support” (Woods 2010: 3). On top of this, a Trade Training Centre, with a focus on engineering, is soon to be built at Pinjarra SHS in partnership with Waroona DHS (Woods 2010).

GAP ANALYSIS

An Assessment of Progress

PATM 2001 – PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED	ARE THESE STILL ISSUES ?
<p>“A number of 4 year olds did not go to school in the region this year (2001) in part, it is reported, because it is too difficult for parents to deliver and collect children as they do not have transport and live too far for young children to walk. Concern has been expressed about the additional requirements that will be needed for these children when they do enter the school system.”</p>	<p>Some improvement is evident on the basis of AEDI statistics around participation in care and/or early education programs, but transport is still an issue.</p> <p>The levels of regional vulnerability identified in the AEDI data suggests that many children are inadequately developed by their first year of school.</p>
<p>“Schools surveyed reported the need to exclude students from low income families from school excursions because of non-payment of fees from previous excursions. It is managed carefully and as discretely as possible but the bottom line is that not all students in the same class receive the same education experience. Individual parents surveyed also indicated that they could not afford extra-curricular activities for their children.”</p>	<p>According to service providers with long-term involvement in the sector, poverty is a significant issue in lower income areas which ongoing impacts on educational opportunities for large numbers of students.</p>
<p>“Inadequate levels of social housing and lengthy waiting times”</p>	<p>This continues to be a major concern: there is at present limited crisis services for youth.</p>
<p>“Inadequate drying out houses (ie safe places for alcohol or drug affected people to sober up safely)”</p>	<p>This is currently being addressed through the current and planned construction of substantial social housing stock in the region.</p>
<p>“Overcrowding in Indigenous communities”</p>	<p>This is an ongoing issue.</p>

PATM II: Issues Identified

- Build on the strong improvement in educational attainment through research to understand the specific drivers of this education
- The region records substantially higher population percentages with certificate, diploma and bachelor degree qualifications than was the case in 2001. However, the levels remain low particularly in Murray. There is a need to attract more people with higher level qualification (through employment opportunities in the region) and /or facilitate local access to education opportunities and a way to keep these residents (again through employment opportunities).
- Transport is a significant barrier to accessing education opportunities particularly for youth in Waroona, Murray, Boddington and Serpentine Jarrahdale.
- Transition to university is difficult particularly for students in remote areas of the region. This is addressed to some extent by the co-location of tertiary and secondary education at the Peel Campus

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Increased funding and other resources for targeted training; that is training specifically designed to address the particular needs of specific local cohorts, and individuals.
- Programs to address the gaps identified in the AEDI data and responsive in particular to the needs of vulnerable children in Waroona and Boddington. These programs need to take into account place-based contexts and factors.
- Research designed to build on the strong improvement to educational attainment levels by identifying (and thus effectively capitalising on) the specific drivers for this improvement.
- Regional incentives and support programs for those undertaking or who wish to undertake tertiary study.

Employment and Income

People are struggling to make payments. The working poor is a reality.
(Welfare provider with long-term local experience)

CURRENT CONDITION

The Peel Economy

The Peel's economic performance tracks that of its overall population share of WA and is only overshadowed by the 'out-performance' of regions such as the Pilbara who rely on fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) workers from the Perth and Peel regions.

In 2009-10, Gross Regional Product (GRP) in the Peel was estimated to be equal to \$7.6 billion, and thus equal to around 4% of WA gross state product (GSP).

Table 17 Economic Output in the Peel: Population and Output Shares, 2010

<i>Region</i>	<i>Population Share (June 2010)</i>	<i>Share of WA Gross State Product (2010)</i>
Gascoyne	0.4%	0.4%
Goldfields-Esperance	2.6%	4.2%
Great Southern	2.6%	2.2%
Kimberley	1.6%	1.2%
Mid West	2.4%	2.4%
Peel	4.7%	4.0%
Pilbara	2.1%	4.6%
South West	7.1%	6.6%
Wheatbelt	3.3%	3.3%
<i>Regional WA</i>	<i>26.8%</i>	<i>28.9%</i>
Perth	73.2%	71.1%
WA	100.0%	100.0%

Source: ABS (2010) for Share of Gross State Product data.

The region has a relatively broad base, led by Mining (29.4% of GRP), Manufacturing (9.9%) and Construction (16.6%). Table 18 shows that the Peel was responsible for \$5,046 million of mineral production in 2010, or 7.3% of total production in WA (\$63.7 billion, excluding offshore oil and gas production).

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Mining in the Peel is dominated by bauxite and alumina refining by Alcoa of Australia, which has bauxite mines near Dwellingup (Murray) and Willowdale (Waroona) and alumina refineries at Pinjarra (Murray) and Wagerup (Waroona), and Worsley Alumina, which includes the Worsley mine and refinery in Boddington.

These combined, produced alumina valued at \$4,281 million in December 2010 (including production from Alcoa's refinery in Kwinana, which sources bauxite from the Peel). In total, the Peel region accounts for 21% of world production of alumina (Department of Mines and Petroleum 2011).

In addition to alumina, the Boddington Gold Mine was reopened in February 2010 and is slated to have an annual production of around 850,000 ounces a year when it reaches peak operation, equal to over \$1 billion per annum at current gold prices. Finally, the region also contributes to Mining activity through employment and service activities via Fly-in/Fly-out (FIFO) and Drive-in/Drive-out (DIDO) arrangements.

Table 18 Mineral Production in the Peel: Comparison with WA Regions, 2010

<i>Region</i>	<i>Mineral Production (\$M)</i>	<i>Share of WA Mineral Production</i>
Gascoyne	140.9	0.2%
Goldfields-Esperance	8,452.1	12.3%
Great Southern	3.9	0.0%
Kimberley	1,006.3	1.5%
Mid West	2,645.5	3.8%
Peel	5,046.4	7.3%
Pilbara	48,928.2	71.2%
South West	534.0	0.8%
Wheatbelt	1,950.1	2.8%
Regional	68,707.2	100.0%
Perth	32.7	0.0%
WA	68,739.9	100.0%

Source: Department of Mines and Petroleum 2011.

Construction activity in the Peel region follows the significant release of land throughout the region in recent years and subsequent activity in residential housing and associated commercial development.

Employment

Employment trends in the Peel tend to reflect those of WA in total and are therefore much more favourable than is the case in other Australian regions. However, unemployment estimates for November 2010 indicate that the Peel region is generally less economically robust than the rest of WA, although there is substantial variation between the LGAs.

Table 19 Peel Employment, Unemployment and Income Statistics, By LGA

Source: 1. DEEWR (2011) for labour force and unemployment statistics – March 2011 quarter;
2. ABS (2006a) for median weekly income and household income distribution data – 2006 Census data.

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Labour Force¹</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate¹</i>	<i>Annual Median Taxable Income \$²</i>	<i>Median Weekly Income \$²</i>
Mandurah	29,260	7.0%	55,029	384
Serpentine Jarrahdale	8,453	2.7%	57,723	507
Murray	6,499	6.2%	56,572	391
Waroona	2,017	5.6%	56,885	381
Boddington	868	3.1%	62,162	471
Rockingham	51,451	6.6%	53,938	459
WA	1,275,500	4.4%	58,017	500

Peel Away the Mask II

On average, unemployment stands at 5.7% throughout the Peel region compared to 6.6% in Rockingham and 4.6% for WA (March 2011). Mandurah has a noticeably higher rate at 7.0% -- one that is comparable to that of Rockingham, while Murray (6.2%), Waroona (5.6%), and Boddington (3.1%) have unemployment rates which are also substantially higher than the state average. By contrast, Serpentine Jarrahdale (2.7%), has a much lower rate of joblessness than the WA average.

A similar dynamic can be observed in annual income and wage outcomes across the region, where comparative data is drawn from the 2006 Census. This shows that there are quite marked regional disparities between the various LGAs, with the households in Mandurah (\$55,029), Serpentine Jarrahdale (\$57,723), Murray (\$56,572) and Waroona (\$56,885) each having a median weekly income equal to between 95 to 99% of the WA median, while Boddington (107%) is relatively prosperous on the basis of this measure. All Peel LGAs exceed Rockingham on this measure, but Boddington is the only LGA to exceed the state median.

These income outcomes in part testify to the Peel's "older" age and demographic profile, where post-retirement incomes are lower than those seen in late-stage career earnings. This can be seen in reporting of household income distribution by LGA in Table 20. By way of example, Mandurah – the LGA with the greatest skew in its age distribution – reports that only 19.6% of households earn over \$1,000 or more per week, compared with 24.3% for WA as a whole.

Table 20 **Indigenous Income and Household Size in the Peel Region, 2006 Census data, by LGA**

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Median Household Income (\$/week)</i>		<i>Average Household Size (No. Of Persons)</i>	
	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>	<i>Indigenous</i>	<i>Non-Indigenous</i>
Mandurah	783	811	3.4	2.4
Serpentine Jarrahdale	1,128	1,235	3.3	3.0
Murray	725	969	3.5	2.6
Waroona	850	873	3.3	2.5
Boddington	824	1,073	3.3	2.6

Source: ABS (2006a) Census Data.

There are relatively small differences in the income levels of Indigenous and non-indigenous households in the largest three LGAs – ranging from 2.7% in Waroona to 9.5% in Serpentine Jarrahdale; however, both Murray and Boddington report Indigenous-non-Indigenous household income gaps of over 33%. This is due to the relatively higher incomes of non-Indigenous households in these LGAs and the low Indigenous incomes relative to the rest of the Peel region.

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Research participants identified a lack of local employment as a worrying issue in particular for refugees and migrants on temporary or secondary visas, and for youth. While some Mandurah-based respondents noted a strong youth labour market, in Murray a 2010 (SoM: 10) shire youth survey identified generational unemployment and the lack of full-time, part-time and casual employment in the area as issues of concern for youth and youth service providers. In Waroona participants in particular identified lack of transport as a key barrier to employment, particularly for youth. In Serpentine Jarrahdale, local youth commented on a lack of casual employment in the area; such employment is an important entry to the labour market. In addition, the lack of public transport was also presented as a barrier to developing a sustainable tourism industry in the region.

Alcoa Australia employs some 800 people and is the principal employer in the Shire of Waroona (SoW 2010) however interviewees note that the local population is inadequately skilled to take advantage of higher level

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employment in this industry. On the other hand there is a “strong and large pool of applicants for operator and trade jobs.” Agriculture, the other major employment sector in the Shire, in line with broader industry-wide trends, is experiencing ongoing decline with a resultant steady loss of jobs and employment opportunities for youth.

Financial Stress

“Deprivation” refers to “an enforced lack of socially perceived necessities” as a way to determine “who is missing out on what the community regards as the necessities of life” including such things as medical and dental treatment when needed, a decent and secure home, up to \$500 savings for an emergency, heating in at least one room of the house, and home contents insurance, for example (Saunders et al 2008: 175). Unemployment is linked to substantially higher levels of deprivation (relative to being employed). Other equally important factors informing rates of deprivation include living with a disability or the presence of young children in a household. Those relying on social security payments experience a relatively high level of deprivation, itself an indictment of the adequacy of such payments. Significantly, this Australian research (Saunders et al 2008: 183) suggests that the majority of

items where deprivation is highest relate to steps that people need to take to protect their longer-term security against unpredictable risks: an adequate level of savings for use in an emergency, appropriate insurance coverage and access to dental care when needed. These findings highlight the fact that many Australians may be getting by, but are only a minor mishap (a faulty refrigerator, a scrape in the car, or a toothache) away from becoming deprived.

A speeding fine may be all it takes to precipitate deprivation. Those on low incomes or experiencing poverty are at a greater risk of loss of driving licenses as a result of inability to pay fines, a relatively common situation highlighted in the Mandurah workshop. The loss of a drivers’ license precipitates a spiral of unemployment and further disadvantage.

Interviewees involved in the provision of welfare and other social support in the Peel such as financial and legal counselling note an alarming rise in incidences of financial stress and deprivation in the region affecting not only those receiving welfare but also, and increasingly, lower to medium income groups.

A service provider operating in the Murray area emphasised that:

most of the people we deal with are not home owners. They are renting and fall behind for lots of reasons including the cost of living rising. For example, a couple entitled to disability and carers’ pension getting \$900 to \$1000 a fortnight but paying \$250 a week in rent, which is half of their money on rent. We can give rent assistance but it’s not going to solve the problem because there’s still not enough money so sooner or later they are going to lose. This situation is getting more prevalent, more people like this are presenting.

Service providers from other LGAs also report that “more people in employment can’t stay afloat” as a result of increases in power costs, privatization of government utilities, and cost of transport. Given the low median weekly incomes in Mandurah, Murray and Waroona and the rising cost of living it is not surprising that the number of working people unable to “make ends meet” in the region is growing:

Basically lower income earners are struggling to meet basic living expenses. And this includes rentals –if they pay the rent they can’t afford anything [else]. It’s horrific and getting worse.

Importantly, many of those struggling are

middle to low income earners [who] are not eligible for a lot of the government rebate schemes. Many are young parents, or parents of young children, and older, single clients who are on pensions. Most clients would not have access to a car.

Major factors contributing to financial stress

“are multiple debts, assistance with bankruptcy, with the creditors being Synergy and to a lesser extent Telstra.” For others, “Mortgage stress is a huge thing we deal with, a lot of rental issues, high rental costs. In other words: everything to do with basic living.”

The overall message from service providers is clear: there are increasing numbers of working people unable to meet basic living expenses and *“It’s not looking like it’s going to get any better anytime soon, particularly with the utility prices rising. And basic food costs going up, things like that.”*

Indigenous Employment and Income

Poor health status and related high morbidity and mortality of the Indigenous population is a primary barrier to participation in the labour market (Biddle and Taylor 2008:29) Indigenous interviewees note that employment is very difficult in this area, irrespective of levels of qualification and experience, and that many experience *“a sense of no opportunity.”*

Importantly for Indigenous populations, *“all else being equal”*, socio-economic outcomes *“tend to stagnate or worsen in recessionary periods of the cycle”* (Altman et al 2008:3). The Peel Indigenous population, suffering from chronic health issues and a median weekly income lower than the already significantly low non-Indigenous median weekly income, is likely to experience further setbacks in the face of rising costs of living. Importantly, as part of the Federal Government’s reformed Indigenous Employment Program, \$628 000 was awarded to Fairbridge youth charity in Pinjarra to support a two-year program emphasising traineeships and apprenticeships in hospitality, recreation, construction, landscaping and administration. (Ministers Media Centre 2010).

Fly-In/Fly-out (FIFO) and Drive-in/Drive-out (DIDO) Employment in the Region

According to the Western Australian Regional Development Council (2010), in the order of 82% of the FIFO workforce is sourced from the Perth/Peel region, and a projected additional 17,000 FIFO jobs by 2014 is expected to drive major growth in both the Perth and Peel regions.

FIFO (and also DIDO) workforces are widely associated with a range of negative consequences for regional communities. Communities experiencing an influx of FIFO or DIDO workers (such as Boddington) often receive little economic benefit beyond increases in alcohol and fuel sales and may experience a loss of community identity. At the same time non-resident workers are believed to experience a lack of connection both with their families and local communities (Carrington 2011)

According to a literature review conducted by WALGA (2010) there is little or no research into costs potentially associated with housing resident FIFO and/or DIDO workforces for local governments, or local community and health services. This review also found conflicting research findings on family and resident community impacts of FIFO/DIDO work rosters.

Research participants made frequent reference to the presence and impact of resident FIFO workers in the region. Boddington is experiencing the above identified community tensions associated with a daily influx of mining workers from the Newmont Gold Mine on-site residential camp and also growing numbers of locally resident mine workers and families. For example interviewees noted that *“new mining people look down on the locals”* and that *“there is growing segregation: rich, intermediate, poor”*, while others referred more broadly to a sense of division between ‘new’ and ‘old’ residents. The Shire is also experiencing a loss of development opportunity as a result of large numbers of mine workers driving in and out of the region as opposed to making it their home. This is in part due to the shortage of residential land and housing in the Shire.

Some Serpentine Jarrahdale participants noted a sense of large numbers of FIFO workers in the community: according to one participant on her/his residential street of 17 houses, 4 are occupied by FIFO workers and their families. The number of FIFO workers was also commented upon by Murray participants, just as an increase in *“the transient workforce”*, in particular FIFO workers has been mooted in Waroona (SoW 2011). Participants living in smaller communities such as North Yunderup in which a substantial number of the houses are believed to belong either to largely absent holiday makers and FIFO residents or to landlords, commented that a large percentage of the population consequently *“haven’t got a feel for the community as a whole.”* On the other hand, some respondents find that FIFO employment with attendant blocks of time off enhances capacity to take part in community activity.

GAP ANALYSIS

PATM 1: An Assessment of Progress

PATM 2001 – PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED	ARE THESE STILL ISSUES?
“Lack of Childcare Facilities”	Though the primary research suggests an unmet need in the region, the number and range of childcare facilities has improved.
“Schools surveyed reported the need to exclude students from low income families from school excursions because of non-payment of fees from previous excursions. It is managed carefully and as discretely as possible but the bottom line is that not all students in the same class receive the same education experience. Individual parents surveyed also indicated that they could not afford extra-curricular activities for their children.”	The improvements in regional educational attainment levels and rates suggests that this is occurring. The projected increase in FIFO residents to 2014 will assist to raise these numbers.
“Lack of Combination of Employment Opportunities For Aboriginal People (that include family support, education and training)”	The recently funded traineeship program to be operated out of Fairbridge is a good example of improvement in this area.
“Closure of the Boddington Gold Mine”	Newmont have reopened and expanded the Boddington mine site which is set to become Australia’s largest open cut gold mine.

PATM II: Issues Identified

- The Peel region is a centre for FIFO/DIDO workers in mining, an industry whose employment is forecast to grow substantially over the coming decade. However, there is only a limited delineation of issues in regard to these work practices in the Peel, both where the region is the “home base” for workers, but also one where its own expansion (Boddington Gold Mine) drive developments in this workforce.
- The Peel’s projected growth indicates that its economic base could change quite markedly over the next two decades, as the region’s size allows for a greater level of in-region servicing and a reduction in dependency on Perth for a variety of services. This has implications for the employment-mix in the region, with flow-on implications for planning processes across the Peel.
- A changing and growing economic base has implications for income and employment distribution across the Peel. This change will necessarily drive changes in policy and the range of services which are required.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- In the first instance, data collection and analysis from sources such as the 2011 Census should be sought to determine the extent to which the Peel has, and will, change, and the implications of this change for employment and income distribution across the region.
- As part of the ongoing infrastructure planning process as per the Peel 2020 Sustainability Strategy, there should be scope for an examination of spending and planning options to deal with trends identified in the 2011 Census data.

Environment

It'll be a shame when the houses are built; it won't be like a country town.
(Serpentine Jarrahdale survey respondent).

CURRENT SITUATION

The “*environment*” includes the built and natural, social and cultural, public and private contexts underpinning sustainable communities and regions (Davidson 2008). Three interlinked components are discussed here, each of which is central to the social condition of the Peel: namely, local senses or perceptions of ‘place’, and the built and natural environment. All three are imbricated in the experience of, and responses to, climate change.

Natural environment

The Peel region encompasses an area of 5,521 km and is located 35 km from Perth. It begins in Mandurah, and extends a further 110 km south to the end of the Waroona Shire and around 95 km to Boddington. The region is characterised by its diverse natural heritage, including 50 km of coastline and 137 square km of estuary and inland waterways.

The Peel has a relatively temperate climate and sees rainfall which is around 60 per cent higher than the Perth average. As a result, the Peel-Harvey catchment is an important hydrological system, sustaining over 23 rivers, streams and creeks, of which three, the Murray, Serpentine and Harvey, drain the Peel-Harvey catchment and flow into the Peel-Harvey Estuarine System. Combined, these three rivers account for 98% of all flows into the estuary with Murray being the most significant contributor, accounting for 63% (Serpentine accounts for 15% and Harvey, 22%).

Four dams in the Peel region – North Dandalup, South Dandalup, Serpentine Main and Pipehead, and Samson Pipehead – are an integral part of the Integrated Water Supply System (IWSS) which includes 12 dams in total located between Wanneroo in the north of Perth and the Harvey shire in the Peel. These dams accounted for around 30% of Perth and Peel’s surface water supply in 2004, an amount which is declining in view of the construction of desalination infrastructure in Perth and Peel since then.

The Peel-Yalgorup System (including the Peel Inlet, Harvey Estuary and surrounding lakes) is listed as a ‘Wetland of International Importance’ under the Ramsar Convention (listed in 1990). In addition, the Peel region is part of the *Southwest Australia* ‘biodiversity hotspot’ (Conservation International 2011) which encompasses the Perth, Wheatbelt and South West regions.

Given its diverse array of environmental systems, the Peel faces a number of environmental and sustainability challenges in the coming years. These include its exposure to climate change and ensuing issues such as water availability and bio-diversity. In addition, the region faces environmental and planning challenges from residential and commercial development.

Climate Change

Hick (2006) summarises the recent historic changes in climatic patterns in the Peel region which are in part driven by climate change:

- *Temperature:* The long-term records for Mandurah and Dwellingup indicate a 1 to 2 C degree increase in average temperatures over the past century, although records from the past 30 years (to 2005) indicate a more stable trend in average temperatures.
- *Rainfall:* Long-term records for rainfall in indicate reductions in average rainfall ranging from 8% in Dwellingup to 13% in Mandurah.
- *Water Resources:* The Department of Water (2009) projects that the Murray River alone could be subject to wide variations in total water supply to 2030, ranging from 201 GL in a “dry” scenario

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where the decline in rainfall trends continues to 370GL under a “wet” scenario where rainfall trends track recent historic trends. This affects total availability of water for the Perth and Peel.

- *Sea-Level:* Sea level measurements at Fremantle indicate increases of around 3mm per year over the past 20 years. Projections for global sea level changes range between 15 to 20mm per year.

Further climate changes and ongoing trends will have implications for the Peel region:

- *Impact of Variations in Rainfall:* As a consequence of declining rainfall (a fall of 60% in the average annual rate over 35 years), the Peel’s dams have become increasingly important, in conjunction with the development of desalination infrastructure, in providing water to Perth. Further reductions in rainfall in the Peel will see increasing reliance on desalination infrastructure.
- *Impact of Rising Sea Levels:* Preliminary work has been carried out on some of these regional impacts. For instance, a recent report by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (DCEE 2011) finds, in a “first pass” national assessment of climate change risks to coastal buildings and infrastructure, that WA has between 1,500 to 2,100 commercial buildings at risk from a 1.1 metre rise in the sea level by 2100 – representing a replacement value of between \$12 to \$17 billion. Of this estimate, between 242 and 400 buildings are located in Mandurah, with a broadly commensurate impact in terms of replacement value at around 15 to 20% of the state’s total.
- *Biodiversity:* Conservation International (2011) outlines a number of threats to the broader Southwest region from climate change and development, including loss of habitation and species extinction.

The Peel, as home to extensive National Parks, sensitive unique ecosystems, and primary water reservoirs, may also have additional custodial responsibilities. While the social impacts of climate change are at present poorly understood (Spickett et al 2008) the importance of local understandings and responses (Brace and Geoghegan 2010), conditioned by not only local geography but also demographic and economic complexity, social history, and past experience of change (Duerden 2001), is becoming increasingly apparent.

Social resilience, sense of community, and leadership skills will have much to do with the quality and success of regional responses and adaptation. Social vulnerability needs to be taken into account in planning for climate change. Vulnerability is a product of exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity (Spickett et al 2008). The aged have been identified as a large and highly vulnerable sub-group particularly in relation to health impacts of climate change, along with indigenous, disabled and homeless groups. Levels of vulnerability are further shaped by socio-economic factors. Impacts of climate change are predicted to include mental health issues, changes to life-style, loss of amenities, loss of income, relocation costs and stresses, and financial strain on LGAs, among others (Spickett et al 2008).

Land Use and Development Issues

In addition to the impact of climate change, the Peel is also subject to pressures from projected population increases, including changing patterns of land use and urban development.

The Peel is undergoing extensive urban development, particularly in Mandurah, Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray LGAs. In 2009, the latest year for which data are available, there was a total area of 11,304 hectares zoned for urban development in the Peel region (Mandurah, Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray), of which 4,279 hectares was undeveloped land available (Planning WA 2011). This is equal to 26.3% of the land available for urban development in the Perth Metropolitan Area (16,268 hectares). Across the LGAs, Serpentine Jarrahdale has around 62.7% and the Murray around 50.2% of their total urban zoned land undeveloped, suggesting that those LGAs are likely to see ongoing development over the course of the next decade.

Table 21 Stock of Land Zoned for Urban Development, Total and Undeveloped (2009), hectares (Source: Planning WA (2011))

LGA	Total (hectares)	Undeveloped (hectares)	Per cent of Total Urban Land Undeveloped
Mandurah	5,801	1,224	21.1%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	2,350	1,473	62.7%
Murray	3,153	1,582	50.2%
Waroona	na	na	na
Boddington	na	na	na
Peel (ex Waroona and Boddington)	11,304	4,279	37.9%
Rockingham	6,871	1,734	25.2%
Perth	89,437	16,268	18.2%

This extensive urban development will see a marked change in the experience of the Peel as a “rural” or “semi-rural” environment. It is sense of place that draws people to a particular area and which unites, or divides, them around collective understandings of local place values and their importance. As such sense of place is an important component of regional development and of adaptive capacity in response to these changes.

Peri-urban areas have traditionally been valued for their environmental and cultural assets, their natural resources, proximity to metropolitan centres, and as the settings for a wide range of human activities such as agriculture, water supply, recreation and tourism. In coming decades, climate change, water shortages, the rising importance of localised food production, and the depletion of natural resources such as oil will raise peri-urban areas to new levels of significance. It will be increasingly prudent not to remove options which may prove essential for the effective functioning of metropolitan [centres] and [their] peri-urban area. Land use planning can make an indispensable contribution to maintaining options such as food production, biodiversity maintenance and water supply.

Source Buxton et al, 2008).

PRIMARY RESEARCH

Respondent comments indicate the importance of, and pride in, local natural environments as key aspects of sense of place and further as core strengths in each LGA and the region at large. Survey responses also place a premium on the rural character of many local environments as a key regional strength. For example, respondents celebrated a range of *environmental assets* such as the “*beauty of the area*”, “*amazing trees and open space*”, “*clean air*” and variety of landscape (hills, plains, waterfalls, national parks, walk trails).

These are closely linked to a sense of “rural” character and values. Respondents in each LGA typically referred to the “*quiet*” environment together with a “*slower pace*” and “*country values*” along with a “*sense of freedom*” so that “*kids can play in the street.*”

The importance of the natural environment for local residents appears to be well-documented in the region. See, for example, the Shire of Murray 2010 survey of youth perspectives on the natural environment, and the *Peel 2020 Sustainability Strategy: Final Report* (2006). Similarly, the 2007 City of Mandurah *Youth Consultation Report* found that “*environment based*” responses were the most common reactions to the question “*what’s good about Mandurah?*”

Tensions

Tensions arise for local residents in areas experiencing or expecting substantial residential growth around this growth as a threat to the rural quality of life signified above. This finding supports that of an extensive Shire-wide community consultation undertaken in Serpentine Jarrahdale in 2006/07 (CCS 2007a: 128) which concludes that “*residents have a strong attachment to their localities. While people are generally supportive of the anticipated growth, they are keen to ensure that it does not undermine the region’s existing qualities*

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and lifestyle.” The overall tensions are succinctly encapsulated in concerns in the Murray area about “keeping the Shire country” in the “face of massive growth to come.”

Some respondent concerns link population and economic growth to environmental damage as evident, for example, in concerns about the consequences of

- overuse and tourism;
- clearing of land for mineral extraction; and
- loss of trees and biodiversity.

Importantly, the strong development and growth in the region has a range of culturally-specific impacts on Noongar communities not least in terms of custodial ownership and sense of identity. Specific negative impacts include an ongoing though currently accelerating loss of access to important places along with loss of links to places. Wilkes and Horwitz (2004:5) argue that the development of the Peel-Mandurah region has had a devastating impact on the Noongar population:

A lot of the old fellas I've talked to around Peel find it very difficult to talk about some of the sacred and significant sites and the stories they remember from when they were younger. During their lives the trees have disappeared or the lake has disappeared and those birds that used to fly through the sky over this part of the world no longer fly here, so these old fellas can't keep telling us the oral histories in the way they would like to.” (Wilkes and Horwitz, 2004:6.

At the same time, progress around native title in the region is evident in the 2009 agreement signed by the Western Australian Government and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. The agreement offers a structure through which to resolve native title claims and specify parcels of land to be returned to the Indigenous communities along with assistance in developing new Indigenous enterprises (Department of Regional Development and Lands 2011).

Built Environment

In Waroona research participants commented on the lack of growth in infrastructure, while the retail sector is perceived to be either “stagnant” or “declining”. Frequent mention was made in Boddington of the general lack of amenities and that “most stuff has to be bought elsewhere” while “the only dress shop is the op shop”. This was seen to contribute to difficulties in attracting young families to the area and, once this is achieved, getting them to stay: “They can't even buy birthday presents or shoes locally for their children.” *Serpentine Jarrahdale respondents also repeatedly drew attention to an “infrastructure lag.”*

In addition, respondents in both Waroona and Boddington made reference to the importance of visual amenity. The appearance of the towns' main streets was frequently commented on as important to sense of community.

GAP ANALYSIS

PATM 1: Environmental issues not assessed.

PATM II: Issues Identified

- Climate change threats and substantial social vulnerabilities not least in terms of health impacts on the large, and growing, ageing population and also other vulnerable cohorts including disabled, Indigenous and homeless residents. These impacts are place-based and poorly understood.
- Retention of “rural character” in the face of rapid development is an important challenge.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Preparation for regional adaptation to climate change to include risk assessment processes designed to identify social impacts and vulnerabilities, and which empower these groups to participate in this process.

- Strategies to develop the capacity for adaptation across the region and in relation to identified vulnerable groups.
- Proactive planning to ensure that current environmental advantages are maintained into the future.
- Ongoing identification of “rural character” and strategies for maintenance and development.

Infrastructure, Transport and Telecommunications

CURRENT CONDITION

Funding

Infrastructure is a critical issue for the Peel as it continues to rapidly expand. A primary concern is the sourcing of Commonwealth and State funding to develop infrastructure.

Peel is often seemingly disadvantaged in obtaining funding because of its size and proximity to Perth, amongst other factors. For instance, an analysis of projected Royalties for the Regions funding in 2011-12 (see Table 22) indicates that of the \$1,070.8 million in region-specific funding allocated under the scheme, the Peel is expected to receive \$33.8 million or around 3.2% of the total region-specific spending.

One way to evaluate the level of funding projected for the Peel in relation to the rest of the state is to compare funding on a per capita basis. Peel’s 3.2% share of total region specific funding in 2011-12 should be considered in light of the region’s population share of 17.7%. Doing so, demonstrates that the Peel, the third largest mineral producing region in the state and home to a substantial and increasing number of fly-in/fly-out workers, can expect to receive funding in the order of \$311 per person, compared with an average of \$1,742 per person across regional WA.

The Peel is thereby projected to receive the lowest allocation on a per capita basis of the nine regions.

This level of funding is less than a fifth of the Peel’s share under an equal per capita basis, where it would gain 17.7% of funding, equal to around \$189.1 million in 2011-12 alone – a discrepancy of \$155.3 million on its current projected allocation.

Table 22 Royalties for Regions, 2011-12, Estimated Breakdown of Spending by Region, Regional Specific Spending Only *Source: Department of Regional Development and Lands (2011)*

	Royalties for Regions Spending (\$M)	Per cent Share	Regional Population	Population Share	Per Capita Spending
Regional Specific Spending					
Gascoyne	107.1	10.0%	10,016	1.6%	\$10,693
Goldfields-Esperance	86.1	8.0%	59,070	9.6%	\$1,458
Great Southern	76.9	7.2%	59,412	9.7%	\$1,294
Kimberley	212.5	19.8%	35,706	5.8%	\$5,951
Mid West	100.8	9.4%	55,584	9.0%	\$1,813
Peel	33.8	3.2%	108,560	17.7%	\$311
Pilbara	254.5	23.8%	48,610	7.9%	\$5,236
South West	68.9	6.4%	162,164	26.4%	\$425
Wheatbelt	130.2	12.2%	75,535	12.3%	\$1,724
Regional	1,070.8	100.0%	614,657	100.0%	\$1,742
Cross Regional	422.3				
Total Spending	1493.1				

Community Resource Centres

The Community Resource Centre (CRC) network in WA originated in the long-running Telecentre program, and enables local communities to have access to internet, publishing, and educational technology in the one centre. The structure is currently supported by the *Royalties for Regions* Program in WA.

Peel has four CRCs, one each located in Serpentine Jarrahdale, Pinjarra, Boddington and Waroona (Community Resource Network 2011). Together with initiatives under the National Broadband Network program, CRCs provide localities with hubs for undertaking community outreach and in providing telecommunications services. These centres offer localised opportunities not only for free internet access but also life-long learning. This access to the internet is particularly important in the region given the regional lag (with the exception of Serpentine Jarrahdale) in internet take-up (see below). The extent to which these are patronised, and the types of people who make regular use of them, however will be constrained by the lack of intra-LGA transport persistently highlighted by research respondents in each LGA.

SuperTowns

The CRC network is now being used as the foundation for other development initiatives in the WA regions, such as the *SuperTowns* funding scheme under the *Royalties for Regions* program (with Boddington being one of nine nominated SuperTowns in WA). The Regional Centres Development Plan (SuperTowns) will allow nine towns in WA, including Boddington in the Peel region, to bid for a share of \$85.5 million in funding to provide infrastructure and planning services for areas which are projected to see major growth in the coming decade. This program will provide a competitive forum for the selected towns to plan developments in their areas, in anticipation of ongoing growth (Department of Regional Development and Lands, 2011). The SuperTowns program will enable Boddington to fund and develop a strategic vision in view of its expected growth over the coming five years – in part due to the expansion of the Boddington Gold Mine – as well as funding infrastructure needs identified in relation to this strategy.

Transport

The region is well serviced by major arterial and infrastructure links between the Perth Metropolitan region and Mandurah in particular. Important infrastructure projects in the region have included:

- The \$1.6 billion Perth to Mandurah Rail Line, which commenced operation in December 2007 and currently sees around 3,200 residents on average journey from Mandurah to Perth every day;¹¹ and
- The \$515 million Perth to Bunbury highway which reduced travel time to Bunbury in the South West by 35 minutes and also reduced usage of roads in the Peel.

These, and other, major projects will “*frame*” ongoing planning initiatives for transport options linking people within and outside the Peel region as part of the current planning round for Perth and the Peel regions. This plan will emphasise public transport links – train, light rail and buses – to reduce dependency on motor vehicles, as illustrated in the number of working Peel residents who drive to work, with rates of driving approximating those in Rockingham, but lower than in Perth. An interesting outlier is Boddington, where only 53.6% drive to work.

Table 23 Per cent of Working Population Who Drove to Work, Peel Region, 2006 Census data, By LGA *Source: ABS (2006a) Census Data.*

LGA	Drove a Car to Work (%)
Mandurah	62.3%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	61.3%
Murray	61.9%
Waroona	59.4%
Boddington	53.6%
Rockingham	57.6%
Perth	63.0%

¹¹ As at May 2008. See the Public Transport Authority (2008) ‘New Metro Rail Project: Lessons Learnt’, available at: http://www.ceiid.wa.gov.au/Docs/KNF_200805/MAY08-NewMetroRailProject.pdf.

Telecommunications

The Peel region faces similar challenges in terms of telecommunications infrastructure. Data from 2006 ABS Census indicate that the region as a whole tends to lag behind Perth and WA in terms of fixed internet uptake, with a total of 59% of Peel households having access to the internet compared with 62% across WA and 65% across Perth.

In particular, broadband availability in the Peel lags the state average, with around 34% of Peel households having a broadband connection compared with 40% across the state and 43% in Perth, with dialup connections representing a greater share of Peel households than is the case across WA – 24% versus 22% of all households.

Table 24 Household Internet Connections in the Peel Region, 2006 Census data, By LGA

LGA	Type of Internet Connection, Proportion of All Households (%)				No Internet Connection (%)	Not Stated (%)
	Broadband	Dial Up	Other	Total		
Mandurah	36%	21%	1%	57%	39%	3%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	32%	37%	0%	70%	28%	2%
Murray	32%	24%	1%	57%	39%	4%
Waroona	28%	24%	1%	53%	44%	3%
Boddington	16%	40%	1%	56%	39%	5%
Peel Region	34%	24%	1%	59%	38%	3%
Perth	43%	21%	1%	65%	32%	3%
WA	40%	22%	1%	62%	34%	3%

Source: ABS (2006a) Census Data.

These outcomes mask differences across the LGAs. For instance, Serpentine Jarrahdale has a much higher level of internet connection at the household level, with 70% of households reporting a connection, while Waroona sees only 53% of households reporting a connection. A similar divergence exists in relation to broadband, with 36% of all Mandurah households having a broadband connection, compared with just 16% of households in Boddington.

Recent policy developments in the Peel region have been encouraging. In July 2010, NBN Co, the organisation charged with carrying out the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN) announced that Mandurah would be one of three locations (including Geraldton and Victoria Park) in which the WA rollout of the NBN would take place (NBN Co 2010). This will entail the initial construction of an NBN 'module' covering 3,000 premises in the first instance, with NBN Co recently announcing that construction of the Mandurah module will commence in December 2011 (NBN Co 2011).

PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Transport

Access to transport, and thus to services essential to well-being and quality of life, was consistently and pervasively highlighted by research participants as the most important issue for the region. Mobility is of special importance in the Peel due to the large distances between LGAs and towns, and the large distances many residents in the outer-lying LGAs are required to travel for employment. In addition core health, education and training, employment, and social support services are largely centralized in Mandurah. Many people in the region find that they cannot get to the places that they need to go, whether for employment, education, health or social purposes; this inability is a recurring dimension of disadvantage in the region associated variously with housing issues, domestic violence, opportunities for education and employment, and social exclusion, as discussed further below. Mobility is also a key barrier for youth in the region who are reliant on parents or infrequent public transport in terms of access to employment, education and social opportunities.

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Reduced mobility is principally linked to:

- the high cost of private transport (exacerbated in the region by the long distances travelled);
- insufficiency/ lack of public transport; and
- inappropriateness of available transport.

Private Transport

The importance of access to reliable private transport is highlighted by those living in Boddington and Waroona. Each interviewee in Boddington, without exception, drew attention to the role that access to affordable, private transport plays in the quality of life in Boddington. In the absence of public transport, lack of access to private transport was explicitly linked to feelings of isolation and of being “trapped”. Those without or with limited access to reliable transport are unable to go on outings (which “alleviates the sense of being trapped”) or to shop more economically in the larger nearby towns and cities, or indeed to buy essential items many of which are unavailable in Boddington. Respondents in Serpentine Jarrahdale also noted social isolation as a result of lack of access to transport and highlighted in particular the situation for single car families. In this instance young mothers are often at home without a car and without access to services and/or shopping facilities. Many interviewees highlighted the “complete isolation” that results from a lack of access to either public or private transport.

The importance of having a safe and reliable vehicle was frequently pointed out in relation to the long distances travelled, especially given the absence of mobile network coverage along the way.

Serpentine Jarrahdale research participants characterized the Shire as a “*car-based shire of one and two car families. Together with rising mortgage payments this creates substantial financial pressure*”. This pressure is felt throughout the region as a result of the higher than metropolitan cost of fuel.

Firstly, the price of unleaded petrol in non-metropolitan areas is consistently higher than metropolitan areas: for example, on July 7, 2011 the average cost (cents per Litre – c/L) in the metropolitan area was 140.9c/L compared to 142.7c/L in the Peel region. Waroona prices ranged from 140.0c/L to 149.9c/L (<http://www.fuelwatch.wa.gov.au/fuelwatch/pages/home.jsp>).

Secondly more fuel is consumed through travelling long distances, often to access essential services located some distance away. These costs result in financial strain for all residents: for example, a two-income family in Serpentine Jarrahdale reported fuel costs (average size vehicles running on petrol and gas) deriving from travel to work, to shopping facilities, and to take children to school and to after-school activities at \$100 per week.

Even with reduced travel undertaken by many low income families in an effort to “*make ends meet*” the cost of private transport is increasingly prohibitive and will have escalating social consequences, especially when the growing number of people experiencing housing stress in the region is taken into account. Similarly, the challenges for low income households are greater given a tendency to own older, cheaper and less reliable cars with poor fuel economy and higher maintenance costs.

Public Transport

A lack of public transport is widely reported in Serpentine Jarrahdale, Murray, Waroona, and Boddington as a major barrier to:

- youth employment and educational opportunities; and
- quality of life for those requiring medical and social services.

Described by one interviewee as a “*huge, huge issue,*” the need for improved access to public transport was consistently mentioned by research participants as crucial “for everyone but in particular for young people, young mums, and long-term unemployed.”

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In Waroona, for example, a public bus service to Mandurah operates once a fortnight; there is no other public transport link to Mandurah. While a daily train service to Perth and major regional cities of Bunbury and Armadale is available for same-day travel (see TransWA), one must leave early in the morning (7.00am) and return either within one and a half to two hours of arriving in the city or wait till mid to late afternoon (6-6.30pm). Ticket prices are higher for this service than on the Perth-Mandurah passenger service. Understandably, reliance on private transport is high.

At the same time, access to public transport is an issue for those in the outer-lying areas of the City of Mandurah. For example, residents in Lake Clifton-Herron, a small semi-rural community of some 300 families located 35 km south of Mandurah and administered by both City of Mandurah and Shire of Waroona, highlight a lack of public transport in particular ensuing isolation for “single car families, single parents, teenagers without a car, families struggling to make ends meet and paying rising fuel costs” (<http://www.lakeclifton.com.au>).

Public transport is an issue not only in terms of mobility between LGAs and access to services and employment; it is also an issue within LGAs. For example, in the Murray Shire a major concern is the infrequency or absence of public transport linking the various townships satisfactorily with Pinjarra.

In addition,

Taxi services are often “forgotten” as a mode of public transport; however, for many elderly and disabled people they are vital.

Several participants noted limited local access to taxis.

Appropriate Transport

Public transport is identified as difficult to negotiate for a range of groups who are largely reliant on it, including young/teen mothers, those with disability or health issues, and the frail aged. Transport is also a major issue for the Indigenous community: in the words of an indigenous health worker:

Transport has been the biggest issue as not many clients have reliable cars; public transport is a very difficult option for elderly clients with poor mobility and multiple chronic disease.

The consequences of either lack of access to public transport or inability to use it include deteriorating health and increasing social isolation. Similarly, inadequate networks can be onerous for users. One interviewee recounted having to catch the train (from Pinjarra) to Perth and then to Mandurah to get to a Centrelink office.

Transport is also a significant issue for other services in the region. The provision of outreach clinics is widely reported to be difficult if not impossible due to the large distances between towns (as discussed in the Health and Community Services chapter). In the words of a service provider:

we try to cover the whole area but it's hard because of the long distances and its costs so much and we are always struggling to meet tight budgets.

The lack of access to transport (both public and private) has fostered community innovation as exemplified by the Waroona Community Car which has been in operation since the 1990s. Funded through grants and donations and run by a group of volunteers, the car is available solely for residents who require medical appointments outside of Waroona and who are unable to drive themselves due to illness, age or who do not own their own vehicle. In March 2011 for example, the car was used to make 36 return trips, in excess of 1 per day. This high usage underscores the level of need in this small Shire alone.

While some may argue that reliance on costly and time consuming private transport and limited public transport options is an expected consequence of what is often presented as the “choice” to live in more rural areas, it needs to be kept in mind that not all rural residents choose to live further afield. Many lower income and marginalized groups do so in search of affordable housing as noted earlier. Similarly, the loss of a job, the ageing process, or onset of illness has serious consequences for rural residents relative to those with

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access to strong public transport networks. At the same time, making the “*choice*” to live in a rural area is not a protection from unanticipated or underestimated consequences and attendant disadvantage.

One of the consequences is time poverty due to extended travel time: whether anticipated or not, this places pressure on families with attendant social and community costs. For example working days are substantially longer and everyday tasks such as shopping or having a dental checkup or taking a child to sport can take up considerable time.

Clearly, a rapidly growing population of people in pursuit of affordable housing and a rise in the numbers of young and older residents, at risk of reduced capacity for driving particularly over long distances, will mean that the identified lack of public transport will disadvantage increasing numbers of Peel residents not least in terms of deteriorating health, exclusion from economic markets, and social isolation.

GAP ANALYSIS

PATM 1

PATM 2001 – PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED	ARE THESE STILL ISSUES?
“Address Public Transport Issues (local, regional and external)”	The Perth Mandurah Passenger Rail line does much to address external public transport issues. However inadequate local and intra-regional public transport remains a debilitating factor in the region with wide-ranging consequences for quality of life for a growing proportion of the population.

PATM II: Issues Identified

- Climate change threats and substantial social vulnerabilities not least in terms of health impacts on the large, and growing, ageing population and also other vulnerable cohorts including disabled, Indigenous and homeless residents. These impacts are place based and poorly understood.
- Retention of ‘rural character’ an important challenge in the face of rapid development.
- Inadequate public transport both within and between LGAs with severe consequences for a growing proportion of the Peel population.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Improved outreach services to ameliorate disadvantage resulting from travelling to access services essential to quality of life and equality of opportunity.
- Investment in funding strategies to encourage and sustain innovative local solutions such as the Waroona Community Car.
- Hire a consultant to develop a transport plan for the Peel.
- Establish a transport committee with three clear goals:
 - map transport present and future needs;
 - develop a plan to meet these needs;
 - advocate for this plan and then develop funding strategies.
- Comprehensive research to understand intra-regional and intra-LGA public transport dynamics drawing on comprehensive range of perspectives including transport providers and potential clients.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has provided an overview of the social condition of the Peel region in 2011 across a wide-array of interlinked indicators: community diversity, health and community services, housing, safety and security, education, employment and income, environment, and finally infrastructure, transport and telecommunications. In addition, this overview encompasses each of the five Local Government Areas (LGAs) constituting what is clearly a dynamic, multi-faceted and diverse region.

The Peel has many strengths, including a wealth of natural resources not least of which are substantial mineral deposits, extensive waterways and diverse natural environments; substantial local expertise and commitment in the health, social and community services sector; inter-regional transport links; and a strong (though fractured) sense of community throughout the region.

Over the last 10 years the region has seen, among other developments, an extensive community visioning process culminating in the *Peel 2020 Sustainability Strategy*; burgeoning mining activity; substantial additions to the region's social housing stock (though this does seem to be concentrated in the Mandurah LGA); programs and infrastructure to improve Indigenous health (including a recently opened health centre) and Indigenous traineeship programs; and many more innovative and successful community service and engagement initiatives.

At the same time, in part as a result of sustained and rapid population growth, the Peel is significantly underfunded. Concurrently, the region is experiencing enduring gaps in health and community service resourcing, and is home to a large and growing population of significantly disadvantaged and deprived people. Not only is the region under-funded, it also suffers from a debilitating lack of longer-term funding in support of sustainable regional programs.

The primary research indicates extensive social exclusion across the Peel in relation to (Saunders et al 2008):

- economic exclusion (in addition to income, access to savings, credit, assets and the labour market);
- service exclusion (exclusion from public and private services used by a majority of the population; and
- disengagement (lack of participation in customary and widely practiced activities).

Forms of disadvantage often occur together; while they are also often inter-related it needs to be kept in mind that the relationship may not be necessarily causal.

The inter-relatedness of causes of social and economic exclusion was highlighted in the 2001 *Peel Away the Mask* report which drew upon the trope of a "*Spiral of Community Dysfunction*" to demonstrate the cumulative nature of dysfunction.

This was seen to be initiated by population growth attended by a shortage of resources leading to increasing strain on services and attendant emphasis on crisis management. As a result the pursuit of funding and delivery of preventative and early intervention programs fall by the wayside. Investment in sustained prevention and early intervention programs is crucial not only to reversing "*spirals of disadvantage*" but may indeed sidestep such a spiral in the first instance.

Such a spiral is evident in the findings of this report. Most tellingly, while there are clearly a range of prevention and intervention programs in the region, this remains a significant area of lack across all service areas as consistently reported by research participants. Such programs and interventions are particularly important in the areas of:

- domestic violence;
- cultural diversity and inclusivity;
- credit and debt;
- parenting support;
- mental health; and
- improving community knowledge about and access to the services available.

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There can be no doubt that ongoing rapid growth complicates social conditions in the Peel, and persistently 'moves the goal posts' for redressing service shortfalls in the region. Services must not only expand to close current gaps, but must also grow and evolve in line with the needs of the growing population. For example, the needs of the growing ageing population will shift as more people enter their 7th, 8th and 9th decades. However rapid population growth is not a driving feature of the social conditions evident in Waroona. At the same time, population growth if well-resourced is also an opportunity. Growth in the Peel can bring economic expansion, diversity, and desirable economies of scale which too often underpin the development of local public transport links for example.

A pervasive dimension of social exclusion in the region is limited intra-regional public transport and the high costs of private transport. The primary research consistently highlights a lack of access to transport affecting large sections of the Peel population and posing a barrier to participation in the local community, labour markets and education programs, and severely limiting access to essential health, social and community services. Transport is also a significant issue for services in the region; the provision of outreach clinics is widely reported to be difficult if not impossible due to the large distances between towns.

Other significant regional challenges include:

- retention of the locally highly valued "rural character" in the face of extensive urbanisation;
- geographic dispersion of the main population centres the majority of which are small;
- significant points of difference among LGAs; and
- addressing critical housing gaps.

Regional housing concerns can be grouped into two areas: features and consequences of rapid housing development and shortages of affordable and public/social housing. The former is most apparent in the Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray shires. In addition it is in each case unevenly experienced so that communities in each shire are experiencing vastly different levels of growth (see LGA sections). Issues for Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray include timely provision of infrastructure, affordability of housing stock, limited variety of accommodation in particular smaller properties for singles, and those wanting to downsize with age, and very low levels of public or social housing. This rapid residential growth is attended by a range of social issues and concerns about environmental impacts, and potential loss of rural character and amenity.

Community and service sector participants consistently highlight that crisis and short term or transitional housing is inadequate to meet demand. The shortfall in affordable transitional and longer-term housing underpins disadvantage in the Peel region for a growing number of residents including those on low (and rising numbers on medium) incomes and those escaping domestic violence and other crisis situations, ultimately contributing to homelessness in the region. Along with infrastructure, and equally important, is a need for services central to the prevention of homelessness in the first instance and to reducing the likelihood of recurrent homelessness. Both housing and non-housing support services in the Peel tend to be concentrated in the Mandurah area and are unable to meet demand. The ratio of unmet demand to supply in the other four LGAs is very high.

Specifically, service providers emphasise a lack of specialised crisis accommodation, and timely specialised crisis assessment services, in the Peel designed to meet the needs of those under the age of 15, and those suffering mental ill-health or experience drug and alcohol issues.

This research also demonstrates that infrastructure alone, though crucial to redressing social exclusion, is not sufficient alone. It must be attended by well-resource health and community services. To capitalise on health and community service sector strengths the region not only requires increased and ongoing funding, it is also requires a stock of well-located accommodation for not-for-profit sector service growth.

The complexity of disadvantage in the region means that the issues highlighted here are unlikely to be resolved overnight. As did *Peel Away the Mask I*, and in line with *Peel 2020* approaches, this report recommends a strategic regional approach to resourcing current and future needs, and to addressing issues identified here. Such an approach must be responsive however to the diversity of communities and needs across the region. The following key recommendations contribute to the *Peel 2020* vision of a vibrant and thriving region "offering an exceptional quality of life" (PDC 2006: 6).

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increased, and longer-term, funding by governments with regard to services and infrastructure.
2. Establishment of a “Committee for Peel” (similar to the “Committee for Perth”) tasked with regional advocacy and strategic acquisition of funding.
3. Establishment of a transport committee to develop a transport plan for the Peel based on comprehensive research into intra-regional and intra-LGA public transport dynamics, and which includes the perspectives of potential clients. This committee would be tasked with furthering the *Peel 2020* goal of encouraging public over private transport.
4. The opening of the Nidjalla Waangan Mia Centre is a big step towards addressing the gap in Indigenous health services in the region. There is at the same time a strong need for an Indigenous-driven regional social healing program along with outreach services to Boddington and Waroona.
5. Whole-of-Region sector mapping to capitalise on existing health and community service sector strengths through greater integration of services while also ensuring a broad range (and meaningful client choice) of service types. This database should provide a clear sense of client bases, resources, individual service strengths and challenges. It will be effective only if it is current and includes data relevant to its stated goals. Such a map could be coordinated as a live digital repository constructed and managed by a committee *responsible to the sector*.
6. Regionally coordinated strategy to attract more services to the region, that is, to have more government services headquartered / located in the Peel. This in turn requires a regionally-developed hierarchy of needs determined in consultation with the not-for-profit sector. Most importantly this requires a reliable stock of well-placed accommodation for this sector.
7. Improved strategically organised outreach services to ameliorate disadvantage in rural and remote areas of the region.
8. Specialised crisis accommodation for:
 - i. youth under 15;
 - ii. those suffering from mental illness;
 - iii. those experiencing domestic violence, and
 - iv. those experiencing drug and alcohol issues.
9. Investment in funding strategies to encourage and sustain innovative local solutions.
10. Coordinated regional partnerships with Indigenous communities to address the Indigenous/ non-Indigenous quality-of-life gaps in the region.
11. Ongoing focus on mapping housing diversity and planning action to rectify identified imbalances or absences.
12. Strategies for early development of strong social and community relationships between new and existing residents.
13. Preparation for regional adaptation to climate change to include risk assessment processes designed to identify social impacts and vulnerabilities, and which empower these groups to participate in this process.
14. Strategies to develop the capacity for adaptation across the region and in relation to identified vulnerable groups.
15. Proactive planning to ensure that current environmental advantages are maintained into the future.

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16. Ongoing identification of “rural character” and strategies for maintenance and development.
17. Dedicated funding for sustained community education/prevention programs.
18. Build on the strong improvement in educational attainment through research to understand the specific drivers of this improvement.

The overarching goal must be to ensure that the benefits of the region’s sustained growth and also its disadvantages are not concentrated in particular areas and particular groups.

Findings on Local Government Areas

This section provides a summary for each LGA of the key findings of this report's regional discussion, the GAP analysis as it pertains to that LGA and suggestions on what would make a difference. In providing this summary the section draws on quantitative data tabled in the preceding chapters and integrates secondary and primary research.

The Peel Region



Map courtesy of Peel Development Commission

City of Mandurah

The City of Mandurah is the administrative and service centre of the Peel and is situated on the western coastal edge of the Peel region. Located 72 km from Perth, the City is believed to be sufficiently distant to enable its development as a primary regional economic city (CoM 2008). Mandurah is home to an array of significant regional infrastructure including, among others, an established international-standard Centre for Performing Arts, numerous museums, the Challenger Institute of Technology (offering vocational training to over 20,000 students in 2010), Peel Health Campus, and Mandurah Ocean Marina. The City encompasses 18 localities ranging from Madora Bay at its northern-most point to Lake Clifton and Yalgorup National park at the southern-most extremity (CoM 2011). In addition, the City boasts 50 km of Indian Ocean frontage (CoM 2008) and 1,300 hectares of “natural and developed reserves and public open space (CoM 2011).

Peel Population and Demographics, By LGA

LGA	Area (km ²)	Current Population	Per cent Aged 15 to 25	Per cent Aged 65 and Over	2001 Population	Per cent Growth Since 2001
Mandurah	174	70,413	12.1%	21.2%	48,877	44.1%
Serpentine						
Jarrahdale	1,461	17,212	13.1%	9.2%	11,704	47.1%
Murray	1,154	15,401	10.8%	18.3%	10,875	41.6%
Waroona	832	3,842	12.3%	13.2%	3,524	9.0%
Boddington	1,900	1,692	9.8%	13.8%	1,440	17.5%
Peel Region	5,521	108,560	12.0%	18.5%	76,420	42.1%
Rockingham	257	104,130	14.1%	12.6%	74,018	40.7%
Perth	5,385	1,678,853	15.1%	11.9%	1,393,725	20.5%
WA	2,531,563	2,293,510	14.4%	12.1%	1,901,159	20.6%

Source: Based on Table 2 of the Peel region discussion.

Much of the growth in Peel over the last decade has been concentrated in Mandurah, which already accounts for 64.9% of the Peel’s population, although it is the geographically smallest LGA in the Peel region (174 km²). In 1978, Mandurah was a town with an estimated population of 10,000 (City of Mandurah, 2009). Over the thirty-two years to June 2010, Mandurah’s population increased nearly seven-fold to 70,413. The City of Mandurah projects a further increase in Mandurah’s population to 100,000 by 2020, with a potential doubling by 2031 (CoM 2009). By way of comparison, the City of Rockingham, which neighbours Mandurah and is located in the South West of the Perth Metropolitan Region had 104,130 people in June 2010.

Community Diversity

The Peel has a proportionally large number of residents over the age of 65 (18.5% in comparison to the state at 12.1%) and Mandurah particularly so. Those over the age of 65 accounted in 2010 for 21.2% of the city’s population, a representation 75% higher than the WA average. Projections to 2021 see this proportion rising to almost one-third of the population. Conversely, Mandurah’s population of 15 to 25 year olds, 12.1% of the entire population, is small compared with that of Perth (15.1%) and WA (14.4%).

The City’s Indigenous population, according to inherently conservative ABS census data, in 2006 accounted for 1.5% of the overall population, a share significantly lower than that recorded in WA (3.4%).

Residents born overseas in 2006 made up 23.2% of the population, a proportion high for the region but below that in Rockingham (30.6%), Perth (33.7%) and WA (29.3%). However, Mandurah ranked 14th out of the 30 LGAs identified as having the highest *number* of overseas born (OMI 2011). The challenges facing immigrants settling in the City vary according to the specific circumstances associated with the different forms of immigration; for example those arriving on skilled migration, secondary migration, refugee, and temporary visas receive divergent levels of support and bring with them a diversity of skills and capacities. Migrant experiences and challenges are also informed by the economic, social and cultural conditions prevailing in the new home area.

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The Department of Immigration and Citizenship funds a two-day per week Settlement Grants Officer position located in Mandurah as a means to provide newly-arrived refugees, humanitarian entrants and migrants on eligible visa categories with orientation advice, information, advocacy, referral and capacity building services for a period of up to 5 years. According to a local service provider, many such refugee residents of Mandurah are now outside this five year period of entitlement yet continue to struggle with issues such as lack of work in Mandurah and the Peel more broadly. As part of the above support, free English lessons are offered; however, many refugees are illiterate in their countries of origin and thus experience additional difficulties in learning English. Appropriate housing is hard to find in Mandurah (and the rest of the region) given, for example, African and Sudanese community's large and/or extended family structures along with persistent difficulties in finding employment. Refugees in the region experience increasingly complex issues over time and, as a whole, are "severely disadvantaged."

However, residents on Temporary Visas also struggle to gain employment, but at the same time receive very little official support. The consequences of failing to find work are quite different for these residents. Two distraught interviewees from a non main English speaking country living in Mandurah on temporary visas described being on the verge of returning home after having spent the family's life savings to make a new start in Australia. Despite the fact that both adults hold professional qualifications in short supply in Australia, and even though they had applied for hundreds of jobs over a six month period, neither had any luck securing work. They had come to the conclusion that racial and ethnic discrimination was an insurmountable barrier to their participation in the labour force.

Two service providers confirmed that migrants faced overt racism, having directly witnessed it themselves.

In part a reflection of the ageing population, Mandurah and Murray in particular have higher rates of disability and reported core activity limitation. According to regional unpublished data based on ABS 2003 data, 25.3% of the population live with a disability.

Social Disadvantage

Mandurah's score of 991 on the ABS 2006 Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) places it, along with Murray and Boddington, close to the Australian standardised average score of 1000. Its position in the fifth decile in turn situates Mandurah in the middle of WA LGAs on this measure; specifically Mandurah ranks 69 where 1 is the most disadvantaged LGA in the state and 142 is the least disadvantaged. Importantly, however, this index demonstrates that Mandurah is home to both some of the most disadvantaged people in Australia and also some of the least disadvantaged in Australia. The minimum score of 734 for a Census District in Mandurah is in stark contrast to its maximum Census District score of 1184 (the highest Census District score for the region). Examination of the population distribution shows that while 6% of the City's population fall in the 10% of *least* disadvantaged people in Australia, on this measure *8% of the City's population is part of the most disadvantaged 10% of the nation.*

Health and Community Services

While residents living in the increasingly gentrified central areas of Mandurah may find services to be relatively well located, those living in less central localities in the City find access and lack of transport to be a problem. Although a substantial variety of health, social and community services are available in Mandurah a relative lack of specialist services means that many travel out of the Peel to Fremantle and Perth in search of this assistance.

The GPs per 100,000 residents ratio in Mandurah in 2008 was 96.7 which, though considerably higher than the rest of the Peel LGAs with the exception of Murray (121.9), is 44% lower than that of the state (157.2) and 44% even lower than that of the nation (178.6). This shortage is a doubly critical issue given the high proportion of residents over 65. Higher numbers of elderly residents in turn statistically means *higher numbers* with mobility, general health and, for example, geriatric depressive illnesses than in a similar sized population with a smaller percentage of elderly residents.

Youth are relatively well serviced throughout the City of Mandurah with an extensive recreation infrastructure and a comprehensive range of co-located youth services available from a central location, and still more co-located services throughout the LGA. It needs to be noted however that many of these struggle to acquire sustainable funding despite demonstrated high demand and a long history of successful service delivery in

the area. At the same time, youth appear to have a “voice” in the area through, for example, regular surveys conducted on behalf of the City of Mandurah and institutions such as the Youth Council. The youth population tends to be concentrated in particular localities (as does the over 65 population). For example, it has been anticipated that “the largest numbers of young people will reside between Greenfields and Halls Head with Coodanup anticipated to experience the most rapid growth” (Trowbridge 2009).

A youth survey conducted in 2007 and covering those aged 11 to 18 years of age found that “drugs and alcohol” emerged as the fourth most prevalent response to the question “What issues and problems as young people are the biggest concern for you?” The highest ranking issue (47% of responses) was feeling “unsafe in the community” as a result of “physical abuse and bullying, criminal activity” and “the use of drugs and alcohol” (Klymovich 2007:14). These findings resonate with the perceptions of workshop participants and interviewees who consistently point out the need for additional and specialised youth crisis accommodation. Though there has been a recent increase in transitional units available in Mandurah for youth clients, and more accommodation for singles is likely to become available to the youth service sector in the coming years, at present, in the words of a service provider, “we battle on a daily basis to find affordable housing for those about to leave short term crisis accommodation. Many 15, 16 and 17 year olds end up going from crisis centre to crisis centre.” Young people in this situation face additional challenges such as the absence of a rent history and referees, and the high cost of renting. As many research participants have pointed out, there is a lack of accommodation such as affordable apartments and boarding house style accommodation for young people in particular young single people.

Interesting in the context of Mandurah’s substantial aged population and trends regarding high levels of volunteerism in this group, Mandurah residents who self-identified as undertaking voluntary work in 2006 accounted for 16.4% of the population, a proportion lower than that advanced by any other Peel LGA and lower also than for WA as a whole (18.7%).

Participants in the Mandurah workshops highlighted a high and wide-spread level of staff burnout in the health, social and community services sector concentrated in Mandurah. At the same time, a critical shortage of accommodation for not-for-profit agencies in Mandurah was also identified (see the Health and Community Services chapter).

Housing

The last decade has seen a reduction in affordable housing in WA, not only in the metropolitan area but also in Mandurah as the ongoing rapid population growth noted above creates competition for local housing stock and reduces availability of lower cost housing while escalating house prices and rents. At the same time, affordable housing options traditionally available in Mandurah have been lost to redevelopment for luxury and holiday accommodation (Pendergast and Doran-Wu 2007).

On one measure of housing affordability, the ratio of median income to median house price, Mandurah’s ratio between 1996 and 2006 fell from 20.5% to 9.5%. In other words, in 2006 the median income in the City would purchase only 9.5% of a median priced house.

Homelessness

Unpublished data from a service provider in the region estimates that in the first half of 2011 there were 393 homeless people in Mandurah,¹² with over one third (128) of these being aged between 12 to 25. In this youth group, 23 are ‘rough sleepers’, the rest living with friends and relatives or in boarding houses and emergency accommodation. This data also reports 50 homeless children under the age of 12. There are between 40 and 50 people in each of the age groups 26-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55-64. Around 28 homeless people in this count are over 65.

Indigenous health workers referred to large numbers of Indigenous people in the region living temporarily with families because there is no other choice. Experienced staff working with the homeless, principally in the Mandurah area, report that:

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- around 80% of the homeless population in contact with local agencies has “mental health problems” (which may be either/both a cause and consequence of homelessness); and
- homelessness is often caused by family breakdowns, drug and alcohol abuse, inability to find housing, and unemployment.

Here too service providers report an “extreme ongoing need for accommodation.” In particular, there is a severe shortage of accommodation for women with children and also single men.

Two social housing developments have been completed in the City in 2011, one in Lakelands and the other in Meadow Springs (CentreCare 2011). Managed by Stellar Living, these provide “151 more affordable housing options in the Peel region” available to “seniors, singles, and families” on low to “moderate” income. Dwellings include 40 one-bedroom, 39 two-bedroom and 7 three-bedroom dwellings. These new properties are part of an upcoming “287 new affordable housing options for the Peel region, with other developments to be located at Coodanup, Greenfields and Mandurah.” Approximately 30 apartments under the management of Access Housing Australia are expected to be constructed on lots acquired in Allnut Street, Mandurah, along with 9 units in Burley Street Mandurah (AHA, 2011). The Department of Housing and Works has 355 units coming online in June 2011; the current waiting list is 3 years (MHNG 2011).

Safety and Security

Within the broader picture of low crime levels in the Peel, Mandurah has higher rates of crime across the categories of “Other Theft”, “Property Damage”, and “Residential Burglary” than the other LGAs in the region. Rates for these categories are also higher than the state average. Concurrently, the City records a lower level of offences in relation to *Total Illicit Drug Offences*, explicable by Mandurah’s older population and substantially higher rates in the Murray and Boddington LGAs which raise the region’s average rate of incidence.

In terms of 2010-11 imprisonment rates for *sentenced* prisoners per 100,000 persons, Mandurah, with a rate of 120.7, sits just under the regional average and well under the WA average of 159.6.

This quantitative data suggests a relatively high level of crime. Many youth and also seniors in the LGA feel unsafe particularly in public open spaces (Klymovich 2007; Public Open Space Review). Similarly unpublished data for the Peel Police District and in the experience of service providers, rates of domestic and family violence are high.

Education

In general, the population of the Peel region has increased its level of post-school educational attainment since the 2001 Census, with Mandurah in particular seeing a 48.3% increase over that period. Even so Mandurah continues to record very low levels of attainment with regard to tertiary qualifications: in 2009/10 16.4% of the Mandurah population had attained a Bachelor’s Degree compared to approximately 28% in both Serpentine Jarrahdale and Boddington, and a state wide percentage of 20.8%.

Mandurah’s results in the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) on average tend to track those of the state, with higher levels of vulnerability detected in two domains – Emotional Maturity, 9.5% of children classified as vulnerable compared with 8.8% for WA, and Language and Cognitive skills, 14.2% compared with 12.1% for WA. Overall, 26.7% of children in Mandurah are classified as being vulnerable in at least one domain, with 12.9% being viewed as being vulnerable in at least two.

According to the AEDI 88.8% of children participated in care or early childhood education programs compared to a WA participation rate of 81.3%.

Employment and Income

As at March 2011, Mandurah had a rate of unemployment (7.0%). This is comparable to Rockingham (6.6%) but considerably higher than for WA (4.4%). At the same time, the LGA’s median weekly income (\$384) was only three quarters of that for the state (\$500). Significantly, close to 50% of households were in receipt of a weekly income of less than \$400, whereas in both Rockingham and WA around 40% of households were in this lowest income bracket. At the same time, under 20% of households in the City received a weekly income greater than \$1000 in comparison to a state wide proportion of 24.3%. Mandurah’s “older” age profile informs

these figures not least in that post-retirement incomes are lower than late stage career earnings. In 2006 the gap between Indigenous median household income (\$783) and that of non-Indigenous households (\$811) was relatively narrow.

Environment

According to a recent assessment of climate change threats to coastal buildings and infrastructure undertaken by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (DCEE 2011), between 242 to 400 of the 1,500 to 2,100 commercial buildings at risk in WA are located in Mandurah, with a broadly commensurate impact in terms of replacement value (15 to 20% of the state's total replacement value of between \$12 to \$17 billion).

Of the land zoned for urban development in Mandurah, 21.1% remains undeveloped providing scope for considerable future development.

The 2007 City of Mandurah *Youth Consultation Report* found that "environment based" responses were the most common reactions to the question "What's good about Mandurah?"

Infrastructure, Transport and Telecommunications

According to a local interviewee involved in the community Sport and Recreation sector,

over the last 8 or 9 years the area has become reasonably well catered for which has done much to alleviate social problems in Mandurah. For example, the Port Bouvard Surf Life Saving Club was built in 2012; facilities at the Peel Thunder Football Club received a \$10,000,000 upgrade, the bowling club has received a new lawn, the Mandurah Surf Life Saving Club is due to be built in 2012 and a new soccer stadium is slated for Halls Head.

Though many essential health, social and community services are located in the City, the concentration of these in central Mandurah means that transport is an issue for those further afield in the LGA; for example, residents in Lake Clifton-Herron, a small semi-rural community of some 300 families located 35 km south of Mandurah and administered by both City of Mandurah and Shire of Waroona, highlight a lack of public transport and ensuing isolation for "single car families, single parents, teenagers without a car, families struggling to make ends meet and paying rising fuel costs" (<http://www.lakeclifton.com.au>).

On the other hand, inter -regional transport has received a major boost in the form of the \$1.6 billion Perth to Mandurah Rail Line, which commenced operation in December 2007 and currently sees around 3,200 residents on average journey from Mandurah to Perth every day¹³ and the \$515 million Perth to Bunbury highway which reduced travel time to Bunbury in the South West by 35 minutes and also reduced usage of roads in the Peel.

As reported in the 2006 Census, 36% of Mandurah households had broadband internet access compared to a Perth and state take-up of 43% and 40% respectively.

In July 2010, NBN Co, the organisation charged with carrying out the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN) announced that Mandurah would be one of three locations (including Geraldton and Victoria Park) in which the WA rollout of the NBN would take place (NBN Co 2010). This will entail the initial construction of an NBN 'module' covering 3,000 premises in the first instance, with NBN Co recently announcing that construction of the Mandurah module will commence in December 2011 (NBN Co 2011).

GAP ANALYSIS

Though many of the region's health, social and community services are located in central Mandurah these are not accessible to all City residents. The increasing gentrification of central Mandurah has much to do with this as does the lack of public transport further from the city centre. At the same time these services struggle to meet the needs of the City's burgeoning population. While a lack of funding is central to this, a lack of

¹³ As at May 2008. See the Public Transport Authority (2008) 'New Metro Rail Project: Lessons Learnt', available at: http://www.ceiid.wa.gov.au/Docs/KNF_200805/MAY08-NewMetroRailProject.pdf.

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accommodation for not-for-profit community services is also restricting the expansion of the sector so that its capacity is further reduced.

Meeting the needs of an ageing population which is three-quarters larger than the WA average is a primary challenge for the City and one exacerbated by the low rate of GP to population ration.

A further major challenge is addressing the needs of the eight percent of the population who are among the most disadvantaged people in Australia. At the same time there are challenges in maintaining a sense of community identity and cohesion when the City is home also to a sizeable group who are among the least disadvantaged in Australia. High levels of economic exclusion are indicated by the high unemployment rate and also the extent of households (50%) living on low incomes if not in poverty. At the same time the City of Mandurah has relatively high crime rates for theft other than motor vehicle, property damage and residential burglary which is often associated with uneven distributions of wealth and social advantage.

Though substantial gains have been made in terms of increased levels of educational attainment, there remains a considerable gap in tertiary attainment rates.

Affordable housing is a continuing issue, as is a lack of both crisis and transition accommodation, which is closely linked to City's conservative estimate of some 400 homeless people almost half of whom are under 25.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- In-depth research to understand the spatial distribution and drivers of both disadvantage and advantage in the LGA. This in turn should inform place-based policies to redress social and economic exclusion.
- Greater diversity of accommodation.
- Research to understand the local causes (and geographic manifestations) of the low ratio of GPs followed by strategies to address this lack.
- Build on the strong improvement in educational attainment through research to understand the specific drivers of this improvement.

Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale

The predominantly rural Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale is located on the urban fringe of the Perth region between 25 and 55 km south-east of Perth (profile.id 2010; SJ Shire 2011). In terms of geography, Serpentine Jarrahdale is the third largest LGA in the Peel Region, with a land area of 1,461 square km. Its diverse land area encompasses timber and significant water catchment areas to the east, including Wungong Reservoir and Serpentine Dam; a central transport corridor including the town centres of Byford, Mundijong and Serpentine; a largely rural area to the west oriented toward agricultural and equine industries; and substantial, rapid residential expansion to the north (forecast.id, 2011). The Shire also incorporates the Serpentine National Park and various nature reserves (Profile.id 2010).

With an estimated June 2010 population of around 17,212 people¹⁴, the Shire presents itself as “a thriving agricultural and rural lifestyle district” (SJ Shire 2011). The majority of residents live in the towns of Byford (with a 2011 population according to Forecast Id (in the vicinity of 8,400), Mundijong (1,300) Serpentine (3,000) and Jarrahdale (1,300). The remaining population is dispersed across smaller towns and rural areas such as Darling Downs, Oakford, Keysbrook, and Cardup.

Peel Population and Demographics, By LGA

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>	<i>Current Population</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 15 to 25</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 65 and Over</i>	<i>2001 Population</i>	<i>Per cent Growth Since 2001</i>
Mandurah	174	70,413	12.1%	21.2%	48,877	44.1%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	1,461	17,212	13.1%	9.2%	11,704	47.1%
Murray	1,154	15,401	10.8%	18.3%	10,875	41.6%
Waroona	832	3,842	12.3%	13.2%	3,524	9.0%
Boddington	1,900	1,692	9.8%	13.8%	1,440	17.5%
<i>Peel Region</i>	<i>5,521</i>	<i>108,560</i>	<i>12.0%</i>	<i>18.5%</i>	<i>76,420</i>	<i>42.1%</i>
Rockingham	257	104,130	14.1%	12.6%	74,018	40.7%
Perth	5,385	1,678,853	15.1%	11.9%	1,393,725	20.5%
WA	2,531,563	2,293,510	14.4%	12.1%	1,901,159	20.6%

Source: Based on Table 2 of the Peel region discussion.

The outstanding feature of Serpentine Jarrahdale’s demographic profile is the very fast rate at which the Shire is growing in comparison with WA. Between 2001 and 2010, the Shire’s population expanded from 11,704 to 17,212 persons, an increase of 46%, placing the Shire as the sixth fastest growing LGA over the decade.¹⁵ Given its recent growth, Serpentine Jarrahdale (together with Mandurah and Rockingham and several other WA-located LGAs) is a member of the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA), comprised of 24 member LGAs across Australia, including Mandurah, Armadale and Rockingham, amongst others, in WA. The NGAA membership contains 3.3 million residents or 15% of the country’s population in 2010 (NGAA 2011).

Projections for Serpentine Jarrahdale’s population by id consulting indicate that by 2031, the LGA’s population can expect to have expanded to 51,095 persons (Forecast id 2011), a near tripling (increase of 197%) of the 2010 population.

¹⁴ This figure is based on ABS (2011) Area and Population Data which enables consistent current (and future) comparison across all five LGAs. Forecast Id estimates are not available for two of the five LGAs. Forecast Id estimates a larger 2011 population of 19,825.

¹⁵ The fastest growing LGA, in terms of population, between 2001 and 2010 was the City of Perth (133.5%), followed by Capel (88.1%), Wanneroo (78.4%), and two smaller towns, Ravensthorpe (56.2%) and Chittering (47.1%).

The key drivers behind this growth are outlined below; principally these revolve around the expansion in the area of land made available for urban development and the drift of population in Perth, both current and prospective, to the regions neighbouring the capital. As such, Serpentine Jarrahdale is a peri-urban area, “neither fully urbanised nor completely rural and increasingly “characterised by a complex social mix of populations” (Buxton et al 2008).

CHALLENGES FACING FAST GROWING REGIONS

The National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA) is a peak body representing 24 member LGAs across Australia, including areas such as Mandurah, Armadale, Rockingham, Kwinana and Serpentine Jarrahdale in WA. The membership of the NGAA is essentially either outer-metropolitan or regional in nature and areas typically are growing rapidly due to ‘spill over’ from state capital cities. The Alliance has been established in recognition of the high, and growing, cost of building socially vibrant, economically viable and environmentally sustainable communities.

The NGAA identifies four key issues which are common to all its members:

- *High Living Costs;*
- *Undersupply of Infrastructure and Services;*
- *Integration with metropolitan regions; and*
- *Significant Disadvantage in terms of educational, housing and social outcomes.*

Primary research in the Serpentine Jarrahdale, as outlined in this report, indicate that these four issues are a concern and stem from current geographical isolation from metropolitan regions but also rapid development within the region and particular challenges as infrastructure is developed. Careful planning in growth regions is required to ensure that the emerging ‘scale’ and potential for improved infrastructure and service delivery as a result of larger populations is realised.

Source: NGAA (2011).

Current Australian research examining historical urban fringe processes indicates that traditional land use planning approaches are inadequate in managing contemporary dynamic complexity of rapid, peri-urban growth. In particular, growth areas are in need of multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approaches.

Source: Bunker, R and Houston, P 2003 (cited in NGAA 2007)

Community Diversity

Serpentine Jarrahdale has a much younger population than that of the rest of the Peel region, with only 9.2% of the population being aged 65 and over, compared to a regional average of 18.5%. The Shire is also younger than WA (12.1%), Perth (11.9%) and Rockingham (12.6%) on this measure. In terms of its youth population (15 to 25 year olds), Serpentine Jarrahdale is closer to the WA average (13.1% of the Shire’s population versus 14.4% of the State’s) than the Peel average of 12%. This divergence from the Peel is a product of the different drivers shaping Serpentine Jarrahdale’s growth. Whereas Mandurah has seen a population expansion in two older demographic groups – retirees and FIFO workers, Serpentine Jarrahdale’s demographics have been shaped by its emergence as the fastest growing LGAs on Perth’s perimeter, which has attracted young families.

SURVEY OF RESIDENTS IN SERPENTINE JARRAHDAL

Local perspectives were surveyed at ‘**The Glades Moonlight Market**’ on Saturday March 19. ‘The Glades’ is a new housing development near Byford which, according to developers, will grow in the near future into a community of 10,000 people. The art, craft and produce market is organised by the developer and is promoted as a regular family event offering a range of free entertainment.

The twenty people surveyed represent a range of ages and lengths of residence in the Shire. Five respondents gave Serpentine Jarrahdale as place of residence, while ten specified Byford, two Cardup and two Darling Downs. See the table below for a gender, age, and length of residence profile of the twenty respondents in the sample.

Gender (No.)	Age	No.	Years in Residence	No.
Female: 12	18-30	4	1-5	2
Male: 8	30-45	2	5-10	9
	45-65	9	10+	9
	65+	5		

Respondents were asked the same questions that structured the community workshops; responses are discussed below under the broad headings of community challenges, strengths and significant changes. Suggestions regarding addressing the challenges were also canvassed as below.

The main challenges identified for local communities were:

1. the expansion of the population and absence of supporting infrastructure including shopping facilities (5 respondents) and
2. a lack of public transport (3 respondents).

Respondents also noted concerns that the increase in population could lead to an increase in youth crime, especially vandalism (4 respondents); while others noted a related concern that there “is nothing for youth” (2 respondents).

Sense of community, in particular rural or country aspects, was identified by 75% of respondents as a local **strength**. Typical responses include:

“Laid back way of life, like a country town” and “I walk down the street and people say hi”

Others noted proximity to Armadale and Perth: “It’s rural but close to Perth.” The majority of respondents highlighted growth in population as the most significant **change** in the Shire over the last 5 years. This change was interpreted by half of these respondents as a good thing:

“Growth is astronomical. When we moved here it was the end of the earth. Happy with it though, nothing like this market ever happened without growth.”

The other half saw it as leading to “overpopulation” and social problems. Others lamented the loss of rural character:

“It’ll be a shame when the houses are built; won’t be like a country town.”

In terms of other indicators, Serpentine Jarrahdale has a relatively lower proportion of Indigenous people than the Peel (1% versus 1.4% of the population), and lower still than Rockingham (1.5%) or WA (3.4%). The Shire has a higher percentage of overseas-born residents, with around 24.5% being born overseas versus 22.6% for the Peel in total, but around 29.3% for WA (2006 census data). Serpentine Jarrahdale was ranked 29th out of the 30 LGAs identified as having the highest proportion of overseas born; while Mandurah ranked 14th out of the 30 LGAs identified as having the highest number of overseas born (OMI 2011). It is likely that on this count, the Serpentine Jarrahdale population will come to more strongly resemble Perth (33.7% of its population born overseas) over time as migrants account for a disproportionate share of the growth in the Shire's population.

Social Disadvantage

On the basis of the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD), drawn from 2006 census data, Serpentine Jarrahdale records more favourable outcomes than the Peel as a whole. On this measure the Shire experiences relatively less disadvantage than the Peel as a whole. Indeed Serpentine Jarrahdale is located just outside the top 10% of WA LGAs in terms of the relative position of its population's ability to access schools, community services, shops, transport and medical facilities as well as broader indicators such as remoteness, participation, income and education.

However, broad measures of social advantage/disadvantage can mask critical emerging issues in fast growing areas such as Serpentine Jarrahdale. For instance, a pervasive dimension of social exclusion is poor access to transport and thus participation in the local community and labour markets, and limited access to education and community services. Interviewees in Serpentine Jarrahdale make consistent reference to social isolation as arising from multiple factors as evident in the following comment:

In Serpentine Jarrahdale, what I see is isolation for mums in particular, a lack of transport, minimal choices in child care options though there are 2 new ones in Byford.

Living in Mundijong] can be isolating and difficult if you don't drive.

This is keeping with broader findings across the Peel where respondents and service providers note that this isolation is "made worse if you have need of mental health, aged, or disability support."

One challenge in Serpentine Jarrahdale will be to ensure that a relatively geographically large LGA, with a rapidly growing population, can provide minimum public services. One advantage of higher population growth is that Serpentine Jarrahdale can make the case for additional resources to provide for a growing community while also taking advantage of the 'economies of scale' inherent in rolling out infrastructure for a larger population.

Health and Community Services

Serpentine Jarrahdale is serviced adequately by critical health infrastructure, including infrastructure located in LGAs such as Armadale and Murray. However, pressures due to geographic isolation are emerging. Respondents in Waroona, Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray highlighted community concerns around not only wait times but also stresses on those attempting to visit critically ill patients who are often as far away as Fremantle. Interviewees also noted pressure on local ambulance services throughout the regions, and in Pinjarra were concerned about the absence of this service.

Furthermore, there is evidence that Serpentine Jarrahdale, like the Peel in general, is under-serviced in terms of medical staff and infrastructure. The table below, reports on GP to population ratios in the Peel LGAs, in comparison with WA and Australia. The ABS (2008) indicates that on average across Australia, there are 178.6 GPs per 100,000 persons and around 157.2 GPs per 100,000 in WA, indicating an under-servicing in WA by at least 12% and much more in regional basis.

General Medical Practitioner (GP) to Population Ratios, Practitioners per 100,000 of Population, 2008

Peel Away the Mask II

LGA	Number of General Practitioners	GPs per 100,000 of Population
Mandurah	66	96.7
Serpentine Jarrahdale	10	60.6
Murray	18	121.9
Waroona	1	26.5
Boddington	1	63.3
Peel Region	96	91.5
WA	-	157.2
Australia	-	178.6

Source: Based on Table 8 in the Regional Discussion.

The Peel has 91.5 GPs per 100,000 persons, which is 58% of the WA equivalent and around 51% of the Australian average. Serpentine Jarrahdale has a lower ratio still at 60.6 – around 33% lower than Mandurah’s ratio. These figures tend to reinforce community perceptions that the Peel region and by extension, Serpentine Jarrahdale, is facing a pronounced GP shortage. Anecdotal evidence from the qualitative research indicates that this under-provision can be seen in other areas. For instance, focus group participations cite the low number of child and community health nurses in the region; research participants suggest that numbers are low—for example, one full-time-equivalent in Serpentine Jarrahdale for a population of over 17,000.

Housing

Housing is a critical issue in Serpentine Jarrahdale, in terms of its impact on existing residents and the extent to which the Shire is being called upon to reduce housing pressures elsewhere. Semi-rural areas in the Peel region offer relatively lower priced housing for those escaping high housing costs in the Perth metropolitan area.

This aspect is driving rapid and extensive housing development principally in Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray. As a result, young adults and families, along with retirees, are expected to continue to be a significant and growing proportion of the Peel population (Pendergast and Doran Wu 2007).

This trend can be seen in housing construction data in Serpentine Jarrahdale. According to id Consulting (2011), between 2000-1 and 2010-11, around 2,924 new dwellings were approved for construction in the Shire, including 528 dwellings in 2010-11 alone. By way of example, Mandurah, with around four times the population, had 830 approvals in 2010-11. Respondents in the qualitative research highlighted the following concerns/issues with such a rapid rate of development:

- absence of, or ‘time lag’ associated with, infrastructure to support the rapid residential growth (including schools, retail outlets, transport, health facilities);
- small block sizes and affordability of local private housing stock;
- lack of rental properties;
- limited variety of types of properties in particular a lack of units and housing for single adults, and smaller centrally located properties for ageing residents wanting to downsize; and
- “very low levels of public housing stock.”

The more general observations about housing pressures throughout the region, such as homelessness and accommodation shortages will increasingly apply to Serpentine Jarrahdale, but at a scale which is commensurately larger in view of the more rapid rate of development taking place in the Shire.

Growth Corridor Comparative Case Study: Officer in the Shire of Cardinia, Victoria

Commissioned to provide research to underpin a not-for-profit organisational response to growth corridor human service demands, Lynn and Monani's 2010 study of the town of Officer in the rapidly growing Shire of Cardinia in Victoria provides insights of particular relevance to those rapidly growing towns and LGAs in the Peel. Cardinia as a whole has similarities with the Peel region beyond rapid growth such as high proportions of trade qualified people, wherein Office, much like Serpentine Jarrahdale, has more professional than Cardinia just as is it has higher average income households and an aggregated relative lack of disadvantage as measured in the 2006 Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage. While parallels between Officer and Serpentine Jarrahdale are strong, the study has significance for Murray and the Peel more broadly.

Key relevant findings and recommendations:

- *Early development of strong social and community relationships, through:*
 - appropriate youth and family support services for vulnerable members of the community
 - strategies to address the complex needs of victims of family violence
 - meaningful involvement of existing residents
 - infrastructure to reflect ecological sustainability especially regarding water and transport

- *Early provision of accessible community infrastructure including:*
 - better public transport
 - service hubs that bring services together in easily accessible locations
 - community spaces for active and passive recreation
 - more immediate affordable housing to address mortgage stress
 - the provision of *adequate support from community service agencies at the early stage of arrival in the growth corridor*
 - the development of multi-cultural and inclusive practices
 - ongoing mapping of community assets to identify resident needs

- *There is a clear need for consideration to be given in policy and practice to resourcing networks that ensure that individuals, as workers, clients or residents, are not isolated, but mutually connected, supported and informed.*

Source: Lynn and Monani 2010.

The important message here is to develop places, linkages, processes and policies which facilitate community participation and intermingling of new and existing residents in the service of a shared sense of community identity and to prevent social isolation taking hold.

Safety and Security

Serpentine Jarrahdale has consistently lower rates of crime than the rest of the Peel across all categories with the exception of *Residential Burglary* where it is close to the regional average. In relation to non-vehicle theft (*Other Theft*) and *Total Illicit Drug Offences*, Serpentine Jarrahdale has crime rates which are half that of the Peel average and substantially lower than the South West Metro and WA average.

According to unpublished data, in the Mundijong Police Area (which includes Mundijong, Byford, Hopelands, Mardella and Oakford), between July and December 2010 there were 42 reported incidences of family violence, 30 with intimations of physical violence (irrespective of charges pressed), and between Jan and June 2011 there were 42 reported incidences including 29 with assault offences. The high local incidence of domestic violence is an emerging issue throughout the Peel region and has far reaching implications for the broader community and is also, as experienced professionals in the Peel point out, a "big issue in relation to a big number of services."

The primary research highlighted several current and potential issues for Serpentine Jarrahdale:

- People living in areas undergoing rapid expansion often perceive crime and safety issues to be of growing importance, as evidenced by the Serpentine Jarrahdale public survey.
- There is a sense that issues are inter-related, with one advocate in Serpentine Jarrahdale pointing out that many victims of domestic violence “have no transport leaving them isolated with nowhere to go and not knowing what to do”.

A key finding for Serpentine Jarrahdale is that its rapid growth will place increasing pressure on existing services dealing with public safety and security issues and that a structured and coordinated approach is required to address emerging issues.

Education

Serpentine Jarrahdale tends to report higher levels of educational attainment than the rest of the Peel region. For instance, 21.6% of residents in the Shire have a bachelor degree qualification compared with 16.4% of the population in Mandurah. On a broader level of comparison, the Shire also has a higher level of qualification than the WA average (20.8%). A similar trend can be seen in advanced diploma qualifications, with 17.9% of the Serpentine Jarrahdale population holding a diploma compared with just 13.9% of the WA population. While Mandurah has a slightly higher level of diploma attainment (18.4%), Serpentine Jarrahdale’s overall level of advanced post school qualification (bachelor degree or diploma) is higher at 39.5% compared with 34.8% of the population.

In keeping with its expanding population, Serpentine Jarrahdale is attracting funding for an expansion of its educational infrastructure. This includes new primary and secondary schools in Byford in 2013 and 2014 respectively and improved links to the Peel Education Campus and educational institutions in Armadale. However, it is likely that as the Shire’s population increases, the issue of transport linkages to institutions in neighbouring regions will become more pressing, as will the requirement for greater consideration of the possibilities for expanding educational infrastructure in the Shire itself.

One measure of educational performance is that of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) which reports on the health and wellbeing of children in their first full year of school, as determined in five ‘domains’ (see Table 10 in the regional report for a listing). Serpentine Jarrahdale has considerably more favourable outcomes than Mandurah across all five domains, with a lower level of assessed vulnerability in each case relative to the WA average (right column). Despite this, around 21.1% of children in the LGA are classified as being developmentally vulnerable in relation to at least one domain, with 10.3% of the total population being developmentally vulnerable in at least two. Of particular concern is the Language and Cognitive Skills domain which sees around 10.3% of children in the Serpentine Jarrahdale area being classified as being developmentally vulnerable.

However, in general the AEDI survey paints a positive picture of early childhood progress in Serpentine Jarrahdale. On another measure of preparedness, around 88.4% of children surveyed in the Shire were found to have been in child care or early childhood education programs, compared with 85.9% across the Peel region and 81.3% in WA.

The primary research tends to confirm the above observations. Respondents from Serpentine Jarrahdale cite concerns over the lack of public secondary schooling in the area; those who can afford private schooling are believed to be well-serviced locally and to thus also avoid long commuting times experienced by public school students who must leave the area. This will be remedied with the planned construction of the Byford secondary school in 2014, as noted above. A further issue raised by respondents is overcrowding in local primary schools as a result of rapid population growth: again, a new public primary school is scheduled to open in Byford in 2013 as part of a management plan to cater to the population growth in the area. At the same time, those involved in the sector note that perceptions of overcrowding arise from a shift in school status from smaller rural school to larger, outer urban school.

Employment and Income

On average, unemployment stands at 5.7% throughout the Peel region compared to 6.6% in Rockingham and 4.4% for WA (March 2011). Serpentine Jarrahdale (2.7%) has a much lower rate of joblessness than the Peel or WA average. A similar trend is observed in income and wage outcomes across the Peel (on the basis of 2006 census data). This shows that there are quite marked regional disparities between the various LGAs, with median weekly income for households in Mandurah (\$384), Waroona (\$381) and Murray (\$391) being equal to between 75 to 77% of the WA median, while Serpentine Jarrahdale (101%) and Boddington (94%) are relatively prosperous on the basis of this measure and are the only Peel LGAs to exceed Rockingham on this measure.

This tends to reflect the relatively disadvantaged position of the Peel's labour market. Serpentine Jarrahdale benefits from its connection to the Perth region in much the same way Rockingham does. The Shire is also home to a substantial FIFO/DIDO workforce, either commuting to Boddington or to major resource projects around WA.

Environment

There are two central environmental issues in the Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire.

First, the Serpentine Jarrahdale is the location of the Serpentine River and Serpentine Main and Pipehead dam system (two co-located dams), which serve to drain the Peel-Harvey catchment and supply the Integrated Water Supply System (IWSS) respectively. The Serpentine River is one of three Peel rivers (including the Murray and Harvey) which together support four major dam systems and account for 30% of Perth and Peel's surface water supply.

The second issue is that of land development. In 2009, the latest year for which data are available, there was a total area of 11,304 hectares zoned for urban development in the Peel region (Mandurah, Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray), of which 4,279 hectares was undeveloped land available (Planning WA 2011). This is equal to 26.3% of the land available for urban development in the Perth Metropolitan Area (16,268 hectares). Across the LGAs, Serpentine Jarrahdale has around 62.7% of their total urban zoned land undeveloped, suggesting that the Shire will see ongoing development over the course of the next decade.

The still emerging impact of climate change, coupled with development pressures in Serpentine Jarrahdale and water use planning in the Perth and Peel region will govern policy in regard to the river and dam system in the Shire and vice versa, over the coming decades. As Buxton et al (2008) point out in relation to growth area strengths into the future, prudent planning will be required to ensure the ongoing sustainability of Serpentine Jarrahdale natural resources.

Tensions arise for local residents in areas experiencing or expecting substantial residential growth around this growth as a threat to the rural quality of life signified above. This finding supports that of an extensive Shire-wide community consultation undertaken in Serpentine Jarrahdale in 2006/07 (CCS, 2007a: 128) which concludes that "residents have a strong attachment to their localities. While people are generally supportive of the anticipated growth, they are keen to ensure that it does not undermine the region's existing qualities and lifestyle." The overall tensions are succinctly encapsulated in concerns in the Murray area about "keeping the Shire country" in the "face of massive growth to come."

Some respondent concerns link population and economic growth to environmental damage as evident, for example, in concerns about the consequences of

- overuse and tourism;
- clearing of land for mineral extraction; and
- loss of trees and biodiversity.

Infrastructure, Transport and Telecommunications

Respondents to the qualitative research in Serpentine Jarrahdale noted that transport was a problem in the Shire, creating a sense of social isolation but also placing pressure on the large number of young families in the area.

Social isolation resulted from a lack of access to transport and highlighted in particular the situation for single car families. In this instance young mothers are often at home without a car and without access to services and/or shopping facilities. Many interviewees highlighted the “complete isolation” that results from a lack of access to either public or private transport.

Serpentine Jarrahdale research participants characterized the Shire as a “car-based shire of 1 and 2 car families. Together with rising mortgage payments this creates substantial financial pressure”. This pressure is felt throughout the region as a result of the higher than metropolitan cost of fuel. Firstly, the price of unleaded petrol in non-metropolitan areas is consistently higher than metropolitan areas: for example, on July 7, 2011 the average cost (c/L) in the metropolitan area was 140.9c/L compared to 142.7c/L in the Peel region. Secondly more fuel is consumed through travelling long distances, often to access essential services located some distance way.

These costs result in financial strain for all residents: for example, a two-income family in Serpentine Jarrahdale reported fuel costs (average size vehicles running on petrol and gas) deriving from travel to work, to shopping facilities, and to take children to school and to after-school activities at \$100 per week. Even with reduced travel undertaken by many low income families in an effort to “make ends meet” the cost of private transport is increasingly prohibitive and will have escalating social consequences, especially when the growing number of people experiencing housing stress in the region is taken into account. Similarly, the challenges for low income households are greater given a tendency to own older, cheaper and less reliable cars with poor fuel economy and higher maintenance costs.

To some extent, Serpentine Jarrahdale benefits from relatively strong telecommunications links. The Shire is home to a community resource centre that provides public access to the internet and related communications services. In addition, Serpentine Jarrahdale had a substantially higher level of total internet access, as measured by 2006 census data. Around 70% of households in the Shire had home internet access, compared to just 59% for the Peel in total and 62% for WA. However, broadband access in the Shire was around 32% compared with 34% for the Peel in total and around 40% of all WA households. The commencement of NBN infrastructure works in the Peel, starting in Mandurah, should go some way to rectifying this deficiency.

Key Community Strengths

1. Growing recognition within WA that Serpentine Jarrahdale is one of the fastest growing areas in the State. This, coupled with the emergence of the NGAA as a peak national body for growth areas will ensure greater recognition of the need to provide services and infrastructure in Serpentine Jarrahdale.
2. Growth in education infrastructure in line with existing state planning.
3. Proactive forecasting, goal setting and planning by the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale and the Peel Development Commission to ensure that the Shire’s requirements are reflected in regional strategic documents and submissions to State and Commonwealth governments.

GAP ANALYSIS

There is growing recognition within WA that Serpentine Jarrahdale is one of the fastest growing areas in the State. This, coupled with the emergence of the NGAA as a peak national body for growth areas will ensure greater recognition of the need to provide services and infrastructure in Serpentine Jarrahdale.

Peel Away the Mask II

There is a clear and growing need for health and child support infrastructure. Resulting largely from inadequate public transport and high private transport costs in the context of geographically-dispersed communities and services, social isolation is an issue in the Shire and one that is likely to become more pronounced with the projected influx of young families on low to medium incomes.

Small block sizes, low levels of public housing stock, limited and precarious nature of affordable housing, and inadequate variety of housing types necessary to support a diverse community are core housing concerns.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- An update to Shire projections in the context of work by the NGAA to incorporate data from the 2011 Census and other sources.
- A comparative study between Serpentine Jarrahdale and other WA outlying regions such as Rockingham, Kwinana and Armadale in the south, Swan in the east, and Joondalup and Wanneroo in the north of Perth to provide a basis for both planning and representation in relation to both built and social infrastructure issues and early intervention opportunities.
- Specific attention in terms of both lobbying and contributing to the ongoing Perth and Peel transport plan to ensure that linkages between Serpentine Jarrahdale and both Perth and the Peel are strengthened.
- Proactive forecasting, goal setting and planning by the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale and the Peel Development Commission to ensure that the Shire's requirements are reflected in regional strategic documents and submissions to State and Commonwealth governments.
- Strategies for early development of strong social and community relationships between new and existing residents to help address volunteerism, social isolation, impacts of FIFO, and greater access to community services through increased awareness.
- Ongoing focus on mapping housing diversity and planning action to rectify identified imbalances or absences.
- Sustainable education and support programs designed to prevent moderate income individuals, couples and families from entering housing stress and avoid homelessness.
- Locally available services providing free financial planning and advice.
- Ongoing identification of "rural character" and strategies for maintenance and development to foster strong resilient community through sense of identity, and belonging inclusive of values important to both long-term and new residents.
- In consultation with local youth, in particular at risk and disengaged cohorts, seek funding for and develop sustainable early intervention/youth at risk programs including access to youth workers and to drop in and casual use facilities.
- Develop strategies to address shortfalls in health services, in particular under-provision of GPs and limited child and community health services.

Shire of Murray

The Shire of Murray, with an estimated June 2010 population of 15,401 people, is the third most populous shire in the Peel region and the second largest land area. Located in the Peel-Harvey coastal plain the shire encompasses the Peel Harvey Estuary which forms part of the Peel Yalgorup Wetlands, acknowledged internationally as a Ramsar conservation site (SoM 2008). The Shire is expected to experience substantial growth over the next two decades as a result of extensive subdivision of land to accommodate urban residential expansion and diminishing stocks of affordable housing (SoM 2008).

There are 9 townships in the Shire of Murray: Pinjarra, Dwellingup, Ravenswood, South Yunderup, North Yunderup, Barragup, Furnissdale, Coolup, and North Dandalup. Pinjarra is 86km south of Perth and 20km from Mandurah. It is the administrative centre and largest town in the shire with, according to Shire 2010 estimates, a population of 3,992 residents out of a shire total of 15,408 people. The next largest town is South Yunderup with a population of 2,619 and Ravenswood with 2,460 people. These proportions are predicted to remain fairly similar in projections for 2031, though the growth forecast for South Yunderup (8,562) will see its population come very close to that of Pinjarra (9,392).

The principal industries in the Shire are bauxite mining, agriculture, forestry, mineral processing and tourism.

Peel Population and Demographics, By LGA

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>	<i>Current Population</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 15 to 25</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 65 and Over</i>	<i>2001 Population</i>	<i>Per cent Growth Since 2001</i>
Mandurah	174	70,413	12.1%	21.2%	48,877	44.1%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	1,461	17,212	13.1%	9.2%	11,704	47.1%
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<i>Peel Region</i>	<i>5,521</i>	<i>108,560</i>	<i>12.0%</i>	<i>18.5%</i>	<i>76,420</i>	<i>42.1%</i>
Rockingham	257	104,130	14.1%	12.6%	74,018	40.7%
Perth	5,385	1,678,853	15.1%	11.9%	1,393,725	20.5%
WA	2,531,563	2,293,510	14.4%	12.1%	1,901,159	20.6%

Source: Based on Table 2 of the Peel region discussion.

The period from 2001 has been one of substantial growth for Murray with a population increase of 41.6%, a rate similar to that experienced in Rockingham and double that experienced across WA.

Community Diversity

Murray has a demographic profile similar to that of Mandurah, although it has a relatively smaller youth population (10.8%) than the rest of the region with the exception of Boddington, and also smaller than Rockingham, Perth and WA. Those over the age of 65 account for 18.3% of the population, a proportion substantially higher than recorded in Rockingham, Perth or WA. While Murray currently has the second largest percentage of the population over the age of 65, projections for 2021 suggest that though this proportion will grow, it will be smaller in 2021 than that all other Peel LGAs with the exception of Serpentine Jarrahdale.

Population forecasts (forecast.id 2011) indicate that the 2006 proportions of (in descending order) couple households without dependents, couple families with dependents, lone person households, and one parent families will hold true as the population grows to 2031. In other words, the overall demographic mix is not predicted to change. Couples without dependents, currently accounting for

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40.2% of the population are projected to account for 39.8% of the 2031 population and thus will form the largest numerical increase with some additional 5,352 such households settling in the Murray.

Murray also recorded a regionally high Indigenous population share; though this proportion is higher than that of Rockingham it is also lower than the State average. The share of the population born overseas (20.3%) is well below the regional proportion (22.6%) and also that in Rockingham, Perth and WA all of which cluster around 30%. This overseas population is however of note in the local communities: Murray workshop participants for example made mention of rising numbers of South African and Sudanese migrants living in the area.

The Peel has generally higher rates of measured disability and activity limitations than other regions in WA, and Murray (25.1%), together with Mandurah, has higher rates than the Peel in general (24.0%).

Social Disadvantage

Murray's score on the ABS Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) is 984, which is close to the Australian standardized average of 1000. However, Murray's state ranking of 58 shows a significant level of disadvantage in the LGA, given that a ranking of 1 is equal to the most disadvantaged LGA in the state and a rank of 142 equals the least disadvantaged in the state. On this measure 124 LGAs across the state experience lower levels of disadvantage than experienced in Murray. Even more telling is the minimum score for a collection district in the area of 585, the lowest such score in the Peel region and one which indicates a level of disadvantage commensurate with that experienced by the most disadvantaged 10% of Australia's population.

A service provider operating in the Murray area emphasised that:

most of the people we deal with are not home owners. They are renting and fall behind for lots of reasons including the cost of living rising. For example, a couple entitled to disability and carers' pension getting \$900 to \$1000 a fortnight but paying \$250 a week in rent, which is half of their money on rent. We can give rent assistance but it's not going to solve the problem because there's still not enough money so sooner or later they are going to lose. This situation is getting more prevalent, more people like this are presenting.

Health and Community Services

Murray records a GP to population ratio of 121.9; this is the highest in the region. Indeed it is four times higher than the Waroona ratio and double that in both Serpentine Jarrahdale and Boddington. Importantly, however, the ratio is well below that recorded for WA (157.2).

Health care in the shire appears to be centralized in Pinjarra. Murray hospital, one of three hospitals in the Peel, is situated in Pinjarra as are most of the medical, dental, physiotherapy and chiropractic services in the shire. Home and Community Care (HACC) is also located in Pinjarra. There also appears to be an absence of local mental health or crisis counselling services; there are none listed in the Shire of Murray Health and Community Services Directory which are based in the Shire. Workshop participants noted a general concern about the absence of a Pinjarra ambulance service, and the wait time of some 20 minutes for an ambulance to arrive from nearest depot in Mandurah. While there are two aged accommodation services in the Shire and a third under construction in Dwellingup, such accommodation is in short supply given that those aged over 65 currently account for 18.1% of the population and by 2021 are projected to constitute over one fifth of the population.

Community Forums organized by the Murray Shire in 2011 identified, in all four communities consulted, a desire for facilities to house visiting health professionals and other outreach services—thus redressing the centralization of health care in both Pinjarra and Mandurah—along with buildings designed specifically to accommodate community groups. At the South Yunderup meeting a Shire wide “One Stop Shop” including a range of health, medical and social services (specifically Centrelink) was mooted to meet the needs of current and future residents (Coffee 2011:163).

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One of a small number of local, not for profit community service providers covering the entire shire noted a very high, and increasing, demand for its services which include help with utility bills, food, clothing and access to financial counselling and other support. This service sees on average 160 and sometimes 200 clients each month including "families, children, parents, single parents." This high demand is a result both of population growth and, more importantly, the rising cost of living. The latter means that "more people in employment can't stay afloat." One public survey respondent stressed how crucial this service is for many people's quality of life in the shire citing personal experience.

Housing

Over the last 20 years the Shire of Murray has provided relatively affordable housing for young families and older adults including retirees, a role expected to continue in response to ongoing pressure on Mandurah housing stock and high housing costs in the metropolitan area (SoM 2008). To meet this demand, new 'green field' residential developments will supplement existing residential zones; while substantial growth is anticipated in Ravenswood, South Yunderup and Pinjarra a lower rate of growth is expected in the "more rural hamlet areas" of North Dandalup, Dwellingup and Coolup (SoM 2008: 8). Dwellingup is also earmarked for residential growth in order to accommodate Boddington goldmine workers (SoM 2008).

Housing affordability in terms of the ratio between median income and median house price as calculated across the last three census periods has fallen dramatically in Murray, for 20.4% in 1996 to 11.1% in 2006. According to this measure, the median income would purchase 11.1% of a median-priced house. At the same time, according to Beer et al (2011) the percentage of tenant households experiencing housing stress was less than 5%. Importantly, there is a regionally high percentage of residents (7.1%) living in occupancy arrangements "other" than owning, purchasing or renting.

In the last census one fifth of the Murray population self-identified as undertaking voluntary work a figure well above that recorded in either Rockingham or WA.

Safety and Security

The Peel region has lower levels of reported crime than WA as a whole and Murray reproduces this pattern across all five categories reported by the WA Office of Crime Prevention (now the WA Police Strategic Crime Prevention Division). In addition, Murray records 34% fewer instances of *Property Damage* relative to already low regional average. On the other hand, Murray greatly exceeds the regional and state averages in relation to the rate of imprisonment for *sentenced* prisoners: Murray records a rate of 194.8 in comparison to a regional rate of 131.7 and a state rate of 159.6. An examination of *unsentenced* prisoners and detainees, paints a similar picture with Murray recording a high rate (65.9, which is more than double that of the region) of unsentenced prisoners citing a home address in the LGA. This latter result implies that Murray's total rate of imprisonment (sentenced and unsentenced) is around 259.7 persons per 100,000, compared to 193.3 for WA and 148.9 for Rockingham. The Peel's equivalent rate is 159.14.

Education

The Peel region has a population with a higher level of trades qualifications than the WA average, as measured under the 2006 Census (the latest year for which data are available), with Murray recording the highest regional percentage of residents with certificate level qualifications (67.6%). Conversely Murray recorded the lowest percentage of residents with Bachelor Degrees; at 12.5% this is half that recorded for WA (20.8%). Murray also lags behind the rest of the region in terms of its 22.7% increase in attainment levels since 2001. The Murray LGA has better outcomes than the WA average on the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) measure in all domains except Language and Cognitive Skills where 15.7% of children in the LGA are assessed as being developmentally vulnerable compared with 12.1% for the state as a whole. Around 19.4% of children are classified as developmentally vulnerable in at least one of the five domains. However, only 8.7% are classified as being developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains. The percentage of children in the LGA who attended care or early childhood programs, as recorded in the AEDI data, was the lowest in the region—69.1% as opposed to the Peel average of 85.9%, itself higher than participation percentages in Rockingham (84.4%) and WA (81.3%).

Employment and Income

Mining is carried out in Murray, comprised principally by bauxite mining near Dwellingup and alumina refining in Pinjarra which accounts for 33% of local jobs. Residential construction, retail, education and health are significant industries in the Shire while agriculture and forestry provide under 10% of jobs (forecast.id, 2011). Murray's March 2011 unemployment rate of 6.2% is substantially higher than that in WA at large; while the median weekly income (at Census 2006) was very low: \$391 compared to the Boddington (\$471), Serpentine Jarrahdale (\$507), Rockingham (\$459) and the state (\$500).

According to Census data, the Indigenous median household weekly income of \$725 was markedly lower than that of non-Indigenous households (\$969). This represents an income gap of 25% and a level of inequality compounded by differences in household sizes—the average Indigenous household was 3.5 persons (the highest in the region) compared to an average non-Indigenous household of 2.6.

A 2010 youth survey conducted by the Shire (SoM: 10) identified generational unemployment and the lack of full-time, part-time and casual employment in the area as issues of concern for youth and youth service providers.

Environment

The Department of Water (2009) projects that the Murray River alone could be subject to wide variations in total water supply to 2030, ranging from 201 GL in a “dry” scenario where the decline in rainfall trends continues to 370GL under a “wet” scenario where rainfall trends track recent historic trends. This affects total availability of water for the Perth and Peel. Long-term records for rainfall in indicate reductions in average rainfall ranging from 8% in Dwellingup to 13% in Mandurah. The still emerging impact of climate change, coupled with development pressures across the LGA and water use planning in the Perth and Peel region will govern policy in regard to the river and dam system in the Shire and vice versa, over the coming decades. Prudent planning will be required to ensure the ongoing sustainability (Buxton et al, 2008) of Murray's natural resources and thus both its natural advantages and importance to the Mandurah and Perth Metropolitan populations. In 2009, the latest year for which data are available, there was a total area of 11,304 hectares zoned for urban development in the Peel region of which 4,279 hectares was undeveloped land available (Planning WA 2011). In Murray around 50.2% of the total urban zoned land, or 1,582 hectares, was undeveloped.

SURVEY OF MURRAY RESIDENTS

Local perspectives were surveyed at Pinjarra Shopping Centre and Yunderup Sport and Recreation Club on the 22nd of February. The 17 people surveyed represent a range of ages and lengths of residence in the Shire. Six respondents gave Murray as place of residence, while three specified Pinjarra, six South Yunderup, and one each Ravenswood and River Glades. See the table below for a gender, age, and length of residence profile of respondents.

Gender	Age	No.	Years in Residence	No.
Female: 8	18-30	2	1-5	2
Male: 9	30-45	4	5-10	5
	45-65	5	10+	10
	65+	6		

Respondents were asked the same questions that structured the community workshops; responses are presented below under the broad headings of community challenges, strengths, and significant changes.

Challenges identified for local communities included:

1. A lack of public transport (13 respondents)
2. A lack of taxis (5 respondents)
3. A lack of employment opportunities (2 respondents)

Community Strengths

Respondents emphasized community spirit (50 %) and the rural quality of the Shire of Murray (50%) as the key strengths.

Significant Changes

The majority of respondents highlighted growth in population as the most significant change in the Shire over the last 5 years. Respondents from South Yunderup also cited “new people” as the most significant change along with an attendant shift from being predominantly a holiday and retirement place to a family place.

Infrastructure, Transport and Telecommunications

Recently completed infrastructure includes the multi-million dollar Murray Aquatic Centre funded in part (\$834,000) through the *Royalties for Regions* Country Local Government Fund.

Lack of public transport is pervasively identified as a major barrier to accessing out-of-shire opportunities (SoM 2010: 8). Concurrently, the infrequency or absence of public transport linking the various townships satisfactorily with Pinjarra is reported as a major issue. Indeed, a Shire 2010 youth survey found that lack of transport was what the majority of respondents disliked most about living in Murray. A lack of public transport (and of taxis) was cited by the over 90% of primary research respondents to the public survey of Murray residents (see box above). Access to public transport and the rising cost of private transport is evidently a major ongoing issue for a wide range of residents though especially for one or no car families, and those on low incomes.

Described by one interviewee as a “huge, huge issue,” the need for improved access to public transport was consistently mentioned as crucial “for the whole shire, for young people, young mums, long-term unemployed.” Interviewees highlighted the “complete isolation” that results from a lack of access to either public or private transport.

Public transport is infrequent and fails to link the various townships satisfactorily with Pinjarra, nor Pinjarra with Mandurah, which is a primary location for local employment and education, specialist medical services, along with Centrelink and Medicare offices, for example. One interviewee recounted having to catch the train (from Pinjarra) to Perth and then to Mandurah to get to Centrelink.

Workshop participants expressed a concern that residents have to leave the shire when they can't drive anymore. In addition, the lack of public transport was also presented as a barrier to developing a sustainable tourism industry in the shire. Clearly, a rapidly growing population of people in pursuit of affordable housing and a rise in the numbers of young and older residents will mean that the lack of public transport will disadvantage increasing numbers of local residents not least in terms of social isolation. Close to 40% of Murray households in 2006 recorded not having an internet connection in comparison to a Peel average of 38% and a WA average of 34%.

Key Strengths

Murray Workshop participants, interviewees and survey respondents evince a consistent sense of community spirit combined with a semi-rural quality as core strength in the shire. In general, people noted that “it's relaxing and calming; that's why we live here.” The natural environment also emerges as a key strength; the walk trails, bird life and sense of freedom were frequently cited. An overall tension arising from current and projected development is succinctly encapsulated in concerns in the Murray area about “keeping the Shire country” in the “face of massive growth to come.”

GAP ANALYSIS

Public inter-regional and intra-shire transport is insufficient for community needs across the full spectrum of access to employment, education, health and community services necessary for quality-of-life, and the development of local tourism. At the same time, and possibly related to this lack of access to public transport, Murray lags behind the rest of the region in terms of its 22.7% increase in attainment levels since 2001.

While the population is growing rapidly it is forecast to maintain its current demographic profile with an attendant ongoing demand for services already under strain. One area of growing need is support for a widening group of people experiencing housing stress and related deprivation. In addition, the Shire has pockets of extreme disadvantage along with a large gap in Indigenous / non-Indigenous income.

While rural character and the natural environment is a core strength in the Shire, this natural environment is at risk from decreased rainfall as a result of climate change in tandem with “green field” development pressures.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Increased access to public transport.
- Evaluation of localised barriers to post-secondary educational attainment and the development of strategies to address these.
- Attraction of new welfare providers and financial services to the area along with funding to increase capacity of extant services.
- Strategies for early development of strong social and community relationships between new and existing residents.
- Greater diversity of affordable and well-placed housing across the region including:
 - stock designed for retirees seeking smaller properties and which allow them to “age in place;”
 - flats/apartments for single people; and
 - hostel and boarding-house-style accommodation.
- Proactive planning to ensure that current environmental advantages are maintained into the future.
- Ongoing identification of “rural character” and strategies for maintenance and development.

Shire of Waroona

The Shire of Waroona, incorporating the localities of Waroona, Hamel, Preston Beach and Lake Clifton, is 108km from Perth (SoW 2011). The estimated June 2010 population of 3,842 constitutes 3.5% of the Peel population. The second smallest land area in the Peel region, Waroona Shire spans “pristine beaches, unspoilt lakes, fertile farmlands and peaceful jarrah forests” including Yalgorup National Park (SoW 2011). Waroona township is home to 66% of Shire residents. The nearest large town in the Peel region, Pinjarra, is 25km away, while Mandurah is 45km away. Local industries include agriculture, tourism, timber, engineering, earthmoving, and mining, including the Alcoa Wagerup Alumina Refinery (SoW 2011).

Peel Population and Demographics, By LGA

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>	<i>Current Population</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 15 to 25</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 65 and Over</i>	<i>2001 Population</i>	<i>Per cent Growth Since 2001</i>
Mandurah	174	70,413	12.1%	21.2%	48,877	44.1%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	1,461	17,212	13.1%	9.2%	11,704	47.1%
Murray	1,154	15,401	10.8%	18.3%	10,875	41.6%
Waroona	832	3,842	12.3%	13.2%	3,524	9.0%
Boddington	1,900	1,692	9.8%	13.8%	1,440	17.5%
<i>Peel Region</i>	<i>5,521</i>	<i>108,560</i>	<i>12.0%</i>	<i>18.5%</i>	<i>76,420</i>	<i>42.1%</i>
Rockingham	257	104,130	14.1%	12.6%	74,018	40.7%
Perth	5,385	1,678,853	15.1%	11.9%	1,393,725	20.5%
WA	2,531,563	2,293,510	14.4%	12.1%	1,901,159	20.6%

Source: Based on Table 2 of the Peel region discussion.

Waroona has experienced the lowest rate of population growth in the region since 2001. At a rate of 9% this is less than one quarter of the growth rate across the region and less than one half of the rate for WA. Given the small population, this growth rate translates into small number of new residents. At the same time it needs to be kept in mind that in a small community and housing market this level of growth can make a substantial impact.

Community Diversity

As at 2010, Waroona, in line with the rest of the region, had a lower proportion of the population between the ages of 15 and 26 and a higher proportion over 65 years of age than the overall WA proportions. These differences, however, are currently not as pronounced as those in the rest of the Peel LGAs. Importantly, the share of the population over the age of 65 is projected to rise to 28% by 2021 at which point this will not only constitute the second highest proportion in the Peel but will see Waroona’s aged population become almost double that of the state’s projected share in 2021.

Though lower than the Western Australian average, Waroona has a regionally high proportion of Indigenous residents. At the same time, Waroona has relatively low levels of migrant settlement with the 2006 proportion of overseas born at around half of the Western Australian proportions. Interestingly, Waroona recorded the highest regional percentage of people speaking a language other than English at home. Primary research participants note a population of residents born in the Philippines while there is also an established Italian community.

The percentage of the Waroona population with a disability (21.9%) and percentage of this with a core activity limitation (16.4) is on both counts lower than the percentages for the Peel region.

Social Disadvantage

Waroona, with a score of 964 lies in the third decile on the basis of an Australia-wide comparison offered on the ABS Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD). Importantly, in the 2006 Census Waroona ranked 40 in WA on the basis of this disadvantage measure where 1 equals the most disadvantaged LGA in WA and 142 the least disadvantaged. According to this measure, Waroona is the most disadvantaged Peel LGA, recording greater levels of disadvantage than 70% of WA LGAs. The minimum score recorded by a Waroona collection district (861) indicates an area of high disadvantage likely to be characterised by households without sufficient bedrooms and without a car, and with limited or no access to the internet, and low income levels. The per cent distribution of usual residents across census district scores shows that 19% of the population falls in the most disadvantaged 10% in Australia.

In comparison, the lowest collection district score recorded in both Murray and Mandurah (585 and 734 respectively) is substantially lower than that recorded in Waroona (861) indicating pockets of disadvantage greater than that experienced in the lowest scoring collection district in Waroona.

This level of disadvantage is confirmed by the number of Interagency Church Group Christmas Hampers needed each year (hampers were provided to 81 households in 2011). Similarly local not-for-profit community support agencies in November 2011 reported 62 requests for assistance (involving 40 children) and supplied "back to school" vouchers in January and February for some 60 children.

Health and Community Services

In order to access emergency medical assistance, Waroona residents travel 45 km to the Peel Health Campus or travel outside the region. Hospitalisation of critically ill local residents in the Peel Health Campus or indeed in Fremantle hospital as is equally likely places considerable stress on local residents who may not have the means to travel to pay visits.

With a 2010 General Practitioner to population ratio of 26.5 compared to a WA ratio of 157.2 and a Peel ratio of 91.5, Waroona is clearly underserved in this regard. Not surprisingly, Waroona participants note that it is difficult to secure a timely appointment with the local doctor. Interviewed indigenous health workers expressed a particular concern over the lack of health services for Indigenous communities in the area.

The Shire owned and maintained Waroona Health and Community Resource Centre, just on the drawing board at the time of the first *Peel Away the Mask* report, was highlighted by local research participants as one of the key strengths in the area for community and health service provision. The Resource Centre incorporates many services including provision of computer and internet access, Broadband for Seniors, training and training facilities, video conferencing, toy library, Family Support Services, booking centre for the Waroona Community Car and provision of meeting rooms. They are also an access point for Centrelink, Medicare, Government Information and visiting agencies as well as a range of other services. The Waroona Health and Community Resource Centre building also has a health wing which houses a doctors' surgery, child and infant health centre (including immunisation clinic) and provision of rooms for visiting practitioners. Current medical services provided through the Forrest Medical Group include a Doctor in attendance from Monday to Friday, nurses and pathology 5 days per week, In addition a private Chiropractor utilises the other medical room on a mostly fortnightly rotation.

Interviewees note the benefits of service co-location and presence of a Support Officer funded through the Department of Communities along with the Centre's role in providing a space in which local community groups can be housed. Such opportunities also exist in the Shire more widely. For example, The Lake Clifton Community Hall has some capacity to accommodate outreach services and visiting agencies. It is used by the local community for social occasions, events, cultural activities and meetings under the auspices of the Lake Clifton Herron Progress and Sporting Association. The centre also provided an important hub for the fire recovery needs after the Lake Clifton Fires once people were able to regain access to their homes and properties.

While a range of outreach programs are delivered through the Community Resource Centre as described above, and accommodation is clearly available, some service providers note that Waroona's distance from Mandurah, its small population, and lack of a local bus service pose a barrier to the delivery of outreach services in the Shire. Firstly, it is costly to provide outreach in the Shire as a result of the time and fuel

needed to travel to Waroona. Secondly, numbers participating in outreach clinics or workshops can be low in part due to a lack of intra-Shire transport so that those in outer-lying areas of the Shire (30% of the population) may struggle to make use of outreach services.

Aged Care and Facilities

Quambie Park Aged Care Facility which incorporates Pam Corker House Hostel is the only aged-care provider in the Waroona Shire. A charitable organisation overseen by a community-based voluntary Board of Management, Quambie Park includes a mix of 37 Independent Living Units as well as a 33 bed residential hostel with ageing in place (high or low care) nursing facility (Pam Corker House). A three million dollar secure 12 bed dementia wing has recently been completed. The complex also houses a number of community usage vehicles including the Community Bus and a fleet of vehicles required to service the Community Care Clients.

Youth

Young people in the Shire of Waroona are catered for in a variety of ways. There is a Youth Advisory Council supported by the Shire and a designated youth centre run by the Waroona Community Resource Centre. The Youth Advisory Council facilitates youth and family activities, celebrate youth week each year and take part in leadership opportunities. Young people are also well supported through the local sporting clubs and with the excellent facilities at the Waroona Recreation and Aquatic Centre.

The loss of a dedicated Youth Officer through changes in funding has had an impact on the delivery of holiday activities in the Shire and the capacity to deliver other youth support programs, advocacy and referral services. The Waroona Youth Centre offers a drop in facility and a range of activities on site for young people as well as access to information and support. Ongoing funding is required to continue this service or to allow it to expand. Some support is offered by regional providers including StreetNet.

In 2006, 25.2% of the Waroona population self-identified as undertaking voluntary work, thus recording the second highest percentage in the Peel region of volunteers as a proportion of overall LGA population. However, research participants expressed concern that volunteers were “already pushed to capacity,” while the growing population was making it difficult for current pool of ageing volunteers to cope.

Housing

Along with the rest of the region, Waroona has seen the ratio of income to house prices fall dramatically between 1996 and 2006. The percentage of tenant households in housing stress in Waroona at between 30% and 35% is significantly high (Beer et al 2011). For example, on this measure Murray recorded less than 5% of the population as experiencing housing stress (Beer et al 2011). Public housing, with a 2010 waiting time of 4 years, is clearly in short supply. Waroona interviewees noted the “poor quality” of local public housing stock and expressed concern that families were “relocated” to Waroona as a last resort “when there is nowhere else for them to go,” resulting in consequent social upheaval and isolation and impacting on local support services.

There appears to be no data concerning the number of homeless people in the area. Some interviewees felt that there was “not a great number”; others cited homelessness as an important concern. These perceptions may be due to varying understandings of what constitutes “homelessness”.

Safety and Security

In comparison to the relatively low Peel region crime rates, Waroona has higher rates of offence in *Property Damage*, lower rates in *Total Acts Intended to Cause Injury* and more than double the rate of offence in *Total Illicit Drug Offences*. More specifically, Waroona has shown a growth in the rate of residential burglaries since 2000-01 up to last few years when the rate has declined. Rates for illicit drug offences have increased significantly in the last 2 years. At 17.2 /1000 persons in 2009 this is much higher than the rate recorded for either the South West (8/1000 persons) or the state (7/1000 persons). Property damage at 19.1% of total offences was the highest proportion recorded in the Peel region. On the other hand, while alcohol factored in 50% of assaults (5-12 percentage points higher than the rest of the region), the proportion of domestic assaults, at 25% of recorded assaults, was by far the lowest in the region and significantly lower than the proportions recorded for both the South West and the state. Of the 24 victims of offenses against the person, 75% were victims of acts intended to cause injury. In terms of imprisonment rates, which provide a medium-

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to-long-term view of crime rates, Waroona records significantly low rates in comparison to those in the Peel region, Rockingham and also WA.

Since August 2008 there have been six full-time-equivalent police officers in the Shire (SoW 2011). According to the recently released *Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan 2011-2014 Review* local residents are concerned about the size of the area covered by this local force: for example residents point out that it takes police 20 minutes to travel from Waroona to Preston Beach located on the outskirts of the Shire. The above *Review* also notes local concern over difficulties experienced in contacting the local police station after hours. The closest women's refuge and youth crisis accommodation is in Mandurah.

In 2010 Waroona shifted from the Peel Region policing district to the Southwest district; according to local sources this is problematic in that Mental Health, Domestic Violence, Youth Services and Department of Child Protection agencies servicing the Shire are located in Mandurah as part of the Peel just as local residents are served by the Mandurah Court House (SoW 2011).

The 2011-2014 *Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan* survey (with 82 respondents) finds that 73% of those surveyed feel that Waroona is a safe place to live while 72% believe that Waroona has less crime than other places in the Peel (SoW 2011: 13). An "Alcohol Prevention and Management Plan" is suggested as a means to "prevent and address [local] alcohol related issues."

Education

Since 2001 Waroona has recorded an increase in resident post-school qualifications of 38.2%. Nevertheless, Waroona continues to have lower educational attainment rates with regard to bachelor degree qualifications (15.4%) in comparison to WA (20.8%), and relatively high attainment levels in terms of certificate (64.6%) and advanced diploma (17.2%) qualification compared to state averages of 33.1% and 13.9% respectively.

The Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) reports on the health and wellbeing of children in their first full year of school. On this measure, Waroona is assessed as having a relatively large population of developmentally vulnerable children, with 28.6% being vulnerable in at least one domain and 21.4% being vulnerable on the basis of two domains. Children in Waroona are marginally less vulnerable on average in the Physical Health and Wellbeing domain, but considerably more so elsewhere. For instance while only 8.8% of children in WA are ranked below the 10th percentile (developmentally vulnerable) on a national basis in Emotional Maturity, around 16.7% of children in Waroona are classified at that level.

The AEDI survey also reports on children's participation in early childhood education programs, and shows that children in Waroona are prepared for school via care or early childhood programs (93.0% participation) to an extent much higher than that of children in Rockingham (84.4%) and more so than is the case on average across WA (85.9%). At the same time, interviewees suggested that access to childcare facilities in the Shire is limited consequently impacting on parents' ability to participate in the workforce and deterring young families from settling in the Shire. Interviewees pointed out that this lack also means that parents of younger children find it difficult to develop community service skills and to support others. According to local sources a feasibility study concerning the provision of child care facilities is currently underway.

In Waroona the lack of public transport is reported as the most significant barrier to the pursuit of tertiary education by local youth. Waroona District High School takes students to Year 10 only. Students travel by bus daily to Pinjarra Senior High School or to Mandurah, Murray and Harvey to attend a range of public and private schools in the region catering for Year 11 and 12 students. Locally there is also St Joseph's (a Catholic education school which takes students to year seven), a pre-primary and kindergarten adjacent to Waroona District High School, and a parent-run Play Group.

Outmigration of primary and junior high students reduces numbers and socio-economic breadth at the local schools. There are a number of reasons for this outmigration including religious denomination and continuity of studies from year 8 through to year 12 at the same facility instead of having to change schools at the end of year 10. The proximity to other schools for students living in Lake Clifton and Preston Beach has also lead to change with the building of new schools south of Mandurah. Access to specialised subjects and programs such as music, sport, drama and special needs also plays a part. This can lead to additional costs for

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parents (not least in terms of travel and student housing near universities), along with a long term loss of youth. As one respondent put it, “people leave the area to go to university and then don’t come back”.

The importance of the free orange school bus service must not be taken lightly. Provided by the Public Transport Authority School Bus Services Branch, this is a valuable and much needed service for rural communities like Waroona to ensure that students living more than 4.5 km from the nearest school and outside designated public transport areas are able to attend school regularly. The service also provides capacity for students to attend year 11 and year 12 as well as non government schools that provide appropriate religious denomination or ethos for particular students and those requiring specialised programs and subjects.

Employment and Income

Waroona contributes to the region’s mineral production not least through the presence of Alcoa of Australia alumina and bauxite mine sites. The principal employer in the Shire is Alcoa Australia which operates an Alumina Refinery and mine site just south of the town and employs nearly 800 people (SoW 2010). Interviewees noted that the local population is inadequately skilled to take up higher level professional employment with mining companies in the area though there is a “strong and large pool of applicants for operator / trade jobs.” According to local sources, Quambie Park Waroona (aged-care facility described above) with 75 staff is one of the larger employers in the Shire. Other significant local employers include stock transporters and local earth moving contractors. The March 2011 unemployment rate of 5.6% is higher than the state average of 4.4% and lower than that in Rockingham (6.6%).

According to 2011 figures, Waroona’s median weekly income of \$381 is not only the lowest in the region but is also only three-quarters of the state median of \$500. At the same time, close to 50% of the population are recorded as having a weekly household income of less than \$400.

Environment

Townscape Redevelopment has recently been undertaken to improve the general aesthetics of the CBD. While many elements of the redevelopment are complete, the Shire of Waroona in consultation with the local community continues to make further improvements and progress as funds become available as well as supporting and encouraging local business to address the visual amenities of their streetscape through the provision of business development grants and business incentive grants.

In terms of the built and natural environment, participants commented on the importance of the appearance of the main street and a lack of growth in infrastructure and limited retail development. Some interviewees expressed concerns about being able to protect unique environmental features such as the thrombolites at Lake Clifton in the face of projected tourism growth, and also expressed concern about the clearing of land for limestone quarrying. Road safety was also a concern for some interviewees. According to Shire sources, increased traffic numbers associated with additional growth puts pressure on rural roads and the local governments who are in charge of the ongoing maintenance.

Infrastructure, Transport and Telecommunications

The shortage of public transport and affordability of private transport is an area of concern for those living in Waroona town site and surrounds. A public bus service between Waroona and Mandurah operates once a fortnight; there is no other public transport link to Mandurah. While a daily train service to Perth and major regional cities of Bunbury and Armadale is available for same-day travel (see TransWA) one must leave early in the morning (7.00am) and return either within 1.5 to 2 hours of arriving in the city or wait until late afternoon (6-6.30pm). Ticket prices are higher for this service than on the Perth-Mandurah passenger service. Understandably, reliance on private transport is pronounced.

The cost of private transport is high, particularly in light of the low median weekly income in the Shire. The price of unleaded petrol in non-metropolitan areas is consistently higher than metropolitan areas: for example, on July 7, 2011 the average cost (cents per litre - c/L) in the metropolitan area was 140.9c/L compared to 142.7c/L in the Peel region. Waroona prices ranged from 140.0c/L to 149.9c/L (<http://www.fuelwatch.wa.gov.au/fuelwatch/pages/home.jsp>).

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The high cost as noted above is most keenly felt by those on low incomes (over 50% of the Shire population) and/or who need to travel frequently to access medical services, and/or who are dealing with government agencies not represented in the Shire, for example. In the experience of interviewees, local (voluntary) community service providers “often have to provide petrol money to clients who need to get to Mandurah for medical, xrays etc.”

These transport issues have been addressed locally and innovatively through the “Waroona Community Car” service in operation since the 1990s. Funded through grants and donations and run by a group of volunteers, the car is available solely for residents who require medical appointments outside of Waroona and who are unable to drive themselves due to illness, age or who do not own their own vehicle. In March 2011, for example, the car was used to make 36 return trips, in excess of one per day. In addition, volunteer drivers used their own cars on four occasions. There were also 9 requests that could not be met, and seven cancelled trips. In order to orchestrate the above, 45 calls were made to drivers. This high usage underscores the level of disadvantage and need in this small Shire in relation to specialised medical services, along with its strong capacity for provision of community service.

Access to public transport (“No public transport out here”) is clearly an issue also for those living thirty five km south of Mandurah in Lake Clifton-Herron a small semi-rural community of some 300 families administered by both City of Mandurah and Shire of Waroona. (<http://www.lakeclifton.com.au>). Isolation is an issue for “single car families, single parents, teenagers without a car, families struggling to make ends meet and paying rising fuel costs”.

Key Community Strengths

Interviewees identified four key strengths supporting the delivery of community service:

1. Co-location of services (including outreach) at the Waroona Health and Community Resource Centre, and the presence of a Family Support Officer (funded through the Department of Communities) along with interagency meetings as organized by the shire.
2. Presence of Quambie Park and programs such as Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) and the local Meals on Wheels service coordinated through this facility.
3. The community’s willingness and capacity to offer support, encapsulated in the statement that “dedicated volunteers are willing to go the extra mile in terms of helping others to access services not available locally” (as exemplified by the community car). This capacity to provide assistance is also demonstrated in the local provision of emergency food parcels and hampers noted above.
4. Waroona Recreation and Aquatic Centre which in addition to a range of sporting activities provides health and well-being programs and school holiday programs. It is also an additional facility that can be utilised for outreach services and health promotion, and is regularly used as a meeting space by community groups. Following the fires at Lake Clifton in early 2011, the Waroona Recreation and Aquatic Centre was used as an evacuation centre with many displaced persons housed there during the crisis. Statistics generated by the Centreman system at the centre shows some 85,000 individuals visited the Centre throughout the 2010 – 11 year indicating its importance in the local community.

GAP ANALYSIS

Almost one fifth of the population is amongst the most disadvantaged in Australia, there are only a limited number of health services available locally, and public transport in the area is very limited and costly while private transport, necessary to quality of life, is particularly expensive. A large portion of the Waroona community is significantly disadvantaged as evidenced by:

- the IRSD scores;
- a low median income in comparison to the both the Peel region and to the state; and
- in relation to certain types of service provision and through the loss of Yarloop Hospital and changes to Murray District Hospital.

Redressing this disadvantage will require sustained focussed attention in terms of ameliorating causes and also social impacts upon specific groups such as local youth.

Key strengths of high levels of volunteerism and sustained local initiatives such as the Quambie Park Aged Care Facility the Waroona Community Health and Resource Centre and the Waroona Community Car are crucially important in ameliorating the effects of this significant disadvantage.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Improved access to affordable and more frequent public transport networks.
- Local training and education programs to meet the needs of the mining industry and to enable local residents to take up positions attracting higher salaries.
- Programs to address the gaps identified in the AEDI data tailored to the particular needs of vulnerable children in Waroona and the socio-economic capacities of carers.
- Presence of a youth community officer dedicated to the well-being of socially and economically disadvantaged local youth.
- Education assistance programs to assist those struggling to undertake tertiary education.
- Improvement in the range and level of outreach services grounded in research designed to track the existing provision of outreach service in Waroona in terms of range, level of service and local access along with attention to potential gaps between Waroona's inclusion in regional funding programs and the implementation of local delivery.
- Funding and in-kind support for innovations which address the local barriers preventing access to outreach services such as a mobile outreach vehicle offering integrated services throughout the Shire.
- Continued support for volunteers including training opportunities, succession planning and recruitment strategies to increase the number and diversity of volunteers.

Shire of Boddington

The Shire of Boddington is 123km from Perth. The nearest large town is Pinjarra, 74km away in the Shire of Murray. Waroona is 87km distant from Boddington, while Mandurah and Armadale, the nearest cities, are 95km away.¹⁶ Boddington has the largest land area and smallest population in the Peel region. With an estimated population in June 2010 of 1692 people (1,380 at census 2006) the Shire has 629 dwellings, a hospital, medical centre, district high school, community library, swimming pool, and youth centre (SoB 2010). The administrative offices are located in Boddington town centre. Local industries include bauxite and gold mining, agriculture and timber (SoB 2010). Mining in the area is booming with the reopening of the Newmont Boddington Gold Mine which at full production will be the largest open cut gold mine in Australia (PDC 2011) and ongoing operations at the Worsely Bauxite Mine. The town of Boddington lies on the “banks of the picturesque Hotham River” and over 47% of the shire is state forest (Boddington Community Resource Centre 2011).

Peel Population and Demographics, By LGA

<i>LGA</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>	<i>Current Population</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 15 to 25</i>	<i>Per cent Aged 65 and Over</i>	<i>2001 Population</i>	<i>Per cent Growth Since 2001</i>
Mandurah	174	70,413	12.1%	21.2%	48,877	44.1%
Serpentine Jarrahdale	1,461	17,212	13.1%	9.2%	11,704	47.1%
Murray	1,154	15,401	10.8%	18.3%	10,875	41.6%
Waroona	832	3,842	12.3%	13.2%	3,524	9.0%
Boddington	1,900	1,692	9.8%	13.8%	1,440	17.5%
<i>Peel Region</i>	<i>5,521</i>	<i>108,560</i>	<i>12.0%</i>	<i>18.5%</i>	<i>76,420</i>	<i>42.1%</i>
Rockingham	257	104,130	14.1%	12.6%	74,018	40.7%
Perth	5,385	1,678,853	15.1%	11.9%	1,393,725	20.5%
WA	2,531,563	2,293,510	14.4%	12.1%	1,901,159	20.6%

Source: Based on Table 2 of the Peel region discussion.

As the above table shows, Boddington has experienced population growth in the order of 17.5% since 2001. This rate is relatively low in comparison to Mandurah, Serpentine Jarrahdale and Murray. The Boddington population, however, is expected to grow substantially in the immediate future as a result of the re-development of the Boddington Gold Mine (SoB 2008). While some population growth arising from the opening of the mine has already occurred a further resultant population increase of 1400 people by 2014 is anticipated (unpublished local data). This growth, however, is dependent on housing availability and the upgrading of local amenities to both attract and retain new residents (see below).

Community Diversity

At June 2010, the percentage of the Boddington population aged between 15 and 25 (9.8%) was the lowest in the Peel and substantially lower than in Rockingham, Perth, and WA (all around 14 to 15%). At the other end of the scale, the percentage of the population aged 65 and above (13.8%) was also relatively low for the region and marginally higher than in Rockingham (12.6%) and the State (12.1%). Projected proportions of the over 65 age group for 2021, however, suggest that this cohort will increase to one-fifth of the population.

The Indigenous population share in 2006 at 1.3% was close the overall regional proportion of 1.4% though substantially lower than for the State as a whole (3.4%).

People with a disability, according to regional unpublished data, make up close to 20% of the population which is on a par with the Perth proportion and lower than the Peel share of 24%.

¹⁶ Shortest distance along main roads calculated using Google Maps.

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While Boddington recorded a comparatively low level of migrant settlement (14.2%) in 2006, this proportion is likely to have increased significantly in the intervening years as a result of the presence of mining in the area which, as research shows, attracts overseas employees and their families. A number of such staff and families have recently settled in the shire. Further, this proportion is anticipated to continue to grow as the mine reaches full staffing levels in 2014. Diversity of country of origin is a feature of the Boddington overseas born population with current residents hailing from Surinam, Peru, Mongolia, Indonesia and South Africa.

The experience of migrants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds settling in Boddington, according to recently-arrived local interviewees accompanying overseas born spouses taking up employment at the gold mine, is at present characterised by:

- a sense of intense alienation, of not knowing anyone and of not belonging intensified by language and cultural literacy barriers;
- resultant challenges in undertaking everyday tasks including shopping, banking, visiting a doctor;
- geographic isolation compounded by lack of transport (newly-arrived overseas residents from populous urban cities are unlikely to have drivers' licenses, and are also unfamiliar with the local geography);
- difficulty developing English language proficiency and gaining employment; and
- in some cases, active discrimination.

Community cohesion and sense of place identity is important particularly in the face of rapid demographic change; at the same time this cohesion and sense of place is often challenged by an influx of new residents accompanying mining development, particularly when this leads to a shift in the local demographic profile (Mayes 2008).

Significant exclusion of sections of the community on the basis of race and class is apparent in the primary research. This is neatly encapsulated in the comment from a Boddington participant: "there's a strong sense of community, but it's a bit of a closed shop".

Boddington is experiencing the above identified community tensions associated with a daily influx of mining workers (in this case from the Newmont Gold Mine on-site residential camp) and also growing numbers of locally resident mine workers and families. For example interviewees noted that "new mining people look down on the locals" and that "there is growing segregation: rich, intermediate, poor", while others referred more broadly to a sense of division between "new" and "old" residents. Local initiatives such as a recent "community integration program" concerned to bring old and new residents together suggests that community division is both recognised and significant.

In addition, long-standing racism in the shire is apparent in the frequency of comments such as:

Very few people will say hello to the Aboriginal population; the Aboriginal population will only say hi to a few white people"

Social Disadvantage

Boddington's score on the 2006 ABS Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) of 989 is close to the Australian standardised average score of 1000, just as Boddington's position in the fifth decile of all Australian CDs, placing it within the top half of the all 142 WA local government areas on this measure. Specifically, Boddington ranks 65 where 1 is the lowest most disadvantaged LGA in WA and 142 is the least disadvantaged. Importantly, the minimum scoring collection district in the area is also (just) within the national standardised average range of 900 to 1100.

Health and Community Services

Boddington appears to be well serviced by the Boddington District Hospital which offers a range of in-patient and out-patient services including aged care and 24 hour emergency service. Boddington Medical Centre, officially opened in April 2011, currently has space for an additional GP on top of the current service level equivalent to 1.5 GPs and other health professionals such as a dentist, physiotherapist, and others. Home and Community Care (HACC) is accommodated in the same building which also features a kitchen, showers and large activity room (available, for example, for indoor bowls).

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Access to health facilities was not an issue of concern for the majority of interviewees. Those that did draw attention to medical facilities did so in the context of specialist services, maternity care, and caring for children with disabilities. An interviewee in the latter category described difficulties in getting local help. In addition, "what support there is changes year to year", and it takes time to replace support staff who leave. It is particularly hard if you "don't have the money to go private."

It was also noted that pregnant women travel for antenatal care and ultimately have to go to Narrogin, Mandurah or Armadale to give birth. Interviewees also highlighted a lack of choice in medical care; there are 2 local doctors, one of whom according to interviewees is often fully-booked and one of whom is part time. Consequently, according to interviewees it can be frequently necessary to travel one and a half hours to Armadale for medical attention unavailable in the Shire.

Interviewed Indigenous health workers highlighted a lack of health services specifically addressing the needs of the Indigenous community in Boddington.

Aged Care and Facilities

The five beds linked to high level aged care in the Boddington hospital are frequently full so that those unable to look after themselves frequently need to leave the area. Similarly, there have been 15 expressions of interest in relation to 11 independent living units expected to be available in early 2012 as part of a larger Boddington Shire project.

High transport costs along with the lengthy travel time needed to reach Boddington from Mandurah contribute to a local lack of outreach clinics and programs offered by services in the Peel.

Youth

In the experience of local youth research participants there is a clear group in Boddington "with drug and alcohol issues" in need of access to social workers. Interviewees consistently noted that "there doesn't seem to be anywhere or anyone to go to for young people." The youth centre was perceived to be for younger people (under 16). Similarly, youth programs in the area and a youth "chill out space" were seen to service a limited cross section of the youth. In 2009, 20.7% of the population was under 14 (compared to 19.5% state wide) and 9% was between 15 and 24 of the population was under 24 years of age (compared to 14.5% for the state). This would suggest that the current youth programs are targeted at a substantial portion of youth in the shire, and also that as this group ages the need for programs for older youth will accelerate.

In the 2006 census, 34.8% of the population identified as volunteers, a rate not only the highest in the Peel region but also almost double that of the state average of 18.7%. However, local interviewees drew attention to volunteer burnout, noting that "80% of the work is done by 20% of the people". Importantly, volunteers just "have to keep doing it" because there is no one to take over. Local service providers note that a small population base makes it hard to get the number of participants required to get programs running. An external service provider struggling to provide outreach in the Shire noted that due to limited resources (time and transport) it is not possible to provide one on one help. Rather, group sessions were necessary. Funding was highlighted as an ongoing difficulty not only in terms of resourcing programs but also in relation to paying staff. At the same time, in the words of an interviewee actively involved in the community, "a lot of things here fold due to lack of participation."

Housing

The small size of the Boddington housing market makes it vulnerable to rapid and extensive change as result of small shifts in the market. The resurgence of mining in the area lead to swift rises in house prices so that in 2008 Boddington was one of the ten most expensive non-metropolitan housing markets in the state (Beer et al 2011). In the decade from 1996 to 2006 individual Peel LGAs experienced significant reductions in the ratio of income to house prices: this was at its most extreme in Boddington which saw a reduction in this period from 55.3% to 18.2%. In 2006 the percentage of tenant households in housing stress in Boddington was 15.2% (Beer et al, 2011). In comparison, the percentage in Waroona was between 30 and 35%. Murray on the other hand was less than 5% (Beer et al 2011). In 2006 Boddington recorded the highest rate of renting (24%) in the Peel region after Mandurah (26.8%).

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According to a recent Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute study (Beer et al 2011) there are a range of critical housing issues in the Shire. Firstly, though the 2006 decision to re-open the Boddington gold mine was followed by an escalation in house and land prices in the area driven in part by speculation, following the Global Financial Crisis, housing construction has faltered despite demand so that there is now “only modest rental accommodation/investment activity in the Shire.” This in turn has led to a largely drive-in-drive out mining workforce, despite substantial incentives offered by Newmont to encourage relocation to the area (pers.comm). The Shire is as a result experiencing a loss of development opportunities.

Beer et al (2011) also identified a chronic shortage of public housing. The small number of Department of Housing properties, tend to be small and occupied by Indigenous families with resultant overcrowding, and waiting times are long. Private rental properties are in high demand and rents are high, making them unaffordable for Commonwealth Rent Assistance clients. In addition “the Shire nor its residents have received anything from the Commonwealth Stimulus Package and it is unlikely that any NRAS housing will be built in Boddington” (Beer et al. 2011).

Safety and Security

In comparison to the relatively low Peel region crime rates, Boddington has lower levels of theft (*Other Theft* and *Residential Burglary*) and *Property Damage*, substantially higher levels of *Total Acts Intended to Cause Injury*, and almost five times the regional (and over five times the state and seven times the Rockingham average) for *Total Illicit Drug Offences*. The rate for this offence (calculated at 38.6 per 1000 population) is notably higher than in the rest of the region. Domestic assaults accounted for 56.3% of recorded assaults, the second highest proportion in the region and notably higher than the proportion for the South West (36%) and the state (38.5%). In relation to 2010/11 imprisonment rate data for sentenced prisoners, however, Boddington (177.3) greatly exceeds all other Peel LGAs, with the exception of Murray (194.8), and is well above the Rockingham (137.3) and WA (159.6). From 2004-05 offence rates in Boddington have tended to increase for most categories; importantly where rates have been trending higher in Boddington those in the South West SD have been mostly declining. Within the Peel, Boddington also stands out with no unsentenced prisoners citing a home address in the LGA.

Interview participants tended to describe a local sense of safety, and attendant freedom for their children without fear of “stranger danger”. In general the community was perceived to be a “safe and peaceful place.”

There are 4 police officers in Boddington (Peel District Police Office, Aug 2010 cited in PDC 2011).

Education

Since 2001 Boddington has recorded an increase in resident post school qualifications of 28.4%. Boddington, according to 2009/10 data has the region’s lowest percentage of certificate qualifications per resident population and, along with Serpentine Jarrahdale, the highest percentage of residents with a Bachelor’s degree (21.7%). This level of tertiary qualification exceeds the WA percentage of 20.8%.

In 2009, 300 students from Kindergarten to Year 12 attended Boddington District High School, including students not only from the local community but also Quindanning, Wandering, Bannister and Crossman (BDHS 2009). A rapid rise in student numbers was attributed to the re-development of the Newmont Goldmine. After completing year 10, students either stay on to undertake VET and TAFE courses, attend Narrogin SHS or Agricultural College or move in to the labour force (BDHS). The low percentage of youth between 15 and 24 may reflect the range of education options. The student/teacher ratio in 2009 was 13.3/1, lower than the state government school average of 14.6.

According to the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI), which reports on the health and well-being of children in their first full year of school, Boddington has the most pressing requirement for assistance to address developmental vulnerability in the Peel region.

As the above shows, the percentage of children in Boddington assessed as being developmentally vulnerable is at least double that of the WA average in four domains and approaching double in Communication Skills and General Knowledge. Around half of all children in Boddington are assessed as being developmentally vulnerable in regards to one domain and 44.4% are viewed as being vulnerable in two or more domains. At the same time, the percentage of children who have been child care or in early childhood education programs

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in Boddington is recorded in the AEDI data as 77.8% which is well below the Peel participation rate of 85.9% and also the Rockingham (84.4%) and WA (81.3%) participation rates. This suggests either an insufficiency of such programs in the shire and / or barriers to participation including cost, social exclusion, working hours, and access to transport, for example. Opened in early 2011 the Boddington Early Learning Long Day Care Centre is likely to go some way to redressing any lack of opportunities in the Shire, though it needs to be noted that local play groups and parenting skill sessions can go a long way to addressing the communication skills domain vulnerabilities identified in Boddington.

Employment and Income

The Worsely Bauxite mine together with the development of the Newmont Boddington Gold Mine contribute substantially to the region's mineral production. In the 2011 March quarter, unemployment in Boddington at 3.1% was low in comparison to Mandurah, for example, at 7%, Rockingham at 6.6% and WA at 4.4%. The Shire also recorded a relatively high median weekly income of \$471 which represents 94% of the WA median, and also records the largest percentage of households earning a weekly income over \$1000. These results are likely to be a product of mining employment in the area.

Local interviewees noted a lack of opportunities in fields of employment outside the mining industry.

The Shire had a higher percentage of households earning a weekly income of less than \$400 (40.8%) than the state. This low level of household income is likely to correlate with a significant level of disadvantage in the Shire, particularly given housing and fuel costs. It also signifies large disparities in the Shire.

The median Indigenous household income in Boddington is 77% of the non-Indigenous household income. This regionally large gap is due to the relatively higher incomes of non-Indigenous households in the LGA combined with low Indigenous incomes in the Peel region (with the exception of Serpentine Jarrahdale). In addition, the average Indigenous household is 3.3 persons compared to the average non-Indigenous household of 2.6 persons; this income inequality is thus even larger.

Environment

Frequent mention was made in Boddington of the general lack of amenities and that "most stuff has to be bought elsewhere" while "the only dress shop is the op shop". This was seen to contribute to difficulties in attracting young families to the area and, once this is achieved, getting them to stay: "They can't even buy birthday presents or shoes locally for their children.

The town's appearance was also frequently commented on, in particular that of the main street which was variously described as "looking bad" and "ugly." Others commented on a need to "pretty up the town," noting for example the lack of Christmas lights. Still others bemoaned a general *lack* of change:

Boddington has had a gold mine for 20 years but nothing's changed: we've got DIDO, skimpies, construction, big business and then the pub puts on a bus to transport mine workers from the camp.

Several women commented on the lack of social venues expressing the view that the local hotel is a "blokes pub".

Infrastructure, Transport and Telecommunications

In anticipation of major growth in the coming decade, Boddington was nominated in 2011 as one of nine SuperTowns in WA. Inclusion in the Regional Centres Development Plan (SuperTowns) will allow Boddington to bid for a share of \$85.5 million in funding to provide infrastructure and planning services. This program will provide a competitive forum for the selected towns to plan developments in their areas in response to projected growth (Department of Regional Development and Lands 2011). The SuperTowns program will enable Boddington to fund and develop a strategic vision as well as fund infrastructure needs identified in relation to this strategy.

Each interviewee in Boddington, without exception, drew attention to the role that access to affordable, private transport plays in the quality of life in Boddington. In the absence of public transport, lack of access to private transport was explicitly linked to feelings of isolation and of being "trapped". Those without or with

limited access to reliable transport are unable to go on outings (which “alleviates the sense of being trapped”) or to shop more economically in the larger nearby towns and cities, or indeed to buy essential items many of which are unavailable in Boddington. It is important to have a safe and reliable vehicle given the long distances travelled, especially given the absence of telephone coverage along the way. The high and rising cost of fuel is keenly felt as a significant drain on household budgets.

The 2006 census indicated that a low 53.6% of people in Boddington drive to work in comparison to 62.3% in Mandurah and 63.0% in Perth. Household internet connections are relatively low with only 16% connected to Broadband and further 40% using dial up connections; almost 40% of households have no internet access.

Key Community Strengths

Interviewees identified the following key strengths of the Boddington community:

- new infrastructure, for example school and childcare centre, along with well-equipped library and swimming pool;
- slow pace of living: "I like the peacefulness here. When I'm in the city I can't wait to get home"; " It's nice to know the faces"; and
- strong sense of community (“but it’s a bit of a ‘closed shop’”)

GAP ANALYSIS

Lack of access to public transport and to affordable private transport is a major determinant of quality of life in the shire. Though crime rates are generally low, a reported higher incidence of domestic and family violence needs to be taken into account particularly in the absence of local services to support those attempting to escape this violence.

There appears to be long standing exclusion of the Indigenous community and emerging tensions from the arrival of residents associated with mining. Similarly, sections of the migrant population flowing to the area as a result of mining activity are a potentially excluded group leading to further community fragmentation.

While aged care and accommodation is clearly an issue, the results of the Australian Early Development Index are cause for concern.

A chronic shortage of affordable private and public housing is a critical issue both as a barrier to growth but also to the development of a diverse and inclusive community.

Given that many local programs are dependent on volunteer labour, the reported burnout is also a major concern.

WHAT WOULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- Improved access to affordable and more frequent public transport networks and /or improvement in the level of outreach services.
- Programs to address the gaps identified in the AEDI data tailored to the particular needs of vulnerable children and carers in ways which acknowledge place-based influences.
- Measures to foster community such as
 - LGA-level events designed to bring together disparate community factions
 - Community education programs and campaigns addressing local discrimination
 - Events to highlight the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region
 - Improved access to English lessons at a range of proficiency levels
- Succession planning and recruitment strategies to increase the number and diversity of volunteers including training options.
- The pursuit of funding to address current inequalities (for example access to affordable housing) as part of planning for future development.

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