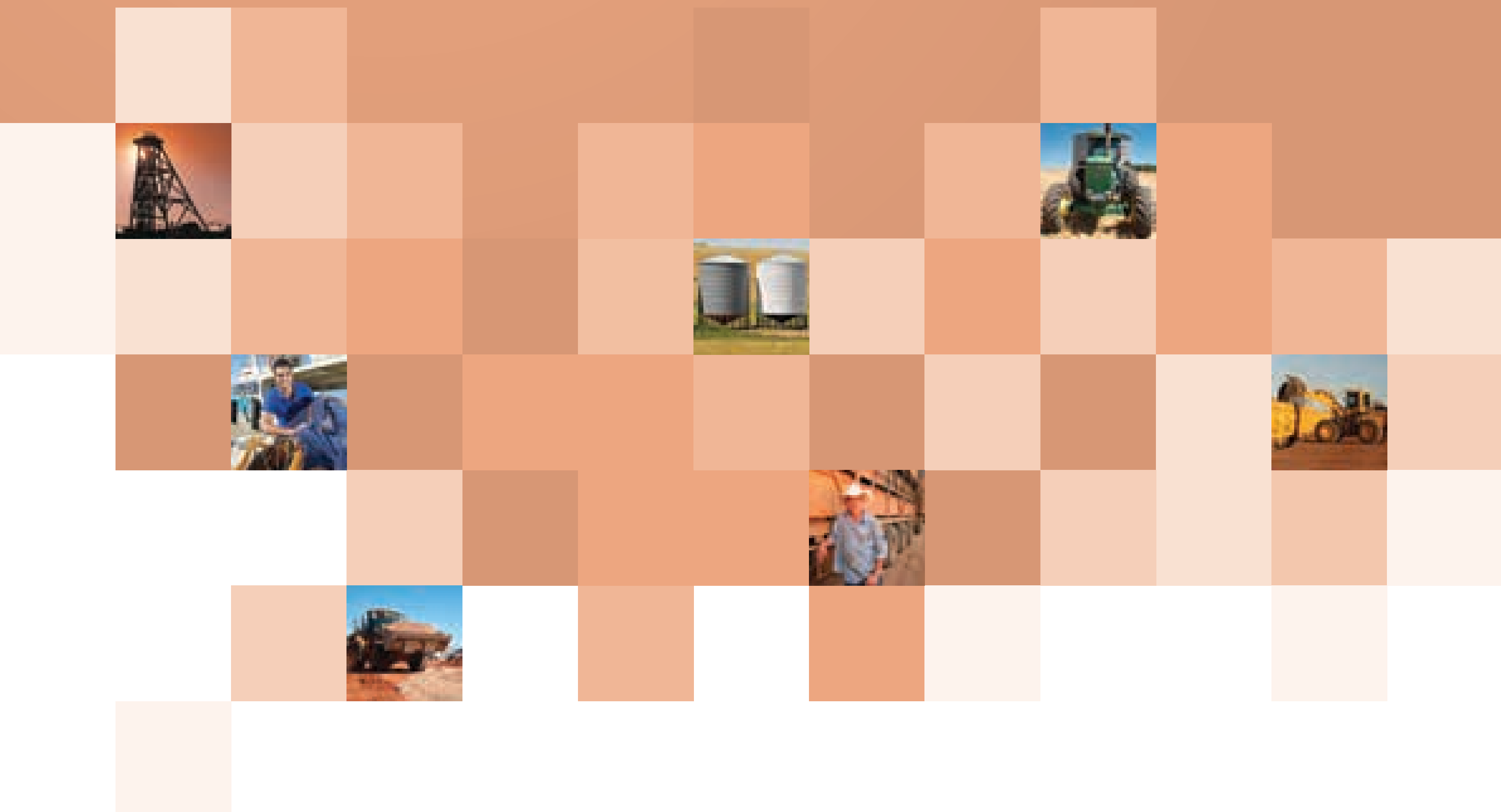
Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Training**
and Workforce Development

Mid West Workforce Development Alliance

Acknowledgement
This plan was prepared by the Mid West Workforce Development Alliance in collaboration with the Department of Training and Workforce Development. The alliance comprised the following individuals who generously contributed their time and expertise:

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Mr Gary Fitzgerald and Ms Joanne Favretto, Department of Training and Workforce Development
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Ms Natalie Nelmes and Ms Meredith Wills, Geraldton Universities Centre
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Ms Bronte Shiosaki, WA Country Health Midwest
Mr Jeff Graham, City of Greater Geraldton
Ms Rebecca Davidson, Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia
Mr Wayne McDonald, Department of Aboriginal Affairs
Mr Wayne Murray, Commonwealth Department of Employment

This plan and executive summary may be viewed or downloaded from dtwd.wa.gov.au

Title: *Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018*

ISBN 978-1-74205-123-9

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The term ‘Aboriginal’ people in this publication is inclusive of Torres Strait Islanders. It is noted that the terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Indigenous’ have both been used in this publication as a result of the terminology used in sourced information.

Guide to implementation

The *Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018* (the plan) aims to build, attract and retain a skilled workforce to meet the economic needs of the Mid West region. It contains a range of priority actions which were identified by local stakeholders to address local workforce development challenges.

The plan aligns with the State Government's *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia (Skilling WA)*, which provides a framework for government and industry's response to Western Australia's skill and workforce needs.

The Mid West Workforce Development Alliance, which is made up of industry, community and government representatives from the region, will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the plan. The alliance will identify those actions within the plan that should be given highest priority and facilitate their implementation. Progress will be reported to stakeholders annually and be included in *Skilling WA's* annual progress report.

The plan has been designed as an important reference point for all stakeholders as it identifies the challenges, agreed solutions and organisations that have a key stake in its implementation.

For the Regional Development Council, as the peak advisory body to the Western Australian Government on regional development matters, the plan is used to identify workforce issues and solutions which require policy consideration across regions. Importantly, the initiatives in the plan are closely aligned with and support the long term aspirations of the *Mid West Regional Blueprint*. It is expected that the *Blueprint* will have a significant role in prioritising many funding decisions in the region including Royalties for Regions initiatives.

For local government bodies, the plan identifies workforce issues to be taken into account as part of local government decision making processes. The plan will be used by industry associations and employer peak bodies as a reference when working directly with employers to implement industry and enterprise solutions to workforce development challenges. The plan also captures the views and aspirations of the broader community and provides a useful reference when engaging on workforce development issues across the region.

The Department of Training and Workforce Development in conjunction with the Mid West Workforce Development Alliance will facilitate the coordination of State Government responses outlined in the plan. This will include working with those agencies and training providers designated to take the lead on priority actions in the plan.

Contents

Background and methodology

The *Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018* (the plan) has been prepared by the Mid West Workforce Development Alliance in collaboration with the Department of Training and Workforce Development. The overall aim of the plan is to identify current and future workforce development and skills requirements of the Mid West region and to develop strategies to address these. The plan has a particular focus on strategies relating to youth engagement in education, training and employment; improving industry engagement; and the enhancement of pathways into the workforce.

The plan sits within the context of the statewide workforce planning framework *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia*[1] and the Mid West Development Commission's draft *Mid West Regional Blueprint*[2]. To align with these strategic documents, development of this plan involved:

- an assessment of the region's economic and demographic profile;
- an examination of existing capacity and capability of the workforce;
- an assessment of the factors affecting the supply of labour;
- an assessment of existing strategies for youth engagement and pathways to education, training and employment;
- extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders in the region, relating to aspects including Aboriginal and youth workforce development issues; and
- the preparation of a series of training and workforce development priority actions for the region.

Methodology

To support the preparation of the plan, extensive desktop research was undertaken, including a review of current research, literature and statistical data. Notwithstanding the data limitations encountered (see appendix A), this material provided the basis for the development of an economic and social profile for the Mid West region.

The research was then validated via a series of stakeholder consultations conducted in Geraldton, Dongara, Northampton, Morawa, Mount Magnet and Meekatharra. These stakeholder consultations involved over 80 representatives from local, State and Commonwealth government agencies, Aboriginal corporations, industry, the Western Australian network of 10 industry training councils, training and employment service providers and community sector organisations, including providers of services to young

[1] Available from dtwd.wa.gov.au

[2] Available from mwdc.wa.gov.au/blueprint.aspx

people. Consultation methods employed to gain stakeholder insight included face to face meetings, open forum-style workshops, telephone interviews and surveys of employers and students in the region.

Appendix B contains a list of stakeholders involved in the consultation process.

Policy and planning context

The *Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018* has been developed within the context of both statewide and regional level policy and planning frameworks. The principle policy documents framing the work are *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia* and the draft *Mid West Regional Blueprint*.

Skilling WA

The Department of Training and Workforce Development is the lead State Government agency in Western Australia for workforce development matters. It has developed a coordinated and integrated whole of state workforce planning and development process: *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia (Skilling WA)*. Regional workforce development plans are a key element of the *Skilling WA* framework (see figure 1). The plans are being developed and implemented by regional workforce development alliances in each of the nine regions in Western Australia.

Figure 1: Skilling WA planning framework

Source: Department of Training and Workforce Development

Skilling WA articulates five strategic goals which are aimed at building, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to meet the economic and community needs of the State. With this in mind, the *Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018* identifies local workforce issues related to these goals and suggests priority actions to address these. The five *Skilling WA* strategic goals are:

1. Increase participation in the workforce, particularly among the under-employed and disengaged, mature-aged workers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other under-represented groups.
2. Supplement the Western Australian workforce with skilled migrants to fill employment vacancies unable to be filled by the local workforce and address those factors which support a growing population.
3. Attract workers with the right skills to the Western Australian workforce and retain them by offering access to rewarding employment and a diverse and vibrant community and environment to live in.
4. Provide flexible, responsive and innovative education and training which enables people to develop and utilise the skills necessary for them to realise their potential and contribute to Western Australia's prosperity.
5. Plan and coordinate a strategic State Government response to workforce development issues in Western Australia.

Skilling WA is reviewed and updated by the Department of Training and Workforce Development as required. *Skilling WA - second edition*[3] was released in November 2014. This document builds on the achievements and progress made over the past four years and positions the State to address current and future workforce planning and development challenges at a State, regional, industry and enterprise level.

Mid West Regional Blueprint

The draft *Mid West Regional Blueprint* (the *Blueprint*) developed by the Mid West Development Commission in collaboration with Regional Development Australia Mid West Gascoyne, is an aspirational growth and development plan for the region. It proposes strategies which focus on driving the region's key opportunities with genuine growth and development potential whilst reducing barriers. It outlines five key pillars imperative for the successful growth of the region. The focus areas under these pillars are designed to create more jobs, improve education outcomes, connect and enhance communities and support economic development to deliver the 2050 vision. The five key pillars are identified below.

1. **Physical infrastructure:** Create an integrated network of infrastructure to generate new industry opportunities for an annual economic growth rate of 5% by 2025.
2. **Digital and communications:** The Mid West will be a connected, digitally empowered and innovative region with competitive mobile and network infrastructure, creating opportunities for growth and development.
3. **Economic development:** Generate 10 000+ new jobs in the Mid West by 2025 and an additional 35 000 by 2050.

[3] Available from dtwd.wa.gov.au

4 **Highly desirable communities:** Build communities with strong social capital and infrastructure that creates a regional population of 80 000+ by 2025 and 190 000 by 2050.
5 **Knowledge and learning:** Create highly educated and skilled communities that meet the region's future workforce requirements.

The draft *Blueprint's* regional aspiration for its workforce development sub-pillar (within the overarching knowledge and learning pillar), is to build "a dynamic and skilled workforce that matches the levels of growth and development in the Mid West".

The Mid West Workforce Development Alliance in partnership with the Mid West Development Commission will ensure that the *Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018* initiatives are aligned with and support the draft *Blueprint's* aspirations.

Profile of the Mid West region

The Mid West region

The Mid West region[4] covers more than 468 000km² and consists of three sub-regions: agricultural/North Midlands, Batavia Coast and Murchison. The region's population is approaching 58 000 people and extends from Geraldton in the west to beyond Wiluna in the east. The Mid West experienced a healthy average annual growth rate of 1.4% between 2003 and 2013 (ABS 2013b). It adjoins the Pilbara and Gascoyne regions to the north and the Wheatbelt and Goldfields-Esperance regions to the south.

Figure 2 shows the study area and the major regional centres.

Main towns within the region include Kalbarri, Northampton, Geraldton, Dongara, Mullewa, Morawa, Mt Magnet and Meekatharra. The consultation phase of this project was conducted at these sites.

Within the Mid West region's three sub-regions, there are 17 local government areas. Most of the statistics shown in this report are at the sub-regional level.

Distance is a critical issue for service delivery and workforce development in the Mid West. Infrastructure and services are concentrated in the main residential towns across the region, with large tracts of open space between them. As an example, approximate distances between key townships include:

- Geraldton – Kalbarri: 140 kms
- Geraldton – Mt Magnet: 340 kms
- Geraldton – Meekatharra: 535 kms
- Geraldton – Wiluna: 720 kms

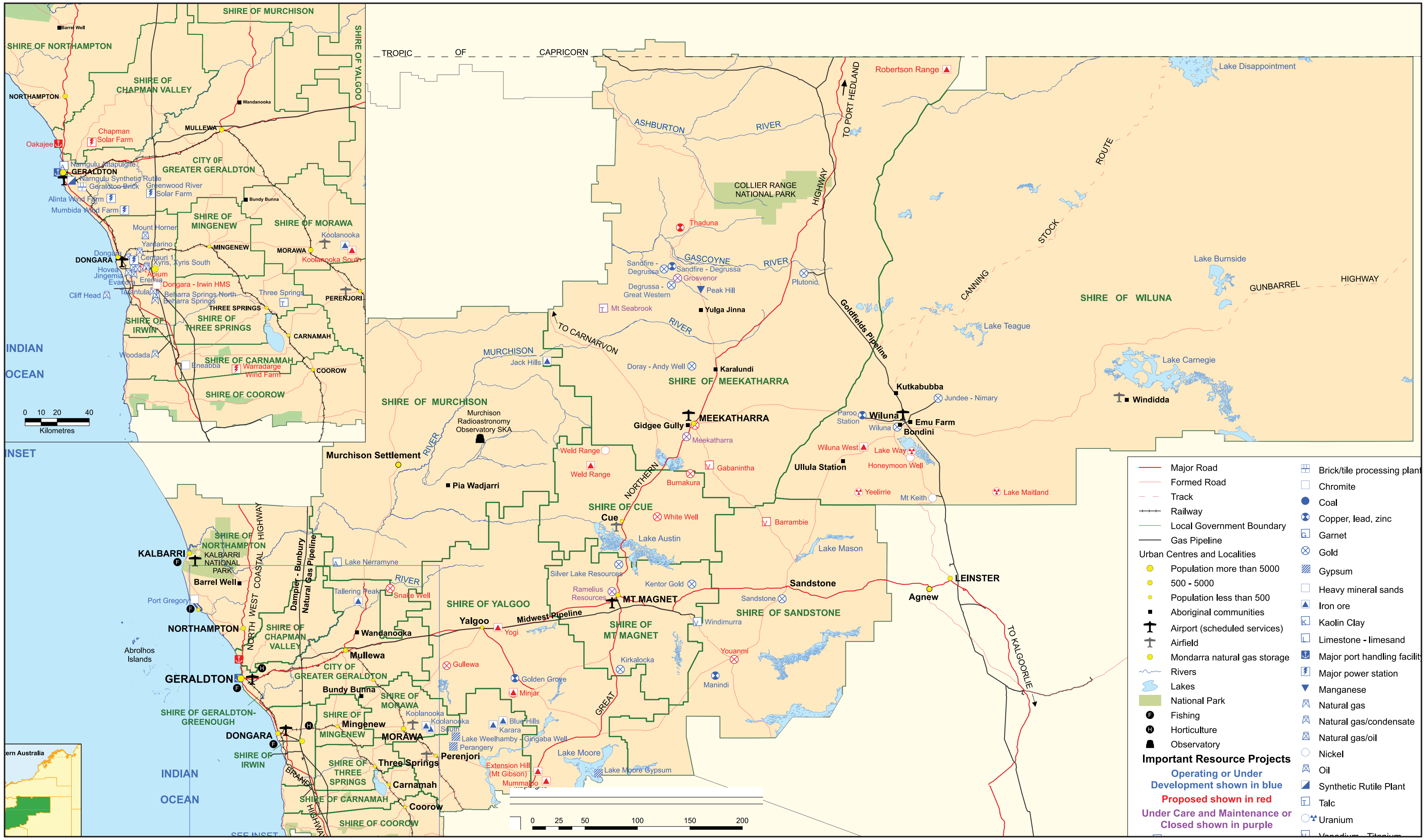
This reinforces the need for an effective strategy to assist the local workforce to meet the employment demand in each of the region's key towns.

Natural resources and landscape

The Mid West region contains a range of natural assets and encompasses a variety of land uses. A significant coastal area to the west, rich agricultural land throughout the northern midlands, numerous waterways, rivers and estuary systems, a series of natural parks and vast and arid landscapes to the eastern and northern parts of the region are features of the region's natural resources and landscape.

[4] Refer to Appendix A for details of the terminology used within this report.

Figure 2: Mid West region



Source: Department of Regional Development, 2014

In addition to the ‘above ground’ landscape and resources, the region is rich in a range of below ground resources such as iron ore, gold, mineral sands and copper.

The region’s land use, natural resources and climate support a wide variety of industry and are therefore key factors in sub-regional workforce development issues. For example, the vast space and clear skies of the east are home to one of the world’s most suitable locations for radio astronomy (currently under construction), whereas the coastal areas support a substantial and growing tourism industry. Agricultural production is conducted across the region, as is mining, whereas fishing and horticulture feature in the region’s west.

Settlements

Settlements are dispersed across the region, linked by a transport network. However there is a high concentration in the western coastal areas. Settlements play a variety of roles, ranging from a major service centre (Geraldton), moderate support and public services in smaller settlements, through to basic service provision.

Implications for the *Mid West workforce development plan*

- Different climates and land use activities across the region will impact on the nature, type and seasonality of work.
- Distance between settlements will mean workforce needs to be either sourced locally or 'fly-in fly-out'; therein lies an expectation of a workforce which features minimal commuting.
- Smaller townships have typically had difficulty attracting the requisite workforce due to a reduced number of services.
- Proximity to other strong economic regions may influence the supply of workers as they take up opportunities in other areas.
- Different settlements play different roles within the region and therefore will have different workforce development needs.

Regional economy

This section provides an analysis of the structure and dynamics of the Mid West regional economy. It focuses on those aspects of the regional economy that have both direct and indirect consequences for labour markets and workforce planning. Central to this is a discussion of the external drivers of economic growth, the structure of the resources sector, industrial concentration, incomes and regional development investment.

Table 1: GRP comparison

GRP expenditure method	Mid West ($m)	% GRP	WA ($m)	% GSP
Household consumption	2 785	49%	116 179	44%
Government consumption	879	15%	39 075	15%
Private gross fixed capital expenditure	1 140	20%	45 377	17%
Public gross fixed capital expenditure	301	5%	13 361	5%
Gross regional expenses	**5 105**	**89%**	**213 992**	**81%**
Plus exports	5 585	97%	187 117	71%
Minus domestic imports	(-3 850)	(-67%)	(-79 869)	(-30%)
Minus overseas imports	(-1 105)	(-19%)	(-56 694)	(-21%)
Gross regional product / Gross State product	**5 735**	**n/a**	**264 545**	**n/a**
Population	53 669	n/a	2 239 171	n/a
Per capita GRP/GSP	106 860	n/a	118 144	n/a
Per worker GRP/GSP	254 598	n/a	247 060	n/a

Source: REMPLAN 2014

Gross regional product

The Mid West's gross regional product (GRP) at June 2014 was $5.74 billion, as identified in table 1, representing 2.2% of gross State product (GSP). While lower than the State average of $118 144 the region's output at $106 860 per person is relatively high compared to other regions.

Mid West industries

Table 2 uses industry output[5] ($m) to detail the composition of the Mid West region's economy as of June 2014.

Table 2: Mid West output by industry

Industry	Mid West		WA	
	($m)	% total output	($m)	% total output
Mining	4 444	38.30%	153 117	28.04%
Manufacturing	1 517	13.07%	97 833	17.91%
Construction	1 118	9.64%	62 643	11.47%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	709	6.11%	33 488	6.13%
Transport, postal and warehousing	479	4.13%	20 725	3.80%
Health care and social assistance	303	2.61%	15 798	2.89%
Retail trade	295	2.54%	14 503	2.66%
Public administration and safety	352	3.04%	16 459	3.01%
Education and training	289	2.49%	12 944	2.37%
Wholesale trade	255	2.19%	16 188	2.96%
Professional, scientific and technical services	252	2.18%	25 864	4.74%
Financial and insurance services	230	1.98%	19 174	3.51%
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	173	1.50%	11 591	2.12%
Accommodation and food services	266	2.29%	10 024	1.84%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	512	4.41%	7 431	1.36%
Other services	147	1.27%	7 065	1.29%
Administrative and support services	154	1.32%	9 849	1.80%
Information media and telecommunications	79	0.68%	7 605	1.39%
Arts and recreation services	30	0.26%	3 817	0.70%
Total	**$11 603**	**100%**	**$546 120**	**100%**

Source: (REMPLAN 2014a)

[5] Industry output is the economic equivalent to 'revenue', it is, therefore, a measure of turnover or scale, not value created or profitability.

Mining is the most valuable sector in the Mid West region, contributing over 38.3% of the region's output (REMPLAN 2014a). In 2012–13, the sector's value in the Mid West was estimated at over $3 billion, which represented about 3.0% of the State's mineral production, excluding offshore petroleum (DRDL 2013). The region's largest categories of minerals by production value are gold, iron ore and copper, lead and zinc. As of January 2014, there were 58 producing mines operating in the Mid West (MWDC 2014), although since that time some are known to have suspended operations, including Blue Hills Mungada Mine. The recent softening of commodity prices and the continuing shift from construction to production in the mining industry may result in significant future adjustments in the value of the sector in the Mid West.

Manufacturing is also a significant contributor (13.1%) to the region's economy and workforce needs (REMPLAN 2014a). Significant manufacturing activity in the region includes engineering fabrication and boat building. The manufacturing sector also plays a key role in supporting mining, construction and agricultural activities.

Agriculture is another major industry for the Mid West, with an estimated total agricultural production of $1 billion in 2011–12 (13.4% of the State's total). In 2011–12 the region had approximately 17.8 million hectares (37.7% of total Mid West land) allocated to agriculture, shared across an estimated 1 000 establishments. Cropping (wheat, canola, lupins) dominates agriculture in the Mid West, accounting for almost 80% of production (DRDL 2013).

In 2013–14 there was an estimated $248.6 million worth of building approvals in the Mid West ($165.6 million residential and $83 million non-residential), which accounted for approximately 1.8% of the State's building approvals, down from 2.3% in 2011–12 (ABS 2013). In 2011–12, the retail industry in the Mid West turned over approximately $660 million, accounting for 2.2% of the State's overall retail turnover (DRDL 2013).

The Mid West region is a significant nature based, marine and cultural tourism destination. The region's attractions include the Batavia Coast, Kalbarri and the Murchison River gorges. The region is also known for its rich Aboriginal heritage. Between 2010 and 2012, a total of 370 300 domestic and 45 200 international tourists visited the Mid West (DRDL 2013).

Enterprise structure

Table 3 shows there were 5 256 businesses registered in the Mid West in 2012. Analysis of these businesses indicates that 59.2% (3 111) employed no staff (for example, owner operator businesses) and a further 23.8% (1 251) employed between one and four staff (ABS 2012).

Despite the high production value and large number of workers employed in the mining industry, the sector accounts for less than 1% of registered businesses operating in the Mid West region (45 registrations). By comparison, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry accounts for 27.3% of registrations (1 435 businesses). Other prominent industries by number of enterprises in the Mid West include construction (16.3%), rental hiring and real estate services (8.0%) and retail trade (6.6%) (ABS 2012).

Table 3: Number of businesses by industry

Industry	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Trend
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1 624	1 608	1 548	1 542	1 511	1 435	
Construction	881	887	867	859	886	855	
Rental, hiring and real estate services	367	375	372	399	408	418	
Retail trade	358	371	355	359	361	348	
Transport, postal and warehousing	330	339	332	341	328	324	
Financial and insurance services	245	250	266	295	309	316	
Other services	249	252	250	262	261	259	
Professional scientific and technical services	228	232	223	233	250	243	
Accommodation and food services	213	206	210	213	216	215	
Health care and social assistance	144	141	150	152	166	169	
Manufacturing	194	177	175	169	165	166	
Administrative and support services	121	127	131	144	129	131	
Not classified	44	61	70	101	88	124	
Wholesale trade	119	114	112	108	105	101	
Mining	44	45	44	42	46	45	
Education and training	30	30	37	37	36	35	
Arts and recreation services	36	35	36	40	37	33	
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	25	22	19	20	20	18	
Public administration and safety	13	10	9	7	8	11	
Information media and telecommunications	8	12	9	12	12	10	
Total	**5 273**	**5 294**	**5 215**	**5 335**	**5 342**	**5 256**	

Source: ABS 2012

Table 4 shows the number of business operating in the Mid West by number of employees. Of these businesses, 59% (3 111) employed no staff (for example, were owner operator businesses) and a further 24% (1 251) employed between one and four staff.

Table 4: Number of businesses by empoyee numbers

Number of businesses	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of non-employing businesses	2 967	3 037	3 013	3 170	3 155	3 111
Number of employing businesses: 1–4 employees	1 385	1 333	1 325	1 276	1 296	1 251
Number of employing businesses: 5 or more employees	921	924	877	889	891	894
Total number of businesses	**5 273**	**5 294**	**5 215**	**5 335**	**5 342**	**5 256**

Source: ABS 2012

Table 5 shows the average size of firms (by output) operating in each sector. The mining industry is comprised of large firms (average output $98.8 million), whereas other sectors are comprised of many smaller operations.

While care needs to be taken in reviewing this information (scale does not necessarily equate to the number of workers needed), the scale of enterprise is an important consideration in determining workforce related issues. Larger firms tend to offer more significant training and development opportunities, whereas smaller firms can have quite specific needs but also require more general skills as multiple roles may need to be fulfilled.

Table 5: Number of businesses by industry output

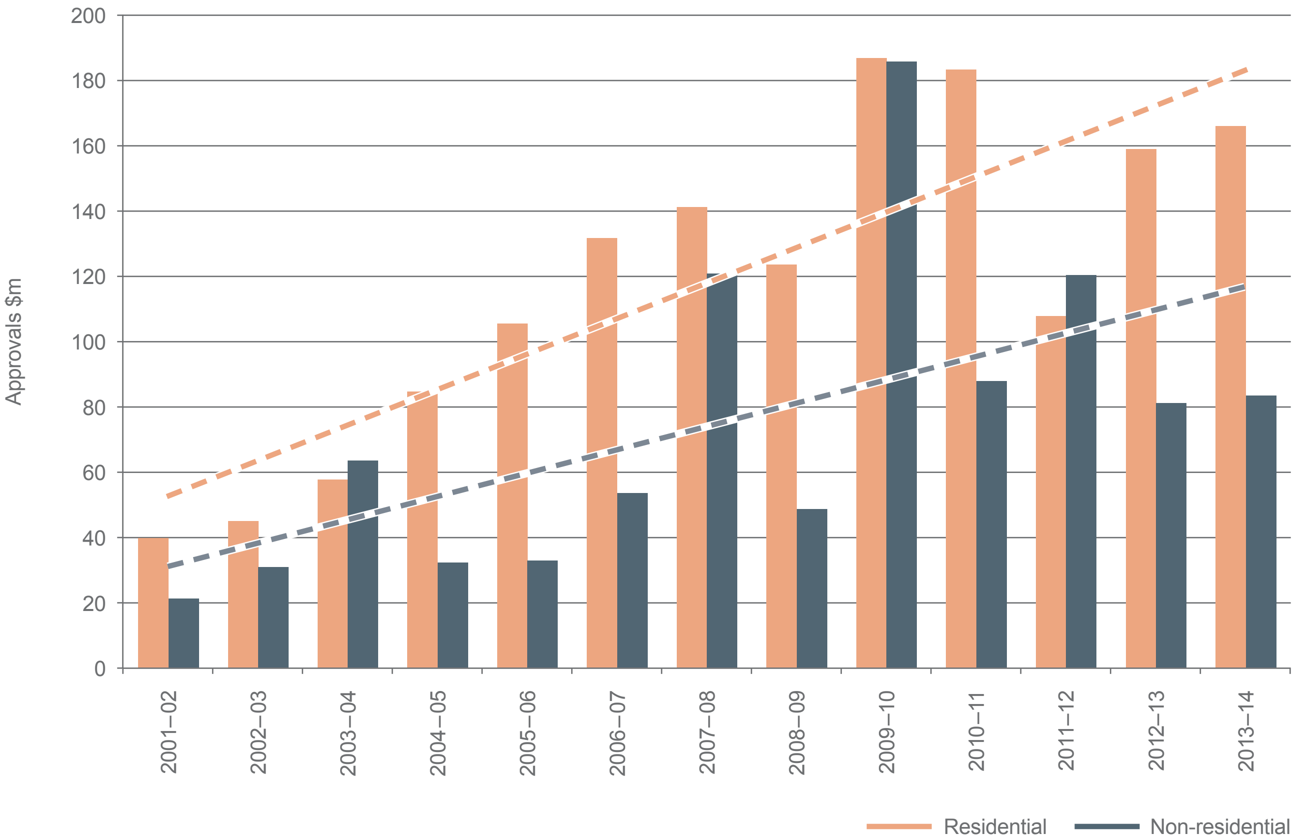
Industry	Number of businesses (2012)	Average Mid West output ($m)
Mining	45	98.76
Public administration and safety	11	32.02
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	18	9.64
Manufacturing	166	9.14
Education and training	35	8.25
Information media and telecommunications	10	7.93
Wholesale trade	101	2.52
Health care and social assistance	169	1.79
Rental, hiring and real estate services	418	1.70
Transport, postal and warehousing	324	1.48
Construction	855	1.31
Accommodation and food services	215	1.24
Administrative and support services	131	1.17
Professional, scientific and technical services	243	1.04
Arts and recreation services	33	0.90
Retail trade	348	0.85
Financial and insurance services	316	0.73
Other services	259	0.57
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1 435	0.36
Not classified	124	n/a
Total	**5 256**	**$181.38**

Source: ABS 2012 and REMPLAN 2014a

Dwelling approvals

Dwelling approvals are an indicator of population growth and help to determine business and consumer confidence. Figure 3 shows that approvals for both residential and non-residential dwellings in the Mid West have grown steadily, experiencing an annual average increase of 15.9% and 39.5% respectively between 2001–02 and 2013–14. Total approvals (residential and non-residential) have increased from $61.5 million in 2000–01 to $248.6 million in 2013–14 (ABS 2013).

Figure 3: Mid West building approvals



Source: ABS 2013

Income distribution

According to the ABS, in 2010–11 Mid West residents had an average wage and salary income of $50 358, compared with $57 365 for the average Western Australian. The region's average annual growth rate between 2005–06 and 2010–11 was 6.9%, compared to 7.1% for the rest of the State (ABS 2012). Average salary income in the Mid West is therefore lower than for Western Australia and is growing at a slightly slower rate.

It should be noted that income figures in the Mid West are more volatile than for the remainder of the State, reflecting the impact that cyclical factors (from the mining and construction sectors in particular) have on the Mid West economy.

State investment in the Mid West

State funding has been invested in the Mid West primarily through the Royalties for Regions program. According to a regional budget highlights report for 2013–14, the total projects funding spend in the Mid West region was $348.8 million (DRD 2014a), the highlights of which are shown in table 6.

Table 6: State government funding - Royalties for Regions

Royalties for Regions program highlights, 2013–14, Mid West region	($ million)
Mid West Energy Project	264.2
Road works (*including $11 million to continue the replacement of the Greenough River Bridge and the realignment of the Brand Highway*)	24.2
Improvements to Geraldton Port	12.3
Works and Skills Training Initiative programs at the Durack Institute of Technology	11.3
Complete construction of the Geraldton Career Fire and Rescue Service Fire Station	4.6
Works on the Abrolhos Islands, including upgrading and replacement of public jetties at East Wallabi and Beacon Islands	2
Mount Magnet Court Facility	1.5
Complete construction of the Geraldton Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Fire Station	1.5
Complete construction of the Mount Magnet Police Station	1.1

Source: DRD 2014a

Implications for the *Mid West workforce development plan*

- The majority of businesses in the region were non-employing, with the majority of the balance only employing one to four employees. Compared to larger firms, smaller firms often do not have the capability and resources to develop and train, manage and retain their staff. Staff do not get the opportunity to develop through the management of larger teams in larger environments, but do often receive a ‘broader’ development profile as they need to fulfil a range of activities.

- The scale and needs of firms varies across industry, and as industry is related to location (due to factors such as climate, land use, natural resources) workforce needs driven by scale will also have a local flavour to them.
- There has been strong and growing residential and non-residential construction in the region. The main drivers of residential construction are population growth and workforce. It will be necessary to research non-residential construction to determine if this is stemming from private or public sectors and, from this, assess sustainability. Construction workers are very mobile. Local construction provides the opportunity for development of local firms and increased employment opportunities.
- While the economy has some major sectors in mining and agriculture the former is experiencing some challenges, however the broader economy is quite diverse for a regional economy and therefore, offers opportunities for employment in a range of fields.
- Relatively high wages in the resources sector has the potential to crowd-out employers in other sectors that are less able to offer competitive wages.

Population and demographics

The region's estimated resident population was 57 901 in 2013, with almost 69.9% residing in the City of Greater Geraldton (ABS 2013a). The Batavia Coast is the largest sub-region, with 84.3% of the population. It also contains the largest local government areas, namely Geraldton, Irwin and Northampton (ABS 2013a). Murchison and North Midlands contain a large number of smaller settlements. Table 7 details the Mid West's population by local government areas and sub-region.

Table 7: Mid West estimated resident population 2013

	Local government areas	Persons	% of Mid West
Batavia Coast	Shire of Chapman Valley	1 214	2.10%
	City of Greater Geraldton	40 448	69.86%
	Shire of Irwin	3 780	6.53%
	Shire of Northampton	3 379	5.84%
		48 821	**84.32%**
North Midlands	Shire of Carnamah	550	0.95%
	Shire of Coorow	1 085	1.87%
	Shire of Mingenew	486	0.84%
	Shire of Morawa	906	1.56%
	Shire of Perenjori	924	1.60%
	Shire of Three Springs	632	1.09%
		4 583	**7.92%**
Murchison	Shire of Cue	298	0.51%
	Shire of Meekatharra	1 521	2.63%
	Shire of Mount Magnet	711	1.23%
	Shire of Murchison	127	0.22%
	Shire of Sandstone	116	0.20%
	Shire of Wiluna	1 279	2.21%
	Shire of Yalgoo	445	0.77%
		4 497	**7.77%**
	Mid West region	**57 901**	**100%**

Source: ABS 2013a

Table 8: Mid West population trends

Age	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Trend
0–4	3 983	3 871	3 779	3 697	3 589	3 577	3 590	3 683	3 780	3 830	3 807	3 840	3 889	
5–8	4 175	4 097	4 036	3 982	3 999	4 052	3 895	3 911	3 885	3 825	3 857	3 878	3 939	
9–14	4 277	4 156	4 115	4 072	4 056	4 046	3 980	3 980	4 038	4 069	4 102	4 076	4 099	
15–19	3 382	3 425	3 434	3 451	3 551	3 530	3 623	3 680	3 692	3 608	3 699	3 745	3 789	
20–24	2 879	2 838	2 818	2 788	2 828	2 868	2 981	3 105	3 249	3 345	3 398	3 455	3 453	
25–29	3 462	3 260	3 133	3 098	3 010	2 986	3 005	3 143	3 262	3 384	3 516	3 787	4 051	
30–34	3 953	3 953	3 865	3 736	3 593	3 414	3 276	3 283	3 335	3 272	3 304	3 463	3 657	
35–39	4 084	4 010	3 854	3 685	3 733	3 821	0 877	4 030	4 003	3 927	3 780	3 710	3 701	
40–44	3 974	4 032	4 069	4 085	4 050	4 026	3 911	3 869	3 872	3 912	4 111	4 292	4 382	
45–49	3 578	3 648	3 697	3 813	3 891	3 913	3 909	3 990	4 086	4 120	4 100	4 111	4 134	
50–54	3 190	3 233	3 316	3 319	3 419	3 551	3 589	3 759	3 925	3 967	3 964	4 037	4 105	
55–59	2 535	2 646	2 772	2 839	3 011	3 197	3 164	3 275	3 377	3 485	3 618	3 736	3 906	
60–64	2 193	2 221	2 264	2 337	2 421	2 523	2 607	2 732	2 835	2 960	3 092	3 121	3 176	
65–69	1 750	1 810	1 860	1 940	1 984	2 041	2 081	2 129	2 210	2 285	2 338	2 445	2 597	
70–74	1 453	1 481	1 480	1 499	1 502	1 529	1 554	1 612	1 694	1 739	1 771	1 874	1 899	
75–79	900	979	1 037	1 102	1 135	1 191	1 200	1 220	1 239	1 264	1 303	1 315	1 371	
80–84	511	586	613	628	639	669	760	823	861	873	905	926	969	
85+	446	446	465	459	484	509	536	555	584	608	646	729	784	
Total population	**50 680**	**50 692**	**50 607**	**50 530**	**50 895**	**51 443**	**51 538**	**52 779**	**53 927**	**54 473**	**55 311**	**56 540**	**57 901**	
% Working age	**65.6%**	**65.6%**	**65.6%**	**65.6%**	**65.8%**	**65.8%**	**65.9%**	**66.1%**	**66.1%**	**66.1%**	**66.1%**	**66.2%**	**66.2%**	

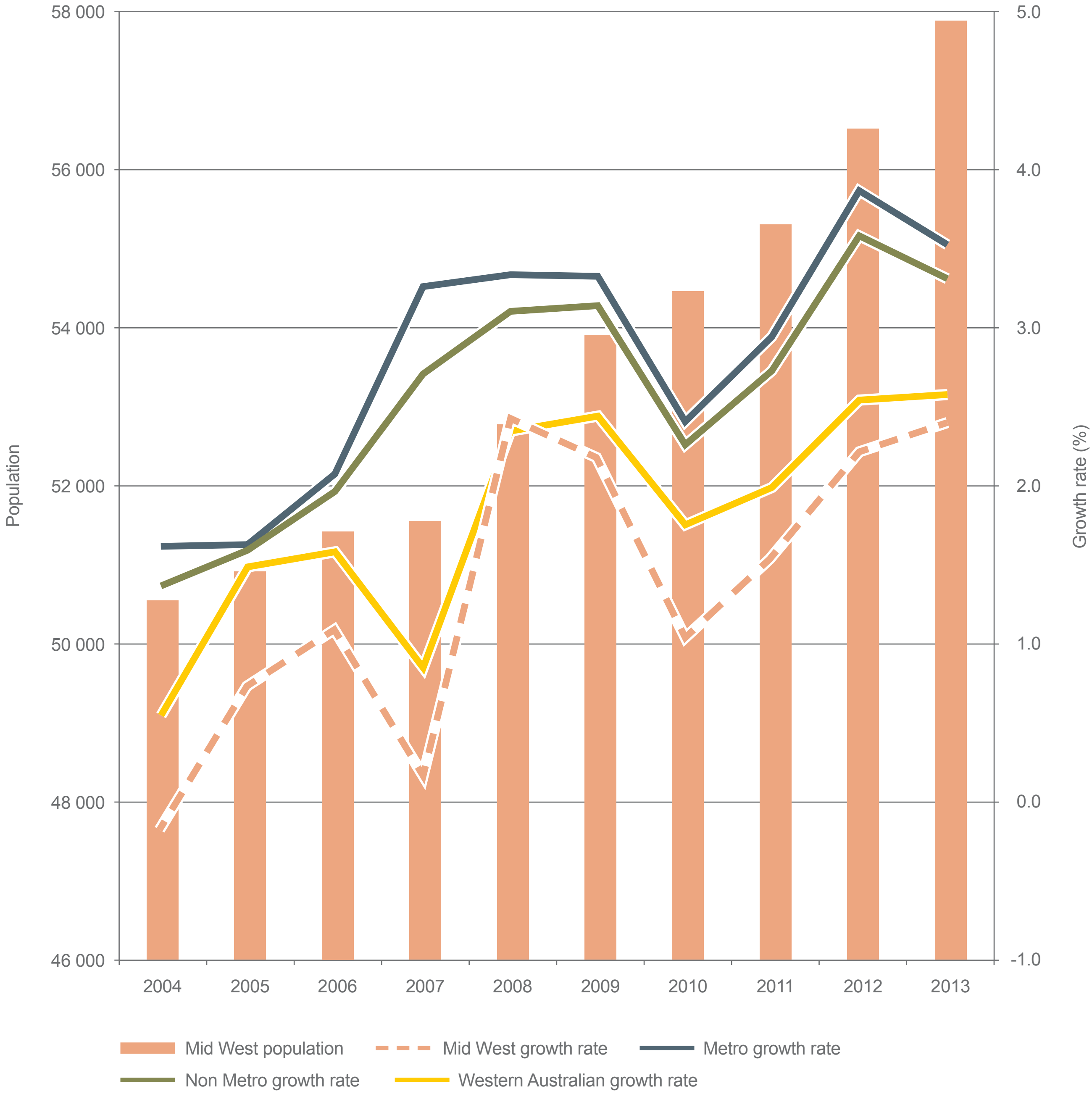
Source: ABS 2013a (based on place of usual residence)

Population trends

Population by age group over the period 2001–13 is detailed in table 8. The average annual growth rate of the population in the Mid West over the period 2001–13 has been 1.1% (ABS 2013a). The proportion of working age population has remained steady, while there has been a marginal 'ageing' of the population, with those over 65 years increasing from 10.0% in 2001 to 13.2% in 2013 (ABS 2013a).

Figure 4 shows the growth rate of the region's population compared to other state averages.

Figure 4: Population growth rates



Source: ABS 2013b

The region's population growth is following the growth pattern for State and regional Western Australia, but at a lower rate. Figure 5 shows population growth rates by sub-region.

Figure 5: Population growth rates by sub-region

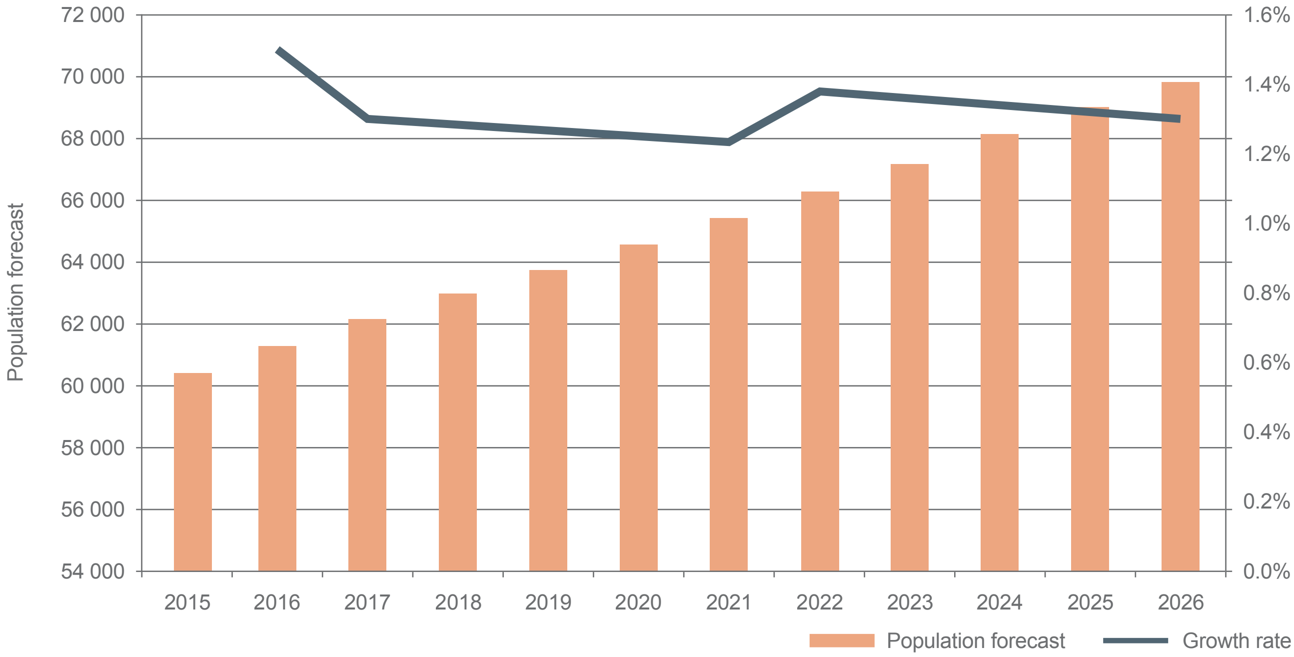
Source: ABS 2013b

There has been variable population growth across the region which will influence a range of workforce issues at a sub-regional level, such as participation rates, availability of skills and attraction and retention of staff.

Expected population growth

Figure 6 shows that growth in the Mid West's population is expected beyond the next 10 years. According to *Western Australian Tomorrow Report No. 7*, with annualised forecasted growth rates of 1.3% from 2015 the region's population is expected to reach around 69 900 residents by 2026. Consistent with most of regional Australia, the Mid West will see noticeable spikes in the 9–14 and 35–40 age groups over the next 10 to 15 years (WAPC 2014).

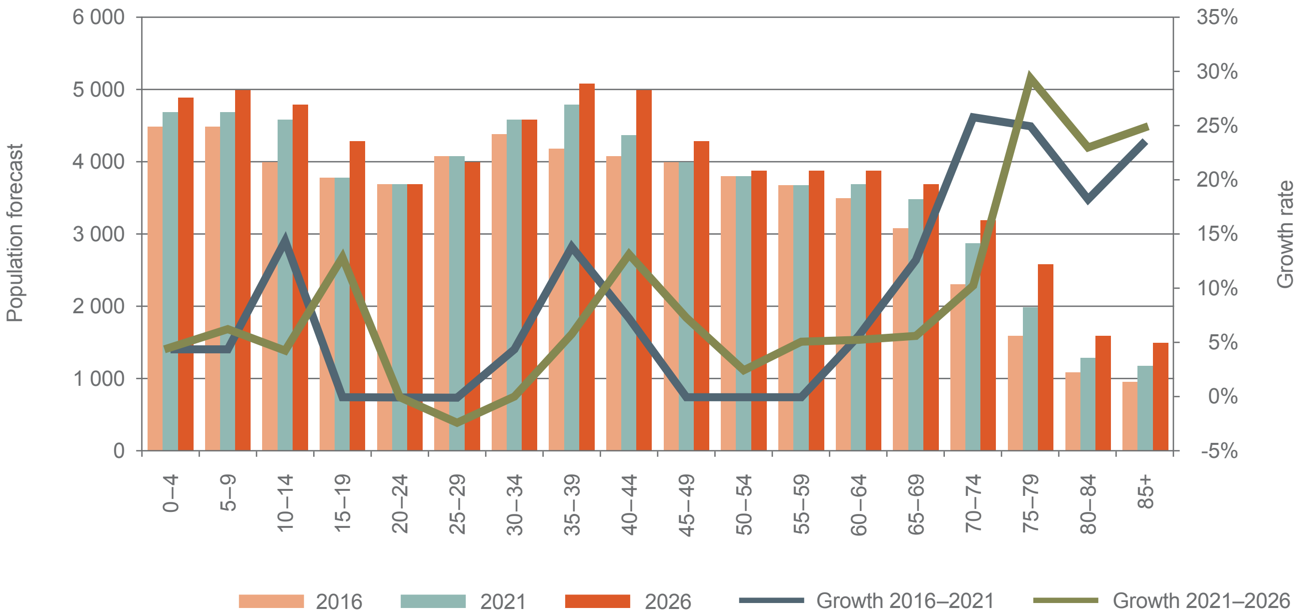
Figure 6: Mid West population forecast



Source: WAPC 2014 (*WA Tomorrow* population projections based on 'band C' scenario).

Figure 7 shows population forecast by age for the Mid West region. This graph reflects an ageing population experienced in most parts of Australia.

Figure 7: Population forecast by age



Source: WAPC 2014 (*WA Tomorrow* population projections based on 'band C' scenario)

The data highlights an anticipated ageing of the population, as well as increases in overall population levels. These changing demographics may be a challenge for ensuring that labour force participation rates can be maintained or grown in the region, and particularly at a sub-regional level. In addition to affecting future labour supply, the ageing population will create challenges and opportunities for the region's labour market as the demand for services such as health and aged care increases.

Age and gender structure

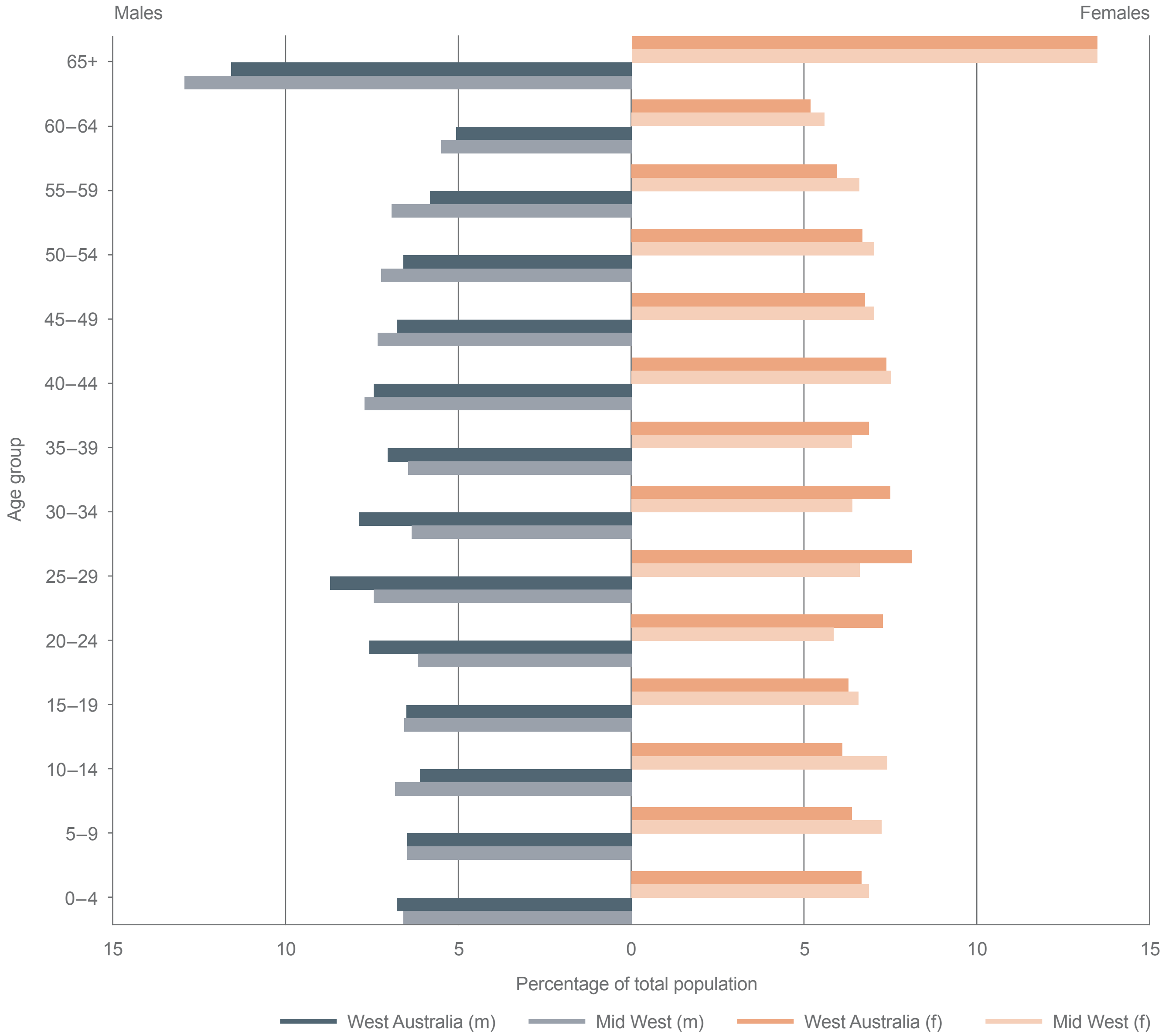
Figure 8 shows that the age demographic of the Mid West broadly reflects that of Western Australia. For example, 20.6% of the population in the Mid West is aged 14 years or under (compared to 19.1% for Western Australia) and 32.5% is aged over 50 years (compared with 30.0% for Western Australia). The State's median age (36 years) is slightly lower than the Mid West (38 years). In the Mid West, 25.8% of the population is aged 15–34 years compared with 29.8% for the State (ABS 2013a). An older age demographic is characteristic of much of regional Australia whereby, due to a need or desire to move away for education, employment or lifestyle opportunities, many younger people leave regional areas for metropolitan destinations.

The sub-regional analysis reveals varying population profiles. For example, ABS data shows that Batavia Coast and North Midlands have older age profiles, with 32.5% and 37.9% of the population over 50 years of age respectively, compared with 26.8% in the Murchison. On the other hand, 39.7% of Murchison's population is aged between 20 and 40 years, compared to 24.3% in Batavia Coast and 26.0% in North Midlands (ABS 2013a). These differences are reflective of the work and lifestyle options available in each sub-region. Murchison, for example, is known for its remoteness and mining industry and therefore has a larger number of working age people than other sub-regions in the Mid West.

Household and family composition

Table 9 shows that Mid West households of usual residents contained a higher proportion of couples without children than both Western Australian and Australian averages. The vast majority of households (69.6%) are families, with fewer lone and group households represented; however, the gender distribution statistics, particularly for the Murchison, suggest that lone person households might be higher as a result of the FIFO workforce spending a portion of the year in that sub-region (ABS 2012a).

Figure 8: Age sex structure by Mid West and Western Australia



Source: ABS 2013a

Table 9: Family composition

Family composition	Mid West No.	Mid West %	WA %	Australia %
Couple family without children	5 684	41.6	38.8	37.8
Couple family with children	5 650	41.4	44.9	44.6
One parent family	2 167	15.9	14.5	15.9
Other family	157	1.1	1.8	1.7

Source: ABS 2012a

Implications for the *Mid West workforce development plan*

Based on the population and demographics analysis, the key implications for the development of the *Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018* are as follows:

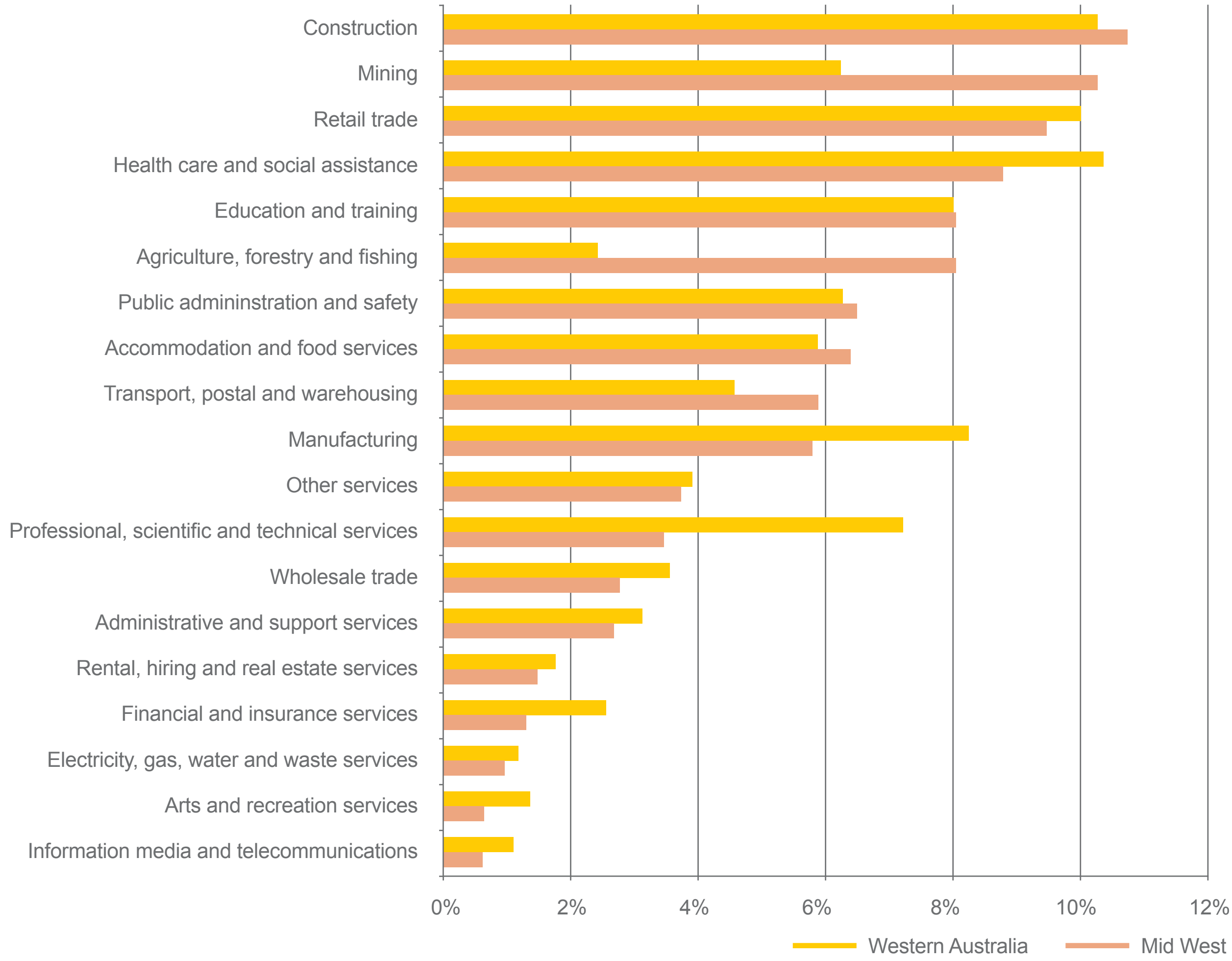
- One major local government area (Greater Geraldton) with around 70% of the region's total population and a large number of geographically diverse smaller settlements will result in spatially different workforce needs and planning.
- Access to employment and education and training pathways for remote and smaller settlements will likely remain a challenge.
- The matching of workforce skills to future industry requirements, given changes in demographics, will be important.
- Steady population growth rates show a continuing need for job creation. This is further underlined by the aspirational population growth targets detailed in the draft *Blueprint*.
- The differences in demographics across the broader region point to likely workforce issues in each sub-region; for example, the demand for aged care services/skills is likely to be higher in North Midlands and Batavia Coast than in Murchison.

Regional labour market

Over half (55.7%) of those employed in the Mid West are in the top six industries, namely: construction; mining; retail trade; health care and social assistance; agriculture, forestry and fishing; and education and training (figure 9). This highlights a concentration of workforce needs across the region in these sectors.

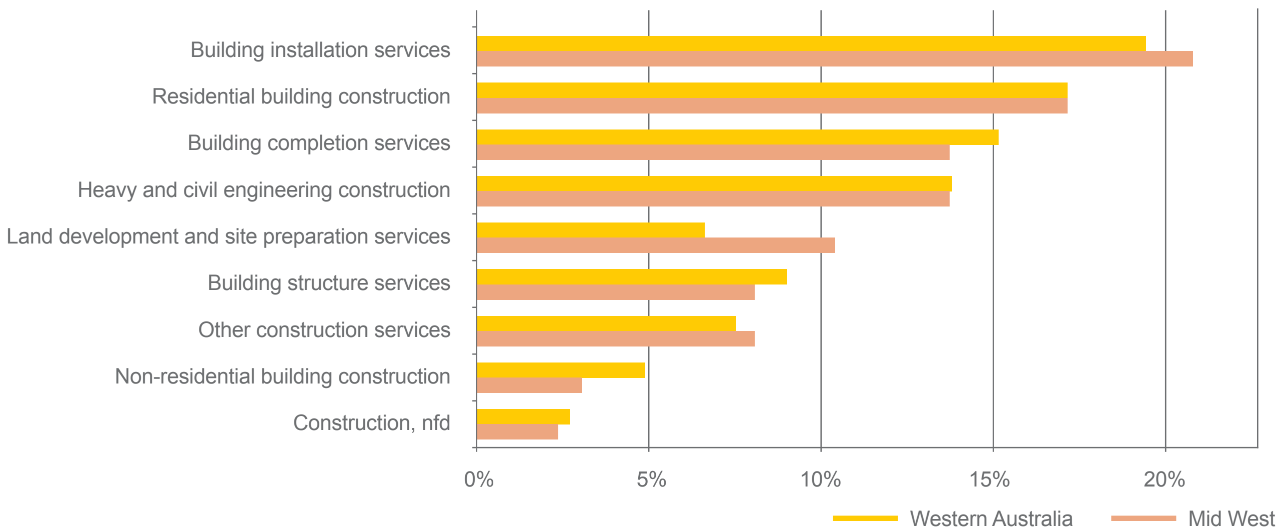
Compared to State averages, the region's workforce is significantly over-represented in: construction; mining; agriculture, forestry and fishing; and transport, postal and warehousing. On the other hand, the region is under-represented in: manufacturing; professional, scientific and technical services; financial and insurance services; arts and recreations services; and health care and social assistance (ABS 2012a). Despite these discrepancies (the service sector under-representation being typical of a regional economy), the broader Mid West economy is diverse and offers a range of employment opportunities. As construction is the largest employer in the Mid West, figure 10 breaks this down to show labour force by types of construction occupations.

Figure 9: Labour force by industry



Source: ABS 2013c

Figure 10: Labour force by types of construction



Source: ABS 2012a

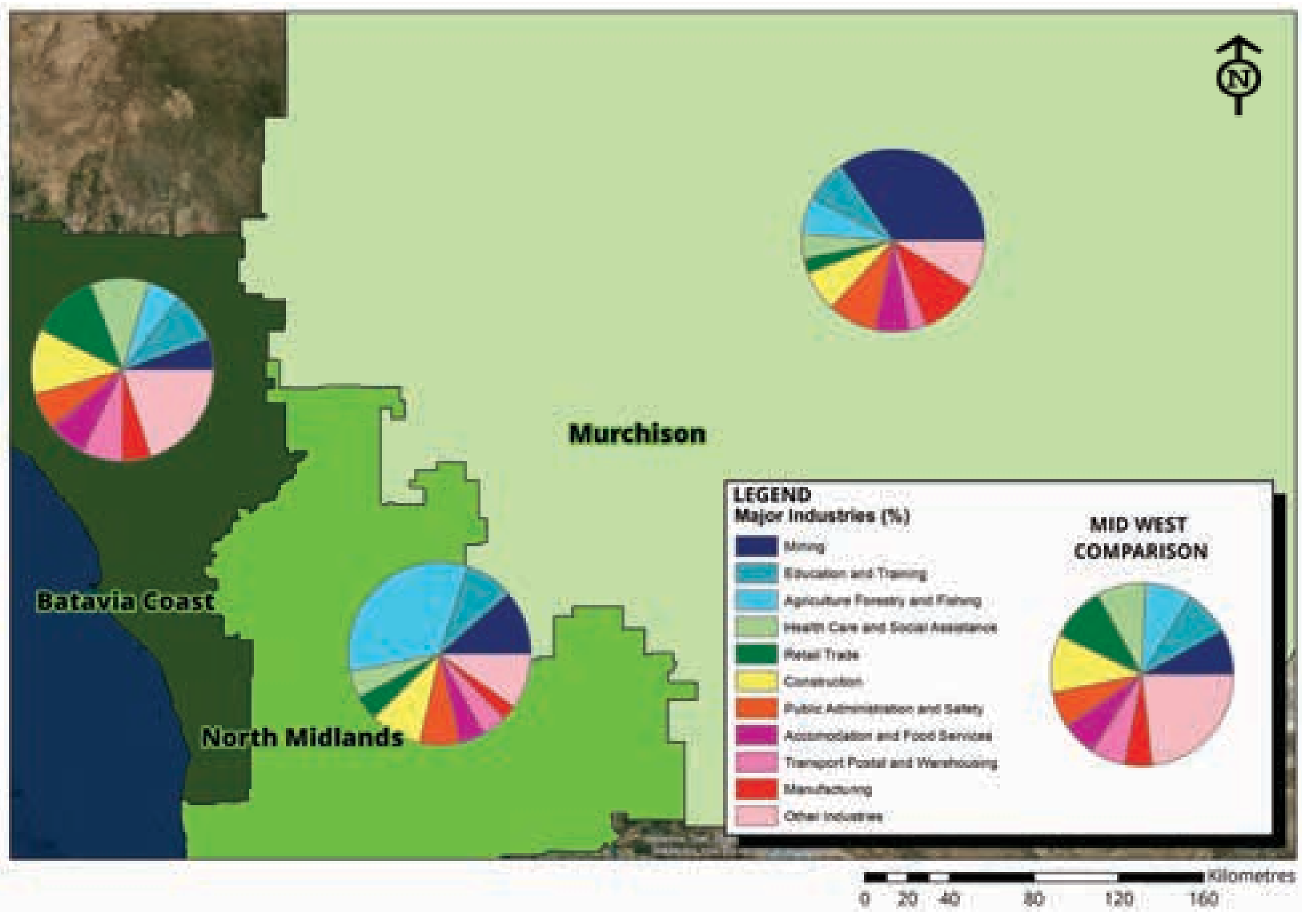
The three Mid West sub-regions have distinctly different employment profiles. One-third of jobs in the North Midlands are in agriculture, forestry and fishing (33.1%), with a similar proportion of people in the Murchison employed in mining (34.8%). The Batavia Coast is more diverse, with one-third of jobs spread relatively equally across retail trade (12.0%), construction (11.5%) and health care and social assistance (10.4%), reflecting its role as the service centre for the Mid West. Figure 11 shows the major Mid West employing industries by sub-region (ABS 2012a).

The draft *Blueprint* forecasts growth in the tourism and agriculture and food industries. The document also outlines aspirational population targets and the industries likely to experience strong employment growth. These industries include: health care and social assistance; education and training; public administration and safety; professional, scientific and technical services; transport, postal and warehousing; accommodation and food services; construction; manufacturing; mining; and agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Labour force growth

Labour force participation rates have remained fairly constant, ranging between 60.9% and 61.9%. In 2011, the labour force participation rate in Mid West (61.5%) was slightly lower than that of the State (64%) (ABS 2012a).

Figure 11: Major employing industries by sub-region



ABS Census data shows significant growth (17%) in the labour force between 2006 and 2011, with the construction (53%); transport, postal and warehousing (39%); and professional, scientific and technical services (38%) industries experiencing very high growth levels, although the latter two have grown from a much lower base. On the other hand, agriculture, forestry and fishing (-17% from a high base) and information media and telecommunications (-12% from a very low base) contracted during this period (ABS 2013c).

It is important to note that there have been significant shifts in State and regional economies since the 2011 Census was undertaken, most notably a softening of the mining industry. However new opportunities have also emerged in the Mid West, including significant investment in advanced telecommunications infrastructure, such as the National Broadband Network rollout of 'fibre to the node' platform, which will in turn support the international Square Kilometre Array radio astronomy project. Flow-on opportunities for the labour market in the Mid West are expected.

Table 10 provides more detail on employment growth by industry sector between the 2006 and 2011 Censuses.

Table 10: Mid West employment by industry sector

Industry	Total persons		2006–11 growth	2011 share
	2006	2011		
Construction	1 953	2 985	53%	11.4%
Mining	2 451	2 751	12%	10.5%
Retail trade	2 346	2 535	8%	9.7%
Health care and social assistance	1 906	2 352	23%	9.0%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2 599	2 149	-17%	8.2%
Education and training	1 903	2 149	13%	8.2%
Public administration and safety	1 464	1 736	19%	6.6%
Accommodation and food services	1 330	1 709	28%	6.5%
Transport, postal and warehousing	1 131	1 575	39%	6.0%
Manufacturing	1 175	1 550	32%	5.9%
Other services	855	995	16%	3.8%
Professional, scientific and technical services	668	924	38%	3.5%
Wholesale trade	736	736	0%	2.8%
Administrative and support services	607	711	17%	2.7%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	324	391	21%	1.5%
Financial and insurance services	344	343	0%	1.3%
Electricity, gas, water and waste services	239	253	6%	1.0%
Arts and recreation services	132	165	25%	0.6%
Information media and telecommunications	179	158	-12%	0.6%
Totals	**22 342**	**26 167**	**17%**	

Source: ABS 2013c (based on place of enumeration)

Table 11 shows the number of people of working age (over 15 years of age) in the Mid West grew by 5 974 between 2006 and 2011, with the growth predominantly in full time jobs. (ABS 2013c).

Table 11: Labour force trends

Labour force status *(persons over 15 years of age)*	**Mid West**			**Trend**
	2001	**2006**	**2011**	
Persons aged 15 years and over	38 946	39 866	45 840	
Employed, worked full time (b)	14 103	14 850	17 582	
Employed, worked part time	5 834	6 095	6 990	
Employed, away from work (c)	1 918	2 075	2 225	
Unemployed, looking for work	2 247	1 274	1 412	
Total labour force	**24 102**	**24 294**	**28 209**	
Not in the labour force	13 239	12 348	14 314	
% unemployment (d)	9.3	5.2	5.0	
% labour force participation (e)	61.9	60.9	61.5	
% employment to population	56.1	57.7	58.5	

Source: ABS 2013c (based on place of enumeration)[6]

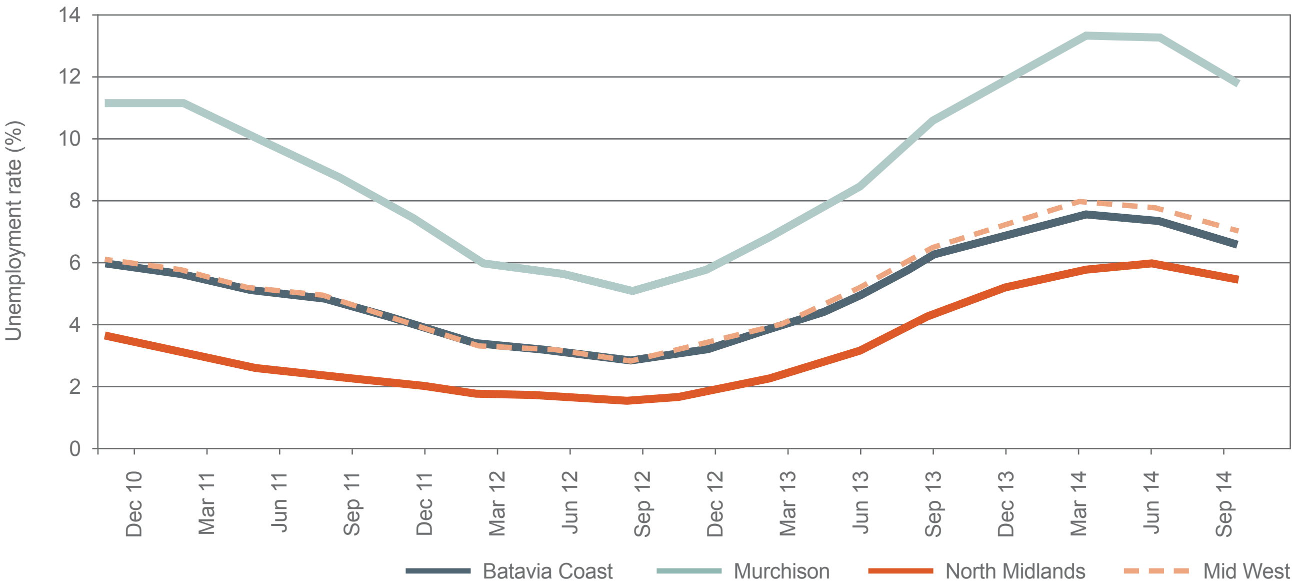
Unemployment trends

ABS Census data shows that unemployment rates appear to be very cyclical, dropping from 9.3% to 5.0% between 2001 and 2011 (ABS 2013c). Small area labour market data shows that although the region has experienced relatively low unemployment rates in recent years, averaging 5.4% from September 2008 to September 2012 (when the rate dipped to as low as 2.9%), the rate has subsequently trended upwards quite sharply, reaching 6.9% by September 2014. The Mid West unemployment rate of 7.9% in March 2014 was the highest in a decade (DE 2014).

Unemployment in all three sub-regions has increased, with Murchison rising as high as 13.3% in March 2014 (see figure 12). The high unemployment rate in Murchison needs to be seen in context of the demographic of the region; it has a larger young adult population, representing a potential oversupply of labour relative to available employment opportunities.

[6] Applicable to persons aged 15 years and over; 'employed, worked full time' is defined as having worked 35 hours or more in all jobs during the week prior to Census Night; comprises employed persons who did not work any hours in the week prior to Census night or who did not state their number of hours worked; the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the total labour force; the number of persons in the labour force expressed as a percentage of persons aged 15 years and over; the number of employed persons expressed as a percentage of persons aged 15 years and over.

Figure 12: Unemployment trends for sub-regions in Mid West



Source: (DE 2014)

Occupation structure

Compared with neighbouring regions, the Mid West has relatively diverse employment options. That said, the construction and mining industries are the major employers. Therefore, as shown in figure 13, the technicians and trade workers category is the predominant occupation in the Mid West in 2011. Managers and professionals are the second and third most represented occupations, most likely due to the number of people employed in the retail trade, health care and social assistance, and public administration sectors (ABS 2012a). The breadth of job types in the Mid West contributes to the region's diversity of employment opportunities.

Internal migration

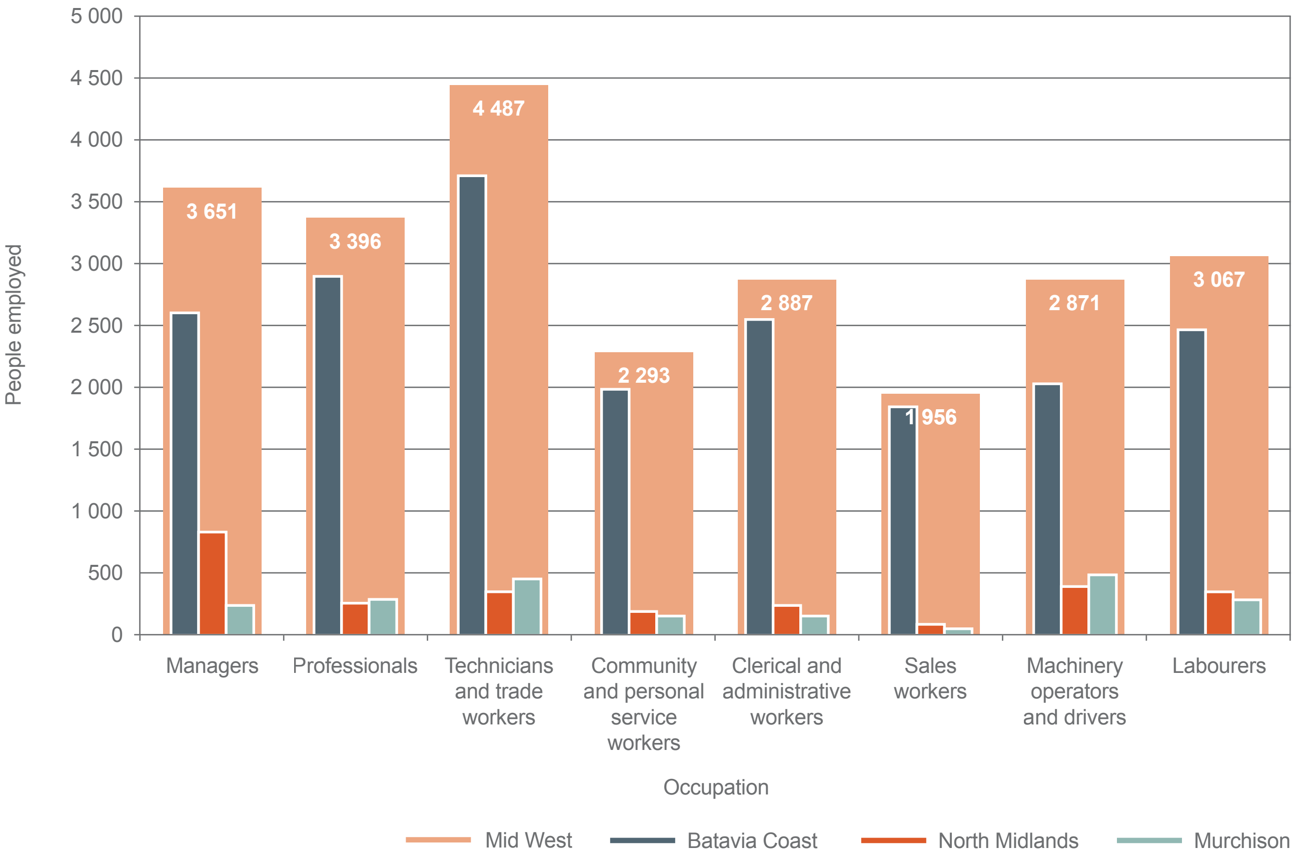
Table 12 shows the 'usual address five years ago' of both Mid West and Western Australian residents. Mid West residents are in line with the State when it comes to mobility. In the Mid West, 46.5% of residents lived at the same address as five years previously. This compares with 46.9% of residents for Western Australia as a whole (ABS 2012a). This finding suggests there is continuity in the workforce and that the region's mining sector is relying less on FIFO workers than other regions.

Implications for *Mid West workforce development plan*

- The broader Mid West economy is diverse and offers a range of employment opportunities, with perhaps the exception of some service sectors which cluster in major metropolitan areas.
- Changes in employment levels by sector indicate changes in underlying industry needs and, therefore, skills.

- Increasing unemployment and the demographics in specific sub-regions (e.g. Murchison) will likely result in continued pockets of high youth unemployment.
- Evidence suggests that there is less reliance on FIFO/DIDO workers in the Mid West than in other West Australian regions.

Figure 13: Number of employees by occupation



Source: ABS 2012a

Table 12: Internal migration trends

Usual address five years ago	2006 Census				2011 Census			
	Mid West		Western Australia		Mid West		Western Australia	
Same address as Census night	15 038	43.6%	874 196	44.6%	24 926	46.5%	1 049 603	46.9%

Source: ABS 2012a

Aboriginal participation

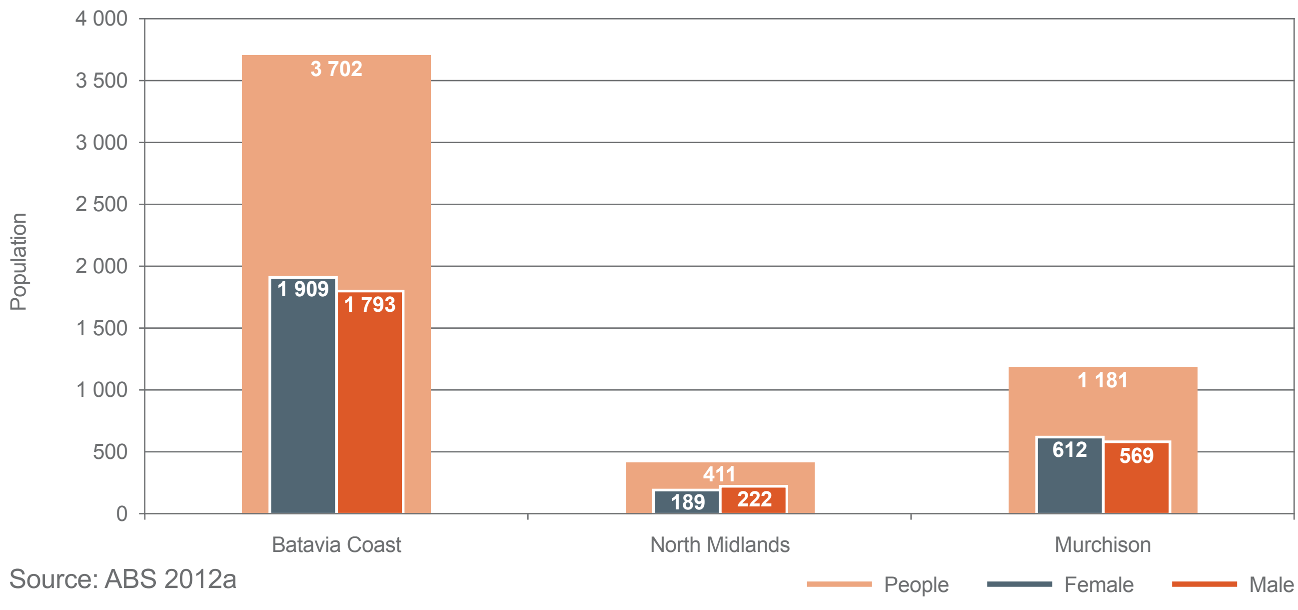
Aboriginal population

Approximately 9.9% of the Mid West population identifies as being Aboriginal; this is substantially higher than the State rate of 3.1% (ABS 2012a). Due to issues associated with under reporting of the Aboriginal population, the actual Mid West Aboriginal population is likely to be even higher, especially in remote areas[7].

Unlike the trend in the total population for the region, there is no apparent loss of youth (teenage and young adults) or growth in the working age population. Only 4.1% of the region's Aboriginal population is over the age of 65, compared to 12.8% of the total regional population (ABS 2012a). This is likely to be a legacy of higher mortality rates combined with a larger proportion of children.

Figure 14 shows that the sub-regional variance of the region's Aboriginal population is significant, with the Aboriginal population comprising 8.4% of Batavia Coast's population, and 28.9% and 7.7% of Murchison's and North Midland's populations respectively. The majority of Aboriginal people in the Mid West live in the Batavia Coast (70.1%) and principally in Geraldton (ABS 2012a).

Figure 14: Aboriginal population in the Mid West



Source: ABS 2012a

Labour force participation

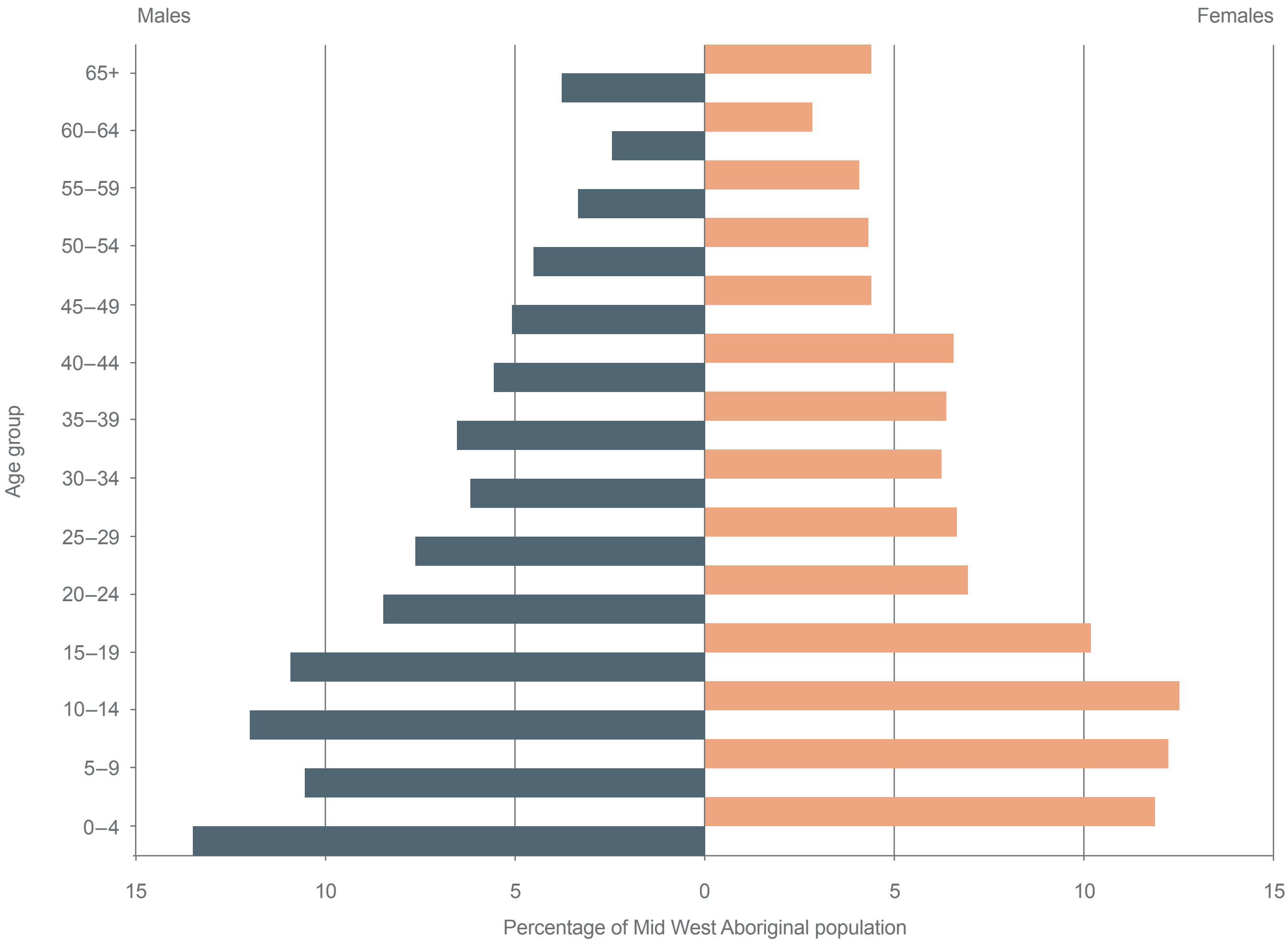
According to 2011 ABS Census data, the population of usual residents aged 15 years and over in the Mid West was 36 391 non-Aboriginal and 3 378 Aboriginal people, while the labour force participation rates were 67.9% and 41.1% respectively (ABS 2012a). That does not include people who did not state their Aboriginal status.

[7] Please refer to Appendix A: Data limitations and terminology for further information.

Age and gender structure

The age and gender profile of Aboriginal people in the Mid West, shown in figure 15, indicates that Aboriginal population growth is likely to be through natural increase rather than migration. There is an over-representation of both male and female Aboriginal youth in all age brackets from 0–24 years (ABS 2012a).

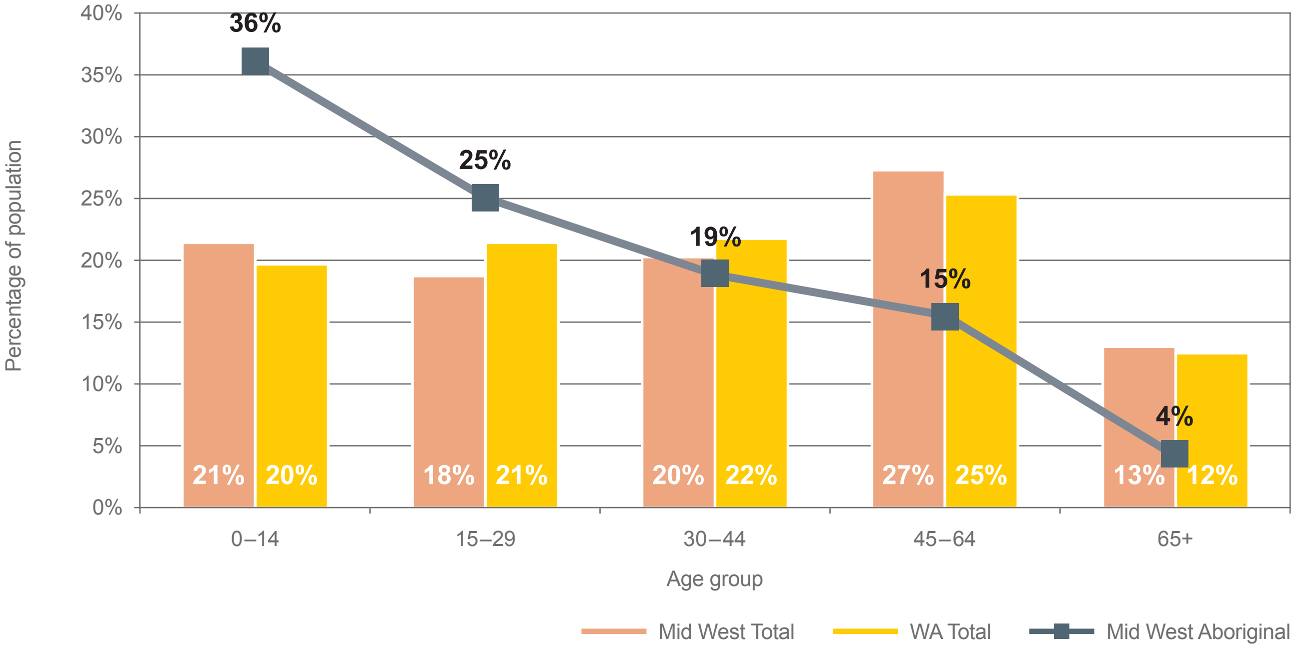
Figure 15: Aboriginal population in the Mid West by age and sex



Source: ABS 2012a

According to 2011 ABS Census data, youth (17–24 year olds) represent 13.3% of the Mid West's Aboriginal population and 14.9% of Western Australia's Aboriginal population. Figure 16 shows that 36.3% of the Mid West's total Aboriginal population are aged 0–14 years. This is significantly higher than the percentage of 0–14 year olds for the total population of the Mid West (21.3%) and the total population of Western Australia (19.7%) (ABS 2012a). This signifies the importance of supporting and promoting education and training programs for this sector of the population.

Figure 16: Aboriginal age groups as a percentage of population

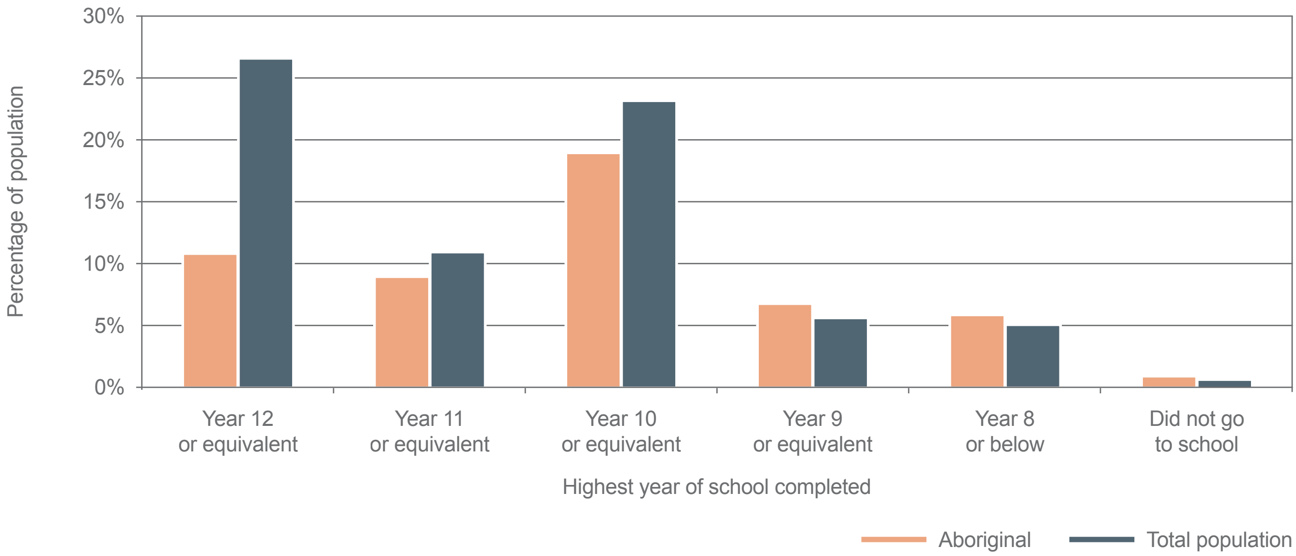


Source: ABS 2012a

Educational engagement

Figure 17 shows that school retention rates of Aboriginal students after year nine fall below those of the general population in the Mid West, particularly for Year 12 and equivalent. This trend is likely to be accentuated in remote areas of the Mid West.

Figure 17: Highest level of school completed

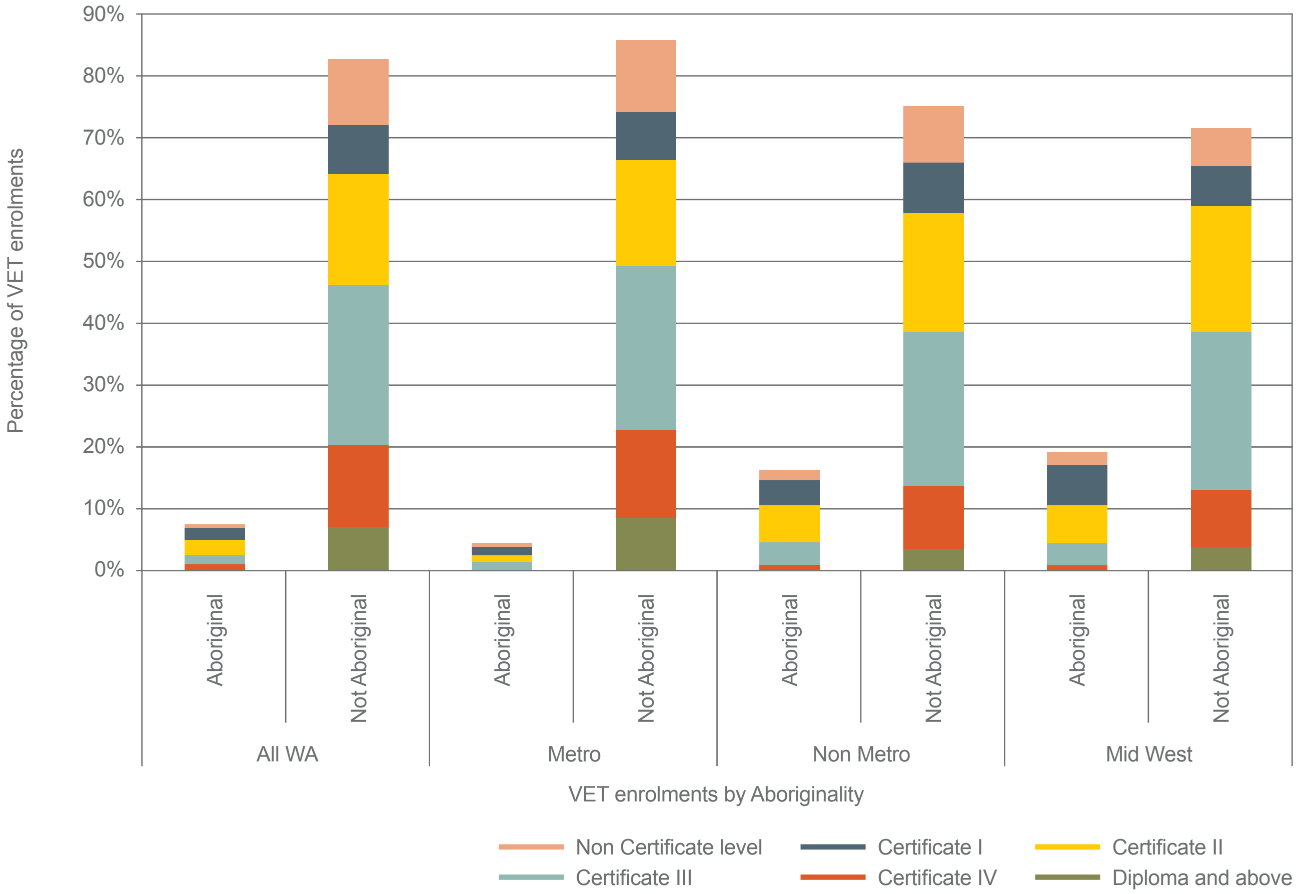


Source: ABS 2012a

Figure 18 shows the distribution of Vocational Education and Training (VET) enrolments in the Mid West by level of qualification and Aboriginal status. On the whole, a greater proportion of VET enrolments in the Mid West in each qualification level are Aboriginal students compared with Western Australia and non-metro areas. In the Mid West the majority of Aboriginal enrolments are at Certificates I to III and at a higher rate than Aboriginal enrolments at Certificates I to III statewide. However Aboriginal VET participation is concentrated at Certificate II level and below compared with Certificate III level and above for non-Aboriginal enrolments in the Mid West.

As the State Training Provider for the region, Durack Institute of Technology continues to focus on expanding and improving education and training provision to Aboriginal people. Examples include the appointment of an experienced manager in Aboriginal relationship management, education and training to work with Aboriginal communities, employers and support agencies on raising the awareness of the importance of vocational training for Aboriginal people in the region; and the construction of a Health, Community Services and Aboriginal Learning Centre in Geraldton, due for completion in 2015.

Figure 18: 2013 VET enrolments by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students

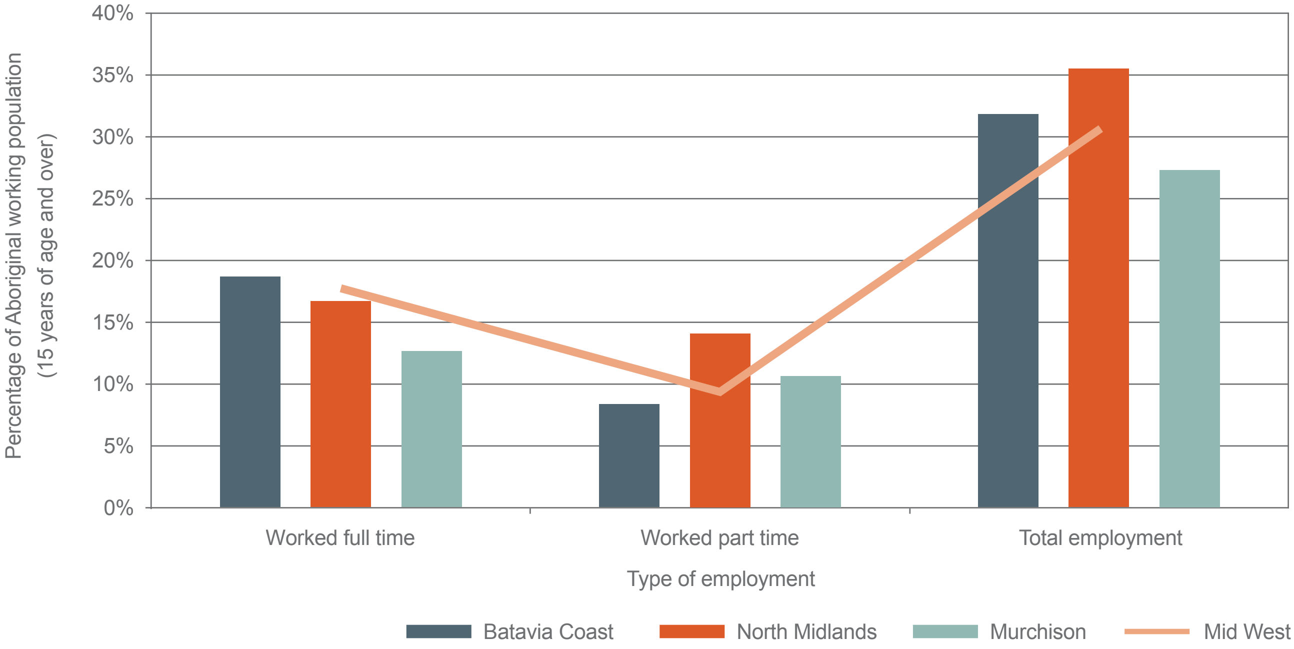


Source: Department of Training and Workforce Development 2013

Employment

Figure 19 shows that the Batavia Coast has a higher percentage of Aboriginal employees working full time (18.9%) than part time (8.4%) when compared with North Midlands (16.7%, 14.3% respectively) and Murchison (12.8%, 10.8% respectively). The ratio of part time to full time employment for Aboriginal people in the Mid West is 1.85, compared to 2.36 for the entire population, indicating a higher rate of part time positions amongst Aboriginal people (ABS 2012a). This may reflect the desire of Aboriginal employees to utilise part time employment as an entry point into full time employment and/or a lack of available full time employment options.

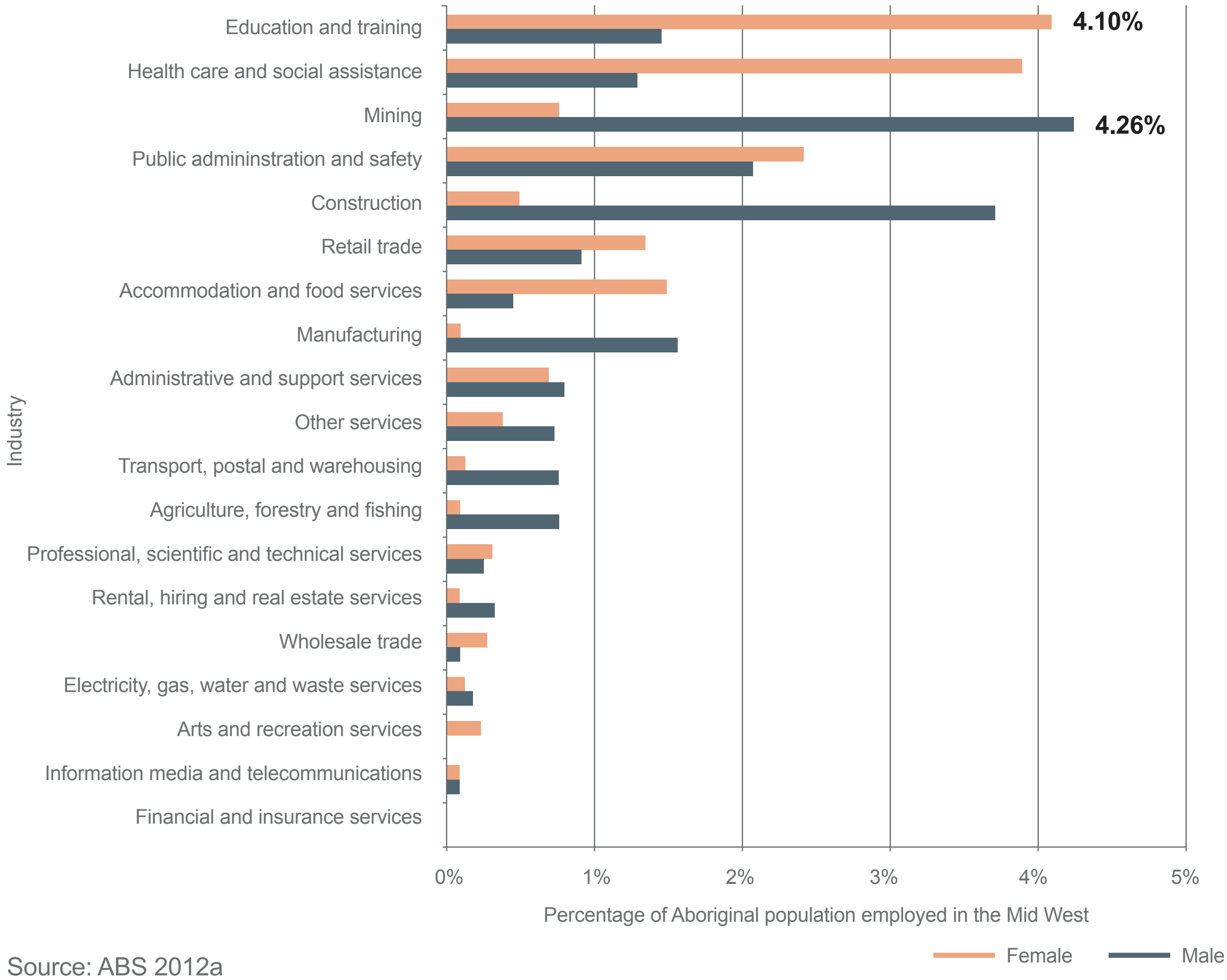
Figure 19: Aboriginal working population by employment type



Source: ABS 2012a

Figure 20 shows that Aboriginal employment is dominated by the following industries: education and training; health care and social assistance; mining; and construction (ABS 2012a). These sectors follow the traditional male to female engagement patterns.

Figure 20: Mid West Aboriginal employment by industry



Source: ABS 2012a

Aboriginal participation across the Mid West is 41.1%, compared to 62.4% for the entire State. The variability of labour force participation across the region is highlighted in figure 21[8]. The analysis shows the number of Aboriginal people participating in the workforce and the participation rate by Local Government Area (LGA). For example in Perenjori, 23 Aboriginal people are employed or looking for work, this represents a very high percentage of the Aboriginal working age population in that LGA. In Sandstone no Aboriginal people are employed or looking for work, however there are no or few Aboriginal working age people in that LGA.

[8] Note that Aboriginal population figures vary significantly across the region. The number of Aboriginal people participating in the labour force in each LGA is provided in parentheses.

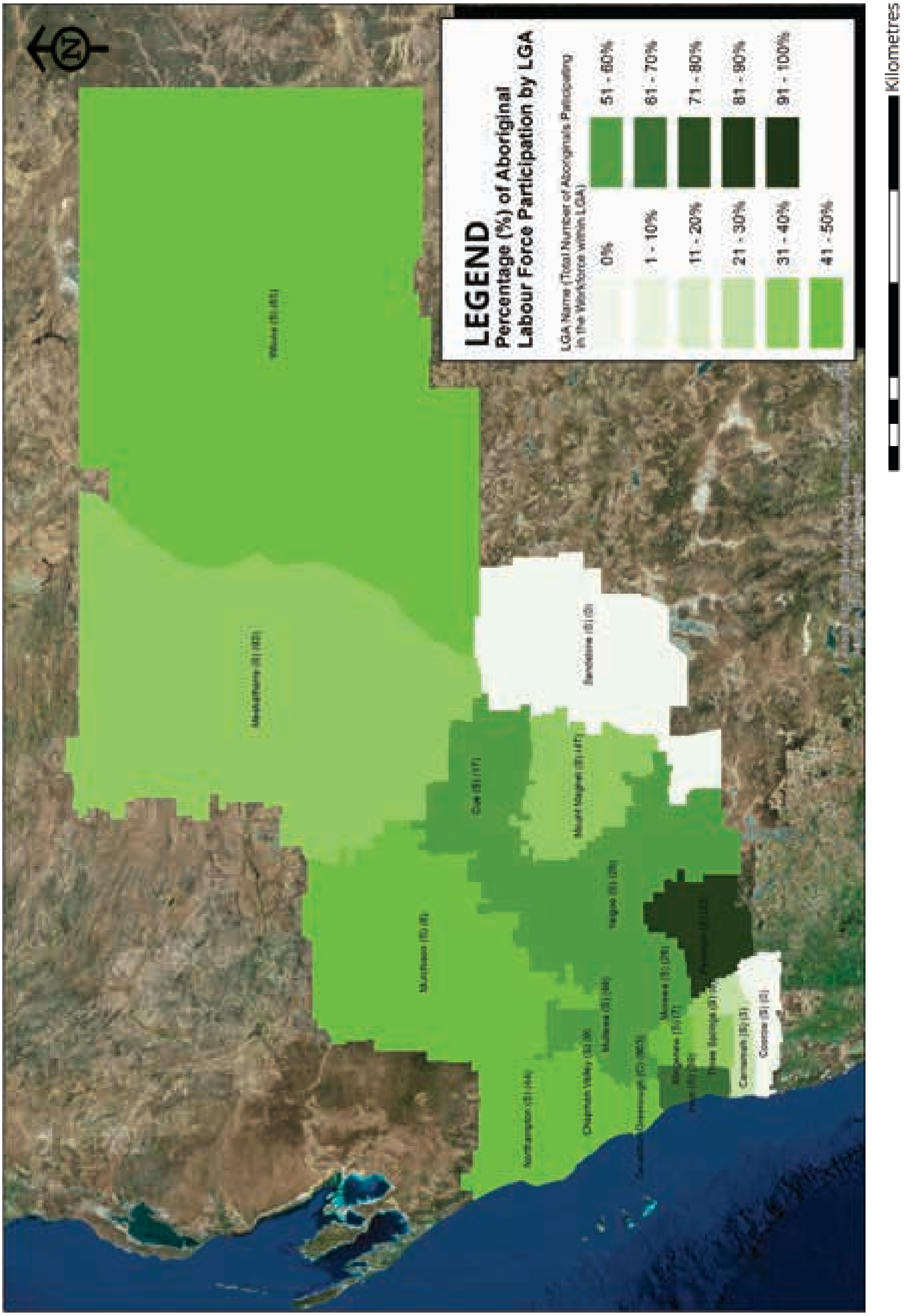
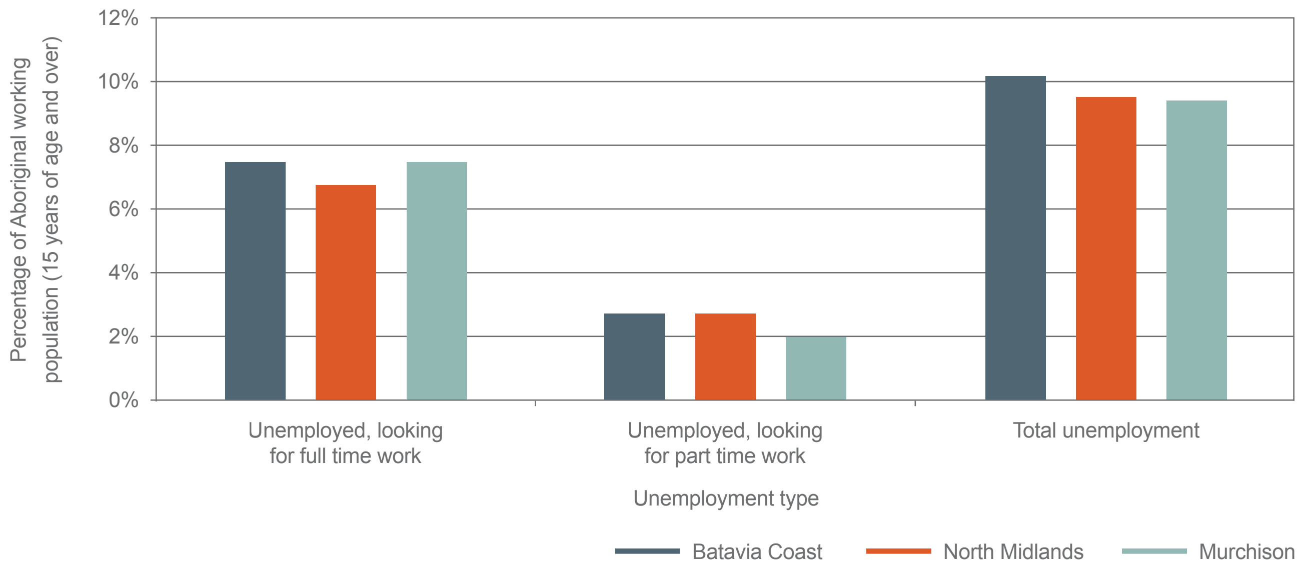


Figure 21: Aboriginal labour force participation

Unemployment

ABS Census data shows the Aboriginal unemployment rate in the Mid West is 10.0% and is relatively consistent across the region, with the Batavia Coast registering 10.2% unemployment and containing the highest population of Aboriginal people in the region (figure 22).

Figure 22: Aboriginal working population by unemployment type



Source: ABS 2012a

The high rate of Aboriginal part time employment may need further exploration in terms of the role it currently plays in Aboriginal workforce participation in the Mid West. Of note, nearly three times more Aboriginal people are looking for full time compared to part time employment, while there is an equal percentage of non-Aboriginal unemployed people looking for full time, compared with part time work. This suggests that the level of meaningful full time employment opportunities for Aboriginal people may be limited.

That said, part time employment is a critical workforce development instrument for increasing workforce participation for Aboriginal women and youth. With 51.7% of the Aboriginal working population not actively engaged in the workforce, compared to 30.9% for the entire Mid West, development of part time employment models might be worth future investigation as one approach to reducing unemployment, increasing labour force participation levels, and as means of transitioning to full time work for Aboriginal people (ABS 2012a).

Implications for the *Mid West workforce development plan*

- Aboriginal engagement is a critical component for increasing workforce participation in the Mid West. The cornerstone of improved outcomes for Aboriginal workforce participation and engagement in the Mid West is through addressing poor secondary school attainment levels.

- The Mid West is fortunate to have a high percentage of Aboriginal youth, which means there are real opportunities to intervene with workforce development initiatives before poor employment and social habits are formed.
- Increasing the secondary school attainment levels, combined with improved VET and school-based traineeship and apprenticeship engagement, will set the foundations for improved employment outcomes for Aboriginal people and workforce participation.

Youth engagement

Labour force participation

ABS Census data shows that the Mid West (9.2%) has a slightly lower than State average (10.8%) proportion of youth[9] in the region. The Mid West has a lower than State average youth unemployment rate of 6.6%, compared to 6.8%, and also a lower than State average participation rate of 71.2%, compared to 72.2% (ABS 2012a).

This data suggests that while Mid West young people have relatively more success in securing employment, there is still significant unmet demand for employment opportunities.

This is an interesting dynamic and represents the influence of the strong traditional industrial and mining base of the region. The path followed by many school leavers is to immediately pursue employment opportunities rather than tertiary or higher education. This is a common feature of industrial and mining regions in Australia.

[9] The definition of 'youth' for labour market measures reported in this section is for those aged 15–24, unless otherwise indicated. This is in line with definitions commonly used by the ABS and the UN General Assembly.

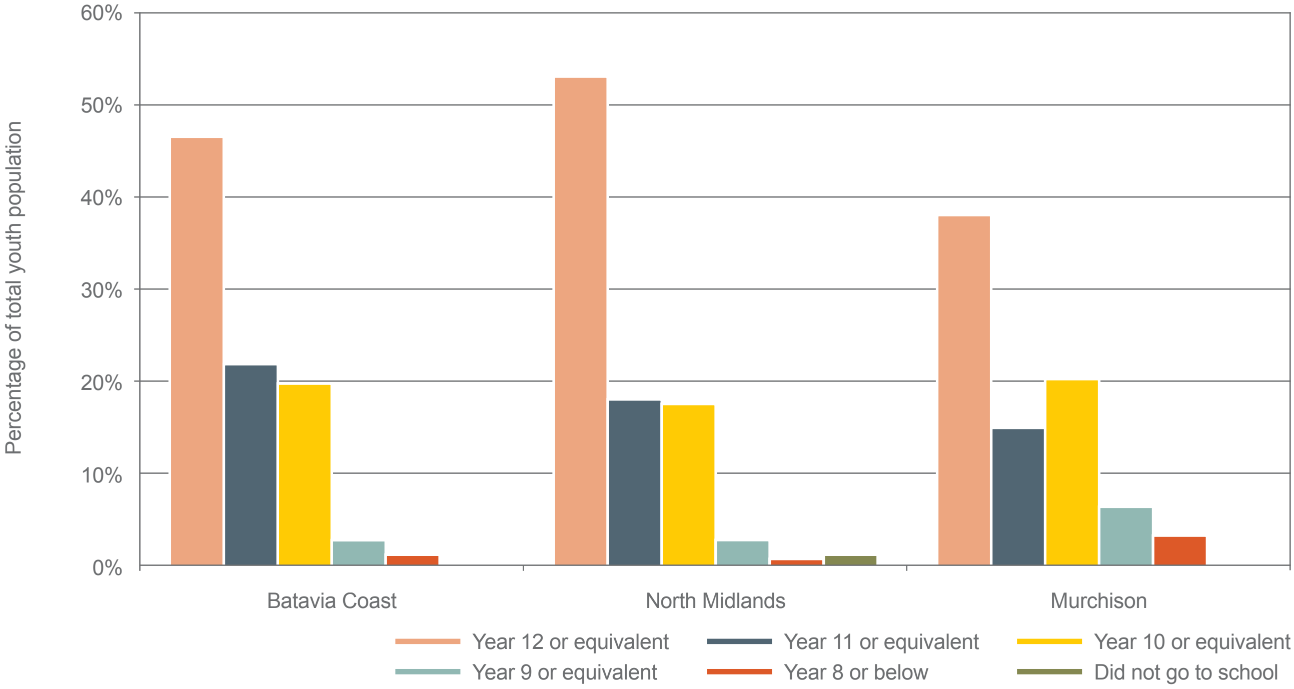
The need to ensure pathways and linkages between education and industry, such as part time after school employment, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships or VET industry placements, that can be identified and engaged by young people and employers in the Mid West, is a crucial element of the region's ongoing workforce development requirement.

While the proportion of youth seeking employment presents challenges for the region, it also provides significant opportunity for workforce development programs that will facilitate future economic growth and improved workforce development outcomes.

Educational engagement

The Mid West region trails the State average in Year 12 attainment, with only 46.1% of students achieving this educational level compared to the State average of 61.8%. Senior school retention is a considerable challenge for the Mid West community. Figure 23 indicates wide variations in sub-regional education attainment. This is highlighted in the Murchison data, with only 38.0% completing Year 12 and 5.9% achieving Year 9 or lower outcomes (ABS 2012a).

Figure 23: Youth: highest year of school completed

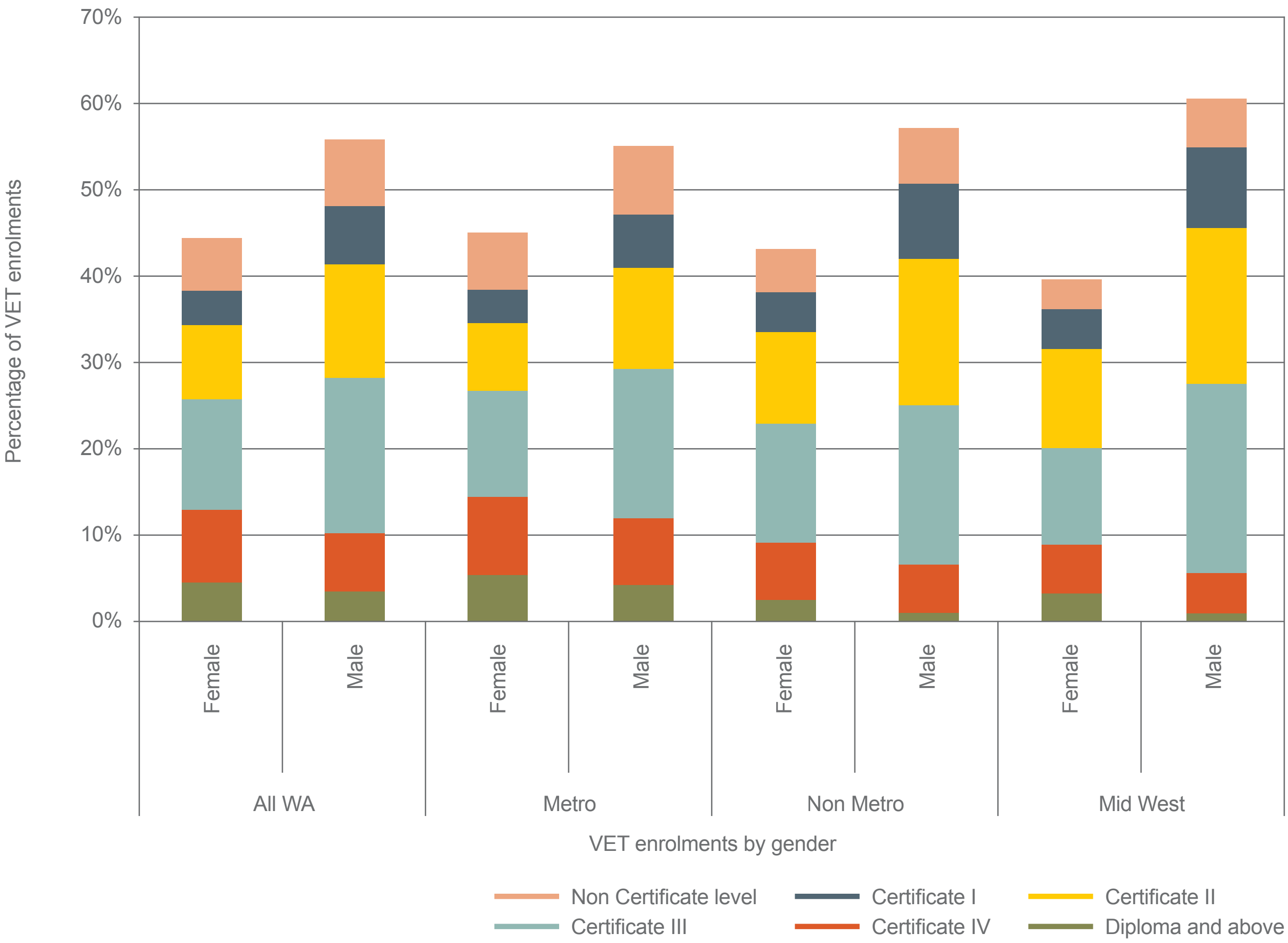


Source: ABS 2012a

VET data for the Mid West region sourced from VET Enrolment Statistics, covering students studying in the Mid West region over the period 2008–13, reflects a different mix of VET based training in the Mid West compared to Western Australia and metropolitan areas. In the Mid West, 14.8% of VET enrolments are at Certificate IV and Diploma levels, compared to 23.3% for Western Australia and 26.3% in metropolitan regions (Department of Training and Workforce Development 2013) (figure 24).

These are offset by higher levels of Certificate I, II and III enrolments in the Mid West (76.3%) compared to Western Australia (63.1%) and metropolitan regions (59.1%). Males dominate the Certificate I, II and III enrolments, with female VET students dominating the Diploma and above enrolments (Department of Training and Workforce Development 2013). This statistic reflects the predominance of male students engaged in trades that are traditionally at the Certificate II and III level. The trends evidenced in these statistics are consistent with many other regional locations throughout Australia.

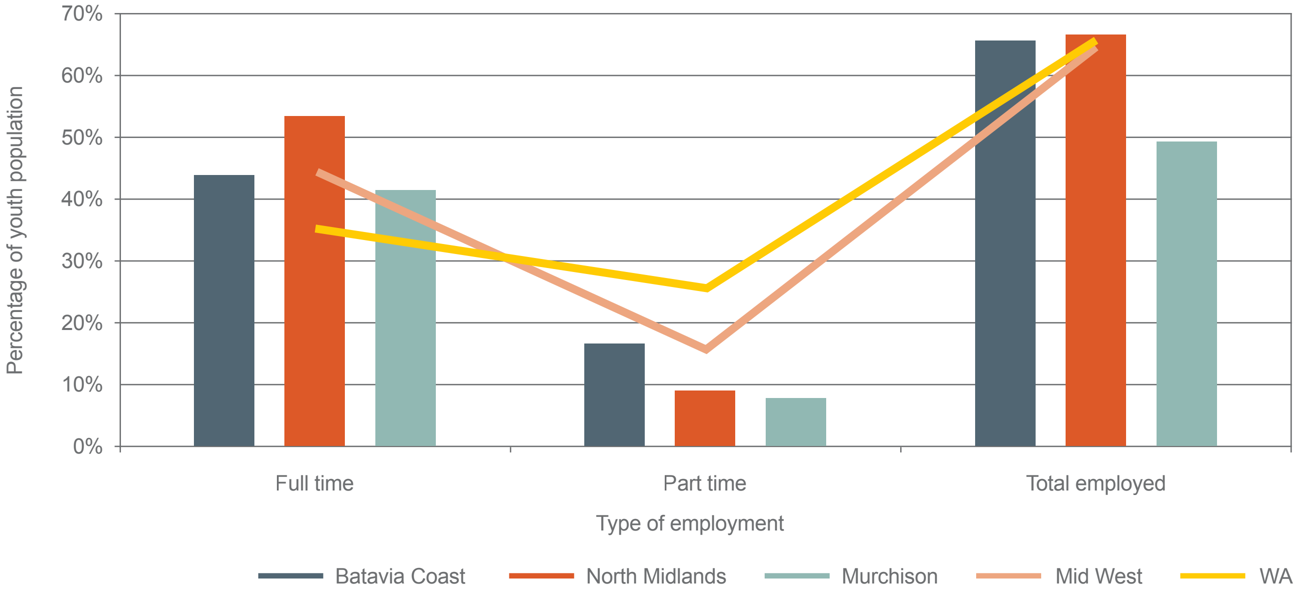
Figure 24: 2013 VET enrolments by gender



Source: Department of Training and Workforce Development 2013

Figure 25 shows that Mid West youth employment is predominately full time and is performing above the State average. In addition to the Aboriginal population, young people also need to be encouraged to utilise part time employment to gain essential employability skills and use this employment as a pathway to full time employment.

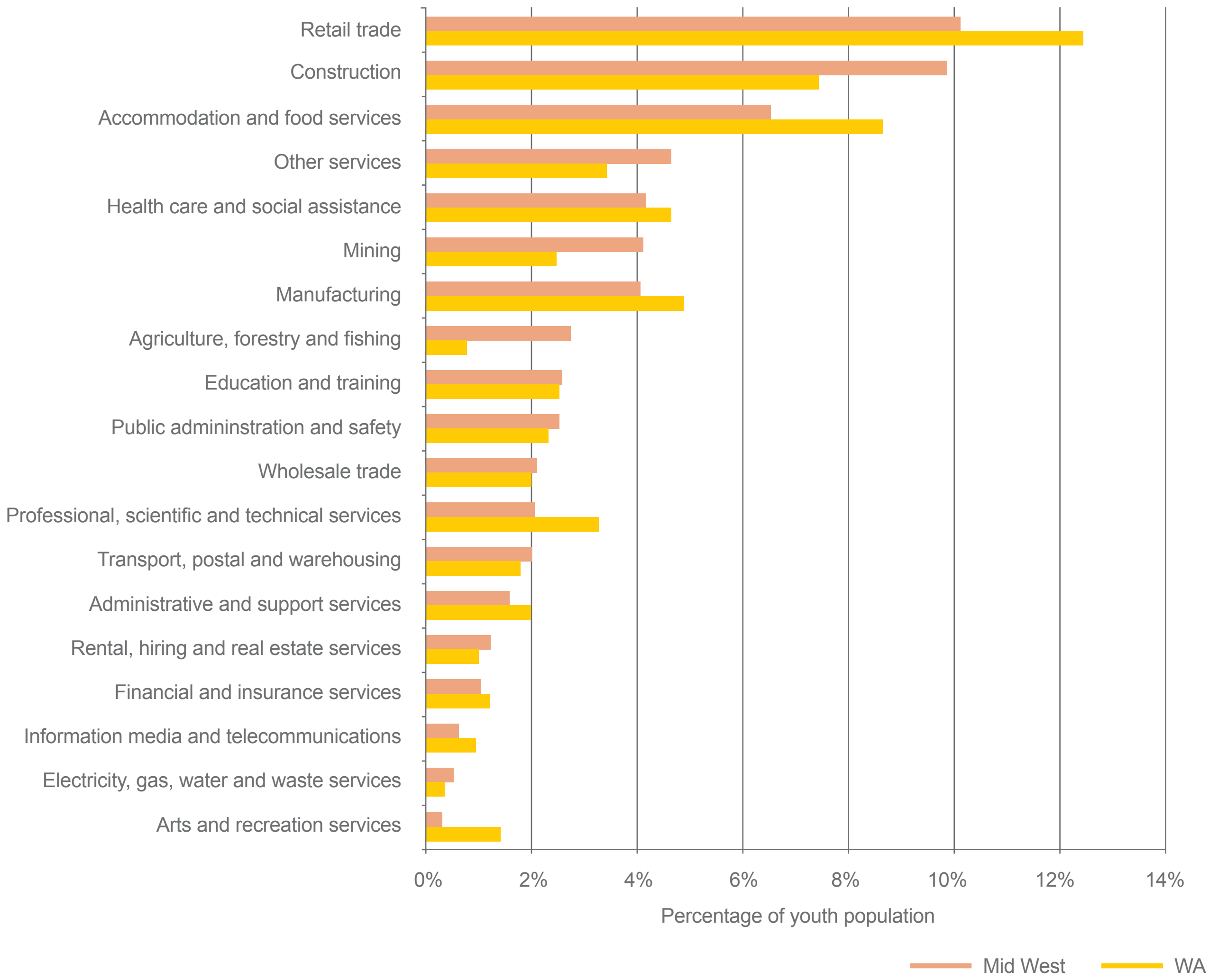
Figure 25: Youth employment



Source: ABS 2012a

The retail, construction and hospitality industry sectors are the main employers of young people (figure 26). The construction industry accounts for 9.9% of all employed Mid West youth, reflecting the growth in construction projects within the region and demand for housing (Department of Training and Workforce Development 2013). While retail is a leading sector of employment for young people in the Mid West, the rates of youth employment in this industry trail the State average. The retail and hospitality industries offer young people entering the workforce opportunities to develop a range of 'employability' skills, yet many existing positions in these sectors are secured by backpackers - particularly in more remote areas.

Figure 26:Youth employment by industry sector

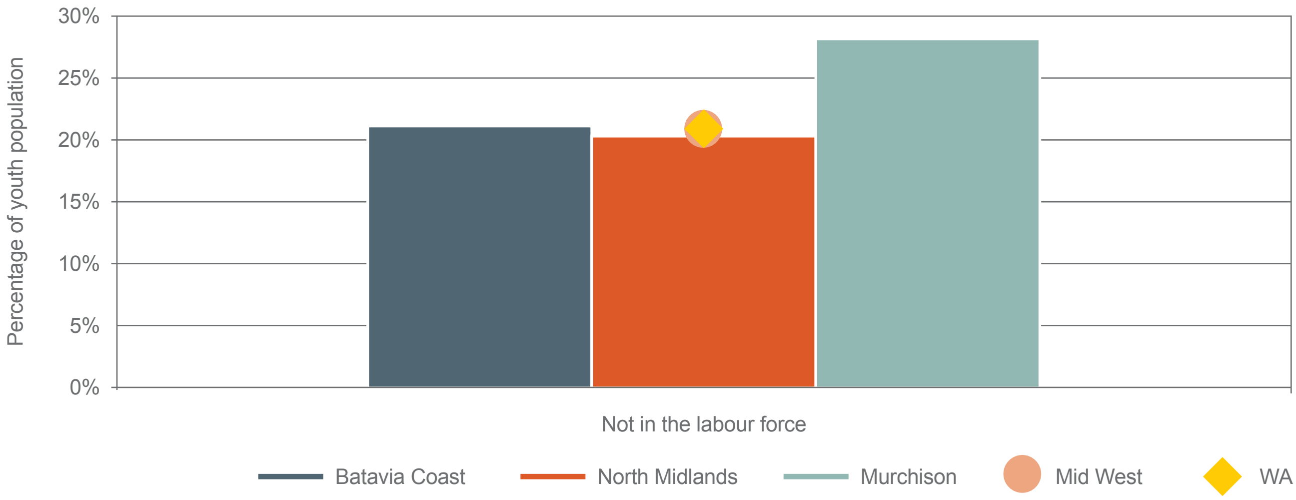


Source: ABS 2012a

Unemployment

According to the *National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions* report (May 2013), the State's youth unemployment rate[10] averaged 17.4% over the 12 months to March 2013 (DE 2013). Figure 27 shows youth not in the labour force in each sub-region[11]. Some 21% of youth in Batavia Coast, 20% in North Midlands and 28% in Murchison were not in the labour force. This compares to 21% across Western Australia.

Figure 27: Youth not in labour force



Source: ABS 2012a

Youth programs

The Mid West has some significant programs targeting youth transition and engagement. These programs provide opportunities for youth at different stages of development to acquire employability skills and practical competencies. The programs cover major facets of youth engagement. These include the Learning Engagement and Participation (LEAP) program for at risk youth who have disengaged from school; Clontarf Football Academy, designed to attract and retain male Aboriginal youth at school; and Future Moves, a systemic and sustainable career development in schools program comprising workshops for students, training for teachers and a web based portal providing up to date resources. Of note, Commonwealth-based funding for many successful youth programs in the Mid West ceased in 2014.

Stakeholder consultations in the Mid West indicated that programs developed for the long term unemployed would benefit from improved mentoring from business mentors and an enhanced connection to industry for work placement.

[10] Note that the *National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions* report defines unemployed youth as aged 15–19, who are actively seeking full time work (as those seeking part time work are more likely to be primarily focused on full time education).

[11] Persons not in the labour force are defined by ABS as those who, during the week prior to Census Night, were neither employed nor unemployed (e.g., permanently unable to work, in gaol, trainee teachers).

Implications for the *Mid West workforce development plan*

The Mid West's high youth population provides both opportunity and challenges. Whilst access to a large cohort of youth provides the foundations for locally produced skilled labour and workforce outcomes, the challenges of engaging youth with education and industry are ever present.

The challenges for youth engagement in the Mid West include:

- increasing the retention rate of Year 12 students;
- addressing the increasing youth unemployment rate;
- increasing the workforce participation rate of youth in the region;
- better utilising the VET and school-based apprenticeship and traineeship system to link youth with industry;
- developing employability skills for youth in the 18–22 age bracket; and
- developing sub-regional strategies to address specific youth issues.

Regional infrastructure

The draft *Mid West Regional Planning and Infrastructure Framework* (the *Framework*) was released in November 2011. The infrastructure priorities outlined in the *Framework* provide a succinct summary that is pertinent to the *Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018*. The delivery of the infrastructure priorities identified in the *Framework* will be critical to supporting the attraction and retention of workers to the region. The following is an overview of transport and infrastructure in the Mid West.

Rail

The rail network in the Mid West region is owned by the Western Australian State Government and is managed and operated on a long term lease by private company, Brookfield Rail, until 2049. The rail network of south-western Australia, which includes the Mid West, comprises of a combination of standard, narrow and dual gauge railway.

Rail haulage in the Mid West primarily consists of iron ore, grain and mineral sands, and is critical to getting products to market and reducing the impact on the region's road network.

As outlined in the framework, to improve access to markets and reduce the volume of freight traffic, it is important to consolidate the rail network within the Mid West to link the Geraldton Port, Narngulu industrial estate and the proposed Oakajee Deepwater Port and industrial estate with mines located to the east, north and south.

Road

The Mid West is well serviced by a network of major sealed roads that provide critical linkages within and beyond the region. Competition between iron ore and wheat haulage on rural roads is an ongoing issue for many Mid West towns, leading to local safety challenges. Growth is expected to continue placing greater stress on road infrastructure, particularly in the Greater Geraldton area.

Airports

The region's principal airport is located close to Geraldton and can accommodate up to 90 000 passenger movements per year. Meekatharra, Mount Magnet and Wiluna also have airports that accommodate regular flights to and from Perth. Other airports within the Mid West include Dongara, Kalbarri, Morawa, Perenjori, Murchison, Yalgoo and Cue.

There are a number of private charter operators based in the Mid West that provide FIFO charter services to inland mine sites.

Ports

The Mid West has one major port located at Geraldton with a second port proposed at Oakajee (described below). More than half of Geraldton Port's exports are generated from minerals and iron ore. Exports make up over 90% of the total volume throughput of the port, which is growing at an increasing rate. The Geraldton Port can currently accommodate Panamax (70 000 dead weight tonnage) vessels.

Strategic infrastructure

Oakajee Deepwater Port

The Oakajee Deepwater Port is proposed for a site about 25 kilometres north of the city of Geraldton. The proposed port is intended to have the capacity to accommodate capesize vessels (up to 180 000 dead weight tonnage) and will service the region's iron ore industry. Construction is yet to begin.

Geraldton Port expansion

The proposed expansion of the Geraldton Port will support the Oakajee Deepwater Port and grow exports from the region.

Oakajee Narngulu Infrastructure Corridor

This planned project involves the development of rail and road linkages with the Oakajee and Geraldton ports.

Freight hub

Oakajee would create a new international gateway to Asia and combined with the proposed PortLink Inland Freight Corridor (which includes development of new road and railway corridors connecting the Yilgarn area and the Mid West and Pilbara regions to export ports in Esperance, Geraldton/Oakajee, Port Hedland and Fremantle), could position the Mid West as a logistics hub for the State, linked to a national freight network.

Social infrastructure

It is important that all communities have access to adequate social infrastructure and services. The provision of such infrastructure makes a significant contribution to the liveability and attractiveness of a region.

The expansion of the Mid West's population to an estimated 69 900 by 2026 will require a higher threshold of facilities and services. The enhancement of these facilities and services will greatly assist the region's ability to attract and retain workers and their families.

The Mid West Development Commission, through the *Mid West Investment Plan*, is working with Mid West local governments and other key stakeholders to identify local and regional infrastructure priorities, with a focus on social infrastructure and services. Table 13 provides a list of social (and other public) infrastructure projects outlined in the *Mid West Investment Plan*.

Table 13: Mid West Investment Plan projects

Project name	Town/Region	Timeframe	Government contribution ($000's)	Project cost ($000's)
Murchison radio-astronomy observatory power station	Murchison	Unknown	10 000	26 500
Depot Hill Springs crossing upgrade	Mingenew	Unknown	640	1 580
Morawa sportsground facilities redevelopment	Morawa	Unknown	850	2 587
East Ogilvie Road upgrade	Northampton	Unknown	1 200	2 002
Morawa aged care units	Morawa	Unknown	330	830
Place Road/Flores Road intersection reconfiguration	Greater Geraldton	Unknown	2 815	7 300
Batavia Coast Marina stage 2	Greater Geraldton	Unknown	3 860	3 860
Silver Chain Eneabba refurbishment	–	Unknown	100	350
Geraldton universities centre – stage 2	Geraldton	Unknown	3 000	3 000
Yalgoo community sports hub	Yalgoo	Unknown	286	2 200
Northampton light industrial units	Northampton	Unknown	661	1 830
Wubin Mullewa Road upgrade	Mullewa to Wubin	Ongoing until 2015	10 800	21 600
Goldfields Highway	Meekatharra to Wiluna	Ongoing until 2015	10 000	20 000
Geraldton Airport landside development	Geraldton	Unknown	2 755	2 755
Building Better Regional Cities - urban expansion package	–	Unknown	13 970	28 970
Original railway building restoration	–	Unknown	1 000	1 850
Geraldton Residential College	Geraldton	Unknown	2 000	2 600
Perenjori Early Childhood Centre	–	Unknown	600	2 000
Ballinyoo Bridge replacement	Murchison	Unknown	3 500	5 500
Carnamah and Eneabba town revitalisation projects	–	Unknown	356	712
Pioneer Lodge communal activity rooms and roof replacement	Northampton	Unknown	160	353
Morawa town centre revitalisation	Morawa	Unknown	2 536	5 736
Yalgoo staff housing	Yalgoo	Unknown	360	710

Source: MWDC 2011

Implications for the *Mid West workforce development plan*

Based on the analysis of the regional infrastructure, the key implications for the *Mid West workforce development plan 2015–2018* are as follows:

- The proposed Oakajee project will be a major infrastructure investment in the Mid West region. It is expected that this project (rail and road), and associated projects (freight hub) will enable existing companies to increase their production capacity while generating significant job opportunities throughout the region.
- Sequencing of workforce needs is critical on major projects as they proceed from planning, development, construction and finally operation. Skills need to match requirements at the right times and in the right locations.
- The volume of major projects in the region is likely to place demands on the workforce, not just in terms of accessing workforce participants, but in accessing the right skills. The volume of projects present significant opportunities for the region's workforce in terms of participation, skills development and training.
- Ensuring that the sequencing of the availability of the region's workforce and the region's skill set coincides with project needs will be critical. This includes industries supporting projects such as manufacturing.
- The enhancement of social infrastructure and services in the Mid West will greatly assist the region's ability to attract and retain workers and their families. This review has identified almost $145 million worth of projects in the regional pipeline.
- Road, rail and air transport appears well connected in the Mid West, although population growth and expansion of the mining industry appears to be placing stress on road infrastructure.

Priority issues in the Mid West

Summary of key findings

An extensive consultation process undertaken for this plan has uncovered a number of key issues impacting workforce development in the Mid West. These issues form the basis for the priority actions and recommendations outlined in this document. The following is a summary of the salient issues identified by stakeholders, aligned to *Skilling WA* goals.

Workforce participation

- Career aspirations, particularly amongst youth and Aboriginal people, are a major inhibitor to workforce participation in the Mid West region. Mentoring, particularly in remote areas, access to high quality career guidance, and interventions beginning in early childhood are seen as critical to building career aspirations in young people.
- The ageing population in the Mid West is having a number of impacts on the labour market, including: increased demand for specific services (aged care, health); an ageing workforce in specific sectors such as local government; a reduction of the overall labour pool as people reach retirement; and increased competition in specific areas of the job market. The need for succession planning in some industries, such as agriculture, is becoming increasingly important.

Migration

- Skilled migration plays an important role in the Mid West workforce, with employers utilising migrants with 457 visas and international travellers to fill labour gaps.
- Access to quality education in sub-regional areas appears to be a deterrent for the attraction of skilled migrant workers and their families.

Attraction and retention

- Retaining staff has in the past been a key challenge in the Mid West, especially in the mining industry. Transient workers (FIFO/FOFI/DIDO[12]) are an accepted part of the community landscape, particularly in and around Geraldton, although less supported in remote areas where people want to build communities. Of note, recent developments in the mining industry are resulting in increased competition for local jobs as Mid West based FIFO workers seek alternative employment closer to home or their partners enter the labour force to supplement reduced family incomes.

[12] FIFO = Fly-in fly-out; FOFI = Fly-out fly-in; DIDO = Drive-in drive-out.

- Employment pathways appear to be a constraint for youth development, including a lack of entry level opportunities and pathways aligned with apprenticeships, traineeships, cadetships or other (entry level) opportunities. Access by young and Aboriginal people to public sector (including local government) positions is also limited, as there is strong competition for these jobs.
- Access to appropriate housing in the right locations is seen as an inhibitor to attracting skilled staff in sub-regional areas. Wages are often not geared to remote areas, for example in the health sector.
- Mentoring programs are seen as a valuable mechanism for retaining staff; this includes Aboriginal staff which often require one on one support.
- Access to quality education in sub-regional areas appears to be a deterrent for the attraction and retention of workers and their families.

Skill development and utilisation

- The employability of young people presents a serious challenge to workforce development. For example, low literacy and numeracy skills was identified by employers; anecdotal evidence suggested work experience is not being offered by businesses in remote areas; and school-based apprenticeships and traineeships are not being sufficiently utilised as a skill building platform and connection between education and industry.
- A number of well-regarded programs have been implemented in the Mid West that assist students to become employable (for example, Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre, LEAP program, Future Moves, careers forums). That said, there appears to be a lack of connection to industry through placement, work experience and volunteering, and many programs funded through the Commonwealth have since been cut.
- Quality of, and access to training and skills development is a challenge, particularly in the remote areas of Mid West.
- The Geraldton Universities Centre (GUC) model, which involves collaboration with multiple university organisations to facilitate regional access to courses aligned to their local industry needs, appears to be working well and should be further developed and built upon.
- The availability of skills varies between sub-regions. Skilled professionals and managers appear to be in short supply, particularly in the Murchison sub-region. Shortages of highly skilled professionals have been noted in the health, education and hospitality industries. Skill needs in some industries are changing, for example higher order management skills in the agricultural and related industries.

Planning and coordination

- Existing workforce development programs are generally working satisfactorily, but opportunities for further development exist. For example, pre-apprenticeship courses may help link education and industry, whilst filling knowledge gaps and assisting with building skills in the sub-regions.
- There are some well-established and well-functioning linkages and networks in the Mid West. These networks can be developed further through, the Mid West Chamber of Commerce via its leadership development and mentoring programs.

- A more coordinated approach to employer/industry engagement is needed to improve employer support for workforce development, particularly: youth pathways from school to local employment; and to further build on existing Aboriginal employment strategies.
- Sub-regional initiatives, such as the Morawa Education, Industry and Training Alliance, a partnership between local education providers, industry bodies and local government aimed at addressing the shortage of entry level people in the agricultural and mining industries is an example of a successful model which could be supported and leveraged.
- Attracting people based on future skill needs is important. For example, consultations revealed that there is a perceived lack of people with information technology skills in the Mid West. These skills will be required as the National Broadband Network (NBN) rolls out and the education sector builds towards online learning platforms.

Sub-regional issues

Significant sub-regional issues were identified through the consultations. Many of the priority actions addressing workforce development issues (see table 17), will need to consider differential approaches at the sub-regional level. Key issues are identified below.

North Midlands

- School attendance rates are poor and most local people lack formal qualifications. As a result, there is some reliance on FIFO and DIDO, while senior positions tend to be recruited from outside the region.
- Young people are accessing schooling options in Geraldton and Perth, and those that leave the region tend not to return.
- There is a lack of appropriate housing and public transport linkages to major cities (Perth, small towns to Geraldton).
- Opportunities and aspirations among youth are trades focused. Young females are finding it difficult to find trades opportunities in the region.

Batavia Coast

- The sub-region is very Geraldton focused.
- The lack of education, training and skills development options are pronounced outside Geraldton, and youth unemployment levels increase in line with the distance from Geraldton. For example, unemployment is very high in Kalbarri where there are limited programs or opportunities.
- There are no hospitality courses outside Geraldton, with the perception that backpackers are being employed over locals in this industry as a result. Demand for course delivery at other sites has not been gauged.

Murchison

- The lack and quality of accommodation impacts on the region's ability to attract and retain workers locally.
- Businesses are requiring Aboriginal cultural awareness training to enable managers to better motivate and retain their Aboriginal workers.

It is worth noting that although addressing all sub-regional issues is beyond the capacity of regional stakeholders, leveraging existing initiatives and partnerships will be a critical element in tackling the challenges.

Analysis of workforce development issues

Regional SWOT

The following table shows the regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to workforce planning and development in the Mid West region.

Table 14: Regional SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Partnerships, collaboration and existing governance models in place supporting jobs growth and economic development. • Existing and functioning linkages and networks across industry and at issues level. • An increasing number of undergraduate programs are accessible through GUC. • Diverse economy acting as a service 'hub' for the broader region. • Mentoring appears to be working in Geraldton – disadvantaged and Aboriginal youth, business coaching. • The growth of Geraldton as a lifestyle city and regional capital creates opportunities in diverse industries. • Steady opening of new land for housing development in Geraldton has also kept housing affordable.	• Cyclical, commodity driven economy. • Availability of industry intelligence to support career advice in schools is limited. • Disconnect between industry and education providers at all levels. • Quality of trades training. • Building aspirations and career outcomes of school aged youth is challenging. • VET in schools is not aligning with industry needs. • Mentoring in remote areas is limited. • Scarcity of apprenticeship and training programs, particularly outside of Geraldton. • FIFO related transport linkages to the northern regions of Western Australia. • Lack of school-based apprenticeship and traineeship programs.

Opportunities	Threats
• The NBN rollout and the attraction of smart industries (including those supporting or leveraging the Square Kilometre Array project). • Development of Geraldton as a knowledge and innovation hub will require higher retention rates and attainment levels. • Outlook for the tourism, hospitality and agriculture is positive. • Potential for building the aspirations of young people and their parents. • GUC is an innovative and successful model of regional university education – utilising distance learning and industry support. • Pathways development and alignment/ linkages between schools and industry. • Industry developing its own workforce development plans as pre-emptive strategies. • E-learning capability represents best model to develop remote learning capability. • Offering mentoring or work experience might arrest some issues with youth participation, including in remote areas. • Increased local training across a range of areas, from trades to compliance and mandatory competency based training.	• Social issues (drugs and alcohol). • Lack of career aspirations of young people. • Worker transience and low levels of loyalty. • Economic easing particularly impacting on youth, apprentices and Aboriginal participation. • Low literacy and numeracy skills are an issue and barrier to people participating in the workforce. • Economic uncertainly causing delays in investment. • Lack of quality housing infrastructure (e.g. Murchison). • Uncertainty around the future of national and State labour market policies (e.g. Australian Apprenticeship Support Network, Employment Scholarship program). • Uncertainty around national policies relating to young people, with new restrictions on Newstart and Youth Allowance. • Significant cuts announced to Commonwealth Government funding for youth programs.

Key issues impacting the Mid West's workforce

Based on desktop research and stakeholder consultations, table 15 provides a qualitative assessment of the five strategic goals of *Skilling WA* against the workforce planning and development needs identified for the Mid West. While all areas require some attention, it highlights where the focus of effort should be to achieve *Skilling WA* goals in the Mid West. This assessment combined with the SWOT analysis, have been used to guide the development, focus and intended outcomes of recommendations in this report.

Table 15: Measure of Skilling WA strategic goal need in the Mid West

Skilling WA strategic goal	Level of focus needed in Mid West	Justification
Workforce participation	✔✔	• Ageing workforce is changing labour market demographics and capability. • Career aspirations are low, particularly amongst youth and Aboriginal people. • There is evidence that education and training outcomes (e.g. Year 12 attainment) are below State averages in some areas and in some sub-regions, such as Murchison. • Risks to future workforce participation are high, particularly amongst youth and Aboriginal people.
Migration	✔	• FIFO/DIDO are playing an important role in local and interregional workforce. • There has been, and will continue to be, an effective increase in the local population as FIFO workers remain in the region as major mining construction contracts are completed. • Skilled migrants and international travellers are filling skills gaps but present risk to developing future generations.
Attraction and retention	✔✔	• Attracting skilled professionals to the region is challenging and it is being managed better in some locations and industries than others. • Reduction of FIFO activities creating a new dynamic to the local employment market which has made it relatively easier for firms to attract and retain workers and skills. • Lack of accommodation options is a barrier in some industries, such as health and also in local government. • The lack of employment pathways is inhibiting development of young workers. • Young professionals leaving the region due to lifestyle choices is a challenge.

Skilling WA strategic goal	Level of focus needed in Mid West	Justification
Skills development and utilisation	✔✔✔	• The lack of employability skills of some young people presents a significant challenge to workforce development in the Mid West; English, maths, science and work ethic are often noted as lacking. • A realistic alignment between VET in schools programs and employment opportunities is needed. • There is some evidence (poor literacy and numeracy and employer perceptions gathered during consultations) that limited access to quality education options in sub-regional areas is impacting employment outcomes. • The availability of skills varies between sub-regions. • Requirement for businesses, including SMEs, to plan for their future workforce, up skill and re-skill.
Planning and coordination	✔✔✔	• Existing workforce development programs are good, but opportunities for further development exist, particularly in remote areas. • Coordination of activities and projects amongst agencies and within the private sector has been identified as an area for improvement. • There are some good linkages and networks in the Mid West which can be built on and leveraged to produce positive workforce development related outcomes. • Employer staff engagement and human resource skills are required to facilitate better workforce development outcomes.

Note: ✔✔✔ = highly important, ✔✔ = important, ✔ = somewhat important

While all strategic goals are important, skills development and utilisation, and planning and coordination, are seen as the *Skilling WA* goals requiring the most attention in the Mid West. Additionally, the long term aspirational growth envisaged in the draft *Blueprint*, as well as specific strategies identified under its 'knowledge and learning' pillar, will require a training and workforce development response. Tables 16 and 17 propose a series of key priorities and associated 'game changer' initiatives, and also a set of priority actions to address these identified needs.

These can be broadly grouped into the following themes:
- building linkages between education and industry;
- filling specific needs based skills gaps;
- addressing youth career aspirations;
- strengthening the agricultural and tourism (including retail and hospitality) sectors' workforce; and
- developing early childhood intervention strategies to improve childhood aspirations.

Strategies for workforce development

Key priorities

Key priorities and 'game changer' initiatives have been developed (table 16) in conjunction with the Mid West Workforce Development Alliance to address the critical issues previously outlined. These priorities and initiatives are potential projects that will directly support the draft *Blueprint*, as well as deliver workforce development outcomes identified as part of *Skilling WA*. They should be regarded as the most immediate areas of need stemming from this project.

Table 16: Key priorities

No.	*Key priorities*	Game changer initiatives	Elements
1	Getting young people into jobs that match the Mid West's labour market requirements.	Greater focus and resourcing to enable better coordination and integration of youth workforce development activities between schools, employers, training providers, the GUC and service providers in the Mid West. Establish an executive steering committee to drive the coordination and integration of initiatives, reporting to and under the leadership and direction of the Mid West Workforce Development Alliance.	• Connecting schools with Durack, GUC, private training providers, service providers and employers. • More opportunities for work placements and work experience. • Greater support and utilisation of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. • Building on Joblink Mid West's Workforce Development Centre career development in schools initiative providing workshops, resources and professional development to schools and teachers with career development responsibilities. • Mentoring programs involving schools and employers. • Proper course selection at school to maximise career aspirations. • Encouraging youth and early childhood aspirations.
2	Greater engagement of employers in the workforce development agenda - small to medium sized enterprises, larger firms, local and State Government.	Develop a coordinated, structured and strategic approach to industry advisory arrangements that increases employer support for workforce development, particularly youth pathways from school to local employment.	• More structured approach to employer/industry engagement by schools, training providers and service providers. • Major employers/industry contributing to the development of sustainable communities, through the provision of advice, labour market intelligence and resources and by engaging with schools and education and training providers. • Promotion to employers of school-based traineeships and VET in schools generally (via direct marketing and also at existing events such as Careers Expo, Science Forum, etc.). • Provision of more work placement and work experience opportunities.

No.	*Key priorities*	Game changer initiatives	Elements
3	Continued focus on improving the education, training and employment outcomes of Aboriginal people.	Advocate for Aboriginal employment strategies that provide sustainable 'career development pathways' for continued career progression and professional development rather than consistent turnover through short term employment programs.	• Leverage the work of the Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre (AWDC) and its partners. • Establish linkages between Midwest Aboriginal Organisation Alliance activities and the work of the AWDC. • Explore linkages between appropriate organisations to support activities outside of Geraldton. • Engage employers, particularly the large resource/non-resource players, to create/build on their existing Aboriginal employment strategies with a view to increasing Aboriginal employment opportunities in the Mid West region. Cross sector investment may be needed. • Focus on developing local projects that have career pathways beyond entry level, rather than employment projects at entry level with a finite life. • Focus on improving education, training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people through early childhood learning and youth engagement.
4	Enhancing the attraction and retention of skilled workers in sub-regional areas.	Leveraging of existing initiatives and partnerships in the region to address sub-regional challenges.	• Focus on addressing barriers, developing strategies and/or alternatives for programs that aim to attract and retain skilled workers (e.g. teachers, ICT and health professionals) in remote areas. • Supporting education and training access, including remote area access and engagement. • Developing strategies to prevent 'skills drainage' during commodity cycle upswings.

Priority actions

The following priority actions (table 17) have been developed in conjunction with the Mid West Development Alliance to address the challenges previously outlined. These priority actions have been refined to ensure their relevance and ease of implementation. They are directly aligned to and will complement and support one or more of the broader key priorities identified in table 16. Alignment to draft *Blueprint* sub-pillars and strategies and *Skilling WA* goals is also shown.

Table 17: Priority actions

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Education and training	Pre-compulsory learning and development	1 The Department of Education to provide guidance and support as needed in relation to the development of parenting centres across the region as proposed by the draft *Mid West Regional Blueprint*.	1.2	1, 3
		Lead agency: Department of Education		
		This recommendation supports the draft *Blueprint* which proposes early childhood learning as a key aspect of its education and training sub-pillar. The Mid West has several parenting centres (Geraldton, Bidi Bidi and Perenjori). These centres are a valuable asset to be leveraged to develop childhood aspiration across the region.		
	Aboriginal education	2 The Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Training and Workforce Development to continue raising awareness and promoting financially viable and sustainable VET in schools programs as a pathway to employment amongst Aboriginal students.	1.4, 4.3	3
		Lead agency: Department of Education (Mid West Education Regional Office)		
		VET in schools offers a viable pathway for many students, particularly remote area and Aboriginal students. These pathways continue to engage students during and post traditional school-based programs, a point where many, notably Aboriginal students, are lost to further education, training or employment pathways. Engaging with State, independent and Catholic schools to increase awareness of these options amongst Aboriginal students may lead to greater uptake.		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Education and training	Education workforce	3 The Department of Education to investigate alternatives for programs or leverage off existing Local Government Alliances, such as Morawa Education, Industry and Training Alliance and Jurien Bay Education Working Party, with the aim to retain teachers in more remote settings for longer periods of time.	3.2	3, 4
		Lead agency: Department of Education (Mid West)		
		Many teachers are placed in remote locations for limited timeframes. Many are graduates seeking experience before returning to other locations to continue their careers. This leads to a high rate of turnover amongst teachers which the community perceives as a factor in many remote students losing a connection to and interest in education and training. Training teachers locally through GUC has already shown that graduates stay working in the region. Developing models that aim to retain these teachers and other graduates, in remote areas for longer periods of time will assist to maintain connections between students and education and could be piloted to assess the resultant levels of educational attainment and engagement.		
		4 The Department of Education and the Department of Training and Workforce Development to assess the feasibility, and explore avenues for development and implementation of pilot programs to encourage Aboriginal people from regional and remote areas to pursue teaching and teaching support careers.	1.4, 4.2	3
		Lead agencies: Department of Education and Department of Training and Workforce Development		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Education and training		Encouraging Aboriginal people to undertake teaching and related careers will provide a rewarding pathway as well as increase engagement amongst other Aboriginal people due to two factors. First, it could be argued that Aboriginal teachers are more prepared to live and work in remote areas compared with non-Aboriginal teachers. Secondly, Aboriginal students are likely to engage with Aboriginal teachers due to better cultural awareness and understanding. Early Childhood Education at Durack and Teacher training at GUC, along with Aboriginal support officers at these locations, could help make this training more viable and attractive to Yamatji people.		
	Educational aspirations	5 The Mid West Workforce Development Alliance to facilitate existing youth career development programs by promoting mechanisms for students to have access to agreed programs/placements in industry upon completion.	1.3	1
		Lead agency: Mid West Workforce Development Alliance		
		The absence of pathways to industry at or near completion of youth career development programs is a major structural issue in the Mid West. The impact of this was evident through the consultations and identified in the statistical data. Working with industry to develop these pathways is critical if students are to remain engaged and enter the workforce.		
		6 The Mid West Workforce Development Alliance to facilitate the successful Mid West Youth Science Forum for upper primary, middle and senior school students by developing an annual program of industry promotion to stimulate aspiration.	1.3, 4.6	1
		Lead agency: Mid West Workforce Development Alliance		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Education and training	Educational aspirations	The draft *Blueprint* seeks to develop childhood and student aspiration throughout the Mid West as a way to encourage diversity, educational outcomes and grow skills across a range of industries and sectors. The Youth Science Forum was highly regarded by students and schools as a means to develop student interest. This model can be built upon and leveraged to further enhance aspirational development amongst primary and middle and senior school students.		
		7 The Department of Education to develop a program in line with the philosophies and practices of the Mindshop Excellence program and roll this out through the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry and local secondary schools throughout the region.	4.2	1, 2
		Lead agency: Department of Education (Mid West)		
		Mindshop is a five day work based program used in many regions across Australia to engage students with industry and develop practical problem solving skills. The establishment of this or similar strategies in the Mid West will further support greater industry/school collaboration and engagement, as well as provide participating students practical work experience. Whilst this supports important aspects of a student's learning and aspirations, one off projects need to be supported in earlier years equipping students with knowledge skills and attributes that supports the overall learning outcomes.		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Education and training	Educational aspirations	8 The Mid West Workforce Development Alliance, Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other relevant parties, to work with retail and hospitality industry sectors and local secondary schools, to identify and promote sources of funding for programs that use local young people within these sectors, provide advice on funding submissions, and encourage local young people to activity seek employment positions in these sectors.	4.2	1
		Lead agency: Mid West Workforce Development Alliance		
		Retail and hospitality sectors are seen as entry level opportunities for students to enter the workforce and develop a range of 'employability' skills. Many existing positions in these sectors are secured by backpackers. Promoting the use of local young people in retail and hospitality can assist in a greater number of younger people developing key skills as well as support the establishment of a strong local workforce to support these sectors.		
		9 The Department of Education (Mid West schools) to target students, their parents and communities in the early years, by leveraging any existing programs, pilots and tools to further promote and encourage career aspiration.	1.1	1
		Lead agency: Department of Education (Mid West)		
		The draft *Blueprint* identifies that an improvement in early years aspiration will assist to lay the foundations for the long term needs of the region's workforce. Much education and training related research now focuses on improving early years and career aspiration. This recommendation aims to cement these principles in the workforce development planning for the Mid West.		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Workforce development	Labour force participation	10 The Mid West Workforce Development Alliance to continue to explore the development of mentoring programs including for young people in the Mid West.	1.1, 1.3	1, 2
		Lead agency: Mid West Workforce Development Alliance		
		Mentoring is being used in many businesses across the Mid West as a development tool for staff. Mentoring is highly regarded as a development tool both within educational environments and workplaces, particularly for disengaged youth. Building on these principles, this recommendation aims to build a platform for the expansion mentoring programs as well as support greater engagement with the region's industries such as mining and agriculture.		
		11 The Department of Agriculture and Food to assess the feasibility of supporting the agriculture industry in developing young industry leaders and entrepreneurs in the Mid West through ongoing training, mentoring and capacity building activities.	1.1	1, 2
		Lead agency: Department of Agriculture and Food		
		The Mid West has a large, growing and sophisticated agricultural industry. The industry has some peculiar workforce development needs arising from a range of sources, such as increased international market access, corporate investment in farming and farming systems and the increasingly rapid uptake of technology and sophisticated production and operational systems. To manage these issues new skills need to be accessed by this sector. The State Government's Seizing the Opportunity initiative may provide funding opportunities to build these skills into the current and future agricultural workforce of the Mid West.		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Workforce development	Building the region's future workforce	12 The Department of Training and Workforce Development in collaboration with the Department of Education, to look at opportunities to further build on school-based apprenticeship and traineeship programs.	5.1	1, 2
		Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development		
		The link between industry and schools/educational institutions has been identified as one area which could be improved. Building upon school-based apprenticeships and traineeships is seen as an important way to develop and build linkages between industry and the education system, as well as providing clearer pathways for younger people entering the workforce.		
		13 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to work with the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Small Business Development Corporation to leverage existing initiatives to support businesses in the Mid West.	3.4, 5.4	2
		Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development		
		Consultations identified a need for small and medium size businesses to continue to up skill around workforce development related issues. This action aims to promote existing resources such as the Department of Training and Workforce Development's 'Workplace essentials' website and leverage other existing initiatives where appropriate. This recommendation supports firms to develop these skills and therefore their workforces.		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Workforce development	Building the region's future workforce	14 The Department of Local Government and Communities to encourage local governments in their workforce planning frameworks to consider where feasible, increasing employment opportunities for local young people including apprenticeships and traineeships.	1.3, 5.4	1
		Lead agency: Department of Local Government and Communities		
		Local governments are major employers in the Mid West region and many have an ageing workforce. Enhancing existing workforce planning strategies to include greater focus on youth employment programs, including apprenticeships and traineeships, will provide pathways for many to enter this sector (which in turn acts across a range of industries) as well as assist in addressing some of the ageing workforce issues faced by local governments across the region.		
		15 The Mid West Workforce Development Alliance to establish and oversee an Education and Training Steering Committee with an initial focus on youth transition and engagement with employers.	1.3, 5.2	1, 2
		Lead agency: Mid West Workforce Development Alliance		
		To aid in the coordination of workforce development activities in the region, this group should be formed to ensure appropriate engagement with educational institutions and industry. With an initial focus on youth related matters, the group will be attending to one of the most significant workforce development related issues facing the Mid West.		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	**Strategy**			
Workforce development	Building the region's future workforce	16 The Mid West Workforce Development Alliance to monitor the work of relevant agencies gathering local intelligence on the changing housing needs of the region, particularly outside Geraldton, to determine any implications for workforce development.	3.3	4
		Lead agency: Mid West Workforce Development Alliance		
		A lack of appropriate housing was identified as a barrier to the attraction and retention of higher order skills in some industries, such as local government and health. Undertaking a detailed housing analysis will assist to crystallise the specific nature (for example family homes, apartments, location) and more clearly define the geographical areas where this issue was identified. Agencies such as the Department of Housing and the Mid West Development Commission are likely to have intelligence on the Mid West region's housing needs.		
		17 Durack Institute of Technology and Geraldton Universities Centre to collaborate on higher education and training pathways and initiatives so that local people are afforded the opportunity to up skill and fill technical and professional roles required in the Mid West labour workforce.	4.2, 4.6	1, 2
		Lead agencies: Durack Institute of Technology and Geraldton Universities Centre		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Workforce development	Building the region's future workforce	Durack and the GUC have a joint committee investigating how higher education and training programs can seamlessly be developed and promoted for the Mid West community from Certificate and Diploma courses to Degree and Post Graduate studies. Home grown professionals will not only fill technical and professional vacancies but experience shows they will also be retained in the region. Working with industry on the most relevant pathways and engaging youth, business and the wider community with the opportunities available will help build the capacity of the region for the long term.		
		18 The Mid West Development Commission to continue to progress the Geraldton Health, Education and Training Accommodation Project.	5.1	2
		Lead agency: Mid West Development Commission		
		Health and allied industries are major employers in the Mid West and provide critical services to the residents of the region. Higher education is a key driver in building the region's capacity. The Geraldton Health, Education and Training Accommodation Project is a major platform designed to support the ongoing development of the health industry, VET and higher education by ensuring accommodation for visiting health professional and students. The project is specifically identified in the *Mid West Investment Plan* and directly supports a range of draft *Blueprint* initiatives.		

Blueprint 2050		Priority actions	*Skilling WA* – strategic goals	Key priorities
Sub-pillar	Strategy			
Workforce development	Aboriginal employment	19 The Department of Training and Workforce Development to continue to build on the work of its Mid West Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre, including further exploration of Aboriginal mentoring programs.	1.4	2, 3
		Lead agency: Department of Training and Workforce Development		
		The Mid West Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre has laid the foundations for a range of Aboriginal workforce development programs and opportunities. The work of this centre is important in linking Aboriginal people in the Mid West to employment, training and education opportunities and should continue to be supported by the Department. The use of mentoring as an approach to assisting education, training and personal development, should, where feasible, be further enhanced amongst the Aboriginal community.		

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Appendix A: Data limitations and terminology

Data limitations

Where available, the most recent government and industry data have been used in the plan. However, there are a number of limitations associated with the availability and accuracy of data, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census being the most notable. There are well known concerns with the accuracy of some Census data in rural and remote areas. Wherever possible, alternative sources of data have been used or the trends and patterns have been cross-checked during regional consultations.

The data used were mostly derived from the ABS 2011 Census, labour force and business data and from the Commonwealth Department of Employment's Small Area Labour Market data. In addition, published secondary sources of data and information have been used such as that available from the Mid West Development Commission, the former Department of Regional Development and Lands (now the Department of Regional Development, Regional Development Australia), the Department of Planning, the Department of Training and Workforce Development and a number of private sector reports.

Considerable caution must also be exercised when using Aboriginal labour market data from the ABS Census. The 'net undercount' for Western Australia's Aboriginal population in 2011 is estimated to have been around 20%. While the ABS does have a methodology to adjust for this, it is only applied to basic counts of Aboriginal persons, but not to any labour market related Census variables. Also there are cultural considerations and other difficulties related to collecting information from a small and highly dispersed group of people. This means that any Census labour market data for Aboriginal people (particularly in the more remote/traditional communities) may have a higher than average error rate.

Caution should be used in analysing and interpreting the data, including any projections. It should also be noted that some sources combine the data for the Mid West with the Gascoyne region thus making some statistical analysis less reliable and less accurate for the individual regions[13].

[13] Please note that some of the percentages presented in this document may not total 100% due to rounding.

Terminology

Within this report the following terminology is used.

1 Recognised and defined statistical areas:
   - region – refers to the Mid West region. This area is a recognised statistical area by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (SA3 classification).
   - sub-regional – refers to the three recognised sub-regional areas within the broader Mid West region, namely North Midlands, Batavia Coast and Murchison. These are comprised of various Local Government Areas (LGAs).

2 Imprecisely defined and descriptive terminology:
   - regional – within the context of this report the term is used to describe that part of the region within relatively close proximity to Geraldton. As a rule of thumb, a location with a travel time of less than two hours to Geraldton would be considered 'regional'.
   - remote – within the context of this report, the term is used to contrast that of regional and refers to areas not within the immediate Geraldton region. As a rule of thumb, a location that has a travel distance of greater than two hours would be considered 'remote'.

Appendix B: Mid West consultation list

Name	Position	Organisation
Daniel Crowe	Executive Officer	Aboriginal Workforce Development Centre – Mid West
Paul Jones	Manager	Boogardie Station
Rebecca Davidson	Manager Mid West	Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia
Jeff Graham	Director Corporate Services	City of Greater Geraldton
Carrie Puzzar	Manager – Human Resources and Workforce	City of Greater Geraldton
Wayne Murray	Project Officer	Commonwealth Department of Employment
Ian Andrews	Executive Director	Community Services, Health and Education Training Council Inc.
Alan Davis	Director, Skills Development	Construction Training Council
David Crothers	CEO	Crothers Construction
Wayne McDonald	Director Regional Coordination	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
Craig Turley	Senior Project Officer	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
Elise Ronan	Project Officer	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
Mike Bowley	Regional Director	Department of Agriculture and Food
James Hagan	Economist	Department of Agriculture and Food
Pamela I'Anson	Regional Manager	Department of Agriculture and Food
Greg Thorne	Regional Executive Director, Midwest Education Regional Office	Department of Education
Greg Nairn	Regional Education, Training and Industry Liaison Officer – Midwest Education Regional Office	Department of Education

Name	Position	Organisation
Joanne Brennan	Coordinator Regional Services, Midwest Education Region	Department of Education
Bert Beevers	Managing Director	Durack Institute of Technology
Kevin Peachey	Executive Director	Electrical, Utilities and Public Administration Training Council Inc.
Dave Hicks	CEO	Engineering and Automotive Training Council Inc.
Allan Jones	CEO	Financial, Administrative and Professional Services Training Council Inc
Kay Gerard	CEO	Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council (WA) Inc.
Mal Gammon	CEO	FutureNow – Creative and Leisure Industries Training Council Inc.
Mairi Quinn	Principal	Geraldton Property Team
Jenny Allen	Director	Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre
Meredith Wills	Director	Geraldton Universities Centre
Natalie Nelmes	Acting Director	Geraldton Universities Centre
Todd West	CEO	Glass Co
Jane Parker	Coordinator of Community	Greater Geraldton Shire - Mullewa District Office
Ron Bradfield	Membership and Indigenous Development Manager	Indigenous Development and Employment Services
Leon Norris	Regional Manager	Joblink Mid West
Jillian Dielesen	CEO	Logistics Training Council Inc.
Darren Lee	Managing Director	Market Creations
Darryn McKenzie		McKenzie Corp
Anita Morrissey	Community Development Officer	Mid West Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development
Milton Milroy		Mid West Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development
Jim Sandy	Chairman	Mid West Aboriginal Employment and Economic Development

Name	Position	Organisation
Zoran Trajkovski	Regional Manager	Mid West - Gascoyne Youth Justice Services, Parent Support Services
Rob Jefferies	Executive Officer	Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Geraldton Iron Ore Alliance
Steve Douglas	Manager, Strategic Projects	Mid West Development Commission
Maeva Hall		Mid West Health Education and Training Alliance
Chris Rafanelli	Retail Sub-Committee	Midwest Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Moritz von Kehler	Regional Coordinator	Mission Australia
Jody Whitby James Brockman Ollie Flanagan Gloria Whitehurst Charmaine Burton Tracey Saylor Christopher Curley	School Engagement Officers	Mission Australia Remote Schools Attendance Strategy
Jade Reed	Manager	Mt Magnet Post and Lottery
Liz Tuchey		Mt Magnet District High School
Peter Canny	Health, Safety and Environmental Manager	Mt Magnet Gold
Mick Madden		MTF Services
Nicki Patterson	Principal	Mullewa District High School
Mick Tierny	CEO	Mullewa Engineering Services
Anita Nugara	Director of Nursing	Mullewa Hospital
Jim McGorman	Owner/Manager	Murchison Carpentry
Anne Harrington		Murchison Traders, Cue
Lance Christie	Manager	Northampton Hospital
Sharon Todd	Manager	Northampton Motor Hotel
Andrew Outhwaite	Executive Officer	Pollinators Inc.
Jenny Rolston	CEO	Progressive Training
Nigel Haywood	Senior Manager	Resources Industry Training Council
Norma Roberts	Executive Director	Retail and Personal Services Training Council Inc.

Name	Position	Organisation
Lauren Tunbridge	Research and Projects Officer	Shire of Irwin
Geoff Carberry	Community Development Services Manager	Shire of Meekatharra
John Roberts	CEO	Shire of Morawa
David Williams	Deputy CEO	Shire of Morawa
Geoff Brooks	CEO	Shire of Mount Magnet
Garry Keefe	CEO	Shire of Northampton
Ian Fitzgerald	CEO	Shire of Sandstone
Silvio Brenzi	CEO	Shire of Yalgoo
Marise Dudley	Manager	Swagman Roadhouse
Alan Glover	Manager Corporate Services	WA Country Health Service Midwest
Brendan Penzler	Manager	Wirnda Barna Artists
Ron Bradfield	Manager	Yulella Aboriginal Fabrications corporation

Forums	Location	Number of attendees
Youth forum	Morawa	9
Youth forum	Meekatharra	2
Leadership forum	Geraldton	5
LEAP program	Geraldton	6
Geraldton Regional Community Education Centre (GRCEC) – Unemployed group	Geraldton	8
Aboriginal forum	Meekatharra	11
MWCCI breakfast forum	Geraldton	5
Dongara Sub Group of the MWCCI	Dongara	6
Mid West Health Forum	Geraldton	5

Appendix C: Mid West regional community identified occupation list

An online survey was developed to support findings from the qualitative research. Surveys were distributed to businesses operating in the Mid West through the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry member newsletter. The survey aimed to gain further insight into the critical occupational shortages experienced by employers and to understand their future workforce needs.

The survey consisted of eight sections, capturing information on the business demographics, workforce needs, education and training requirements and occupation needs. Respondents identified the occupations they anticipated having significant or ongoing challenges in attracting suitable applicants over the period 2014 to 2017.

While the survey was distributed widely, the response rate of 51 usable (i.e. completed) responses was low. Due to the low response rate results are not conclusive and can be considered broadly indicative only. The findings from those responses are summarised below.

Results from the survey show that the vast majority of businesses completing the survey (48 responses) were based in the Greater Geraldton region. The remaining responses were from businesses based in the Coorow (1), Irwin (1) and Wiluna (1) local government areas.

A total of 15 respondents (29.4%) employed 1–4 full time equivalent (FTE) employees; 20 (39.2%) employed 5–19 FTE; and the remaining 16 (31.4%) employed 20–199 FTE employees.

A total of 68.8% of respondents planned to recruit new employees within the next year. The remaining 31.3% (15 businesses) indicated that they would not be recruiting. All 15 businesses without a plan to expand were small businesses with four employees or less, inferring either a lack of demand or capacity to employ additional workers. When investigating the recruitment needs, participants perceived their most significant recruitment challenges to be: (1) unsuitable skill sets to fulfil the role; and (2) an insufficient pool of potential local applicants. The provision of accommodation for successful applicants, wage competition for applicants and the cost of the recruitment process were considered to have a moderate impact.

The most prominent industries responding to the survey included: construction (9); personal and other services (7); retail trade (6); and property and business services (5).

Survey respondents have indicated that workforce shortages are currently being experienced in a wide variety of occupations. Almost 96% indicated that they undertake staff training and development (including mentoring). The remaining 4% indicated that they are a small business and that resourcing constraints limit their ability to offer staff training. About half the sample outsources training to education providers, with most using local registered training organisations.

The survey found that the most in-demand occupations were managers, professionals and technicians and trades workers. Table 18 provides further detail.

Table 18: Community identified high demand occupations in the Mid West

Occupation group[14]	Occupation[15]	Frequency[16]
Sales assistants and salespersons	Sales workers	6
Specialist managers	Managers	6
Construction distribution and production managers	Managers	5
Construction trades workers	Technicians and trades workers	5
Sales representatives and agents	Sales workers	4
Electricians	Technicians and trades workers	4
Mechanical engineering trades workers	Technicians and trades workers	4
Miscellaneous technicians and trades workers	Technicians and trades workers	3
Accountants, auditors and company secretaries	Professionals	3
Human resource and training professionals	Professionals	3
Sales, marketing and public relations professionals	Professionals	3
Freight handlers and shelf fillers	Labourers	3
Hospitality, retail and services managers	Managers	3
Miscellaneous specialist managers	Managers	3

As 94.1% of respondents were operating in the Greater Geraldton area, the ability to generalise results at a regional level is limited. That being said, results show representation from a range of industries. It appears that across these industries the most in-demand occupations include (lower skilled) sales workers as well as (highly skilled) managers, professionals and technicians and trades workers. These occupations can be pooled into the retail, construction/engineering and professional services sectors.

[14] 'Occupation group' is equivalent to ANZSCO Sub-major group or Minor group level (denoted by a two or three digit code respectively).

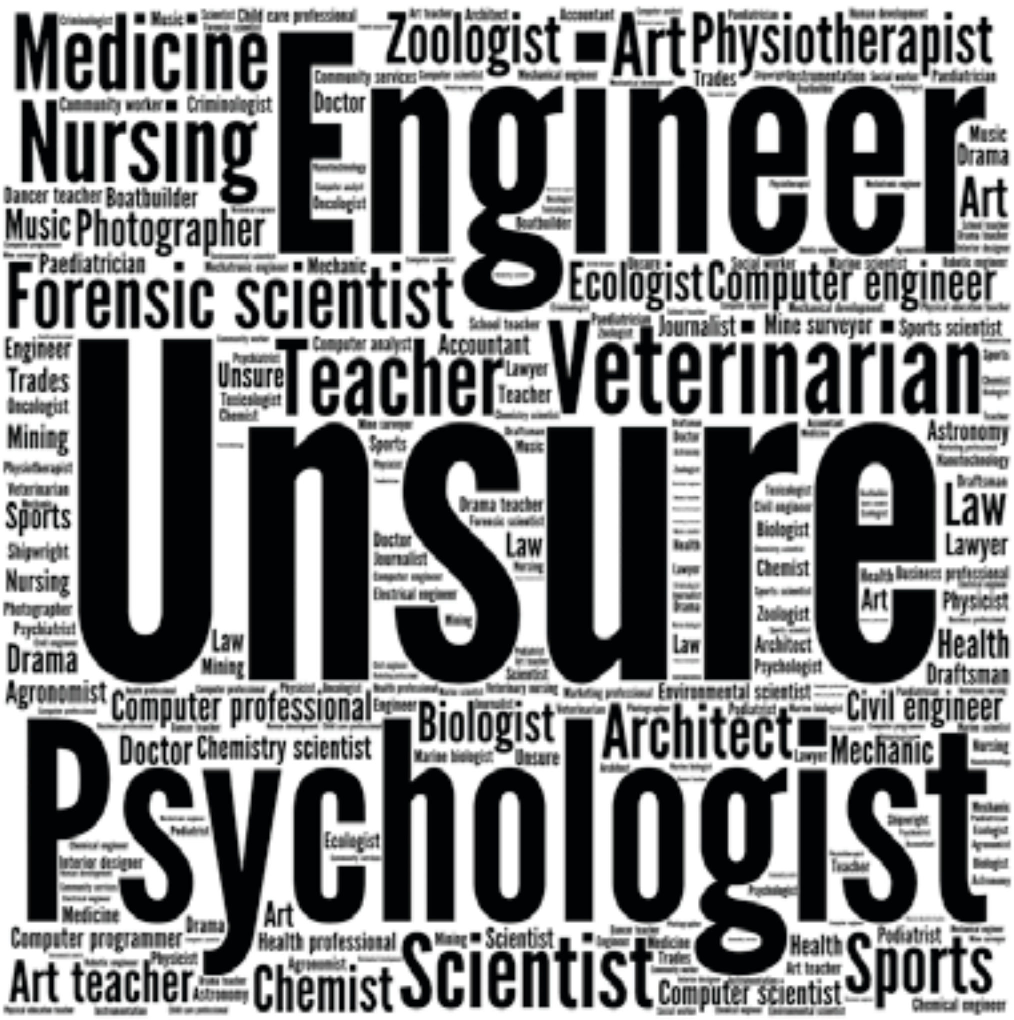
[15] 'Occupation category' is equivalent to ANZSCO Major group level (denoted by a one digit code).

[16] 'Frequency' refers to the number of Mid West businesses indicating which occupations they anticipated having significant or ongoing challenges in attracting suitable applicants (over the period from 2014 to 2017).

Appendix D: Student career aspirations

Figure 28 shows a word cloud depicting career aspirations of Year 10 students. Information was collected from a survey of students (N=93) attending the Midwest Science Forum in Geraldton on June 18, 2014. Note the larger the text, the more frequent the response. This indicates that the most common responses when asking these their career aspirations were 'unsure', 'engineer' and 'psychologist'.

Figure 28: Student career aspiration word cloud



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