

# 4 Transformative Opportunities

## 4.1 An explanation

The overall regional vision will benefit from strategic investment in proposals that will fundamentally change the region, flowing beyond the original investment to support jobs, industry, community and regional liveability.

It is important that transformational projects are grounded in reality and what's achievable, but do allow some space so the South West can dare to dream. The highlighted areas will:

- Attract private as well as public investment
- Echo the pillars of regional development analysis
- Have regional reach
- Benefit the State and national economies
- Provide sustainable jobs
- Work with the environment
- Change the way the South West is perceived
- Enhance existing regional advantages
- Look to the future
- Offer an enviable quality of life

## 4.2 Selecting priority proposals

Priority proposals are highlighted where they align with Commonwealth regional priority areas, determinants of regional development and have propulsive linkages. Propulsive sectors are those that drive and support other sectors within an economy.

The Regional Australia Institute also identified particular prospects for Western Australia. Consistent foci for the South West refer to advanced manufacturing, food processing, tourism and the creative sector. The South West's headline gamechangers include: economic infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, decarbonisation (renewable energy and transformational technologies), timber, tourism and investment in communities.



### Propulsive linkages

Economic development has a number of support theories generally covered by propulsive linkages which are forwards and backwards.

Some industries create more economic eco-systems than others and may also be labelled as clusters or growth poles in economic development theory.

For example:

Advanced manufacturing requires workforce supported by the education and training sector, but plants also require material inputs and energy while completed products require storage and distribution.

Linkages are augmented by options that produce cheap energy for competitiveness and lever off a regional brand / reputation if that energy is renewably produced.

### 4.3 Regional development matrix

	Determinants of regional development (COAG)	Regional Investment Framework (Australian Government)	Infrastructure WA objectives	SWDC regional development framework	Content summary: Category inclusions
1	Access to international, national and regional markets	Investing in Places – delivering infrastructure for accessible regions	Embrace technology, data and digital connectivity		Digital, transport links, and freight and supply chain infrastructure
2	Comparative advantage and business competitiveness	Investing in Industries and Local Economies – ensuring economies are positioned for growth	Maximise regional strengths to unlock strategic opportunities for Western Australia	Economic development, diversification and innovation	Businesses, industry, local R&D, innovation and a regional vision  Supporting a strong, resilient and diversified economy
3	Human capital, particularly education and skills	Investing in People – targeting skills, education, training and leadership capacity	Enhance infrastructure delivery and develop skills for the future		Skilled and adaptable workforces, regional universities and training, and schooling
4	Sustainable (populations, environment and economically)	Investing in Services – health, communications, water and transport	Maximise wellbeing, liveability and cultural strategic opportunities	Regional livability	Services, facilities and liveability, and support for population growth and change
5			Enable environmental sustainability and resilience, and address climate change	Climate resilience and low carbon transition	Build future resilience, ensure sustainable foundations and provide economic opportunities and jobs
6	Partnerships and collaboration		Enhance cross-government coordination and planning	Organisational excellence	Investing in regional leadership, capable local government and the Indigenous community
7			Support access to social services and improve Aboriginal wellbeing	Aboriginal empowerment and prosperity	Recognition, business skills and local procurement
8			Get the most from our infrastructure and improve maintenance		

## 4.4 Gamechangers – how it all comes together

Infrastructure for the economy  
Manufacturing Future Made In Australia

Technology pathways  
Tourism and lifestyle; Community and liveability

Project	Alignment with regional development matrix								Transformative project highlights				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Infra	Manu	Tech	Tour	Comm
Renewable energy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		
AMTECH		✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓		
Intermodal Terminal with interoperable links	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Bunbury Port	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓			
BMRA Passenger Terminal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Rail upgrades	✓	✓							✓	✓			
Critical minerals		✓			✓					✓	✓		
Water security	✓				✓				✓	✓			✓
Bunbury Waterfront	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	
BMRA Commercial	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			
Collie industries		✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		
Creative sector		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		
Housing	✓				✓				✓	✓	✓		✓
Plantations and timber manufacturing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Wanju new suburb development				✓	✓				✓	✓			
Agribusiness precinct	✓	✓			✓				✓	✓			
Tracks and trails		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Regional centres	✓				✓								
Waste	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Human capital, education and skills		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							



Image by City of Bunbury





## 4.4.1 Transformative economic infrastructure

### Bunbury Port

Adopted in 2023, Bunbury Port Masterplan provides an overview in a 30-year time horizon, being responsive to emerging markets and delivers on the port's key role to facilitate trade. A renewed Bunbury Port Optimisation Plan (BPOP) provides an overview of the requirements needed to meet future growth in the region and the necessary infrastructure requirements. This plan is currently under review by State Government.

Bunbury Port is a critical component of the transport supply chain and it is well placed for a future that looks towards more Indian Ocean markets. New demands will necessitate adaptation for supply chain efficiencies and evolving needs. That puts an onus on operations to safeguard port landholdings for port-related trade in the decades ahead.

Currently operating across two sites – an Inner and Outer Harbour – realisation of the existing outer harbour for an extended period may be required. Capacity exists to create additional berths within the port footprint, move to more land-backed facilities, widen the channel to accommodate larger vessels and create an operations centre with autonomous control capability to maximise efficiency and minimise demurrage costs.

Economic gains to be enjoyed by investment in the port cannot be under-estimated and reach beyond the region to Perth. It is well recognised the expanse of land over 400ha is well placed to assist with the West Coast trade demands.

### Intermodal Terminal

The construction of an Intermodal Terminal (IMT) will be critical economic infrastructure serving Bunbury Port, advanced manufacturing and the efficient transfer of freight.

The subject of an Infrastructure WA submission, the location of the IMT has been identified as Waterloo (DoT 2019, DPLH 2020), a strategic optimal location linking Bunbury Port, Picton, Preston and Kemerton Strategic Industrial Area. The 1,350ha Waterloo site also intersects the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, due to be completed by 2026, and existing rail infrastructure.

### Rail

Additional rail corridor capacity will facilitate efficiency, reduced road usage and will improve both industry and social outcomes.

The 18km Brunswick section requires duplication and grade separation as the line reaches operational capacity, while a Kemerton spur would provide rail as a transport choice for tenants of the Strategic Industrial Area.

A proposed Greenbushes line reinstatement is looking unlikely which advances a view that the South Western Highway requires investment to cater for road freight volumes.

All upgrades would need to be considered in relation to efficiently linking in with the future creation of a South West intermodal terminal.

### Transforming Bunbury's Waterfront

The Transforming Bunbury's waterfront (TBW) project will see Bunbury reimagined as a city connected to Geographe Bay.

Work has been ongoing and has seen early stages delivered from the Dolphin Discovery Centre and the Koombana foreshore, through to the Jetty Baths. The Jetty Road causeway upgrade has been completed.

Stage 3 of the project has progressed with the refurbishment of the boat ramp and upgrades for trailer parking at Casuarina Boat Harbour. The 460m Northern Breakwater structure, which is being constructed with 400,000 tonnes of rock, is critical to creating a safe, year-round facility for 300 future boat pens in the harbour. The breakwater works are expected to reach full height by the end of 2025.

Meanwhile, design and development of the broader marine precinct (including future boat lifting, servicing and stacking) is under way. Dredging has been completed and land reclamation for future marine facilities, landscaping and dune protection is progressing along with measures.

Ultimately, TBW will see recreational and commercial boat pens created in the sheltered Casuarina Boat Harbour, sparking private investment in marine services as well as anticipated tourism investments. The overall investment has been \$112m to date and will change the face of Western Australia's second city, changing perceptions as works transition from dominantly industrial to a marine precinct and tourism drawcard.

## 4.4.2 Transforming manufacturing

### BMRA Commercial

Air freight and general aviation servicing opportunities at Busselton Margaret River Airport (BMRA) are available across a flat 15ha industry-zoned development area.

Growth in passenger flights with underbelly freight capability will generate opportunities, particularly in future years as key international routes open to markets demanding premium perishable products.

However, the uniquely spacious greenfield development site and Code 4C and 4E aircraft accessibility offer opportunities that are unavailable in other airports. BMRA has the space for passenger and commercial aircraft hangars with associated servicing.



### Agribusiness Precinct

The need for a relocated new, fit-for-purpose saleyards to replace the Boyanup yards is well established. Demand persists, with stakeholders indicating the efficiency of selling stock from the South West catchment through Capel rather than through facilities in the Wheatbelt or Great Southern. Maintaining sale yards close to their current location is crucial for aggregating cattle herds, supporting feedlots, aiding small producers in competitive sales, and serving as a transit point for a variety of destinations.

Establishing a new location also opens up other opportunities as appropriate buffers, biosecurity, animal welfare, access to the RAV 4 network, water availability and other systems can be put in place.

Stakeholders have indicated a variety of large businesses across several different agricultural industries that could potentially act as an anchor, including an abattoir, horticulture processing facility, and grains processing. Indeed, a modern fit-for-purpose agribusiness precinct would offer opportunities in value adding, would be technologically advanced and would promote the circular economy.

It is notable that the existing saleyards within Boyanup townsite creates land use conflicts with neighbours including odour, noise, dust and effluent disposal, as well as constraining development of fully serviced land. Relocating the yards opens the door to residential development.

### Water security

Harvey Water's market-led proposal phase of the 'Collie to Coast' has progressed. The project offers to deliver a water infrastructure undertaking designed to improve water availability and quality for the benefit of agriculture and industrial water users in the South West, particularly supporting agricultural expansion in a proposed 500ha horticulture zone – Myalup Primary Industries Reserve.

Originally funded in partnership with the Australian and WA Government, a business case was developed to deliver a reduction in water salinity sourced from the 185GL capacity Wellington Dam, and to reduce water loss in the distribution network. The potential of Wellington Dam asset is constrained by salinity levels that exceed potable water two-fold.

The Collie to Coast work considers long-term forecasting and includes stakeholder engagement to maximise inputs and benefits. The preliminary business case was completed in 2024 but details are not yet public. Options considered include: project scale; the existing Binningup desalination plant; construction of a new 20GL capacity Wellington Dam desalination plant; upgrade and extension of water networks; establishment of managed aquifer recharge; and, better utilisation of existing storages in a drying climate.

Reducing salinity remains a South West priority issue and boosts regional water security.



## Manufacturing opportunities

**Manufacturing is undergoing a dynamic transformation globally and plays a vital role in Australia's economy.**

Manufacturers are diversifying their focus across different stages of the manufacturing process, ranging from research and development, and ethical resource acquisition to responsible processing of waste materials.

Government policy supports the benefits of expanding regional production opportunities by decoupling the over-reliance on imports, alleviating dependency on global supply chains in materials, medical technologies and other goods. Advanced manufacturing is linked with competitive advantage and requires affordable energy, with an emphasis on promoting renewable energy as having leading credentials.

### AMTECH

An Advanced Manufacturing and Technology Hub (AMTECH) in the region will enable the adoption of new technologies, processes and practices to attract increased private sector investment and encourage high-skilled, high-value job creation for the long-term growth and prosperity of the regional economy.

New technologies produce specialised and valuable inputs linked to downstream processing, improved efficiencies in the innovation process to target and supply growing Australian export markets and support the nation's energy transition.

Skilled and knowledgeable workforces will be a prerequisite, building strength and underpinning investment attraction.

### AMTECH development begins

In early 2025 the WA State Government announced plans to develop AMTECH in Picton and establish facilities to support the local manufacture of major energy infrastructure. The State's Made in WA plan details its commitment to installing a Western Power Manufacturing Facility as the anchor tenant for AMTECH and enable local industry to leverage opportunities.

This is an important first step in the development of WA's first dedicated advanced manufacturing, technology and renewables zone which will unlock local supply chain opportunities and create jobs as the energy transition takes pace.

It also signals WA Government commitment to the energy transition pipeline. This encouraging development will underpin future investment in partnerships and facilities designed to increase industry collaboration, skills development and R&D innovation.

AMTECH will elevate the region's manufacturing potential by clustering private enterprise, education and skills training, and research to drive high-value industry transformation and workforce development.

At both a State and Commonwealth level there is increased investment in manufacturing innovation to support new and emerging markets. The South West is poised to benefit and play a major role in a 'Future Made in Australia' building on the region's existing strengths and comparative advantages.



Image by Uncommon Creative, Dwyer Engineering



## Location

The South West has long been hailed as an industry hub and export gateway, boosted by Bunbury Port which features one of the largest landholdings of any port in Australia.

Together with a sophisticated port, rail and road network within reach of key mining operations, current and emerging manufacturers, innovators and educators, the South West has a real opportunity for advancement. Major growth opportunities exist at the region's Strategic Industrial Areas at Kemerton and Collie, as it transitions from a traditional coal-based economy to embracing an innovative, opportunity-rich business environment supported by the State Government.

The convenience of available industrial land within close proximity to the port and access to key road links to Perth suggests the cost of growth in the Bunbury Geopraphe will be more inviting than competing areas.

Furthermore, the development of the Bunbury Geopraphe Sub-regional Planning Strategy, South West Supply Chain Strategy and finalised alignment of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road has aided the identification of quality sites all within 10km of Bunbury Port.

Consequently, AMTECH has the potential to link and complement other future development in the South West, such as an intermodal terminal and port expansion.

## Critical minerals

Critical minerals are essential components in modern technologies, particularly in generating clean energy. The Department of Industry, Science and Resources lists 33 critical minerals: Nine are produced in the South West. They are alumina, graphite, lithium, silicon, tantalum, titanium (ilmenite and rutile) and zircon.

The Australian Government's critical minerals strategy emphasises sovereign capability, supply chains and renewable energy development as key issues with \$566m made available from 2024-25 for Geoscience to map critical mineral and rare earth deposits across the continent.

These actions and investing in a "Future Made in Australia" highlight the importance of the South West in advanced manufacturing, port expansion and a renewable energy future. The South West is



Image by Simcoa

approaching a watershed period in which it value adds its potential or exports materials for another region to benefit.

## Collie industries

Backed by the WA Government, Collie is transitioning away from coal-fired generation to new industries and jobs. Work is progressing to refresh the commitment through to 2030.

Australia's first low emissions steel mill and WA's first steel recycling mill is one step closer with Green Steel of WA closing on its final investment decision. The project has undertaken front-end engineering design and construction is anticipated to begin in late 2025 and complete in 2027.

Magnium Australia's state-of-the-art pilot plant is now operational in Collie's Light Industrial Area, marking a major milestone in the development of sustainable magnesium production. Magnium's facility represents a significant step forward in establishing a domestic supply of this critical defence and automotive metal.

International Graphite has now commissioned and is operating its pilot project as it continues to move towards commercial scale processing. The company has commenced a Battery Anode Material Facility Feasibility Study, demonstrating industry interest in developing projects at Coolangatta Industrial Estate. The facility will produce graphite products for battery materials and a variety of industrial uses.

In support of attracting new job-creating industries, the State Government has allocated \$134m to activate Collie's Coolangatta Industrial Estate.

Tesla's battery re-manufacturing facility is also powering ahead with construction due for



completion in October 2025. The facility will service, repair, and renew Tesla's battery products, including industry scale Megapacks.

It is expected that Synergy and Neoen projects will bring battery energy storage capacity to more than 1GW (4+GWh) by the end of 2025, with proposals to double that in the future.

Other projects include Renergi's waste-to-fuel pyrolysis plant at the commissioning stage, Cannaponics' medicinal cannabis project moving towards certification and Quantum Filtration Medium's water treatment systems.

## Timber and forestry

The timber and forestry industry is under-rated as an economic contributor to the region and points towards a more sustainable future; growing, harvesting and then growing more trees to store carbon.

Innovations range from replacing plastic packaging to building more energy efficient and affordable housing. Planet Ark is promoting a Wood Encouragement Policy, a call to lock up carbon and think of timber first as a building material.

A timber future also raises new opportunities in education and training, developing expertise in construction, architecture, design, technology and manufacturing.

An integrated processing facility would add value to the sector by utilising whole logs to maximum value and reducing costs through efficiency in processing by exploiting synergies

within the industry cluster. A full merchandising yard would also support an Advanced Timber Manufacturing Hub.

## Plantations and investment

The timber industry is a leading prospect for private sector investment. Creating the preconditions for investment in plantations at one end of the industry and high-end manufacturing at the other would set the sector on a solid course given the UN's prediction that demand for timber products will treble by 2050.

Blue sky thinking establishes a path that leads to the development of a CLT or LVL plant and is underpinned by expansion of the Dardanup Timber Precinct to include an industry-leading processing yard serving a variety of related customers.

## Wanju and housing solutions

A shortage of fill materials and challenging soil types on land at the future suburb of Wanju will require lightweight construction techniques. Since the customary approach of brick and concrete on raised pads will not be an option, the opportunity for quick-build alternatives comes to the fore.

Timber construction on raised frames is the future in a suburb already being promoted as one where environmental values will dominate. That opportunity points to affordable and energy efficient homes erected in half the typical build time.



## The Djarlma Plan for the Western Australian forestry industry is inspired by the Noongar concept of Djarlma, which reflects the interconnected relationship of people with forests and woodlands.

The Djarlma Plan is underpinned by four, interdependent strategic priorities that aim to integrate traditional with scientific knowledge:

- 1) Healthy forests and woodlands
- 2) Wood product and ecosystem values
- 3) Community benefits
- 4) Industry for the future



#### 4.4.3 Transformational technologies

##### Renewable energy

The Australia Energy Market Operator (AEMO) has recognised that WA's energy generation has gone from 10% based on renewables a decade ago, to about a third generated by renewables today.

As fossil fuels are phased out, renewable energy technologies will need to come to the fore alongside battery storage capacity – and this will all need to be achieved at pace to ensure sufficient power availability for the region's homes and industries.

The region sits in the core of the South West Interconnected System (SWIS), the world's most isolated electricity grid. The SWIS is a network of transmission lines, and at the heart of that is Collie where coal-fired power stations have serviced the bulk of the state's baseload energy needs for more than a century. Given that the SWIS distribution network features an existing 7,800km of transmission lines and 93,000km of distribution lines, it follows that renewable energy generation must plug into this valued infrastructure.

The Australian Government has identified an area in Geographe Bay to explore the possibility of offshore

wind power generation and while there has been significant interest from potential proponents, it is too early to predict what may happen.

Land-based wind turbines present an opportunity for lower installation costs and cheaper maintenance. Sometimes unpopular with communities from a visual perspective, windfarms in New South Wales can now be developed in plantations, with transmission line corridors aligning with firebreaks and general infrastructure offering foresters a passive income between harvests.

Domestic rooftop solar has become so widespread (36% penetration) that it now contributes more than 2.5GW of energy to the grid. Driven by rising energy prices, half of all WA homes are expected to have solar by 2030.

##### Green hydrogen

The WA Government updated its Renewable Hydrogen Strategy in 2021 with a vision for export opportunities. However, the sector and commercial-scale technology is still emerging. Transport, particularly heavy vehicles and waste collection trucks, are expected to be the initial beneficiaries where the freight task is on a return-to-base model.

##### Gas reliance

The WA domestic gas market is projected to be in deficit between 2024 and 2029, with potential supply from committed and expected projects up to 11% below forecast demand. Options available to alleviate some of this shortfall include: utilisation of gas in storage; and, the potential redirection of uncontracted liquefied natural gas (LNG). From 2030 onwards, further gas supplies are forecast to be required to meet increasing demand. It may be necessary for all Perth basin supplies to be committed for domestic use in the years ahead.

## Battery storage

**Batteries are a critical feature of grid-scale energy storage. They store and release energy as required and provide stability to the grid, managing the ebbs and peaks of power generation and demand.**

The first battery to be up and running is being built by French company, Neoen and delivered by Tesla. Work on the 219MW grid-scale battery will be completed by the end of 2024. State-owned utility, Synergy is building a 500MW /2,000 MWh capacity battery that is expected to be operational in 2027. That battery will be the largest in Western Australia and one of the largest in the world.

Synergy has now awarded a contract to Southern Cross Electrical Engineering Ltd for work on its Collie project. The contractor will install and commission about 640 battery container units, 160 inverters and 220km of high-voltage cabling, as well as managing a laydown facility at the Port of Bunbury.

In addition, Neoen will build a second battery (300MW) before the end of 2025 and Alinta Energy is building a 100MW battery at its existing Wagerup Power Station. Alinta has also lodged a proposal with the state government to build a second, 300MW battery at Wagerup.

These batteries will have a combined 4,640MWh capacity and will be constructed in Collie to take advantage of the SWIS.

Further ambitions could see Neoen creating even greater capacity at Collie, having obtained development approval to build a battery with up to 1 gigawatt of capacity.

## WA Creative Technology Innovation Hub – WA Creative Tech Village

The region has the opportunity to leverage the South West's competitive advantages in the creative industries sector and explore further innovation and technology development through the State-funded WA Creative Technology Innovation Hub (WACTIH) which trades as the Creative Tech Village (CTV).

Headquartered in Bunbury {B}LAB, the CTV operates across the state as a distributed connector network, building local, national and international industry partnerships to deliver stakeholder-driven programs and explore cutting-edge creative technology development.

A first for WA, the hub is focused on supporting the region's 1,500 people working in design, music, advertising, film, and media, as well as emerging technologies including gaming, digital software development and immersive tech and LLMs.

Founded in 2023, WACTIH's first international initiative is the Creative Tech Exchange, an agreement with Indonesia's Singhasari SEZ. The Creative Tech Exchange is also working to develop partnerships with creative, tech and innovation collaborators from Singapore and beyond.

Closer to home, CTV partners with major events such as Emergence Creative, GoSH Hackathon and developed programs such as Bandwidth as a mentoring program, and a Pathways program, Biddiwah, for future emerging creatives and techs.

As the creative industries grow, we might ponder Green AI and the opportunity to be building renewable-powered data centres to export.

## Proven talent, raw talent in the mix

To further progress the creative sector, there are opportunities in the Busselton Business Fibre Zone to create a creative industries centre at scale and on a fully commercial footing based on a model comprising shared resources, tenants with established businesses and the inclusion of an incubator component to transition start up innovators into commercial operations.

Common-user facilities – particularly where tech and equipment is capital intensive – makes a great deal of sense in raising the commercial bar, industry capability and the facilitation of growth in the industry.

The space itself should be built with large areas for usage as a photographic or video studio, sound stage or green screen/ motion capture and recording/ editing facilities for tenants and visiting productions. Co-working spaces add to the commercial arm of the project and generate other prospects.

It is expected that some existing studios and offices would be attracted to a dedicated space. This would underpin greater industry collaboration while tenant rents provide an income stream to maintain the facility and its equipment. Established creatives could additionally be integrated into the incubator program, mentoring and providing advice.

With a targeted Busselton location, the proposed facility could generate genuine critical mass by integrating with nearby convention centre activities, gallery, CinéfestOZ program and events.







#### 4.4.4 Transforming tourism

##### BMRA Terminal

Noted as a leading priority by all South West councils, Busselton Margaret River Airport requires a fit-for-purpose terminal building that reflects the region's quality tourism brand and serves as an appropriate, high level introduction/farewell as expected from visitors to the Capes region.

With airside infrastructure in place, BMRA now accommodates direct RPT (Regular Passenger Transport) Jetstar flights to Melbourne and Sydney, connections to Perth and 36 closed charter flights for the resources sector. The airport serviced a forecast 190,000 passengers in 2024-25.

There is an identified and urgent need to upgrade the terminal to a scale that allows all passengers to disembark smoothly and departing passengers to be processed through baggage and security for outbound flights. Facilities will be required to provide capacity for a fast turnaround and create opportunities for private sector engagement in operations, such as car rentals, food/drinks and retail.

Along with the City of Busselton, SWDC is leading a working group and expert study exploring multiple options for a terminal proposal that would address current capacity issues. It is expected that a path forward will be determined soon.

Looking ahead to 2030 and beyond, BMRA's future will include international capability and the prospect of delivering underbelly freight into Asian markets.

As well as being just 7km from Busselton CBD, the airport is also blessed with greenfield site opportunities.



Image by Tourism WA, Cape to Cape Track

##### Cape to Cape Track

The Cape to Cape Track is one of Australia's premier and most iconic hikes, running along the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge between the lighthouses of Cape Naturaliste and Cape Leeuwin.

It is estimated that the Track attracts around 20,000 walkers each year, who engage in guided and independent short, day, and multi-day walks.

However, a significant portion of the track and its associated day-use sites are in poor condition. Although recent upgrades have been made to a limited number of sections, there is a substantial opportunity to increase the number of interstate and international visitors by upgrading the entire track to meet international standards.

##### UCI Gravel Championships 2026

Australia has been awarded the 2026 UCI World Gravel Championships which will be held in Nannup and put the global spotlight on the South West.

The Western Australian event will not only be the first UCI World Championships outside Europe, but will also bring world-class cycling to the South West. This constitutes an exceptional opportunity for Nannup and the whole region to establish its credentials as an international destination.

Accommodation services will be spread across the region, although investment will be required in communications, water/sewerage infrastructure and power.

##### Trails

The South West is Western Australia's premier trails destination, delivering options from high quality mountain bike projects to a bridle trail and world class walks that include the renowned 1,000km Bibbulmun Track, 1,072km Munda Biddi Trail and breathtaking Cape to Cape Track.

Investment is supporting the extension of the walking/cycling Wadandi Track to 110km. Named after the traditional custodians of the land, the Wadandi Track traverses bushland, farms, vineyards and the magnificent Leeuwin-Naturaliste area.

In contrast, Manjimup is developing Australia's first trailbike hub which will provide unique access to State Forests. The hub is expected to attract more than 33,600 visitors yearly and builds on Manjimup's reputation as a dirt bike racing destination.

#### 4.4.5 Transforming the community

**Economic development activities must go beyond wealth generation and ultimately improve the wellbeing of communities by serving this dual purpose.**

#### Regional centres and hierarchies

Settlement hierarchies underpin economic development, with the trend towards urban living on the coast, especially relevant to regional centres.

Weak regional centres lead to weak regions. Economic activity and liveability flow in waves from regional centres so it is important that the Bunbury-Busselton population axis stays strong and Manjimup anchors the Warren-Blackwood sub-region.

A drive to have Bunbury recognised as Western Australia's second city is important in administration, education, healthcare, business and accompanying investment.

Transforming Bunbury's Waterfront will change perceptions while the development of Hands Oval is already doing that in hosting AFL games. Advanced manufacturing, port investment and digital progress will lay the foundations of a path to the future. Combine this with R+D, skills training and industries requiring an educated workforce, and your key centres secure the region.

#### Bicentennial Square

Development of Bunbury's Waterfront highlights the impact of revitalisation on first impressions and serves to provide opportunities in jobs and community leisure. Bicentennial Square has all the hallmarks of potential to better connect Bunbury to Leschenault Inlet and deliver transformative outcomes.

The currently underutilised public space can position itself as a connector to the water and become a vibrant precinct and community asset with strategic options to rejuvenate the CBD.

#### Human capital, education and skills

Unprecedented change and a housing shortage serve to elevate the importance of endogenous skills development and training in the region.

While collaborative activities already take place among SW Health and Education Campus bodies (Bunbury Regional Hospital and St John of God Hospital, ECU South West, South Regional TAFE, Manea Senior College and the Rural Clinical School), they operate separately which triggers an opportunity to create a fully co-operative working space and closer ties for all the precinct partners.

A proposed Precinct Hub would be co-designed to physically connect the partners, support collaboration and ease current infrastructure constraints as well as delivering a multi-disciplinary and interprofessional approach to regional health and education.



Image by City of Bunbury, Koolambidi Woola - Youth Precinct



## Closing the gap

The South West Native Title Settlement has begun to fundamentally change Aboriginal engagement and create unprecedented opportunities for South West Noongar people. Notwithstanding formalised approaches, it is important that the potential for Aboriginal advancement is fulfilled through acknowledgement of history and an understanding that, for traditional owners, booja is a complete ecosystem that includes family, society and relationships with the land, plants and animals.

Opportunities for recognition abound in signage, art, procurement and tourism. Shared learning and mutual respect will be a key to a shared future in which no one is left behind.

In Bunbury, the Gnaala Karla Booja Aboriginal Corporation has a vision for a centre at Mangrove Cove where new premises can blend the 21st century with traditional culture and share arts with the community and visitors alike.

## Liveability

Growing our regional cities is popular theme, and sustainable populations are a key pillar, but there are risks that need to be carefully addressed. The '20-minute city' with easy commute times, accessibility and parking will be challenged by unmanaged population growth. However, those issues will present their own opportunities for surrounding smaller towns and for infrastructure and services that retain high levels of liveability.

There will need to be open and mature discussion on sprawl versus multi-storey buildings, and the necessary development of support infrastructure to cater for more people. For example, there will be requirements for expanded sports facilities, and thoughts will need to turn to the built environment in respect of catering for an ageing population. Amid all change, the value of the natural environment must always be taken into account.

## Waste

Waste precincts have the potential to meet State and Federal policy expectations by rapidly heading towards zero waste to landfill while using 'waste' as a resource and boosting innovation, jobs and the economy. Developing composting facilities will cut landfill significantly and create other opportunities, while other activities can move towards a circular economy in which landfill is an atypical approach to available waste materials.

Investment in materials recovery will produce a stream of sorted materials for recycling uses and product for an innovation hub, which is strong potential development for the site. There have been great strides in utilising mine tailings as roadbase and that is just the start as the region takes its first steps on the journey towards a circular economy.

Image by Tourism WA, Shelter Brewing Busselton

