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GVROC Land and Housing Audit and Action Plan

For the Goldfields and Esperance Region

Glossary of Acronyms

AHS – Aboriginal Health Service

CHP – Community Housing Provider

DLGSC – Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

DMIRS – Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety

DoC – Department of Communities

DoE – Department of Education

DPIRD – Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

DPLH – Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage

DWERS – Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

FIFO – Fly-in, fly-out

GEDC – Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission

GIHO – Goldfields Indigenous Housing Organisation

GVROC – Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils

LGA – Local Government Authority

NHFIC – National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation

UCL – Unallocated Crown Land

WACHS – Western Australia Country Health Service

WATC – Western Australian Treasury Corporation

Version

Version	Date	Notes
A	23/12/2022	For client review
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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and Context

The Goldfields-Esperance region is currently experiencing a marked increase in demand for land and housing. This demand is not being met due to a lack of available land, housing and other affordable accommodation. This lack of housing availability and housing market inefficiency in the region is resulting in rapidly rising rental and house prices, resulting in significant flow on impacts for the State and National economies, regional Goldfields and Esperance communities and individual households.

In April 2022, the Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (GVROC) completed the 'GVROC Housing Strategy', with the aim of examining these issues and determining a plan of action for GVROC and its member LGAs to work with the State and Federal Governments and the private sector to resolve the issues and deliver better outcomes for the region.

GVROC met with Department of Communities, Director General, Mike Rowe, and following this meeting, a housing forum was arranged between GVROC members, DoC representatives and the GEDC to further discuss the housing strategy and a joint approach by local and State government to address regional housing and land actions.

In July 2022 Chadwick Consulting and Elysian Consulting were engaged by GVROC in partnership with the Goldfields Esperance Development Commission (GEDC) to prepare this report. The aim of this report is to:

- articulate what role the State Government and its agencies can play (if any, and in partnership) to assist with delivery of additional housing stock;
- develop an evidence-based Action Plan for the GVROC and local stakeholders, which can be used to advocate to State agencies and industry, towards investment, partnerships and housing solutions, identifying short, medium and long-term new housing stock development priorities; and
- identify any other innovative actions or solutions that could expedite new housing provision for social, GROH, key workers and communities, across the Goldfields region, regardless of who owns the land.

1.2. Purpose and Need

Across the Goldfields-Esperance region, demand for housing has been rising markedly since 2017, with a particularly acute increase from 2020 to 2022. Median house prices have risen from \$237,000 to \$326,000 from December 2019 to Jun 2022, an increase of 37.5%.¹ Prior to this period, a 2014 RPS report commissioned by the GEDC and Department of Communities (DoC) forecast that housing stock was unable to meet demand post-2015, indicating a long-term trend in the region.²

The region's rental market has become increasingly unaffordable. As of June 2022, the regional rental vacancy rate was 0.47%. Median rents increased by 21% from July 2021 to June 2022, reaching \$435 a week. Over a 5-year period, regional median weekly rents have increased by 45%.¹ The limited supply of rental properties and fast rising rents continue to present challenges for current and prospective residents.

¹ Goldfields Esperance Development Commission. 2020-2022. *Housing and Land Summaries*.
<https://www.gedc.wa.gov.au/our-focus/publications>

² RPS. 2014. *Housing in the Goldfields Esperance Region – An Assessment of Housing Demand and Need*.



Housing stress has reached critical levels in many areas of the region.³ The local government areas of Wiluna, Menzies and Laverton are all within the top ten worst affected by housing stress in WA as determined by a recent Community Housing Industry Association study.⁴

Strong commodity prices are driving a boom in mining sector activity, post-COVID government stimulus measures have increased consumer confidence and general economic activity, favourable agricultural conditions and global demand have contributed to non-mining sector activity, domestic tourism is on the rise, and the State Government is providing focused investment and stimulus in renewable energy projects.⁶ These factors have all contributed to rapidly increasing demand for housing and land in the region (both residential and industrial demand).

Housing Stress by LGA ⁵	
LGA	Current unmet need (% of all households)
Wiluna	47.5%
Menzies	45.0%
Leonora	2.5%
Laverton	42.5%
Kalgoorlie-Boulder	2.9%
Esperance	5.4%
Dundas	9.2%
Coolgardie	6.6%

Supply has been unable to meet this demand, due to a range of systemic barriers and constraints. As a result, the worsening gap between supply and demand is becoming a major issue for the community, with affordable and appropriate housing becoming more difficult to secure, especially for government and key workers and those on low-to-moderate incomes. Homelessness is increasingly becoming an issue, with the rate of homelessness in the Kalgoorlie region almost three times higher than the Perth metro rate in 2021, at 4.1%.⁷

Since 2013, regional population has declined from 62,225 to 57,330, while Gross Regional Product has risen from \$9.53B to \$11.26B (Figure 1). Such strong economic growth would typically be accompanied by corresponding population growth. However, as Figure 1 shows there is the beginning of an uptake in the curve for population growth starting again. This uptake in growth is also driving housing demand, but it is difficult to understand the residential and non-residential components across the varying regions LGAs.

Also, while some LGAs have experienced reduced population over the above time scale, some have experienced growth, so it needs to be noted that when combined into a regional figure, this hides differences across the large region, its varying communities, and sections of the population. Reliance on the latest Census data can also be flawed, due to the high census non return rate in parts of the region.

Anecdotally, there has been high population growth, post the COVID pandemic in the region outside of the increase in FIFO. Additionally, when considering the current mining boom and significant FIFO worker growth taking up available rental housing, which is of non-residential in nature, this is also impacting the ability of the region to absorb additional residential population.

³ This means people are either experiencing homelessness, living in overcrowded homes or spending over 30 per cent of their income on rent.

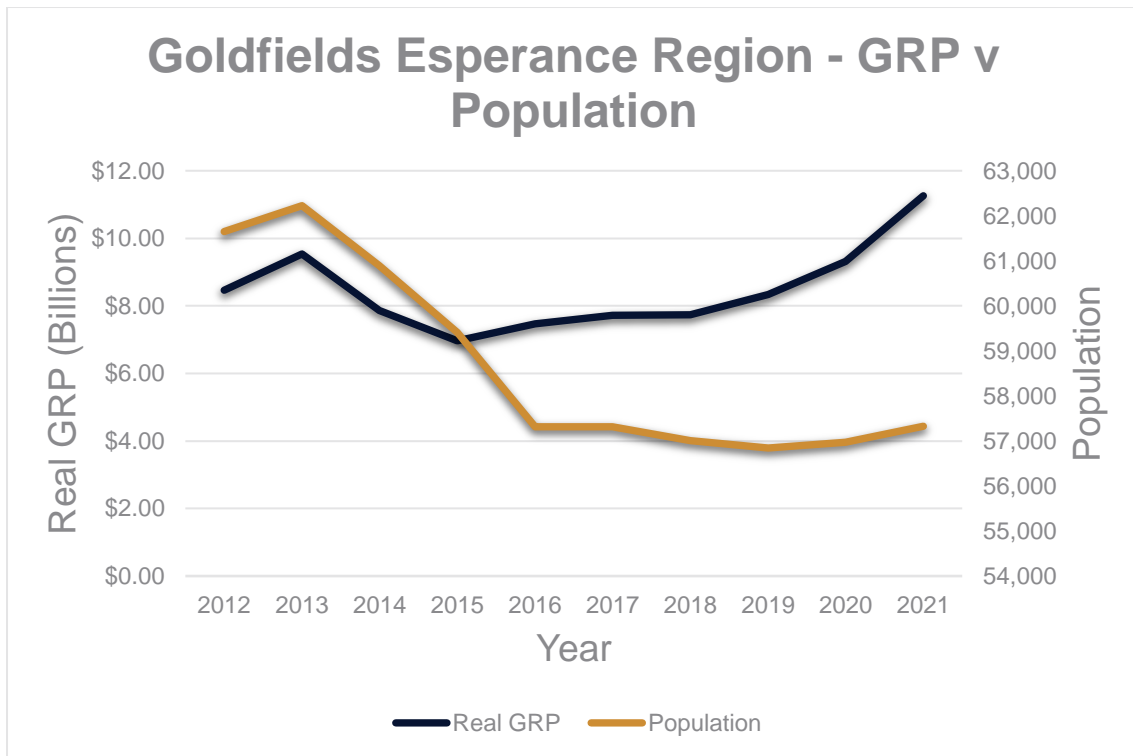
⁴ Community Housing Industry Association. 2022. *Quantifying Australia’s unmet housing need*. <https://cityfutures.ada.unsw.edu.au/social-and-affordable-housing-needs-costs-and-subsidy-gaps-by-region/>

⁵ Community Housing Industry Association. 2022. *Quantifying Australia’s unmet housing need*. <https://cityfutures.ada.unsw.edu.au/social-and-affordable-housing-needs-costs-and-subsidy-gaps-by-region/>

⁶ Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre. 2022. *Quarterly Economic Commentary*. <https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2022/03/BCEC-Quarterly-Economic-Commentary-March-2022-1.pdf>

⁷ Shelter WA. 2021. *Heat Map Summary – Homelessness and Housing Stress*. <https://www.shelterwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Heat-Maps-report-Rental-stress-and-homelessness-in-WA-March-2021.pdf>





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For the region to secure a viable social and economic future, many factors are required, including the reliable provision of essential services, economic development opportunities, the ability to attract workers to the region, the ability for government to service regional and isolated communities, and viable businesses that can service the surrounding lands and industry.

Available, affordable and appropriate land and housing to meet the needs of residents, businesses and government and non-government services are key enablers for all of these factors. It is essential that people in the region have access to a safe, secure and affordable housing that meets their needs and supports them to participate in the social and economic life and growth of the region, bringing benefits to the whole of WA.

To ensure there are viable and responsive housing markets and support for the economic development of the Goldfields-Esperance region, a range of land and housing uses must be accommodated, including:

1. Land for residential, industrial and commercial use
2. Housing for government and NGO workers, including:
 - a. Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH)
 - b. WA Country Health Service (WACHS) Worker Housing
 - c. Other government entities
 - i. State Agencies
 - ii. LGA staff
 - d. Aboriginal Health Service
3. Housing for non-government workers
 - a. For purchase
 - b. To rent
4. Social housing
5. Seniors appropriate housing
6. Aboriginal housing (to accommodate both permanent housing and transient movements)

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2021. *Gross State Product & Regional Population datasets*. www.abs.gov.au



7. Housing for workers including temporary, short- and medium-term options
8. Private stock available for investors, owner-occupiers and renters

The Goldfields Esperance region covers some of the most isolated and disadvantaged communities in Western Australia. As consequence, the region relies on State Government supported housing programs including social housing and Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH). This is especially pronounced in the regions outside of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Esperance.

This report considers key land and housing issues and aims to provide a series of strategies and actions that will stimulate and enable the delivery of appropriate land and housing stock in the region. It has a focus on the role GVROC and its members can play in achieving these outcomes, especially in overcoming systemic barriers to housing and land supply.

2. Methodology

This report's findings were developed in three phases, detailed below. These phases were not strictly chronological, with engagement and data gathering conducted in an iterative process as themes and findings became apparent.

2.1. Phase 1: Environmental Scan and Stakeholder Consultation

Phase 1 involved analysis of regional centres within each of the nine GVROC LGAs to determine current land and housing supply and demand-side factors. Data was primarily gathered through desktop analysis, and face-to-face and online meetings with stakeholders.

At the same time, the land and housing needs of LGAs across the region was examined. This activity sought to understand where there is unmet demand, and where the main priorities for new housing stock lie. This included government housing programs (e.g. social housing, GROH, WA Country Health Service Housing), key worker accommodation (short-stay and long-term), private rental, and private purchase.

2.2. Phase 2: Issues & Options Analysis

From the information gathered in Phase 1, an analysis of the needs and barriers to provision of additional land and housing across the housing continuum was undertaken. Recurring themes and structural barriers to housing provision were identified. Exploration of the options that GVROC and its members have available in overcoming these barriers was undertaken, with an eye to developing options that are appropriate and effective in the GVROC context.

2.3. Phase 3: Development of Outcomes and Actions

Finally, desired outcomes were developed, and an Action Plan was drafted. This provides a framework of actions that GVROC and its members can apply and tailor to their unique needs, capabilities and capacity. These actions range from direct action, to partnerships, to influencing/advocacy activities.

The Action Plan is included in Section 5.

2.4. Report Scope

2.4.1. Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (GVROC)

The Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (GVROC) was formed in 2007, with the overarching principle to develop a strategic alliance of local governments in the Goldfields. The LGAs within GVROC form the spatial scope of this report, consisting of the:

- Shire of Coolgardie
- Shire of Dundas
- Shire of Esperance



- City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder
- Shire of Laverton
- Shire of Leonora
- Shire of Menzies
- Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku
- Shire of Wiluna

2.4.2. Shire of Ngaanyatjarra

The Shire of Ngaanyatjarra contains the traditional lands of the Ngaanyatjarra people of the Central Desert of Western Australia. The 99-year leases held by the Ngaanyatjarra Land Council on behalf of the traditional owners also form the boundaries of the Shire of Ngaanyatjarraku (henceforth, The Lands).

The Lands represent a unique case in the region. They are characterised by a remote collection of Aboriginal communities with very high levels of unemployment, low personal incomes and a housing market that is solely reliant on government investment and support.

There are at least 250 public houses in The Lands, all owned by the State Government. Being State owned, these properties are exempt from paying local rates, creating unique financial issues for the Shire. These properties are also not held in freehold, and the Shire has no titles on the land.

These factors, the remote location, unique housing typology and unique demographics of The Lands require unique responses and engagement with government.

The Shire and GVROC are aware of this reality, and the Shire has developed its own housing strategy in late 2021 and is in discussions with the DoC regarding its implementation.

For these reasons, an audit and action plan relating to The Lands is not within the scope of this report, and the above information is provided for comprehensiveness of information only.

2.4.3. City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Shire of Esperance

While many communities in the region do not have formal housing and rental markets and rely heavily on government investment and intervention, the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Shire of Esperance are large enough to be considered functional housing markets. The price of land and housing is market driven, and investment in housing investment is typically financially viable. However, this situation is changing recently with investment looking less viable with high construction costs, and lower returns particularly for lower end of housing market. These factors sit these locations apart from the rest of the GVROC townships and some commentary within this report applying specifically to regional centres outside of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Esperance.

These Councils also have better access to staff, resources and expertise. Currently, both Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Esperance are progressing their own Housing Strategies, and undertaking action regarding land and housing supply in a manner that is relevant to their context.⁹

Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Esperance are affected by the barriers and constraints identified in this report, and they will also play a part in the solutions and actions recommended herein, but these factors form part of a larger story in these two LGAs.

Noting these factors, this report focuses most of its attention and actions on the other LGAs in GVROC, and this is reflected throughout.

⁹ For example: Urbis. 2022. *Kalgoorlie-Boulder Housing and Land Position Paper*. Prepared for the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Chamber of Commerce and Industry. <http://kbcci.com.au/userfiles/files/P0041157%20-%20Kalgoorlie%20Boulder%20Summary%20Doc%20V3.pdf>



2.5. Data Collection and Stakeholder Consultation

Demographic and Housing Data

There were limitations in some of the data that was available in the preparation of this report. In many parts of the region, demographic data collation is difficult due to the high volume of non-responses to the ABS Census and the transient nature of FIFO workforces and the movement of Aboriginal people to and from remote communities.

In Local Government Areas outside of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Esperance, especially those in the Northern Goldfields, housing and rental markets are heavily reliant on government and NGO ownership and management. These housing markets feature high proportions of social housing, and few dwellings are formally rented through agents. Data regarding government-owned asset occupancy, ownership and housing program status is not publicly available, and where limited data is available it is inconsistent and often incomplete. Many businesses manage and rent housing to their employees through a private agreement. Furthermore, the habitability of dwellings is not always clear, and often reported inaccurately. These factors limit the accuracy and completeness of the available data, and as such, this data has been used to inform the report's findings, not drive them.

Accurate and comprehensive data can only be collated by the relevant LGAs and State Government Agencies directly. This data was sought during the study period of this report, but only limited data has been provided by these LGAs and agencies, and the data provided has been further limited by the capacity and capability of these LGAs. The data that has been gathered is represented throughout the report. To further develop this evidence base, further actions have been recommended in the reports' Action Plan.

In lieu of this formal data being readily available, this report relies significantly on the input of key LGA representatives provided through the consultation process. Overall, the data available is less formal and comprehensive than anticipated. Despite this, the small scale of most of the region's towns and the extensive local experience and knowledge of LGA representatives has provided a strong base of information that has been drawn on in identifying issues, barriers and potential solutions in this report, identified through the stakeholder consultation process.

Consultation

This report draws on consultation with a large range of stakeholders across the GVROC Region. This consultation was multi-faceted in its purpose, including:

- Collecting qualitative information on land and housing supply and demands trends, and constraints and opportunities;
- Gathering quantitative property and demographic data where possible;
- Understanding the role of various stakeholders in addressing land and housing issues, and the current state of relationships, policies, and systems between these stakeholders;
- Identifying the work and opportunities that have already been undertaken; and
- Identifying potential objectives and actions aimed at overcoming the identified challenges.

Senior stakeholders from the following organisations were consulted to provide input into this report:

- Goldfields Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (GVROC)
- Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission (GEDC)
- Department of Communities (DoC)
- Various senior executive representatives and elected officials from all GVROC Local Government Authorities, excluding the Shire of Ngaanyatjarra
- Non-government housing and community organisations, including:
 - o Koya Aboriginal Corporation
 - o Goldfields Indigenous Housing Organisation (GIHO)
 - o Community Housing Limited
 - o Stellar Living Ltd



3. Current Situation

The Western Australian economy continues to perform strongly. In the post COVID-19 period, the State has benefitted significantly from strong demand for WA's commodities across both the resources and agricultural sectors, an increase in tourism activity and the flow on benefits from government pandemic stimulus expenditure in housing and infrastructure. As a result, the WA economy is anticipated to grow by 3% during the 2022/23 financial year building on the 4.4% achieved in 2021/22.¹⁰

These strong economic conditions are apparent in the Goldfields-Esperance Region with increased mining investment and exploration complementing the existing mining and agricultural activity. High prices for gold and iron ore and shifts in the global energy market are increasing demand for nickel and rare earth minerals, which is driving increased mining exploration, investment, and activity across Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie and the Northern Goldfields. Continued favourable agricultural conditions and emerging renewable energy opportunities are increasing activity in Esperance and Dundas.

The region makes a strong and increasing contribution to the State's overall economic performance. Between 2015 and 2021, the Goldfields-Esperance Region's Gross Regional Product increased from \$6.5 billion to \$11.9 billion.¹¹ However, while the region's economic contribution grows, it faces significant challenges in maintaining viable and sustainable communities. Due to a range of issues, the region struggles to adequately provide access to appropriate services and infrastructure to meet the needs of local residents and visitors, to develop and sustain local business activity, and to build capacity to locally service existing and emerging industries. This is significantly hampering the economic and social development and sustainability of communities (and potentially the State of WA, as the region may fail to leverage new major projects and transformational industries for the future of WA), resulting in:

- An overreliance on external (to the region and/or local communities) contracting and service delivery for all government, health and community services; property, plant and equipment maintenance servicing, and for much of the larger retail and commercial activity;
- The exporting of income generation and economic activity opportunities outside of the region;
- Lower standards of health, income, education and employment for local residents;
- An increasing reliance on fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) and drive-in drive-out workforces;
- Reduced access to employment, training and educational opportunities;
- An inability to retain and attract adequate population levels; and
- Entrenched disadvantage for local residents.

As representatives of their communities, GVROC members are committed to identifying the key issues faced by their communities and implementing strategies to address these challenges and to support the development of their towns. A key limitation currently impacting GVROC communities is a lack of appropriate and timely access to land and appropriate and affordable housing.

While each location has its own unique circumstances, all GVROC communities are experiencing difficulties in housing and land availability that are preventing local residents and communities from participating in and benefiting from the economic development of the region.

¹⁰ WA Government. 2022. *Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*.

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/2022-23-government-mid-year-financial-projections-statement>

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2021. *Gross State and Regional Product datasets (2021 census)*. www.abs.gov.au



A growing, stable economy

As previously described, the Goldfields-Esperance region is currently benefiting from strong economic activity. Historically, the region has been impacted by boom bust cycles of investment and construction activity associated with commodity price movements and mining investment cycles. However, the current pipeline of investment in approved and planned major projects and their resultant construction and operation phases indicates that the region is likely to benefit from a sustained increase in the level of mining sector job creation and economic activity in the long term.

Furthermore, with the continued favourable agricultural conditions and emerging renewable energy opportunities currently being explored across Western Australian's Southern Coast, there is potentially significant investment and economic activity planned or under consideration in the Shires of Esperance and Dundas.¹²

Like much of regional WA, the region has benefited from an increase in domestic tourism following the COVID-19 pandemic. Capitalising on tourism opportunities is critical to the sustainability of towns and diversifying local economies. With the current and planned investment in the 'Outback Way', the region will benefit from increased logistics, transport and tourism traffic.¹³ This is creating new and alternative employment and business opportunities throughout the Northern Goldfields.

The current economic growth profile of the region offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to capitalise on investment activity to build community sustainability and improve the standard of living for local residents. However, lack of access to land and quality housing is limiting the capacity of the region, denying local residents the opportunity to participate in and benefit from strong economic activity, and further entrenching social and economic disadvantage. It may also prompt industry and investment to reconsider their investment in WA if joint solutions to housing, accommodation and infrastructure are not forthcoming.

If not addressed, this has the potential to further undermine the sustainability and viability of some GVROC communities.

Geographic challenges

GVROC communities are some of the most isolated, under resourced and underserved communities in Western Australia. Local residents of GVROC communities experience some of the highest levels of disadvantage and are heavily reliant on government in their ability to access quality health, medical, social and community services.¹⁴

The vast distances, low population levels and lack of critical mass across the region make it difficult for government and non-government agencies to service. For some communities, government and community service delivery is provided exclusively on a drive-in, drive-out basis. More generally, access to quality service provision is limited, with service delivery disjointed and highly fragmented.

For those towns with services present, retaining suitably skilled staff willing to live in regional and remote areas is challenging. Ensuring these staff have access to quality suitable accommodation is critical to maintaining effective service delivery. In those cases where suitable housing is unable to be provided, service delivery is further constrained, limiting services and amenity for the community.

¹² ABC. 2021. *World's biggest green energy hub proposed for south coast of Western Australia.*

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-07-13/green-energy-hub-planned-for-south-coast-of-wa/100288734>

¹³ Dept. of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. 2019. *Upgrading the Outback Way – Investment Strategy.* <https://investment.infrastructure.gov.au/projects/key-projects/outback-way.aspx>

¹⁴ Infrastructure Australia. 2022. *Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps – Regional Analysis: Western Australia.* https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/9_RSIG_Regional%20Analysis_WA.pdf



The consequence of this is twofold: it further entrenches disadvantage and poor health and lifestyle outcomes for residents; and acts to discourage new residents from relocating to these communities.

Limited housing investment

The increase in mining investment and related activity are creating employment, business and economic development opportunities for GVROC communities. However, this is also placing pressure on the capacity of local communities to service the needs of industry from both a housing and local business service perspective.

There is limited capacity for most local housing markets across GVROC communities to adequately respond to the needs of the mining sector via traditional urban housing models. Accordingly, the mining sector continues to rely on a FIFO workforce with a considerable proportion of accommodation requirements being met through short term worker camps. GVROC members are looking to make the most of these opportunities to support the economic development of their communities, to create local business development opportunities and to generate additional income.

While FIFO and worker villages are providing solutions to part of the region's housing needs, the current investment activity is driving additional demand for housing within GVROC communities. Positively, the increased economic activity is driving additional housing demand in all areas of the region. A number of resource firms are increasing their focus on residential workforces and secondary industry activity supporting additional population growth.

Outside of the mining sector, there is consistent unmet demand for housing from social housing eligible households, government employees, not-for-profit and service industry workers, and local business staff.

Due to subdued housing demand across GVROC towns over the last decade, coupled with limited serviced lot availability and land tenure constraints, there has been limited investment in new housing supply across the region. Between 2016 and 2022 only 615 new dwellings were constructed in the Goldfields-Esperance Region. Almost 90% (542) of these dwellings were constructed within the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and Shire of Esperance.¹⁵

Furthermore, due to high costs, limited availability and access to trades people, and low property values, appropriate investment in existing housing stock has not occurred. Due to a lack of investment in new supply and maintenance of existing stock, much of the housing across GVROC communities is now ageing, with many properties in less-than-ideal condition.

This lack of investment has resulted in an absence of quality housing being available across some communities which is constraining delivery of government and other services to regional communities.

LGAs are playing a key role

In the absence of consistent standards and availability of government services, GVROC communities are highly reliant on local social capital and the ability of LGAs and regional organisations to work together to develop local solutions. There is limited housing supply and management capability across the region and LGAs have been filling the void.

Local government is increasingly requested to facilitate, coordinate, and support the delivery of standard services to their communities – this includes an increasing expectation that local governments play a role in delivering or facilitating local housing solutions.

¹⁵ .idcommunity. 2023. *Goldfields-Esperance Community Profile*. <https://profile.id.com.au/rdage/>



GVROC local governments are actively tackling land and housing challenges however, there are varying levels of knowledge, capacity and focus across the group. GVROC members are addressing the challenges in different ways, with differing levels of success. There was evidence that some GVROC members had identified solutions or responses to address issues that others were still confronted with. It was also clear that despite the progress some members had made, there are critical constraints and barriers to achieving lasting impacts.

Confounded by size

Many government agencies are confounded by the size and nature of the land and housing challenges in the region. Given the relative isolation, low population and modest scale of some of the solutions being sought, the region's housing and land challenges are easily seen as too small and insignificant. Simultaneously, due to the unique operating environment, level of complexity, and the number and scale of issues present, these challenges can be considered too big and complex to be addressed by government policy makers and enablers.

Despite this, it was noted that across the region small wins can have a significant impact on GVROC communities.

Opportunity for change

Despite the continued predominance of FIFO workers, the upswing in economic activity across the region is creating opportunities to enhance social and economic development of GVROC communities.

The anticipated lifespans of contemporary resource and renewable energy projects are longer than in previous boom-bust cycles, bringing levels of consistent, long-term activity to these communities. This longevity may support greater sustainability of enabling conditions.¹⁶

There are demonstrative examples of successful projects and models across the region that can be built upon, if some of the existing barriers can be overcome. These are explored in the following sections, and the Action Plan.

It was noted that GVROC members have expressed a willingness to take a lead role in developing and implementing solutions and this enthusiasm should be harnessed for the benefit of GVROC communities.

3.1. Constraints

Through engagement with GVROC members, a range of the circumstances and factors that constrain the ability of the market to function efficiently and inhibit the development and investment for the benefit of GVROC communities have been identified. These factors include:

Land availability

Across many GVROC communities there is a lack of available developed and serviced land for residential, industrial and commercial development. In most locations there is existing undeveloped land that would be suitable for residential, commercial or industrial development however, for a variety of reasons this land is currently not being used, or is unable to be used, for the benefit of the community.

¹⁶ GEDC. 2016. *Goldfields-Esperance Regional Investment Blueprint – A Plan for 2050*. www.gedc.wa.gov.au/



There are significant freehold land holdings across the region that are currently in public or private ownership that would be suitable for residential or other development uses. In some instances, this land is held by State Government potentially for future use. In other cases, the land is held in private ownership with no current intention for development.

Land tenure issues represent a significant constraint to land availability and access across the region. Difficulties in resolving issues including undetermined Native Title and the presence of mining tenements represent a significant constraint to improving land availability. A number of members identified specific land parcels suitable for residential, commercial or industrial development that could be easily activated however, due to an inability to resolve land tenure issues the land remained undevelopable.

LGAs have also reported the process to convert subdivided Unallocated Crown Land (UCL) lots to freehold is difficult even in the absence of Native Title or mining tenement matters, due to uncertainty, delays and confusion regarding the process that must be undertaken with DPLH and other agencies.

Recently, further uncertainty in this area has been perceived with the introduction of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act (2021) (the Act), which overhauls the previous Aboriginal Heritage (1972). While the new Act does not change the likelihood of Aboriginal heritage matters affecting development, it has changed the stakeholders involved, giving authority to Local Aboriginal Heritage Councils in providing consent for new activity. It has also increased the level of decision making they are given in the process. Regulations that enable and govern this process are still being introduced, and the full impact of the Act is yet to be determined. For most GVROC LGAs, this change will not fundamentally affect the processes to unlock land that is already within their town footprints, but it may affect further townsite expansions if required in the medium- to long- term.

Existing housing stock

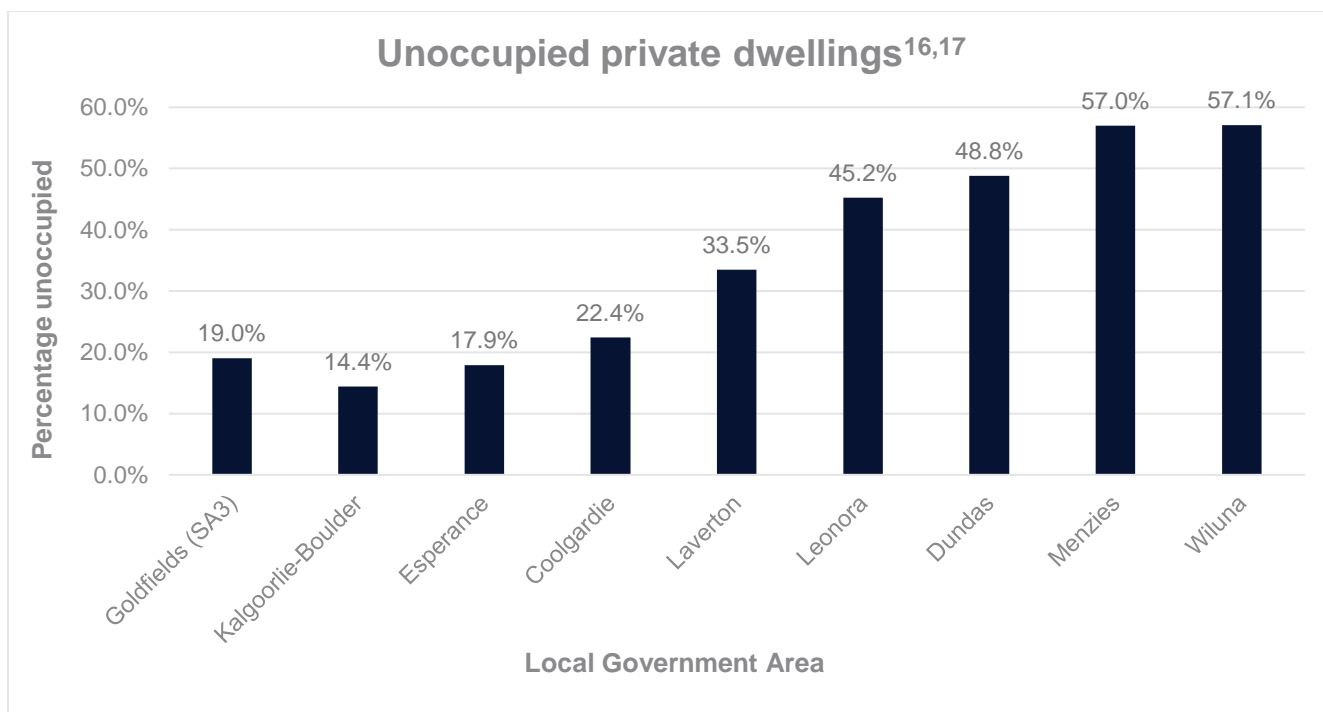
The state of existing housing stock across the region is constraining LGAs' ability to capitalise on current social and economic development opportunities. A significant proportion of the housing stock in the region is ageing, with properties reaching the end of their useful life and in need of full refurbishment or replacement. The lack of available trades and high costs results in a lack of investment and maintenance of existing housing stock further exacerbating the problem.

LGAs have reported many instances of vacant and dilapidated stock, which is supported by census and government data. The quantum of this issue is examined in figures below.

As a consequence, there a significant number of vacant properties across the region that are unable to be used to provide safe and secure housing. Given the cost of replacing housing and the difficulties in attracting funding for new housing stock, the underutilisation of existing housing stock is highly inefficient for the community. These challenges are intensified by challenging client groups and a lack of management and investment in State owned housing across the region resulting in poorly maintained and vacant housing.

For a number of GVROC communities, a lack of funding and clarity regarding responsibilities for remote Aboriginal housing management is resulting in vacant deteriorating assets, overcrowding and homelessness.






Number of unoccupied private dwellings ¹⁶	
<u>Local Government Area</u>	<u># unoccupied dwellings</u>
Kalgoorlie-Boulder	1686
Esperance	1091
Coolgardie	325
Laverton	92
Leonora	264
Dundas	246
Menzies	90
Wiluna	113
Goldfields (SA3)	2877

At least

130 (13%)



public housing properties in the Goldfields Esperance region have been identified as needing **urgent maintenance or refurbishment**, out of a total stock of 992.^{18,19}

While the above figures demonstrate a clear issue that has been affirmed by key LGA stakeholders in the region, a comprehensive and accurate audit of vacant houses and their state of repair was unable to be completed in this report. Further information on specific numbers and the identification of these properties has been sought, but unable to be provided in any great detail due to the lack of information provided by LGAs and the DoC. This requires on-the-ground identification and monitoring, which is challenging given the resourcing and capability issues faced by many LGAs in the region.

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2021. *Dwelling Count datasets (2021 census)*. www.abs.gov.au

¹⁸ 'Unoccupied private dwellings' as defined by the ABS are 'most often a separate house, townhouse, apartment or flat, with no one staying there on Census Night'. Notably, this includes social housing and other govt. housing programs. It should exclude short-stay workers' (FIFO) accommodation, but due to the limitations discussed in Section 2.5 it is difficult to confirm how accurate these figures are. Vacancy rates above 50% exceed the rates reported by LGA's.

¹⁹ Infrastructure Australia. 2022. *Regional Strengths and Infrastructure Gaps – Regional Analysis: Western Australia*. https://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/9_RSIG_Regional%20Analysis_WA.pdf



Further evidence of the true quantum of this issue, and the locations and ownership of these properties would be valuable to guide future action. This is addressed in the report's Action Plan.

Housing industry capacity

There is limited housing market and industry capacity across significant areas of the region. The local trade and skill base is largely based in Kalgoorlie, Esperance or elsewhere outside of the region. This results in high costs and limited serviceability.

There is a strong and viable network of builders and trade subcontractors operating in Kalgoorlie and Esperance. However, due to sustained low levels of activity, they have a largely local focus that responds to the market cycle. With minimal dwelling construction projects located outside of Kalgoorlie or Esperance, the small scale and ad hoc nature of these projects doesn't create consistency of servicing. Accordingly, there is limited surplus market capacity to deal with sharp increases in demand and little incentive to increase their capacity and expand their services to more remote parts of the region.

Larger local builders have also diversified into commercial operations to optimise revenues with the current pipeline of projects and mining sector activity.

Housing market capacity

The region currently lacks an at-scale not-for-profit provider of affordable housing services that is able to bring significant affordable housing management capability and additional housing investment into the region. In other regions across WA, not-for-profit community housing providers are able to manage and own substantial assets and are able to use their cashflows to invest in additional affordable housing.²⁰ There are three providers currently operating in the region – Community Housing Limited, Stellar Living Limited and Goldfields Indigenous Community Organisation (GIHO) – none of which operates at significant scale. As a consequence, there is a heavy reliance on the Department of Communities for the delivery of social and affordable housing.

Conversations with CHP stakeholders yielded the following insights:

- Community Housing Limited deliver services exclusively into remote Aboriginal communities under contract to the DoC. They currently have no plans to grow their services into urban locations in the region.
- Stellar Living provide a limited service to a small number of properties in Kalgoorlie servicing a specific cohort. They also have no significant plans to grow their focus in the region.
- GIHO are an Aboriginal Community Housing Organisation (ACHO), employing and working in partnership with First Nations people. They provide housing and tenancy support services to First Nations people in both urban and remote communities in the region. GIHO's operations are currently limited in scale, however, they have demonstrated a desire to expand their services over time, should viable opportunities present themselves. It is worth noting that GIHO are not currently a registered CHP.

²⁰ Shelter WA. 2022. *Community Housing Sector Growth Opportunities*. <https://www.shelterwa.org.au/community-housing-opportunities/>



For a non-profit housing provider to make a successful contribution to the region's housing needs it will require considerable scale of its operations, and partnership opportunities that enable their service and expansion (see the *Spotlight* below).

Spotlight – Community Housing in the Region

Community Housing Sector

The community housing sector plays a significant and growing role in delivery of social and affordable housing across Australia. The sector currently manages more than 120,000 tenancies and has assets worth more than \$18 billion dollars.

Operating as not-for-profit entities, Community Housing Providers (CHPs) leverage rental revenues, tax benefits, and cross-sector relationships to develop, own and manage social housing properties while providing targeted support services to tenants.

Increasingly, the sector is able to access government and private sector funding to invest in additional social and affordable housing for the benefit of local communities. Social housing represents a low-risk, steady revenue stream, and CHPs can leverage their existing portfolio to secure finance for new housing projects. By leveraging funding and partnership options not available to the government and private sectors, CHPs can play a unique role in facilitating investment in housing that supports low-income families and key workers.

Untapped Opportunity

Recent State Government investment through the Social Housing Economic Recovery Package (SHERP) demonstrates the consequence of the lack of an established and focused community housing presence in the Goldfields-Esperance region.²²

Under the SHERP initiative, the State Government has allocated \$319 million in funding for the construction, renovation and maintenance of social housing across the State. This funding is being provided to registered CHPs, LGAs and remote Aboriginal communities.

Of the funding allocated to February 2023, only \$1.05 million has been allocated to organisations in the region, and for refurbishment projects only. Stakeholder engagement indicates that no new construction project proposals were submitted by CHPs for social housing projects within the region.

The absence of an established, regionally-focused CHP has resulted in a lack of concerted effort to advocate for and leverage investment in social housing projects in the region. As a consequence, the region is forgoing direct State Government social housing investment, and the opportunity to access additional pools of capital available to the community housing sector.

There may be opportunity for GVROC to advocate for the State Government to attract and support the establishment of a stronger and locally focused CHP presence in the region. GVROC could also invest in partnership with such an organisation, providing support via aggregated property management, provision of land or other resources.



The sustainable growth of a CHP in the region represents a significant opportunity to increase housing investment. In October 2021, Housing Minister John Carey held a community housing sector roundtable to shape the future direction of social housing delivery in WA, as part of the WA Government's commitment to invest \$2.1 billion in social housing over the next four years, including the delivering of around 3300 new social homes. Policy changes announced within the Department of Communities, as well as priority reforms intended to support a more collaborative partnership between the State Government and community housing sector, include access to increased borrowing capacity. The loan-to-value cap for providers operating under a Community Housing Agreement with the Department of Communities is increasing from 30 to 50 per cent. The change means CHPs can borrow substantially more money to purchase, lease or build new social and affordable housing for Western Australians in need.²¹

Housing financing constraints

LGAs and private investors in the Goldfields-Esperance region face significant challenges in its ability to secure financing to fund home purchases and new housing supply. Due to the traditional market volatility experienced across the region, strict lending practices are applied for financing applications. Conservative regulation by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority and lending policies of the major banks place significant barriers to home finance for borrowers seeking finance.

For GVROC members, while the State Government encourages the LGA's to invest in housing, the WA Treasury Corporation lending rules limit the ability of LGA's to access low-cost government backed debt to finance lending for new GROH housing supply.

While there is consistent demand for State Government employee housing, the current funding model for GROH and WACHS staffing requirements has resulted in a lack of capital funding for direct property investment by government. A lack of available capital investment in these programs by the State Government has resulted in inadequate service delivery, and often leaves LGAs no choice but to manage this issue for their communities. This is evidenced by a number of GVROC LGA's providing accommodation to State Government employees.²³

Given the high levels of mining activity, responding to housing needs of that sector has been and continues to be a priority for many GVROC locations. Demand for mining (and related industry) housing focuses investment on 'worker village' type accommodation, with little flow on to in-community housing development. While these communities can benefit from complementary services, most worker villages are operated and managed most efficiently as 'all-in-one' facilities, reducing the involvement of local communities and local businesses in delivering services to dwellings and residents in the village. Furthermore, the self-contained nature of worker village environments can lack integration and interaction with the broader community.

²¹ Shelter WA. 2022. *Community Housing Sector Growth Opportunities*. <https://www.shelterwa.org.au/community-housing-opportunities/>

²² WA Government. 2022. *Social Housing Economic Recovery Package – Grants Program*. <https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/departments-of-communities/social-housing-economic-recovery-package>

²³ This issue is examined further in the 'Department of Communities structural challenges' section below.



Spotlight – Lending Policy Constraints and Opportunities

Supporting Private Home Ownership

Given the higher levels of risk associated with home lending in remote locations, banks will either decline to provide home purchase finance or require additional deposit requirements. Under these circumstances, banks are typically prepared to lend up to 70% of the value of the property. The purchaser is required to fund the remaining amount as a deposit. These significant deposit requirements pose a significant barrier to home purchase in remote locations.

As a response, the Commonwealth Government via the National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation (NHFIC) has established the Regional First Home Owners Guarantee. Under this scheme, NHFIC will provide a guarantee for up to 15% of the property value provided that purchaser has a 5% deposit and can obtain finance from a traditional lender. The Scheme will assist up to 10,000 First Home Owners per annum across regional Australia.

While this provides some response, it is available only to first home buyers, is suitable only where the deposit requirements are up to 20%, can only be utilised where there are banks prepared to lend in that location, and has a limit of 10,000 homes across Australia.

Noting the reliance on government funded housing in remote locations, there may be opportunities to advocate to the State and Commonwealth Governments to further support initiatives that better target the challenges of enabling home purchase in remote locations. This has the potential to facilitate private investment in housing in GVROC communities.

Supporting LGA Housing Investment

Under current WATC lending policies, finance can only be provided based on current income received by the LGA. While investment in new housing supply for GROH or worker villages has the potential to generate significant future rental revenues, this future income generated by the investment cannot be considered by WATC when assessing lending requests. Accordingly, any WATC debt finance sourced by LGA's must be secured against existing rates and other income or alternatively sourced from private banks, often at higher interest rates.

There may be opportunities to engage the State Government in revisiting existing WATC lending policies where debt finance is being sourced to fund the construction of housing backed by long term lease or income commitments.

Market dynamics

There are a range of market dynamics at play that prevent the region's housing market from operating efficiently and discourage investment in housing.

Due to the isolation of the region, the limited number of suppliers, competition for resources, and a lack of critical scale, the region has traditionally been a high-cost environment. Land development costs largely associated with infrastructure, servicing and civil works charges are also high due to the requirement for fill, competition for heavy machinery, and the high cost of utility provision that is being passed on. Recent supply chain and labour shortages across the housing industry have further increased construction costs across the region.

The State Government has demonstrated a willingness to stimulate regional land supply through the provision of funding for headworks, infrastructure and civil works. This funding is provided to offset the high construction cost of urban land development in regional areas, specifically where the cost to develop the land exceeds its completed value. Initial projects were supported in 2021/22 budget with funds provided to facilitate new urban land supply in Karratha and Kalgoorlie.²⁴ There is an opportunity for GVROC to advocate for the State Government to provide similar investment in the Goldfields-Esperance region.

Property values across many GVROC communities are low and capital growth rates have been negligible for most of the last decade.²⁵ In almost all GVROC communities, consumers are able to purchase a home at prices lower than it would cost to build a new home, and housing is generally valued significantly lower than replacement cost. This significantly discourages home purchase for both owner occupiers and investors, particularly where rental opportunities exist.

While the region's rental housing needs are supported by institutional property ownership (businesses, LGAs, Aboriginal corporations, NGOs), this is highly disaggregated. Institutional ownership is critical to maintaining stability in the region's housing market however, these fragmented management arrangements have resulted in limited value and efficiency obtained through aggregation and coordination of property management and maintenance services. With the high cost of maintenance and property servicing experienced across the region, an inability to provide coordination and aggregation of activities is highly inefficient and costly.

Demand factors

The nature of demand for housing and land across GVROC communities creates a variety of challenges.

A high proportion of the region's workforce is highly transient²⁶ and anecdotal evidence suggests there is a perception that their employment within the region is only a short- or medium-term option. As a consequence, there is a preference to rent locally rather than own a property. While a number of policies are encouraging workers to be based locally, there remains a high reliance on rental housing to accommodate these workers. In some cases, it is hoped that workers will transition to local home ownership once settled in the region. However, it is likely that for many that will prefer to remain in rental accommodation rather than purchase a home locally. There are also increasing numbers of employers from SME sector renting properties for their employees in order to attract and retain staff.

Aboriginal people make up a high proportion of the population across GVROC communities. With strong cultural connection to country, they are committed to their communities and are likely to remain in the region long term. Unfortunately, for a large proportion of these households, obtaining access to private housing options either in the rental market or via home purchase is difficult. Increasing levels of Aboriginal employment across the region will increase their capacity to afford home ownership. This offers both opportunities and challenges for the housing market. Encouraging home ownership will support investment and help normalise housing markets however, there are limited options to access to finance to purchase a home. In the absence of viable options to access the private housing market, there will continue to be increasing demand on State Government housing options, overcrowded housing and homelessness.²⁷

GVROC members recognise that the current availability of land and housing within their communities is failing to meet the needs of potential residents wishing to relocate to their towns. The GVROC communities offer residents unique lifestyle opportunities however, there are cohorts who could or

²⁴ WA Government. 2021. State Budget 2021-22. <https://www.ourstatebudget.wa.gov.au/>

²⁵ Taken from reiwa.com data.

²⁶ GEDC. 2016. *Goldfields-Esperance Regional Investment Blueprint* www.gedc.wa.gov.au

²⁷ REMPLAN. 2023. *Goldfields-Esperance – Our Community*. <https://app.remplan.com.au/>



would like to settle in the region that are being discouraged from relocating due a lack of suitable or available housing options.

Department of Communities structural challenges

The Department of Communities (DoC) and its officers experience a range of systemic and structural issues that limit their capacity and capability to adequately service the region.

Social Housing

While there is funding available for social housing from DoC’s spot purchasing and capital investment programs, but due to the high cost of new housing construction or refurbishment and the value of the end asset being lower than its cost, construction or spot purchasing in the Northern Goldfields towns does not represent value-for-money and thus the funding is often determined to be more effectively spent elsewhere. The pool of funding for these programs is limited and unable to meet overall demand. Overall social housing demand in the Goldfields-Esperance region is comparatively low to other regions, which reduces the quantum of funding being allocated to the region.

GROH Program

To support the achievement of government objectives, DoC provides housing to facilitate the attraction and retention of staff in regional and remote locations under its Government Regional Officers’ Housing (GROH) Program. DoC leases properties to government agencies and these properties are sub-leased to government employees at the discretion of their employing agency.

The GROH program is serviced via two pathways:

- 1) Properties purchased or built by the State Government for the GROH program; and
- 2) Properties leased from third-parties for use in the GROH program.

The purchasing pathway relies on the availability of limited capital investment. The 2022/23 State Budget allocated \$99.4 million for GROH capital works over the forward estimates as follows:

Year	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Capital Allocation	\$23.8m	\$23.0m	\$26.3m	\$26.3m

Based on an average per unit construction cost of \$550,000 per dwelling and this funding being allocated across the state, this funding will be insufficient to meet demand. Therefore, it is unlikely that there will be significant increased capital investment for the region via the GROH program.

In response to the limited capital investment available to the GROH program, the State Government relies on the leasing program to meet demand for regional officers housing requirements. The leasing encourages third-party property owners to invest in or make established housing available to lease by the State Government.

Under the leasing model, the State Government can pay either a market rent or a cost recovery rent. Market rent provides rental payments comparable to the general market. This model is ideally suited in locations with competitive property markets that benefit from both consistent rents and where capital growth is anticipated.

The cost recovery option provides rental payment based on the replacement cost of the dwelling over 20 years. Given that the State Government will currently only secure long-term leases of up to 10 years, only a portion of the overall replacement cost of the dwelling is guaranteed to be recovered. In addition, the investor effectively receives no return on the capital cost of investing in the asset. Under



such an arrangement the investor bears all occupancy risk beyond the initial 10-year lease period, and is therefore relying on anticipated future rental demand and the ability of the property to be sold in the future to realise any value from the investment.

Given the uncertainty of long-term housing demand, high construction costs, and historical low capital growth in housing values across the region, the leasing model is largely unviable in most GVROC communities. A feasibility model is presented below comparing the GROH lease model in action in a typical Northern Goldfields town against a similar property in Albany. Neither the market rent or cost recovery rent options offer a positive return on investment over 20 years.

Exacerbating the current situation, DoC representatives have reported that existing leases are frequently not being renewed by their third-party owners. Property values have risen so steeply over the last 2 years that many owners are choosing to sell their properties instead. The rate of cancelled leases is outpacing new DoC investment and reducing the number of properties available to the State through the leasing pathway.

GROH Lease Program Modelling – Goldfields-Esperance Region			
Base Assumptions			
3-Bedroom, 2-Bathroom Home			
Construction Costs:		\$450,000	
Land Contribution by Shire:		\$10,000	
Financed period:		20 years	
Interest Rate:		6.50%	
Shire Equity Contribution:		20%	
Loan Commencement Amount (80%):		\$360,000	
Completed House Value:		\$300,000	
Option 1a: Market Rent (1% capital growth)		Option 1b: Market Rent (0% capital growth)	
Rent (adjusted annually based on CPI (3.5%)):	\$600 per week	Rent (adjusted annually based on CPI (3.5%)):	\$600 per week
Annual Capital Growth:	1%	Annual Capital Growth:	0%
Value at Year 20:	\$362,000	Value at Year 20:	\$300,000
Return on Investment over 5 years:	-44%	Return on Investment over 5 years:	-46%
Return on Investment over 10 years:	-41%	Return on Investment over 10 years:	-46%
Return on Investment over 20 years:	-6%	Return on Investment over 20 years:	-15%
Option 2a: Cost Recovery (1% capital growth)		Option 2a: Cost Recovery (0% capital growth)	
Rent:	Dwelling replacement and operating costs over 20 years	Rent:	Dwelling replacement and operating costs over 20 years
Annual Capital Growth	1%	Annual Capital Growth	0%
Value at Year 20:	\$362,000	Value at Year 20:	\$300,000
Return on Investment over 5 years:	-36%	Return on Investment over 5 years:	-38%
Return on Investment over 10 years:	-31%	Return on Investment over 10 years:	-36%
Return on Investment on 20 years:	-3%	Return on Investment on 20 years:	-11%



The State Government has encouraged GVROC LGAs to invest in housing for GROH under the leasing model however two significant challenges exist:

1. As outlined above, the investment metrics do not support the option as being a low-risk option delivering sound financial returns;
2. The current lending policies of WATC limit the ability of local governments to access debt to fund any investment in GROH housing.

Renewal of underutilised assets

There is a significant quantum of dilapidated houses and vacant lots that are owned by the DoC that require funding to bring them up to standard and into a housing program. In some cases, these assets are surplus to requirements and could be divested.

DoC stakeholders have reported that under current managerial and ministerial practices, the process and justification required to dispose of or demolish any underutilised and/or vacant assets is challenging. As previously discussed, there is limited capital funding available to bring them up to a liveable standard.

When funding is available, DoC officers are finding it challenging to get contractors to complete works on these properties in a timely manner due to their remote locations and small volume of works. Under the current Head Maintenance Contract arrangements, works are allocated to contractors via the Head Contractor, Lakes Maintenance. Lakes Maintenance negotiates pre-arranged agreements and pricing terms with sub-contractors with works prioritised to those contractors. Where availability or workload challenges occur, inflexibility under this model limits the ability of Lakes or DoC to promptly reallocate maintenance works to alternative contractors. It is only after an inability to perform works within a timely manner is established that alternative delivery options are explored.

Collaborative Solutions

Despite these barriers, senior DoC representatives have expressed a willingness to work collaboratively with GVROC and its members to explore solutions (and in some instances they already are), including:

- Commencing the process to dispose of underutilised DoC assets to LGAs or NGOs in cases where a higher use could be achieved;
- Exploring long-term lease arrangements for GROH houses in partnership with LGAs;
- Creating synergies between DoC and GVROC members in the procurement and contracting of maintenance and construction contractors.

These solutions are explored further in the Action Plan of this report.

Comparative Location – Albany: Market Rent (2.5% capital growth)	
3 Bedroom 2 Bathroom Home	
Construction Costs:	\$380,000
Land Contribution by Shire:	\$150,000
Financed period:	20 years
Interest Rate:	6.50%
Shire Equity Contribution:	20%
Loan Commencement Amount (80%):	\$424,000
Completed House Value:	\$530,000
Rent (adjusted annually based on CPI (3.5%):	\$600 per week
Annual Capital Growth:	2.50%
Value at Year 20:	\$772,000
Return on Investment over 5 years:	-12%
Return on Investment over 10 years:	-8%
Return on Investment over 20 years:	27%



3.2. Enablers

Following analysis of the feedback and insights from GVROC members and engagement with relevant stakeholders, a number of key enablers to unlocking the region's housing and land markets have been identified. These enablers address the above barriers, and increase the potential for housing and land development opportunities to be realised. The key enablers identified are described below, and reflected in the Action Plan.

Policy & process changes

A range of policy and process issues were identified across multiple agencies and sectors. In some instances, there was an absence of policies to address challenges faced by GVROC members. In other instances, existing policies were either poorly designed, ineffective or not suited to the Goldfields-Esperance Region.

Examples of this include the DevelopmentWA and WATC policies that are constraining investment in land and housing supply, current policies regarding the management of Aboriginal housing town-based reserves, and the approach to contract management and implementation of the Head Maintenance Contract with Lakes Maintenance by the DoC. In the private sector, there is a misalignment between resource industry housing and contracting policies.

While noting that GVROC members do not have direct influence over these policies, there is opportunity to work collaboratively with these agencies and their representing ministers to demonstrate the value in altering or finding alternative solutions to overcome the consequences of these policies.

A key limitation imposed on GVROC members is the ability to resolve land and housing issues through a lack of ease, timeliness and certainty of approval processes. The issues relate to the complexity and difficulty of resolving land use matters within existing frameworks such as Native Title, substituting land uses within mining tenements and progressing approvals associated with unreticulated sewer.

A key enabler in this area is the internal knowledge and understanding of GVROC members in being able to overcome these issues. There are varying degrees of knowledge across GVROC members and this appears to drive a heavy reliance on key personnel either within the LGA or within the approval authority. A lack of systemic approach to these issues also appears to be hampering the collective and individual efforts of GVROC members to achieve outcomes.

Spotlight – Streamlining Approvals

Effluent System Approvals

The Shire of Menzies has reported difficulty in obtaining approval from the Dept. of Health for effluent disposal systems to service residential lots, with applications being rejected without solutions being suggested. This sentiment has been echoed by representatives from other LGAs, and it has been highlighted that this issue is even more pronounced for lots that are not large enough to accommodate traditional septic systems, and instead require secondary treatment systems (e.g. aerobic treatment units (ATUs)).

The Shire of Dundas has indicated that they have established a consistent and streamlined process for seeking approval for septic systems servicing detached housing, and they are also working with the Dept. of Health to trial larger wastewater treatment ponds that can service larger and denser development.

In this case, it would be beneficial to share the experience gained by Dundas with the wider GVROC group. Working collaboratively, outstanding gaps or shortcomings in this process can then be identified by the group, and the Dept. of Health can be approached to develop a solution. This approach would pool limited resources, reduce repetition, and stress on central State agencies that these issues are not isolated to single cases.



Funding and financing

With high housing construction, maintenance and land development costs across the region, to effect real change in housing supply and availability will require significant capital investment. A key enabler for GVROC to facilitate sufficient access to land and quality housing for its residents will be the ability of its communities to access sufficient pools of government and private funding and financing.

Enabling housing potential in the region will require increased commitment of new and sustaining capital expenditure from government for:

- Housing for low-income households, disadvantaged groups and Aboriginal people;
- Housing for government employees through GROH and WACHS; and
- The provision of new and upgraded infrastructure and servicing.

It will also require access appropriate levels of affordable debt and financing to support private sector housing development and construction, land activation and home ownership.

Capacity and capability

Ensuring that GVROC communities benefit from effective housing and land solutions is also contingent on GVROC members being able to access appropriate levels of capacity and capability, both internally and externally.

GVROC LGA's are relatively small compared to their metropolitan counterparts. It is evident that for multiple GVROC members, a lack of internal capacity (time, effort and resources) or capability (technical expertise and knowledge) is hampering their ability to progress solutions and increase land and housing supply in their communities. However, individual GVROC members face different capability gaps, and there are opportunities for the sharing of knowledge, expertise and capacity.

Externally, GVROC will require partners such as State Government agencies and the local market to have sufficient capacity and capability to effectively collaborate with GVROC to effect change. Currently, it appears that limited capacity and capability at the State Government level is creating barriers and constraints to GVROC progressing action. In some instances, agencies appeared to lack the required level of capacity (desire, priority, focus and resourcing) or capability (technical expertise, regional understanding, awareness and nuance) to actively work with GVROC members. In some cases, GVROC members with limited capacity and capability, lack the ability to clearly articulate the range of problems and potential solutions or pathways available in this space, to make a convincing case to Government.

Information and awareness

A lack of information and awareness presents a significant barrier to resolving housing and land issues across the region.

At a State Government level, there appears to be a lack of understanding of specific regional and remote issues and opportunities within the Goldfields Esperance Region. Given its relatively small population, isolation and lower profile issues compared to other WA regions, GVROC communities can be somewhat 'out of sight, out of mind'.

As a consequence, there is a lack of understanding regarding the quantum and impact of the housing and land challenges faced by GVROC communities. While this lack of information and understanding continues, government agencies will maintain the status quo, will not offer alternative approaches that may have worked elsewhere, and the issues facing GVROC communities are likely to persist.

There is an opportunity for GVROC to improve information and awareness of challenges and solutions, both within the group and externally within government.



A clear and comprehensive agenda for dealing with housing issues would provide a basis for engagement with government, industry and external partners. There is potential for GVROC to establish a clear advocacy agenda to guide collective engagement to promote awareness and to influence change.

GVROC members have already demonstrated a number of successful approaches and solutions that had been applied in the region.

In some instances, members had invested significant time and effort and had made substantial progress on issues faced by other LGA's. Other members were often unaware that their counterparts had experienced similar problems and/or that they had not implemented similar solutions.

As a consequence, there are opportunities for increased knowledge sharing between GVROC members to improve adoption of solutions, to standardise practices and to enhance outcomes for communities.

Coordination

GVROC members are often engaging in disaggregated albeit similar activity as they seek to overcome land and housing barriers affecting them.

In some cases, it is clear that positive relationships with knowledgeable or influential stakeholders are creating benefits for certain LGAs, but these benefits are not easily translated elsewhere. Furthermore, the scale of the issues in the region and the corresponding activity being undertaken appears limited to external stakeholders when they only see the perspective of one or two GVROC towns.

There is opportunity here to aggregate and coordinate the effort of GVROC members, and to take a systematic and coordinated approach that will raise the profile, scale and achievability of the solutions being proposed.

Major Investment Opportunities

There is a significant pipeline of mining sector investment across the region forecast to require large construction workforce over the next 5-7 years and operational workforces ongoing.

There are also a number of emerging alternative energy proposals currently under consideration that have the potential to significantly alter the demographics and development of the region. The Western Green Hydrogen Project currently being considered for the area between Eucla and Norseman in the Shire of Dundas would see the establishment of a new major townsite north west of the existing Eucla townsite, and development of a new port and related industry on the State's south-east coast.

Fortescue Futures Industries' proposal for a hydrogen energy project around Esperance could result in massive expansion of the town's population, intensification of smaller towns in the Esperance hinterland, expansion of the region's industrial activity and creation of new port facilities to the east or west of the town.

Spotlight – Planning Innovation

The Shire of Esperance has recently endorsed a Local Planning Policy that will facilitate the use of Tiny Homes across the Shire.

In adopting the policy, the Shire recognised that the use of Tiny Homes (small dwellings of less than 50m² built on a moveable base) is increasing in popularity and provides an affordable and sustainable way of living. The policy provides a framework for the approval of Tiny Homes in Esperance and surrounding rural areas.

Importantly, it gives guidance and clarity for residents on the circumstances in which Tiny Homes can be approved thereby ensuring that the Esperance community will have immediate access to a greater choice of housing options.

There now exists the opportunity for the Shire to share its knowledge with the wider GVROC group, in order to explore if similar policies are appropriate and easily implementable in other LGAs.



There is a current and future cumulative impact of these resources and energy projects and associated services on communities across the region – no single agency is looking at this cumulative impact and planning for housing, land and enabling infrastructure.

While these proposals remain under investigation and the specific implications of the projects are yet to be identified, if either project proceeds, they will further increase housing challenges across the region due to the significant and rapid influx of construction and operational workforces and indirect population growth. They also represent a major opportunity for these areas, if they are able to leverage the influx of investment to improve housing and community outcomes. The Shires of Dundas and Esperance will need to work collaboratively with GEDC, State Government agencies and project proponents to ensure the effective coordinated planning and infrastructure delivery should these or other major project investments be confirmed.

Spotlight – Leveraging Community Benefits

Bluebush Village - Kambalda

The Shire of Coolgardie is in the final stages of developing Bluebush Village, a 200-bed worker accommodation village in the centre of the Kambalda West townsite. The ownership, management and tendering models for this project are all aimed at capturing benefits for the local community:

- The facility will be Shire owned, and managed by a third-party, increasing Shire revenue which can be reinvested in the community.
- The design of the facilities and management of the village are aimed at integrating accommodated workers into community life.
- The facility is designed to be repurposed should demand fall away, lowering risk for the Shire.
- The tender for the village was broken into four separable parts, providing opportunity for local companies that might not otherwise be able to provide all services required to competitively tender.
- Eight executive style rooms are being included, as a response to demand from mining companies. These can also be repurposed as tourist accommodation if necessary.

Similar models are being explored by the Shire for worker villages in Coolgardie. These examples provide valuable insights that GVROC members can potentially apply across the region.



4. Objectives & Strategies

The following objectives and strategies provide a framework that focuses the subsequent Action Plan on overcoming the barriers and constraints examined in the previous sections of the report.

While it is noted that to meet current and future land and housing needs across the region, coordinated action is required across all levels of government as well as the private and non-government sectors, this report focuses on the sphere of influence of GVROC, its members, and the GEDC.

4.1. Priority Objectives

To ensure clarity of effort and purpose in GVROC's approach to increase access to land and quality housing within its communities the Action Plan focuses on achieving the following Priority Objectives:

1. Increase utilisation of existing residential land and housing within GVROC communities:
 - a. Identify and maintain an understanding of vacant land and housing
 - b. Encourage the upgrading and reoccupation of vacant public and private housing stock
 - c. Activate vacant residential zoned land within townsites
 - d. Encourage appropriate densification (e.g. use of ancillary dwellings and tiny homes)
 - e. Encourage the sale of vacant houses and land
2. Increase investment in new housing supply through:
 - a. State Government direct investment
 - b. Attracting alternative investment through not-for-profit, Indigenous businesses or other ownership arrangements
 - c. Private investment by business and individual households
 - d. Targeted funding proposals for key cohorts and projects
 - e. Direct LGA investment
3. Improve ability to enable development of residential, industrial and commercial land uses:
 - a. Efficient and effective process and approval support with State Government
 - b. Streamline local approval processes, documentation, specifications
 - c. Increase access to expertise and resources to maintain focus and effort
4. Build regional housing market capacity
 - a. Increase capacity for LGA investment in housing
 - b. Create opportunities for housing aggregation
 - c. Enable increased coordination, aggregation and efficiency in housing maintenance services
 - d. Establish a pool of builders who can deliver projects in the region

4.2. Strategies to Effect Change

To drive and effect change in their communities, GVROC should focus its efforts around **six key areas of activity**:

1. Coordination of effort
2. Shared knowledge, capability and resources
3. Collaboration for regional benefits
4. Advocacy and influence
5. Facilitation
6. Direct investment

In undertaking these activities, GVROC should focus developing actions and responses that deliver **outcomes at three levels**:

1. **Systemic Actions** that are designed to address barriers and constraints that are influenced or exist in a broader state-wide context.
2. **Region-wide Solutions** should focus on addressing issues that will deliver solutions to the benefit of all GVROC communities.
3. **Local Responses** are designed to target specific local challenges and opportunities.



5. Action Plan

Strategy 1: Build an evidence base				<i>Enabler</i>
As an enabler for other actions, GVROC should build a quantitative evidence base of the scale of the issues facing its communities, and the consistent themes being faced across multiples LGAs.				
#	Action	Timeframe	Area of activity	Enabling actions
1.1.	Gather and consolidate data on the number of vacant and/or dilapidated houses in GVROC towns, noting their ownership (highlighting those under non-private and Housing Authority ownership). Nominate a custodian to coordinate updating this data at regular intervals.	Short	Coordination of effort	
1.2.	Gather and consolidate data on the number of freehold vacant lots in GVROC towns, noting their ownership (highlighting those under non-private and Housing Authority ownership). Nominate a custodian to coordinate updating this data at regular intervals	Short	Coordination of effort	
1.3.	Gather and consolidate data on the number of subdivided lots that are not development ready, noting ownership and what barriers to development are present (e.g. Native Title; tenure; servicing; mining tenements).	Medium	Coordination of effort	
1.4.	Gather and consolidate data on the number of Shire staff and other key workers being housed in Shire-owned housing assets, and the number of further dwellings (if required) to meet Shire staff housing demand.	Short	Coordination of effort	
1.5.	Document the current pipeline of funded maintenance and construction works for all LGA owned assets across the region. Nominate a custodian to coordinate updating this data at regular intervals.	Short	Coordination of effort	
1.6.	Develop, consolidate and maintain a list of critical housing and residential, commercial and industrial land release priorities.	Short	Coordination of effort	

Strategy 2: Internal coordination, knowledge and resource sharing within GVROC				<i>Local Responses</i>
Create a community of knowledge network and repository within GVROC to increase overall capability and capacity in overcoming barriers to land and housing supply and support improved community outcomes.				
#	Action	Timeframe	Area of activity	Enabling actions
2.1.	Identify and connect a network of relevant operational staff of GVROC members, and create a framework for the sharing and documenting of knowledge on land and housing development matters.	Short	Shared knowledge, capability and resources	

Strategy 2: Internal coordination, knowledge and resource sharing within GVROC Create a community of knowledge network and repository within GVROC to increase overall capability and capacity in overcoming barriers to land and housing supply and support improved community outcomes.				<i>Local Responses</i>
2.2.	Shire of Dundas to share the effluent disposal system approval processes they have successfully developed with the Dept. of Health to interested GVROC members. Remaining gaps can then be identified.	Short	Shared knowledge, capability and resources	
2.3.	Shire of Coolgardie to share case studies of the Kambalda and Coolgardie workers' camps, and the Shire's retention of lots within the mining company backed housing development in Coolgardie. Note the levers and incentives used to facilitate these outcomes, and the anticipated benefits.	Short	Shared knowledge, capability and resources	
2.4.	Shire of Esperance to share their Tiny Homes policy, with an exploration of the planning, financing and approval (e.g. utilities and headworks) challenges that have affected the policy's drafting and implementation.	Short	Shared knowledge, capability and resources	
2.5.	Shire of Dundas to share the progress they have made on implementing the 3D concrete building initiative, noting current barriers, anticipated benefits and how wider collaboration might increase its viability.	Short	Shared knowledge, capability and resources	
2.6.	Identify other consistent shared barriers and constraints to development or land activation, and share knowledge and documentation of known solutions or successful strategies. This may include: - Broader adoption of consistent policies, standards or specifications used by GVROC members to comply with regulatory requirements (e.g. wastewater treatment systems) - Increased knowledge and understanding of regulatory, planning, Native Title, and Aboriginal Heritage approval processes and applicable local management responses. - Development of best practices guides and processes across GVROC members - Sharing of innovative construction methodologies that increase regional housing supply capacity and/or reduce costs.	Medium	Shared knowledge, capability and resources	1.3; 1.6
2.7.	Consider joint funding, job share or pooled resources to centrally undertake coordination and progression of land and development unlocking activities (as per the data gathered in Strategy 1). This could include engagement with DPLH, DMIRS, DevWA, DoC and other agencies to de-constrain land, and the coordination of LGA funded construction and maintenance works as part of an amalgamated program.	Medium	Shared knowledge, capability and resources	1.2; 1.3; 1.6
2.8.	Within GVROC, conduct a workshop with appropriate staff to establish an understanding of the critical issues, gaps, and challenges for GVROC members on land use approvals with land use agencies such as DPLH and DMIRS and development approval agencies such as the Health Department and DWER.	Short	Shared knowledge, capability and resources	1.3; 1.6

Strategy 3: Strategic and collaborative engagement with the Department of Communities Seek a strategic partnership approach to address public housing and GROH issues across the region. Seek a shared understanding of the systemic barriers that limit DoC's housing supply and service provision in the region, and work collaboratively to overcome these barriers.				Region-wide solutions
#	Action	Timeframe	Area of activity	Enabling actions
3.1.	Write to the Minister for Housing seeking the establishment of a strategic partnership approach via the establishment of a joint working group including relevant representation from GVROC, the DoC and GEDC.	Short	Advocacy / influence	1.1; 1.2
3.2.	Establish the full quantum of demand for GROH housing across the region.	Medium	Advocacy / influence	2.1
3.3.	Work towards achieving full utilisation of DoC owned housing and land in the region, working collaboratively to overcome recurring barriers as they become apparent.	Medium	Advocacy / influence	2.1
3.4.	Progress the sale of vacant DoC owned housing and land that is surplus to requirements to LGAs and other regional housing providers.	Medium	Direct investment	2.1
3.5.	Identify and work collaboratively to resolve issues with Aboriginal Town Based Communities, making best use of existing vacant housing.	Medium	Collaboration for regional benefits	2.1
3.6.	Improve subcontractor engagement under the Head Maintenance Contract, coordinating a shared program of works between DoC and GVROC members that provides a more sustainable pipeline of works for subcontractors to engage with.	Medium	Collaboration for regional benefits	1.5; 2.1
3.7.	Advocate for increased capital expenditure in the region to support GROH and social housing, noting that the current GROH lease model and debt financing of housing developments are largely unviable in the region (mostly outside the two major centres although increasingly impacting these too).	Medium	Advocacy / influence	2.2
3.8.	Advocate for flexibility in the GROH lease model, with the incorporation of a risk premium to be embedded in the long-term lease model for the region.	Medium	Advocacy / influence	3.2
Strategy 4: Engagement with the State Government Departments that enable land and housing supply in the region Establish and maintain an agenda of policy and funding priorities that will enable GVROC to advocate for action that will overcome barriers to land and housing supply in the region.				Systemic Action
#	Action	Timeframe	Area of activity	Enabling actions
4.1.	Within GVROC, establish and maintain an agenda of policy priorities that are priorities for overcoming barriers to land and housing supply in the region.	Short	Coordination of effort	1.3; 1.6; 2.8
4.2.	Engage with relevant State Government agencies and Ministers, seeking a strategic partnership approach to overcome barriers to land and housing supply in the region.	Medium	Advocacy / influence	4.1

Strategy 4: Engagement with the State Government Departments that enable land and housing supply in the region				Systemic Action
	Establish and maintain an agenda of policy and funding priorities that will enable GVROC to advocate for action that will overcome barriers to land and housing supply in the region.			
	This includes (but not limited to) DPIRD, DMIRS, DPLH, DevelopmentWA, DoC and DLGSC.			
4.3.	Use this agenda and engagement as a catalyst to engage with key personnel in the relevant agencies to (i) establish key regional contacts within agencies, (ii) increase the level of understanding within agencies of the regional context, (iii) establish consistent processes across the region and (iv) to improve GVROC members capacity to engage.	Medium	Advocacy / influence	4.1; 4.2
4.4.	Advocate for the State Government to review of WATC's lending criteria with respect to regional housing projects.	Long	Advocacy / influence	
Strategy 5: Increase utilisation of existing land and housing stock				Local Responses
Support measures that will maximise the use of the current land and housing available within existing town footprints.				
#	Action	Timeframe	Area of activity	Enabling actions
5.1.	Pursue opportunities to activate privately owned vacant housing and land. Proactively engage with private and NGO owners of these assets to determine appropriate incentives for the refurbishment and/or sale of vacant housing stock or land. This may include rates concessions, partnerships to de-risk investments, grants, communal CCTV projects, etc.	Medium	Facilitation	1.1; 1.2
5.2.	Implement urban planning policies that facilitate increased housing development on existing residential land. This includes encouraging the use of ancillary dwellings, tiny homes, general infill opportunities and increases in the flexibility of zoning and permitted land uses.	Medium	Facilitation	2.4; 2.5
Strategy 6: Develop Regional Housing Scale				Region-wide solutions
Consider options to create greater scale and efficiency in housing management and operations across the region, commencing with an assessment of the following options.				
#	Action	Timeframe	Area of activity	Enabling actions
6.1.	Assess the viability of aggregating the management of current LGA housing portfolios, to identify efficiencies, build regional housing management capacity, streamline maintenance expenditure, and enhance property management	Medium	Collaboration for regional benefits	1.4

Strategy 6: Develop Regional Housing Scale Consider options to create greater scale and efficiency in housing management and operations across the region, commencing with an assessment of the following options.				<i>Region-wide solutions</i>
6.2.	In partnership with an interested CHP, assess the viability of a partnership model where they manage the above portfolio. This could support development and retention in the region of housing management expertise, capacity and leveraging opportunities	Long	Collaboration for regional benefits	6.1
6.3.	Assess the viability of a property trust model for GVROC members to jointly invest in, develop and own new housing supply across the region, as an enabler for GROH, staff housing and other worker housing options.	Long	Collaboration for regional benefits / Direct investment	1.4
6.4.	Consolidate construction and maintenance procurement across GVROC members to enable at-scale procurement to support cost effective construction works.	Medium	Collaboration for regional benefits	1.5; 2.7; 3.6

Strategy 7: Develop Regional Housing Capacity Support the development of regional housing capacity to improve the management and sustainability of existing affordable housing stock and to increase investment in affordable housing within the region.				<i>Region-wide solutions</i>
#	<i>Action</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Area of activity</i>	<i>Enabling actions</i>
7.1.	Engage with local housing providers to identify opportunities to assist them to build regional housing capacity and scale (e.g. divest management of LGA assets or workers camps to a regional CHP to enable growth and critical scale)	Long	Facilitation	1.4; 6.2
7.2.	Advocate for the State Government to facilitate increased capacity of regional housing providers, through the transfer of management of housing throughout the region (e.g. head lease of existing social housing).	Long	Advocacy / influence	

Strategy 8: Support Regional Housing Businesses Collaborate with the State Government, via GEDC's economic development staff, to support activities that develop housing related business opportunities, increasing business sustainability in the construction industry, and delivering improved cost efficiencies.				<i>Region-wide solutions</i>
#	<i>Action</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Area of activity</i>	<i>Enabling actions</i>
8.1.	Host or facilitate contractor engagement and business development sessions for local businesses with DoC, Lakes Maintenance and other housing related service providers, to increase the pool of contractors active and involved in the delivery of housing maintenance services in the region.	Medium	Facilitation	1.5; 3.6
8.2.	Increase GVROC participation/collaboration in aligned State Government procurement (such as through DoC maintenance procurement activities).	Medium	Collaboration for regional benefits	1.5; 2.7; 3.6

Strategy 8: Support Regional Housing Businesses				<i>Region-wide solutions</i>
Collaborate with the State Government, via GEDC's economic development staff, to support activities that develop housing related business opportunities, increasing business sustainability in the construction industry, and delivering improved cost efficiencies.				
8.3.	Implement collective tendering activities across GVROC members, providing local businesses with a pipeline of work that enable forward planning, while providing cost-effective procurement for GVROC members.	Short	Collaboration for regional benefits	1.5; 2.7; 6.4
8.4.	Partner with the resources sector and related service providers to coordinate a pipeline of work, providing greater consistency of work and enabling an increase in the capacity of local businesses to operate at scale.	Medium	Collaboration for regional benefits	1.5; 2.7
Strategy 9: Increase Regional Housing Investment				<i>Region Wide Solutions</i>
Pursue opportunities to encourage increased government and non-government and private sector investment in new or upgraded housing within the region.				
#	Action	Timeframe	Area of activity	Enabling actions
9.1.	Advocating for increased investment in the construction of new and maintenance of existing housing by the State Government across its public, Aboriginal, GROH and WACHS housing programs.	Medium / Long	Advocacy / influence	1.1; 1.2; 3.2
9.2.	Support and facilitate the development of proposals for new or upgraded housing in the region either directly or in partnership with other providers.	Short	Facilitation	
9.3.	Identify project opportunities targeting local housing gaps or high priority cohorts that align with State and Federal Government funding opportunities (such as seniors).	Medium	Facilitation	
9.4.	Work with the State Government to develop increased capacity for an interested CHPs and/or Indigenous corporations across the region with the specific intent of enabling additional non-Government funding to be invested in maintaining the existing and building additional housing in GVROC communities.	Long	Advocacy / influence	6.2; 7.1
9.5.	Advocate for the State and Federal Government's to assist with actions to increase availability of private sector housing finance within the Goldfields-Esperance Region, for example: advocate the Commonwealth (via NHFIC) to support further lending/financial guarantee programs.	Long	Advocacy / influence	
9.6.	Collaborate with the resources sector and local businesses to increase investment in new housing supply for the residential workforce.	Medium	Collaboration for regional benefits	
9.7.	Encourage locally based workers buy and develop new housing within the region.	Medium	Advocacy / influence	
9.8.	GVROC members to selectively invest in the development of new housing to meet staff and community needs.	Long	Direct investment	

Strategy 9: Increase Regional Housing Investment Pursue opportunities to encourage increased government and non-government and private sector investment in new or upgraded housing within the region.			<i>Region Wide Solutions</i>	
9.9.	Identify and advocate for projects where State Government funding support for headworks, infrastructure and civil works would facilitate residential, industrial and commercial land supply	Medium	Advocacy / influence	
9.10.	Advocate to ensure Local Governments are eligible for new policy and funding programs for headworks, infrastructure and civil works or other areas that enable regional housing and land development.	Medium	Advocacy / influence	
9.11.	Advocate for better collation and access to regional data, including real time population movement data, relevant housing and land supply and development data and industry workforce demand data, from all levels of Government and industry.	Medium	Advocacy / influence	

Next steps:

The implementation of this Action Plan should be supported by GVROC and its members taking a strategic approach to address regional land and housing issues, by:

1. Developing a rolling annual program of work that prioritises actions taken from the Action Plan, taking into consideration the immediate needs of the region and GVROC LGAs, and the capacity of the group to progress and sustain such action. Monitor the delivery of this program of work, and update the Action Plan as necessary.
2. Develop a comprehensive and agreed advocacy and policy agenda that focusses on the regional land and housing priorities that are identified in and are reflective of the Action Plan.
3. Develop an advocacy and engagement strategy that identifies the relevant key stakeholders that must be engaged with to progress this agenda and provides a considered approach to these advocacy and engagement activities.
4. Providing funding for shared resources to maintain coordination, continuity of action and focus, and additional expertise in progressing these Actions.
5. Considering joint funding, job share or pooled resources to provide increased access to skills, expertise, and capacity across the GVROC members Councils to assist with outcome delivery.



6. List of Appendices

Appendix A – Local Government Area Profiles



Appendix A - Local Government Area Profiles

This appendix provides profiles of the GVROC local government areas, providing context and data for the body of the report.

The majority of the information in this section was derived from direct interviews with senior staff and stakeholders in each of the LGAs. Other data taken from the census, REIWA, Landgate, PlanWA and quantitative property data provided by LGAs complements this.¹

1.1. Shire of Coolgardie

The Shire of Coolgardie includes the significant towns of Coolgardie and Kambalda.

Coolgardie is the historical birthplace of Western Australia's 1890's goldrush, and gold mining to underpin the town's economy. Being only ~40 mins from Kalgoorlie provides Coolgardie better access to services and trades, although LGA staff report this is also associated with many local workers choosing to commute from Kalgoorlie, reducing the critical mass and sense of community in Coolgardie.

Kambalda is split into two townsites, approximately 4km apart. The town is a service centre for gold and nickel mining, with significant activity in close proximity to the town. There is an airport NW of town.

There are six mining companies operating within the Shire of Coolgardie, providing a significant volume of activity and demand that the Shire has been working to leverage in order to improve housing and service provision for locals. The corresponding scale of the Shire's land and housing activity has resulted in them being able to capture the attention of DPLH, DWERS, DMIRS, etc., and overcome land tenure and zoning issues.

1.1.1. Current Situation

The Shire is already a major housing provider in both Coolgardie and Kambalda, and maintains a pipeline of further development, servicing Shire staff, GROH, and mining company demand. Shire representatives indicated that the Shire's role in housing provision has been driven by necessity, and there has been difficulty in developing and retaining the internal resources and capability to manage this approach. Currently, there is a reliance on consultants to provide project management of developments, and ongoing property and asset management services.

1.1.2. Land & Housing Needs

Shire representatives, census data and REIWA data indicate the following land and housing needs:

- Land
 - o Despite Native Title remaining unresolved, land supply is not currently a significant constraint on housing provision in the Shire due to the existing supply of freehold and land zoned for public purposes.
 - o The LGA is effectively the only land developer in both Coolgardie and Kambalda.

Coolgardie Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Coolgardie
Relative location	558 km ENE of Perth 38 km SW of Kalgoorlie
Population (2021 census)	763
Change since 2016 census	-102

Kambalda Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Coolgardie
Relative location	616 km E of Perth 55 km S of Kalgoorlie
Population (2021 census)	2462
Change since 2016 census	-77

¹ Note regarding census data: Town Profile statistics are taken at the 'Urban Centres and Localities' statistical level, Shire statistics at the 'Local Government Areas' level.



- Government and Service Workers
 - o Shire staff report that current GROH housing is sufficient to house the quantum of government workers currently required, but the quality of this housing is not meeting the expectations of potential tenants.
- Social Housing
 - o Currently, social housing is only available in Coolgardie. The current stock does not meet demand.
 - o The majority of this stock is ageing, in poor condition and misaligned with demographic demand. with demand, with many family-sized properties occupied by singles or couples.
- Seniors Accommodation
 - o The Shire is involved in the provision of aged appropriate housing in both Coolgardie and Kambalda.
 - o Shire modelling indicates that the local ageing population is driving increasing demand for 1 or 2-bedroom, accessible housing, with expected supply inadequate to meet this demand.
- Mining Sector Workers
 - o The rapid growth of mining sector activity in the Shire has resulted in a shortfall of housing for mining sector workers.
 - o Due in part to the extended predicted lifetimes of current mines, mining companies in the Shire of Coolgardie are increasingly seeking local traditional housing options to accommodate their workers, complementing their traditional FIFO / workers camp models. The immediate demand for workers accommodation dictates that both options are necessary.
 - o Development of a number of workers camps and residential subdivisions has been secured, but further demand remains.
- Private Housing
 - o The size and economic activity in these towns has created a semi-functional housing market, with 61 property transactions recorded in period of January – June 2022.
 - o Median rental prices increased by 48% from June 2021 to June 2022. In June 2022 there was a rental vacancy rate of 3.0%.
 - o Noting this steep growth in rental prices, and in the context of continued growth in the region, the medium-term supply of freehold land and housing requires ongoing attention. Ensuring that adequate supply for local key workers and those working in industries servicing the mining sector will be essential to securing a sustainable future for the Shire.

1.1.3. Barriers to Supply

- Finance
 - o WATC's prudential lending policies have created a barrier to the Shire financing GROH and essential worker housing.
 - o The Shire has secured private finance for projects with secure, long-term leases (based on binding commitments from mining companies), including a subdivision in Coolgardie that will include mining company housing and housing for Shire staff. Outside of these low-risk projects, financing remains a significant issue.

1.1.4. Opportunities

- The Shire is closely involved in the provision of workers camps in and around Coolgardie and Kambalda. The design and contracts for these camps have focussed on retaining local benefits. This model is providing benefits to the local community, and similar models are being applied to future worker camps proposed on the outskirts of Coolgardie.



1.2. Shire of Dundas

The Shire of Dundas includes the town of Norseman, which primarily services gold mining activities in the area, complemented by some tourism and agricultural activity. The Kalgoorlie – Esperance railway runs through Norseman. There is a Shire-owned aerodrome SW of the town.

This report also considers the locality of Eucla. Despite being small in population, its location on the Eyre Highway and proximity to the South Australian border, it requires a notable number of government workers (namely, police and border quarantine). There is also the possibility of a hydrogen generation plant being developed near Eucla, which would change the town’s housing and economic dynamic significantly.

1.2.1. Current Situation

The majority of housing and rental activity in the Shire of Dundas is non-market, meaning it is government supported, corporate housing, or rented through private agreements.

The Shire relies heavily on GROH, WACHS and Shire-owned housing to support critical staff, but the remote location of these towns means that tenancy and asset management is difficult and expensive.

The Shire is involved in the provision of housing, and also undertakes its own commercial activity (e.g. timber processing, honey production, and a laundromat) to supplement its revenue.

Unlocking land for development is a key issue in the Shire of Dundas.

1.2.2. Land & Housing Needs

Shire representatives, census data and REIWA data indicate the following land and housing needs:

- Land
 - o Residential land is in short supply in Norseman, with only 7 vacant lots available. All of these are listed at less than \$13 000.
 - o There is an immediate and acute need for industrial and commercial land in Norseman. This is increasing competition for residential land as the town tries to unlock current UCL land for multiple purposes.
- Government and Service Workers
 - o There is significant demand for GROH and WACHS housing. The GROH program is serviced by 12 dwellings, with demand for at least 5 more. WACHS have two dwellings, and reportedly require significantly more.
 - o The Shire owns and manages housing for senior and critical staff, including one for the local general practitioner. They are lacking many critical staff, and currently cannot afford to expand this portfolio in order to house them.
- Social Housing
 - o Shire staff have reported that much of the social housing stock in town is dilapidated and untenanted.
 - o Anecdotally, there is latent demand for social housing in Norseman, but due to the size of existing waitlist and the requirement that applicants travel to Kalgoorlie, locals do not bother to make the application.

Norseman Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Dundas
Relative location	726 km E of Perth 196 km S of Kalgoorlie
Population (2021 census)	555
Change since 2016 census	-19

Eucla Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Dundas
Relative location	1,434 km E of Perth 893 E of Kalgoorlie
Population (2021 census)	37
Change since 2016 census	-16



- Seniors' Accommodation
 - o There is a notable ageing population in Norseman. There are 4 houses currently used as dedicated seniors' accommodation, with the Shire predicting demand for a total of 20 in the coming years.
- Private Housing
 - o There has been recent economic growth and corresponding job opportunities, but very few properties available to rent. As of November 2022, no rentals have been listed on realestate.com.au.

1.2.3. Barriers to Supply

- Native Title has not yet been resolved, creating a barrier to freeholding UCL land.
- Mining tenements around the town of Norseman, and the Shire has reported difficulties liaising with DMIRS in trying to unlock this affected land although is understood to be working through initial issues with DMIRS,
- Shire officers have reported difficulty liaising with DPLH to unlock further UCL land although is also understood to be working through initial issues with DPLH,
- Many private and State-owned properties (both land and housing) are sitting vacant.
- Mains water is supplied via pipeline, and the costs of connection and supply are significant.
- Similarly, electricity connection costs for residential lots are expensive (\$15K as of October 2022).
- There is no mains sewerage in Norseman, meaning septic systems are a requirement. Shire officers have reported that the DWERS approval process for detached single-residential dwellings has been relatively smooth, but larger or denser development requires non-traditional, closed-loop systems. This approval process is taken on a case-by-case basis, an anecdotally proponents have found it difficult to gain consistent guidance on the requirements or process.
- The remote locations of both Norseman and Eucla limit the availability of trades.
- The Shire is pursuing 3D printing of dwellings as an innovative solution to housing provision, but is hitting a barrier with regards to current building legislation.

1.2.4. Opportunities

- The Shire is trialling wastewater treatment ponds to service a 300-person workers camp, with the intent of using the treated water for irrigation. If this trial is successful, it may provide a precedent for similar projects in the future.
- The Shire already owns and manages a housing portfolio and has expressed a willingness to expand this role under the right circumstances.
- The viability of a 3D house printer is being pursued by the Shire, seeking to resolve labour cost and availability, durability, and flexibility of housing design issues. The Council and other regional stakeholders are supportive.



1.3. Shire of Esperance

Esperance sits on the Southern Ocean coastline and is the second largest town in the region. Its major industries are agriculture, tourism and fishing, without the heavy reliance on mining that is typical throughout the remainder of the region.

1.3.1. Current Situation

- Esperance has a functional and activity housing market. The town benefits from its coastal location to offer an attractive retirement and holiday location.
- The population has declined slightly over the last 10 years however, housing market activity and population growth appears to have increased following the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The town's economy is more diverse than other towns in the region, and there are major renewable energy and aquaculture projects planned that will likely stimulate significant investment and population growth in the future.
- The Shire is the major land developer in Esperance.
- Under the current Town Planning Scheme there is a large number of infill redevelopment opportunities able to support the town's growth.
- Esperance has sufficient land available to meet current and known housing needs well into the future. In addition, the State Government also holds a large parcel of land suitable for development.

Esperance Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Esperance
Relative location	720 km ESE of Perth 400 km S of Kalgoorlie
Population (2021 census)	10,218
Change since 2016 census	-203

1.3.2. Land & Housing Needs

Shire representatives, census data and REIWA data indicate the following land and housing needs:

- There is strong demand for rental housing in the town flowing from increased economic activity however, there are little or no rental properties available in the town.
 - o As of June 2022, there was a rental vacancy rate of 0.1%, with median weekly rent increasing by 5% from June 2021 – June 2022. In November 2022, there were no rentals listed on [realestate.com.au](https://www.realestate.com.au) as of Nov 2022, while there were 168 jobs listed on [seek.com](https://www.seek.com).
- The town is currently facing a severe shortage of rental and short-term worker accommodations.
- The Shire is currently progressing actions to increase supply and availability of short stay accommodation options.
- Given the strong tourism economy, Esperance's housing market is severely impacted by AirBnB and other short stay accommodation arrangements which reduce opportunities for long-term rentals. 17% of dwellings were unoccupied on 2021 census day, indicating a relatively high level of holiday home and investment stock.
- There is strong demand from GROH and WACHS for housing, with approximately 25-30 properties likely to be needed over the next 5 years.
- There is consistent demand for affordable housing and seniors' accommodation.

1.3.3. Barriers to Supply

- There are minimal barriers to supply in Esperance.
- It has a ready supply of land and a pool of local builders and subcontractor trades. There is sufficient capacity to deliver current levels of new housing construction demand.
- Some land areas may need significant infrastructure, headworks and civil works to subdivide in the longer term.
- More recently with higher development costs and comparative lower returns from investment than leveraged in other regions, Esperance's investment profile is not attractive.



- Funding issues for government housing programs represent a barrier to servicing the most vulnerable in the community.
- However, should demand spike significantly resulting from major investments in renewable energy proceed, the capacity of local industry to respond will be challenged and the community could experience further rental and housing shortages with price escalations.



1.4. Shire of Kalgoorlie-Boulder

Kalgoorlie is a city of nearly thirty thousand people that supports both local economic activity, and acts as a major service centre for the wider region. It represents the largest residential housing market in the GVROC region.

1.4.1. Current Situation

The City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder (the City) has a relatively large housing market, and which has traditionally experienced boom-bust property cycles consistent with similar mining centres.

Kalgoorlie-Boulder Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Kalgoorlie-Boulder
Relative location	595 km E of Perth
Population (2021 census)	29,068
Change since 2016 census	-807

As a major population centre, the City is home to the majority of critical government and social services that support the region. The City is well serviced with community infrastructure and facilities and the housing market is more affordable than other major centres around Western Australia.

However, recent trends suggest there are underlying challenges that will be difficult to address. The rental vacancy rate was 0.3% in June 2022, with median rent increasing 26% over the year to June 2022. In November 2022, there were 711 jobs listed on [seek.com](https://www.seek.com.au), but just 54 rental properties listed on [realestate.com.au](https://www.realestate.com.au). Despite strong employment conditions in recent years, there has been limited private investment in land and housing development.

Kalgoorlie-Boulder is comparatively well serviced with a range of housing options including:

- A large viable rental and home ownership market;
- Government owned public housing and GROH housing;
- Aged care and independent living;
- A number of transitional housing and Aboriginal short stay accommodation facilities; and
- Temporary worker accommodation facilities.

With current high levels of mining construction activity and infrastructure projects, the City is dealing with an influx of workers. There is limited availability of short-term accommodation options with much of the City's hotel accommodation currently being used to house workers limiting access for tourists and visitors. This is also placing pressure on the existing rental housing market.

The City is implementing policies to promote the retention of residential workforces and promote homeownership among the workforce.

1.4.2. Land & Housing Needs

- Land
 - There is current land availability within Kalgoorlie-Boulder however, anticipated population growth is likely to place pressure on existing supply
 - Current high development costs are placing significant barriers to new residential land supply thereby deferring investment and constraining future land availability
 - DevelopmentWA is the major land developer, undertaking development within the Karkurla Estate.
 - Smaller scale residential developments are also underway with lots currently available for purchase.
- Government and Service Workers
 - There is significant demand for GROH and WACHS housing in Kalgoorlie. Both GROH and WACHS have indicated a desire to consider proposals for long term leasing.



- Social Housing
 - o Kalgoorlie has social housing managed by DoC, Stellar Living and Goldfields Indigenous Housing Organisation (GIHO), with DoC being the majority provider.
 - o There has been limited investment in social housing in Kalgoorlie in recent years. The social housing portfolio is ageing, and the condition of some assets is deteriorating. There remains strong demand for social housing however, total waiting list numbers for Kalgoorlie-Boulder are lower than other major regional centres.
 - o Development WA has identified a site in Kalgoorlie for social or affordable housing as part of the Housing Diversity pipeline program. An EOI process may be opened when land remediation processes are complete at the site.
- Private Housing
 - o A number of resource companies are prioritising residential workforces in the City increasing demand.
 - o At present, there is a perceived preference for the workers to pursue rental housing in the first instance.

1.4.3. Barriers to Supply

- A significant barrier to supply in Kalgoorlie is the high cost of civil works and infrastructure costs for the development of residential land.
- At present due to high construction costs, it is largely uneconomic to develop land for sale in the City as the cost to develop is often higher than can be achieved at sale. Accordingly, there is limited residential development occurring in Kalgoorlie.
- With DevelopmentWA the main developer in the City, the high costs and its requirement to achieve project hurdle rates constrains the ability of DevelopmentWA to proceed with development activity. In response to this challenge, the State Government provided a contribution \$6 million to support the development of lots in the Karkurla development.
- In addition to high land costs, the cost of dwelling construction in Kalgoorlie is significantly higher than the metropolitan area.

1.4.4. Opportunities

- The City has a viable housing market, albeit with challenges.
- A strong pipeline of planned regional investment and an emerging focus on the residential workforces as mining projects move into operational phase suggests a level of sustainability in the future housing market.
- Increasing rental rates and sustained demand has the potential to offer confidence to businesses and investors to invest in new housing within the City.
- The City is currently working on a number of initiatives to bring new residential land to market to help alleviate the current residential property shortage. These initiatives include:
 - o the proposed development of land in the Kalgoorlie CBD (for high-density and mixed use development)
 - o the proposed sale of land in Broadwood for the development of residential estates; and the proposed development of a lifestyle village for temporary worker accommodation to alleviate pressure on hotels and caravan parks; and
 - o the City's support of the "More than Mining" campaign for FBT reform, which calls for stamp duty relief on unit properties and owner/occupier properties.



1.5. Shire of Laverton

The only major settlement in the Shire is Laverton, a small town that primarily services the gold and nickel mining industries and the pastoral sector. It is the western end of the Outback Way, a road route across Central Australia to Queensland, drives tourism activity through the town. Laverton is serviced by a Shire-owned airport directly NE of town, which generates revenue servicing the movement of FIFO workers. There is a workers' camp in town (Boomers), which accommodates transient mining workers. There is a new hospital earmarked for development and airport terminal expansion.

Laverton Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Laverton
Relative location	957 km ENE of Perth 252 km NNE of Kalgoorlie
Population (2021 census)	407
Change since 2016 census	+67

1.5.1. Current Situation

Laverton is not currently experiencing an overall shortage in the number of residential dwellings in the town. The pressing issue is that a significant proportion of the housing is in poor condition, with many not fit for human habitation. Local representatives report that many houses, both private and publicly owned, are vacant and dilapidated. This is limiting the attractiveness of the town to workers and investors alike. This also makes it difficult for the Shire and other critical service providers and businesses to find and retain staff. Laverton has been increasingly reliant on service and trades provision out of Kalgoorlie.

1.5.2. Land & Housing Needs

Shire representatives, census data and REIWA data indicate the following land and housing needs.

- Land
 - o There is no shortage of residential land within the town's existing footprint, and much of the existing land is serviced (including mains sewerage).
 - o Serviced lots can be acquired for \$10,000.
- Government and Service Workers
 - o The Shire currently owns, maintains and manages 22 dwellings to house Shire staff and others deemed essential to the town, which is ample for current demand.
 - o There is significant demand for housing to other critical workers, including GROH workers (police, teachers), medical staff, and other essential staff (including St John's Ambulance, airport management workers), which are not being adequately serviced through GROH, WACHS and other supported housing programs. These types of workers require appropriate housing of attractive quality.
- Social Housing
 - o There is significant demand for social housing, but of the current stock there are more than 10 vacant and boarded up DoC properties in the town, with little capital available to improve or expand this portfolio.
- Aboriginal Short-Stay Accommodation
 - o Periodic influxes of Aboriginal people travelling to and through Laverton puts significant stress on the town, often resulting in antisocial behaviour and vandalism. While there is an Aboriginal Lands Trust Reserve ~400m west of the townsite, this is quickly overcrowded, and there is a lack of adequate appropriate accommodation to support movements of transitional residents.
- Mining Sector Workers
 - o Housing for mining sector employees is currently being met by the Boomers Camp, which is run by a private third-party and available for all mining companies to utilise. This is not meeting the predicted near-future demand. Focus Minerals and Lynas Rare Earths are developing further camps.
- Private Dwellings
 - o Non-government workers are unable to find rental properties of a desirable quality. The private stock that does exist in the town is in poor condition.



1.5.3. Barriers to Supply

- Finalisation of Native Title over the town of Laverton is imminent, which will reduce tenure barriers to releasing supply.
- There is limited private investment in the town, due to a myriad of factors.
 - o There is no growth in the town, both in terms of population and property values.
 - o There is significant risk of houses in town being vandalised.
 - o Anecdotal evidence suggests that the residents that do live and work in town are typically there for short-to-medium term employment opportunities, and are unwilling to invest in property of their own.
- Housing in Laverton requires significant expenditure on security measures to reduce vandalism and break-ins.

1.5.4. Opportunities

- Burnna Yurral Aboriginal Corporation (BYAC) own 14 houses in Laverton, which are managed by DoC as social housing. 4 are untenanted and require renovation. They also own a hostel at 22 Craiggie St, which is boarded up and empty. BYAC are interested in divesting this stock from DoC, and are willing to renovate and manage them should long-term leases be available to underpin this investment.



1.6. Shire of Leonora

The Shire of Leonora includes the towns of Leonora and Leinster. Leonora is a small town on the Goldfields Highway. It services the mining and pastoral sectors, and there is an airport immediately to the west of the town that primarily services FIFO mining workers. The town is serviced by a railway, with an intermodal terminal earmarked for a site to the south of the Gwalia pit, which will realign the existing rail line.

Leinster is a BHP company town. This management structure means most of the issues covered in this report are not relevant, and therefore it is not considered here.

Leonora Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Leonora
Relative location	833 km NE of Perth 237 km N of Kalgoorlie
Population (2021 census)	567
Change since 2016 census	+11

1.6.1. Current Situation

Leonora has latent and ongoing demand for housing, especially to service government and service workers. Furthermore, there is very limited land to accommodate industrial and commercial expansion, which in turns puts further pressure on residential development due to the overall lack of available land.

While there is movement in the Leonora market, with 48 sales of land or houses recorded in the last 5 years, the median value of these sales was under \$100K, demonstrating that housing investment is largely unviable.

There is a workers camp in town that services the mining industry. Outside of this, only 3 houses in the town boundaries are used to house mining workers.

1.6.2. Land & Housing Needs

Shire representatives, census data and REIWA data indicate the following land and housing needs:

- Land
 - o The release of a pipeline of appropriate land is required in Leonora, in order to service residential, commercial and industrial development growth.
 - o There are 14 vacant lots owned by the DoC in Leonora.
- Government and Service Workers
 - o There is registered and ongoing housing demand from the DoE, WA Police, WACHS, DoC, DMIRS and the Shire for workers housing. The lack of quantity and quality of GROH (and similar government supported housing) is creating an enduring issue in attracting essential workers to the town.
 - o The Shire manages a housing portfolio of 12 dwellings that accommodates approximately half of their current staff, with the remaining in private rentals. The Shire is seeking to develop 3 more houses in the immediate future.
- Social Housing
 - o Shire representative report that much of the local social housing stock is aging and requires significant maintenance.
 - o There is unmet demand for social housing.
 - o There are 6 vacant and boarded up houses that are owned by the DoC. The Shire has been informed that one of these is being demolished. Plans for the remainder are unclear.
- Aboriginal Short-Stay Accommodation
 - o Part of the pressure on social housing in Leonora is from Aboriginal people coming into town from remote communities, resulting in over-crowding and a lack of 'ownership' that often results in property damage and anti-social behaviour.
 - o There is need for short-stay housing to accommodate these movements, in order to relieve some of this pressure.



- Tourism
 - o The movement of caravans creates consistent demand for the caravan park and motel. Shire staff report that this often limits the temporary housing options for workers and contractors, adding further difficulty in securing trades to the town.
- Land Release
 - o There is a limited amount of development-ready land remaining within the town's existing footprint. To enable long-term housing provision, the unlocking of more land is required.

1.6.3. Barriers to Supply

- Land release is heavily constrained around the town. There are a number of active open cut mines in close proximity. Coupled with the airport, and the Gwalia ghost town to the south, land release and development is effectively restricted to the east side of the town.
- Shire staff have indicated that DMIRS have historically denied new development outside the existing town footprint, due to existing mining tenements and mineralised land.
- Noting these factors, the Shire is investigating land release to the east, to Main Reef Road. This land is Reserve (not UCL).
- Similar to other Shires, staff have reported that land de-constraining processes involving DPLH and DMIRS have lacked clarity of process, timing and approval certainty.

1.6.4. Opportunities

- Much of the town is seweraged, which allows duplex development.
- Native Title has been determined over Leonora, in favour of the Darlot people, with the Registered Body Corporate being the Watarra Aboriginal Corporation. The Aboriginal Lands Trust is seeking to divest at least three pieces of land to Watarra. The opportunity exists for the Shire to partner with Watarra to invest in housing for their community.
 - o An immediate opportunity exists on the land between Cohen St and Avard St, in the southern section of town. This land is currently owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust, but is likely to be divested.
- There are a number of vacant and dilapidated social housing properties in town. If DoC were to divest these assets to the Shire (or other interested housing provider), they could be renovated and managed.



1.7. Shire of Menzies

Menzies is a small, historical, gold-rush town on the Goldfields Highway and Perth-Kalgoorlie Railway. Historically, the town's population has fluctuated based on the price of gold and the related opening or closing of local mines. The Shire also includes the remote Aboriginal community of Tjuntjuntjara.

1.7.1. Current Situation

There is a current shortage of housing in Menzies, such that the Shire is utilising the youth centre and Shire-owned caravan park as temporary accommodation.

Menzies Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Menzies
Relative location	728 km ENE of Perth 133 km NNW of Kalgoorlie
Population (2021 census)	103
Change since 2016 census	-5

There is a limited housing market in Menzies, with 16 sales of land or housing recorded in the last 5 years. Housing sales are consistently below \$100K, and land less than \$10K.

1.7.2. Land & Housing Needs

Shire representatives, census data and REIWA data indicate the following land and housing needs:

- Land
 - o Current land supply is ample, although some development issues remain and are explored below.
- Government and Service Workers
 - o The Shire accommodates 12 staff in Shire owned dwellings, with another two dwellings currently being constructed. This will be adequate for the Shire's current staffing housing needs.
 - o The remoteness and size of Menzies leaves it reliant on contractors to travel to and stay in town. These contractors require suitable accommodation, which is currently in limited supply.
- Social Housing
 - o There is no social housing in Menzies.
 - o The Menzies Aboriginal Corp own some housing, including a row-of-5 village southwest of town. There is ongoing demand for more Aboriginal housing.
- Mining Industry
 - o With the potential development of a new mine approximately 40kms from the town in the works, the Shire has expressed a desire to develop a bank of land ready for development to accommodate any sudden increase in demand.
- Tourism
 - o The Shire-owned caravan park has consistent demand, but is often utilised to provide short-term accommodation for contractors, staff and others, limiting available supply.

1.7.3. Barriers to Supply

- The town of Menzies is not sewered, and other utilities are not comprehensively provided, especially to the east of the railway line. The provision of more housing requires utilities to be connected, which is a slow and costly process.
- Of particular issue is effluent disposal. Lot sizes limit the applicability of traditional septic systems. The Shire is exploring the use of aerobic treatment systems (ATU), but have reported issues in securing consistent approvals from the Dept of Health.
- Much of the available land in Menzies is UCL. The process to convert this land to freehold takes time and resources, which are limited in such a small Shire.
- The remote location of Menzies means housing provision is expensive.



- The lack of housing for Shire staff in itself is creating a barrier to the provision of further land and housing. Without key staff to manage projects, liaise with State Government agencies, and generally progress the unlocking of land and provision of housing, the Shire's capacity in this area will continue to be limited.
- The same is true of contractors. Without appropriate accommodation, there is limited capacity for building and maintenance work to be undertaken in the town.
- Menzies has a number of heritage-listed buildings. The Shire has a pipeline of renovation/restoration work scheduled on these buildings, currently representing 2+ years of work. Not all of this work is related to the provision of housing, but it contributes to the demand for contractors and Shire staff resources. The high cost of these works also reduces the Shire's financial capacity.
- All sales of land and housing in the last 5 years were below \$100K in value, indicating that private investment is generally unviable.

1.7.4. Opportunities

- The Shire currently provides rental housing for two teachers. There is the potential to move this to GROH, which could free up Shire resources.
-



1.8. Shire of Wiluna

Wiluna is small town situation on the Goldfields Highway. It is a service centre for the local gold mine, broader mining activities (mostly on a FIFO basis), pastoral industry and the local Martu people. The majority of employment in the town is generated by government services and the provision of basic services.

1.8.1. Current Situation

Wiluna's housing market is very limited, with only 6 sales of land or housing recorded in the last 5 years. The town's current housing supply is insufficient and generally of poor quality and cannot service the needs of the town. The lack of a functional housing market means Wiluna is almost solely reliant on government investment for its housing provision and maintenance.

Wiluna Town Profile	
LGA	Shire of Wiluna
Relative location	947 km NE of Perth
Population (2021 census)	240
Change since 2016 census	+4

1.8.2. Land & Housing Needs

Shire representatives, census data and REIWA data indicate the following land and housing needs:

- Land
 - o There is an adequate supply of serviced lots in Wiluna. Further land release/zoning is not required in the foreseeable future, although other barriers to land release exist and are detailed below.
- Government and Service Workers
 - o There is latent demand for housing to service GROH, Shire employees, and Ngangganawili AHS workers. The Shire is currently unable to maintain a full complement of staff due to housing shortages.
- Temporary accommodation
 - o There is a shortage of quality housing to provide for temporary accommodation of contractors, State Government service workers, consultants and relief agency staff.
- Social Housing
 - o *Note: Wiluna is serviced by the DoC Midwest office, not the Goldfields office.*
 - o The social housing in Wiluna is fully occupied, with latent demand from both local Aboriginal people, and for older locals seeking to age-in-place.
 - o A DoC officer servicing Wiluna is split between Meekatharra and Wiluna.
 - o The Shire believes that there is a need for more culturally appropriate social housing, and a cluster of social housing that would allow ageing locals to be grouped together to increase their sense of community and safety.

1.8.3. Barriers to Supply

- New houses hold very limited value compared to their construction cost and are consistently sold at a loss. As a result, the Shire is effectively the only developer in town.
- Housing for AHS workers is not supported by the State Government. The Shire has a history of working collaboratively with the AHS on this issue and are currently considering selling some old stock which the AHS might be in a position to purchase, but there is no sustainable solution in place for the maintenance or provision of housing for AHS workers.
- Only part of the town is sewerred, limiting development potential and increasing uncertainty and cost in areas that are not sewerred.
- There is demand for more 2x2s rather than family style homes, but denser development is hindered on lots that are not connected to main sewerage.
- Overall, land supply isn't an issue, although the process of converting UCL to freehold ties up Shire resources.





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