Introduction

The Wagin/Lake Grace Regional and Remote Area Economic Development Training Program (RRATP) was successfully delivered over the weekend of the 24th to the 26th of February 2012 and hosted by Wagin Shire, Western Australia.

The forum was facilitated by 2 members of Economic Development Australia (EDA) – WA (William Barry - Team Leader and Hervé Calmy) and the National Coordinator for the program Adam Saddler.

The RRATP covered three sessions:

Session one

This session involved the introduction of facilitators and attendees. The EDA facilitators presented case studies
- Flinders Island and the challenges in building engagement and trust while creating a significant tourism initiative
- Developing local produce and crafts markets for Town Centre rejuvenation
- Integrating town planning and elements of economic development on Christmas Island

Session two

Morning - The economic development toolbox,
Midday - Tour of Wagin, with the Shire President providing a running commentary
Afternoon - Local economic development issues and concepts - Part 1

Session three

Local economic development issues and concepts - Part 2
Where to now and Summary

The Wagin RRATP was delivered in an informal, interactive but focused approach and it allowed issues to be explored and ideas to be tabled. Carolyn Webster is to be commended for her efforts. She was the principal local on the ground contact and did a fantastic job in organising the attendees, venues, social functions and local logistics.
Exec Summary

Wagin has a diverse economy. Where it was once dominated by primary production it is now expanding to champion food production, linking to its rail hub and network, seeking investors on its commercial capacity in the food and fiber hub and its regional position for tourism and ancillary services for mining.

While economic development has been approached in an ad hoc manner, it was agreed that this could be addressed through a proactive strategic approach, with the Wagin Council representatives agreeing to formalise an economic development committee of Council in the near future. The restoring of the local Chamber of Commerce and the merits of integration or alignment to the very active Agricultural Society was also considered worth exploring.

While the attraction of new businesses is seen as a possibility it poses greater challenges then retaining and expanding existing ones. The significant attributes of the Shire and region offer many options which can be pursued to secure the economic future for the town. While all of these want to be capitalised on or at least explored, it was agreed to take a step by step approach. All the ideas, challenges and opportunities raised over the weekend have been placed in a table in this report. The elements of the ED Tool Box are incorporated into the column headings: Policies, Projects, Consultation, Research and Engagement. Where the discussion covered them these columns have been completed and an indicative priority is attached to them.

Initially Wagin should focus on those that the Town has both the capacity and distinct advantage to manage at this point in time. In particular, the food and fibre hub which has both of these elements should be progressed. Additionally, enquiries received in the past 12 to 18 months demonstrate a potential demand for industrial land, a demand driven from Wagin’s proximity to Perth, the rail network and competitive price. Interest has also been shown for retirees to relocate from Perth. A regional approach to economic development was discussed and although currently presenting challenges, it was considered that a regional approach would reap rewards - tourism was an example of this.

THE WAGIN RRATP

Participants included 4 representatives of the Shire of Lake Grace and 12 representatives from the Shire of Wagin.

- Len Calneggia: CEO Wagin Shire
- Phil Blight: Wagin Shire President and local farmer
- Greg Ball: Wagin Deputy Shire President and local farmer
- Joe Shaw: Councillor and local business person
- Dale Lloyd: Councillor and local business person
- Ron Walker: Councillor and farmer
- Carolyn Webster Manager Community and Regulatory Services Shire of Wagin,
- Ron Magerl: Hotelier and Accountant
- Brenton Aughey: President Rotary, local business person
- Ian Pederick: retired farmer
- Peter Foley: Landmark, local farmer and past President Rotary
• Shaun Fletcher: CEO Lake Grace Shire
• Len Armstrong: Lake Grace Shire President
• Sam Appleton: Corporate Services Manager  Lake Grace Shire
• Deb Lloyd: Community Services Lake Grace Shire
**OPPORTUNITIES**
The following opportunities were raised over the weekend. Some were discussed at length while others were just mentioned. They are placed in the table below to commence the creation of the Economic Development Strategy and integration of the ED tool box process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies/Programs</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Consultation/Research</th>
<th>Priority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategy Development</strong></td>
<td>Establishment of an Economic Development Committee of Council</td>
<td>Wagin Shire</td>
<td>Very High</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Potential establishment of an entity similar to a Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Wagin Shire</td>
<td>Very High</td>
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<td><strong>Food Fibre Hub</strong></td>
<td>Complete the current Wagin fibre hub project and then explore value add operations off the back of that, including the creation of an industrial precinct utilising excess energy production.</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture, Murdoch University</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Value add options would relate to development of fish products from fish farm and other complementary industries that could utilise/maximise infrastructure, such as distilleries or breweries.</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture, Murdoch University</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Potential to become an energy provider (solar at Lake Grace and oat husk combustion at Wagin) but changes to current State legislation would have to be lobbied for</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Explore partnership opportunities with Universities/TAFE to undertake specific research associated with potential projects requiring further analysis/studies</td>
<td>Curtin, Murdoch, UWA</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td><strong>Regionalism &amp; Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Maintain/further tourism initiatives at Lake Grace who has already successful “small runs on the board” to capitalize on local competitive advantages such as diverse choice of local products, cross road location, most diverse flora and fauna and potential for grey nomads.</td>
<td>Shire of Lake Grace</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Long paddock touring route concept from Wagin to Lake Grace (Arthur River or William to Lake King)</td>
<td>Shire of Lake Grace, Curtin University</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Proactive regional approach through VROC</td>
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<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>Responsible Party</td>
<td>Priority</td>
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<td>Invite Inspirational people/experts/knowledgeable people to give talks of regional value and importance</td>
<td>Rural Woman of the Year National Year of the Farmer Dept of Agriculture</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Mining</td>
<td>The proposed mines to be open in the region and their flow on effects - How to value add on the opening up of these operations in particular for the small service industries and social support such as housing and maximise the benefits within the region</td>
<td>Department of Commerce to gain an understanding of their needs and contacts in mining companies</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Strategic location</td>
<td>Ensure that the development of the proposed WATCO/QLD Rail workshop is encouraged/supported</td>
<td>WATCO &amp; CBH</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>The State of WA is poised to experience a significant increase in population in the coming decades, Perth will not absorb that growth alone and Wagin, only 200km away, may have an effective role to play in it.</td>
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<td>Low</td>
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<td>Tourism</td>
<td>To be considered in terms of supporting the qualitative hospitality environment beneficial to locals as well as visitors. Engage a regional tourism officer – maybe on contract for a period say two years to evaluate the position’s worth: jointly funded by local governments in the region</td>
<td>Curtin University</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Heritage/farming interpretation; living museum</td>
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<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Woolarama and Events</td>
<td>Develop shoulder events</td>
<td>Wagin Agricultural Society</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Develop events during the year to utilise the existing infrastructure</td>
<td>Wagin Agricultural Society</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Branding of local products</td>
<td>Wagin Agricultural Society</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Capacity Audit</td>
<td>Undertake a skills audit or capacity assessment of the community including senior members (who could contribute in passing-on valuable knowledge and experience)</td>
<td>UWA – Geography Dept</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Establishment of a detailed list of local competitive advantages (Water, Power, Land etc...)</td>
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HOW DO YOU KEEP IT GOING?

The drivers to keep economic development going were discussed throughout the sessions, and included:

- Use the planning strategy to “land” your initiatives well in advance;
- Look for early small results, walk before you run and step up the pressure incrementally;
- Be prepared for the long run, establish partnerships and maintain them;
- Create/keep your vision and share it extensively, never stop telling the story;
- Explore opportunities around catalytic activities such as Woolarama, look out for synergies
- Create events and support existing regional strategies
- Maintain an up to date business database and associated capabilities
- Don’t assume that support for the idea or the project is always there, be flexible
- Stay creative and innovative and explore the science behind the projects (fibre hub)
- Involve youth and assist with training if need be
- Use the state departments as much as possible.
  - The Department of Ag see themselves as an Economic Agency. They consider food and trade development as core to their existence.
  - Department of Commerce – Industry and Innovation Section. They build up strong links with mining companies and are under significant pressure from the minister to increase the local benefit from mines. (local Industry participation)

WHERE TO NOW

In progressing economic development in the region, several angles where discussed but overall it was clearly acknowledged that it have to come from within the region (whatever that may be) and there will be a need to adopt a strategic proactive approach to economic development.

The following points were identified as critical to this approach:

1. Surround yourself with positive likeminded people and don’t let negativity ruin the “vibe”.
2. Be proactive and not reactive.
3. Link/engage with other people, towns, regions, across the country that have a similar mind set, culture, synergies - build networks (Rotary, sister cities, Main Street Australia, EDA etc...)
4. Funding – raise funds locally verses grants however, there can be a mix and all options should be explore not just reliance on Federal and State governments, money from outside is hard to get, money from within is easier.
6. Implement an organizational economic development culture within Council that includes all Council’s departments, has a commercial approach re customer service, which is responsive to rate payers/customers and empowers staff to provide services at a high level, “everybody must be in it” with the message coming from the top. Also manage the residents so they do not have impossible expectations.

7. The future will be about leadership in economic development, ensuring that economic development is included in strategy vision/plan, integrated into the general role of the Council.

Other considerations to develop an economic development approach for the region were as follows:

- Utilise the State Departments of Agriculture, Commerce and Tourism which are great sources of information;
- Invite State government representatives to address the region on particular issues, which has the potential to act as a catalyst for regional collaboration and therefore a regional approach through the establishment of regional forums, meetings and networking functions;
- The establishment of an economic development committee is considered as a very positive step;
- Create an economic development strategy and formally adopt it in inserting it into the local planning strategy; and
- Look to the future and the possibilities, whilst being aware of the past.

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Inspirational people
Sue Middleton
Rural Woman of the year 2010.
Contact through Kay Bodman (friends)
Her key subject: Regional Development Capacity Building