

# Regional Repopulation Plan



*For the regional WA towns of Buntine, Dalwallinu,  
Kalannie, Pithara and Wubin and surrounding areas*

## About This Document

The Regional Repopulation Plan was developed on behalf of the Dalwallinu community who saw a direct need for attraction & retention of migrants into the local area.

## Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements must be given to the residents of Buntine and Wubin who originally created the concept for this project, also to the Regional Repopulation Advisory Committee members and the Perth Working Group members.

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## **Information Sources**

A variety of information sources have been utilised as part of the formation of this plan, these include, but are not limited to, information from;

- Shire of Dalwallinu
- Department of Immigrations & Citizenship
- Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre
- State & Federal Government Ministers and departments

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## Executive Summary

An opportunity exists to utilise under used resources in the rural towns within the Shire of Dalwallinu. There is an opportunity to add diversity to a traditional farming community as well as prepare the area for impending Mid West mineral resource growth and its future labour requirements. This is an opportunity for new migrants to relocate within the shire to assist with this growth in population and economic base for a sustainable future.

The Dalwallinu community have conducted research and identified the demand for migrants in the area. The Regional Repopulation Project aims to be a 'pilot' project which would be transferrable to similar Wheatbelt Shires. It is expected that the formation of a best practice model would take approximately two (2) years and on its completion it would be rolled out into the greater Wheatbelt / Mid West areas.

The Regional Repopulation Project aims to attract and retain migrant families to the Dalwallinu area and address a number of key areas including accommodation, education, and health to ensure the initiative is successful. It is expected that humanitarian migrants will relocate to the Shire. It is a project that was developed by key community members who showed initiative to action a number of ideas to assist and support the development of the local community and economy. This plan also identifies a number of risks and opportunities involved in this project.

The Repopulation Plan is a working document which aims to address key areas of the migrant project. As a working document, the Regional Repopulation Plan is expected to evolve and be updated as the project develops.



Dalwallinu Discovery Centre

## 1. Background

### 1.1 Introduction to the Shire

The Shire of Dalwallinu, with the town of Dalwallinu as its administrative centre, lies 254 kilometres north east of Perth on the Great Northern Highway.

Other townships in the Shire are Pithara located 12kms south of Dalwallinu, Kalannie located 53kms north east of Dalwallinu, Wubin located 21kms north of Dalwallinu and Buntine located 38kms north of Dalwallinu. Dalwallinu is an agricultural, mining and tourist service centre on a National Highway. It is on the southern access boundary to the Mid West mining projects.

Please see the Shires website for further information; [www.dalwallinu.wa.gov.au](http://www.dalwallinu.wa.gov.au)

### 1.2 Project Background

Over the past decades in rural Australia, there has been a consolidation of the traditional family farms into larger holdings. This has led to a population decline as farmers have moved to larger machinery with less units of labour required for farming the land. With this decline there has been a flow-on effect to the schools and recreational facilities in the smaller towns, leading to an under utilisation of these facilities or them closing down.

Within the shire, the smaller towns have diminished substantially. For instance in the Buntine area farm holdings are approximately doubling in size every ten years and the on-farm population is reducing because of this. The town site of Dalwallinu has however grown as alternative businesses, less reliant on agriculture, have started up, despite the total population reducing. In spite of this decline the Dalwallinu Shire is progressive and innovative and has fared well compared to other local municipalities. Both Dalwallinu and Kalannie have industries that have already started and prospered. These include engineering, fabrication (machinery, concrete and housing), mechanical services and transport services.

The shire is also on the edge of an area that is being developed for mining resources. These locations are less than an hour's travel from the towns of Buntine, Dalwallinu, Kalannie and Wubin. For instance, Wubin is the closest town to the Mt Gibson mine which is located approximately 80kms north of the town site along the Great Northern Highway. An opportunity exists for further business development, as these mines would be supportive of local businesses and contractors. Recent surveys have also identified mineral resources that exist within the shire boundaries. Magnetic Resources has completed first pass rock chip sampling of target areas within the Wubin & Dalwallinu projects (Magnetic Resources, 2010).

This project originated from local community member Stuart McAlpine becoming disheartened with the current decline in population within his home town of Buntine. This decline was leading to the under utilisation of the town's facilities. With an estimated replacement value of six million dollars for local buildings and infrastructure coupled with the new investment made by the Federal Government at the local primary school, community members realised the need to repopulate Buntine to protect and maintain this valuable infrastructure by bringing people back into the area.

Identifying a number of skills shortages within the region, Stuart recognised a gap between a large number of workers in the metropolitan area and the current shortages in the Northern Wheatbelt. After making contact with the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre and the Office of Multicultural Interests, Stuart presented a concept plan to the Shire of Dalwallinu at the November 2010 Full Council meeting. Council saw the validity and passion imbedded in Stuart's concept and provided support in the way of administration and in February 2011 the Regional Repopulation Advisory Committee was formed.

Between November 2010 and February 2011, a comprehensive survey of local businesses was conducted by the Shire to gain tangible evidence of the current issues businesses are facing. Although a number of small opportunities arose, there were two obvious areas which required more attention; the need to have access to more labour immediately; and the need for more local, affordable housing. In fact, over 50% of businesses located within the Shire indicated that they did not have adequate labour resources and were currently trying to access more labour. Of the survey respondents approximately 57% stated that they expected to increase their number of employees over the next 2 to 3 years.

The need for more local, affordable housing was also an area of opportunity within the Shire, with approximately 57% businesses stating this as a major constraint to attracting a labour force.

This project was developed in response to the opportunities identified within the business survey and has the ability to address these constraints for the local businesses. This report has been developed as a guide for the project, assessing avenues for labour attraction and retention. It is designed to be a working document that will evolve with the project and allow future development of a 'Repopulation Model' to occur.

### **1.3 Migrants / Migration**

Between 12,000 and 14,000 refugees and humanitarian entrants are settled in Australia each year, with around 1,100 choosing to stay in WA. In the last few years the majority have come from countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia (one third from each since 2007) - notably Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma and Bhutan (DIAC, 2010a). In 2009, 2,013 refugees were settled in Western Australia with the majority coming from Burma, Afghanistan and Iraq (DIAC 2010b).

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship oversees the settlement of humanitarian entrants through the Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (HSS). The strategy provides intensive settlement support for approximately six months (or longer for those more vulnerable) to assist refugees to become self sufficient as soon as possible. A case management approach is used to identify and address the needs of individuals by focussing on access to mainstream services. HSS services include:



- Case Coordination, Information and Referrals
- On Arrival Reception and Assistance
- Accommodation Services and Household Goods assistance

Humanitarian entrants in Metropolitan areas are entitled to English language classes (through AMEP), Complex Case Support Services, and after the initial 6 months the Settlement Grants Program provides a range of targeted support services and programs.

Not all humanitarian entrants have high and complex needs. Many bring with them a strong work ethic and sense of community, and demonstrate an eagerness to find meaningful employment and to improve not only their own lives and those of their children, but also those of the broader community (OMI 2009a; Refugee Council of Australia 2010b). Communities also have levels of collective resilience that can be built on (ASeTTS 2008a).

## **2. Wheatbelt**

### **2.1 Demographics**

The Wheatbelt Region comprises an area of 154 862 square kilometres, more than twice the size of Tasmania. The region is home to over 129,438 people, making it the third most populous region in the State.

The Wheatbelt has a diverse population, with over 22% having been born overseas, and around 5% being Indigenous. The median age of people in the Wheatbelt is 41 years, with 20.7% of the population aged between 0 and 14 years old and 16% aged 65 and over.

The environment of the Wheatbelt is as varied as the people. We have approximately 150km of pristine coastline, extending from Guilderton to Jurien Bay. The Avon region close to Perth is known for its lush environment, thanks to its relatively high rainfall. The areas to the East are rich in minerals, including gold, nickel and iron ore, while the remainder of the region is mostly agricultural.

The region has well-developed transport links, with most major highways and rail routes to Perth passing through. The region has 35% of the State's roads and easy access to the Port of Fremantle and regional ports at Geraldton, Bunbury, Albany and Esperance. A range of private air charter services is available. Daily passenger rail services operate on the main east-west line and a variety of passenger road coach services exist to other areas.

The region has extensive educational, health, recreational and cultural services and is home to the C Y O'Connor College of TAFE and Curtin University's Muresk Institute of Agriculture. The region also offers affordable housing and business premises, including established industrial precincts ideal for manufacturing and new industry.



Outline of the Wheatbelt area

### 3. Current Opportunity

The Shire of Dalwallinu provides a great opportunity to promote economic development and rural diversification. In Australia as a country, regional planning policies that stimulate greater rural growth and support people who live in rural areas must be examined. It is desirable that we maintain rural areas and bring new life to areas that have been in decline.

The existing towns could accommodate a greater population without any major upgrade to their town facilities as many of the local facilities, including schools, water and power supplies, are underutilised or lay idle. The question then needs to be asked, how can we encourage new people into rural areas? As most regional areas, we have always struggled in an attempt to lure unskilled and skilled personnel to the bush given our love affair with living on the coast. However, there is a firm belief that the ability to attract migrants from a range of backgrounds and cultures will not only diversify our regions areas but provide the much needed lifeline to regional Australia.

As per section 1.3, there are approx 1,100 refugees and humanitarian entrants settled in WA each year. Some of these migrants have struggled to find employment and have ended up in the larger cities. Many have come from smaller populations and they can easily become isolated in the large cities; however it is the smaller regional communities that tend to be more welcoming and inclusive.

There is an opportunity to revitalise some of the regional areas of Australia by developing a program to support relocation of migrants to rural areas. Through a mentoring program and a less threatening environment, adaptation to their new country will be faster. This project aims to provide these services as well as become a best practice pilot program for regional WA.



Main Street of Dalwallinu

## **4. Stakeholders & Individual Opportunities**

### **4.1 Local Community**

Several local community members have been involved in this project. As previously stated several residents from the towns of Buntine and Wubin have been heavily involved in the development of the initial repopulation concept.

The opportunities are endless for the local community, as they stand to benefit greatly from any increase in population. The smaller towns have already seen the closure of many facilities, such as schools, post offices, shops and sporting facilities. Any increase is likely to prevent further closure of valuable assets and indeed resurrect some facilities that are idle. More residents would also allow for business expansion and allow strong growth of the economy as well as strengthening of medical and hospital facilities.

Strengthening local communities in all five (5) towns (Buntine, Dalwallinu, Kalannie, Pithara, & Wubin) will reinvigorate community support and create vibrant towns which have faded in the past several years. A reinvigorated community will have a beneficial effect on the availability of volunteers on which small communities survive. In particular, the Shire provides volunteer emergency services personnel (St John Ambulance, Fire and Rescue) for not only the local Shire but also 223kmn of Great Northern Highway and increasing population will provide a greater opportunity to access these personnel.

### **4.2 Local Business**

In recent years several businesses have relocated from the Dalwallinu area due to skills and housing shortages. If these issues are not addressed the business hubs of Dalwallinu and Kalannie will risk losing the vital economic activity that assists in keeping each town alive. The development of this project brings the access to greater population and business growth.

Many of the current businesses export a large percentage of their goods out of the Shire boundaries. This is achievable as Dalwallinu is strategically located on National Highway 95 (Great Northern Highway) which provides pivotal transportation ability to and from outside markets. There is great potential for expansion of local businesses with the ability to double current factory sizes coupled with each town's ability to release further industrial land which will assist in servicing both the mining and agricultural areas.

### **4.3 Migrants**

A variety of areas have been examined as part of this project to ensure the migrants and their families are helped through the relocation and integration process. These areas of need can be identified in this report and include;

- Employment;
- Housing;
- Mental health;
- Social Support; and
- Education and Training.

## **4.4 Government Agencies**

Every tier of Government has shown direct interest in this project and would greatly benefit from its success. The development of a pilot program within Dalwallinu would allow the Advisory Committee to work out any teething problems prior to the rolling out a greater Wheatbelt program.

### **4.4.1 Federal Government**

Both sides of government have expressed a desire to promote rural Australia and encourage new migrants to regional areas. The formation of a portfolio for Regional Australia and the dedication of the Minister for Regional Australia, draws attention to efforts to repopulate and reinvigorate the regions. However, when assessing development of the regions there is a constant battle to draw attention to regional Western Australia therefore this project will assist in shining a light on the area and showing the creativity and innovation that the area can produce.

### **4.4.2 State Government**

State bodies have also expressed a desire to promote rural WA through programs such as “Royalties for Regions”. Since the Nationals won balance of power in 2008 there has been a focus on directing mining royalties back into the communities that they come from. In recent years action plans have been developed to assist in regional growth such as the Regional Development Policy Framework; An Action Agenda for Regional Development, which has been implemented by the Regional Development Council and Minister for Regional Development, Hon Brendon Grylls. This project directly aligns with this plan as well as the Wheatbelt Development Commission’s Strategic Plan and others.

### **4.4.3 Local Government**

The Shire of Dalwallinu has an opportunity to further develop the Shire and diversify its economic and social base. Diversifying the local community provides a sense of inclusion and will enable a greater cultural influence on the current residents. Through securing future investment and job creation it will allow the Shire to develop and reinvigorate the community.

## **4.5 Mining Industry**

The mining tenement holders have expressed a desire to source a high proportion of their future requirements from the local surrounds (Extension Hill Pty Ltd envisage sourcing half of their labour force from the region). They have also expressed a desire to use local contractors where possible. They propose very workable work rosters and the desire to use local schools. A local mine workforce on a short roster is more family friendly.

## **5. Consultation**

Since July 2010 consultation has been conducted with a variety of organisations. In December 2010 the Perth Working Group was formed. A list of members and a brief description on each of the groups can be seen below;

### **5.1 Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) – Chair**

OMI is a division of the Department of Local Government. It supports the development of State Government policies and programs to promote multiculturalism and improve services to Western Australians from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. OMI provides leadership on multiculturalism within the public sector, to the Western Australian community and with business - creating partnerships for a more inclusive and productive society.

### **5.2 Department of Immigration & Citizenship (DIAC)**

The purpose of DIAC is to 'enrich Australia through the well managed entry and settlement of people'.

The department's key objectives, as set out in The DIAC Plan are to:

- Manage the lawful and orderly entry and stay of people in Australia, including through effective border security
- Promote a society which values Australian citizenship, appreciates cultural diversity and enables migrants to participate equitably.

### **5.3 Multicultural Service Centre of Western Australia (MSC)**

The MSC plays a significant role in meeting the settlement, welfare, education and training, cultural, legal and related needs of culturally and linguistically diverse Western Australians. It also undertakes research and community education activities related to their needs and establishes Foundations/Trusts for this purpose.

### **5.4 Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC)**

The MMRC Inc. is a non-profit community organisation based in Mirrabooka which provides services across the metropolitan area. The group receive funding from a range of state and commonwealth government agencies and the management committee is drawn from Centre members and the CaLD communities who they serve. The Centre provides a range of services that assist recently arrived humanitarian entrants and longer term residents who experience difficulties due to language and other cultural barriers which limit their full participation.

## **5.5 Department of Health**

The Department of Health WA provides free and voluntary post-migration health screening for all refugees and humanitarian entrants settling in WA, at the Humanitarian Entrant Health Service. This includes screening for communicable diseases and provision of catch-up immunisation to adults and children.

## **5.6 Department of Human Services**

The Department of Human Services aims to deliver social and health related payment and services. It covers families, Medicare, carers, child support, rural and remote Australians, job seekers, students and trainees, Indigenous Australians, older Australians, migrants, refugees and visitors.

## **5.7 Department of Training and Workforce Development**

The Department of Training and Workforce Development has a vital training role and also a broader responsibility in workforce development, with the aim of building, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to meet the economic needs of Western Australia. The Department works with industry, the community and Government to build a workforce which is productive, inclusive, efficient and mobile. The Department manages public resources in the State vocational education and training system; plans, funds and monitors publicly funded training, plans and provides information on workforce development, strategically manages the Western Australian apprenticeship and traineeship system, coordinates and implements curriculum and professional development across the training system and provides career development services.

## **5.8 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations**

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is the lead government agency providing national leadership in education and workplace training, transition to work and conditions and values in the workplace. In Western Australia, most of the responsibilities involve the funding and delivery of employment services especially Job Services Australia and the Disability Employment Services. Also the Department has responsibility for the Indigenous Employment Program which delivers employment and training services that are designed to meet the specific needs of Indigenous job seekers, Indigenous businesses and employers. The Department also helps families to participate in the social and economic life of the community through the provision of support for child care services.

The following is a list of further departments and interested parties that are available through the Perth Working Group as a resource;

- **Department of Housing**
- **Polytechnic West – AMEP (Adult Migration English Program)**
- **Department of Regional Development and Lands**
- **Wheatbelt Development Commission**
- **Food Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council**
- **Department of Agriculture and Food**

## **6. Risks**

### **6.1 Public Perception**

The treatment of migrants is a hot topic historically in the media, with a continuous stream of stories arising from Christmas Island and other detention centres around Australia. Due to the large amount of negative media this issue gains there is a clear need to provide a 'success' story for migrants throughout regional Australia.

The general public tend to link the words migrant and illegal immigration with a variety of other negative issues however this project aims to change those perceptions by ensuring effective integration of the community members.

### **6.2 Non-integration of migrants**

There is a risk of the migrants not integrating with the current community members and this has been acknowledged as part of this project. Both committees and Council will ensure the current and new community members integrate effectively. The Community Liaison and Support Officer will develop a number of strategies to assist in the integration which may include;

- Cultural events;
- Encouraging volunteering;
- Religious events; and
- Cooking demonstrations.

Events such as these will provide the social 'glue' to ensure a strong community and encourage further migration into the area.

### **6.3 External Influences**

There are a number of external influences that may have an effect on this project two current issues have been listed below;

In March 2011, the Minister for Energy; Training and Workforce Development; Indigenous Affairs released a strategy that outlined an integrated and targeted approach to address a future skills shortage by supplementing Western Australia's skilled workforce.



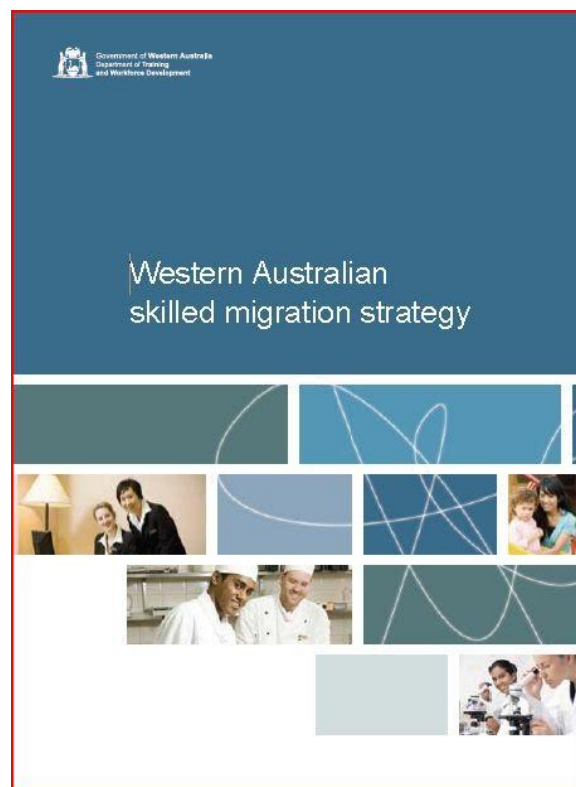
The Minister aimed to attract 6,000 skilled migrants in the year for high demand occupations.

The Skilled Migration Strategy has been developed in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce (WA) and Chamber of Minerals and Energy, with extensive consultation with other industry, government and community stakeholders.

It focuses on the six key themes of:

- delivering a more consistent and integrated planning approach to skilled migration
- providing easily accessible, high-quality information on skilled migration
- developing attraction and retention strategies to ensure WA has the skilled workforce needed to support sustainable economic growth
- refining migration processes to support a more flexible and responsive migration program
- implementing a range of settlement services to support skilled migrants to integrate into the local workforce
- maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the Federal Government to positively influence policy direction and ensure the migration needs of WA are met.

Although this would not directly affect the Regional Repopulation Project there may be both positive and negative spin offs which will impact the operation of the project as a whole. Although there is no immediate action needed from this announcement it has been acknowledged as part of the project.



Copy of WA's Skilled Migration Strategy

## **7. Constraints and Challenges**

### **7.1 Infrastructure**

Currently there is a shortage of housing in the Dalwallinu townsite however the opportunity exists through funding partnerships to construct a series of houses in and around the area to address this problem. This housing would be made available to lease or purchase by the migrants depending on individual circumstances.

In all of the five (5) town sites there are currently a small number of already established blocks available, however in the Dalwallinu and Kalannie there is a large amount of currently unreleased land. It is expected the increase in population will place a larger demand on the land available in the two towns and therefore it is vital that future land releases be explored. Dalwallinu released ten (10) residential lots in early 2012. Once these lots have been sold, phase two will commence with a further 28 blocks that can be made available. The Shire is also investigating other options such as doing its own subdivision to immediately release another 11 blocks.

### **7.2 Migrant Support -**

A Community Liaison and Support Officer has been employed to drive and administer direction from the Regional Repopulation Advisory Committee. The direction is to strongly focus on the attraction and retention of all migrants into the Shire and galvanise strong community support by working closely with local community groups and volunteers. Special focus will be on working with the local Schools, community groups, Community Resource Centres, and also to develop and run annual events and programs to ensure the integration of migrants into the area and continue ongoing strong relationships with local businesses.

Long term vision for this project is that a Support Office be set up in Dalwallinu to assist in the roll out of this 'best practice' program to surrounding areas. This Office would work directly with groups such as the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, Department of Immigrations & Citizenship, Office of Multicultural Interests, and the Multicultural Service Centre.

### **7.3 Funding**

To date the project has mainly been funded by the Shire however assistance to access funding or grants from relevant bodies will continue to be explored.

## 8. Outcomes and Benefits

### 8.1 Migrants

Opportunities exist for the migrant community to live within the Shire and integrate easily into the community. Given that the main townsite, Dalwallinu, has all essential services needed, migrants would be well catered for. Some of the potential areas for growth for the migrants can be seen below;

#### 8.1.1 Accommodation

High quality, affordable housing will be assessed as part of this project to ensure attraction of migrants and assist each family to be comfortable in their own home. This is considered a critical task as part of the initiative and all committees and groups will be required to coordinate the allocation of land to migrant families. This may also require further land release in towns such as Dalwallinu and Kalannie and allow for significant future residential growth in the coming years.

The cost of building and or owning a home in the Wheatbelt compares more favourably to the city as costs are lower for land and building. This is a significant benefit to the migrants as the project aims to attract and permanently retain such families into the area.

As previously mentioned, the increase in population will place higher demand on the release of residential lots in both Dalwallinu & Kalannie. To assist in expediting this process the Perth Working Group, along with the Regional Repopulation Advisory Committee and the Dalwallinu Council, will work closely with groups such as Landcorp, Country Housing Authority and other relevant departments.



Figure 8.1.1 – Current land available for release in Dalwallinu (highlighted in red)



Figure 8.1.2 – Current land available for release in Kalannie (highlighted in red)

### 8.1.2 Skills / Education

This is an area that requires great focus from the project as it does not only stop at the integration of children into the local Primary and High Schools but there is also a direct need to up skill adults in basic English as well as ‘industry language’ relevant to the workplace. Registered training organisations (RTO’s), such as the Australian College of Training, have assisted with similar projects in the past and have shown an interest in being part of this initiative. Their role would be to liaise with businesses in up skilling employees to ensure migrants are workplace ready and also in providing access to training programs for adults wanting to improve basic and advanced English skills.

The Shire has to date offered two terms of English classes, Conversational English and Using English, to over 60 residents of the Shire. An IELTS Masterclass, to assist migrants in their application for permanent residency, has also been held.

As indicated in the comprehensive business survey completed by the Shire in January 2011, most local businesses are happy to conduct on-site and on-the-job training for each individual employee.

### 8.1.3 Community

The rural communities are renowned for being warm and welcoming towards new community members and the Dalwallinu area is no exception. To assist in the successful integration of migrants into the community a series of bi-monthly and annual events would be run to assist in the smooth transition. Such opportunities to participate in the local community activities and add diversity to the area provide community ownership to mentor and support new residents.

#### **8.1.4 Health care**

Identified in an early stage in this project, the assistance of appropriate health care is a must. The local doctor and hospital would be trained for specific issues relating to migrant health and be able to provide the best possible care for the new community members. There is also potential to bring a new doctor to town which would increase the serviceability of the Dalwallinu Medical Centre and provide access to these services to additional residents.

The area of health care is expected to be further explored and expanded as the project progresses. As this is a working document the opportunities / issues that arise will be logged as part of this plan to be available to assist in progressing.

#### **8.1.5 Lifestyle**

The ability to walk to work, arrive at home without sitting in traffic, and potentially developing specific work rosters are just some of the benefits that will be made available to migrant workers. Working and living in regional areas has significant advantages without the pressures of living in the big cities. Less commuting, as migrants will be living closer to home promotes work / life balance.

#### **8.1.6 Transport**

A community bus will be considered as part of this project due to the distances required to travel from town to town. If migrants chose to live in a satellite town, such as Buntine, where there are no shopping facilities or other services, there will be a clear need to formulate a transport strategy to ensure the new community members have access to such resources.

Transport will be utilised during the day to transport any non-working family members to social gatherings, community gardens, and other locations. However, every effort would be made to keep migrants living close to their work places and community facilities to ensure that minimal transport is needed.

#### **8.1.7 Investment**

As previously mentioned, due to the low cost of establishing housing and business ventures within the area, opportunities exist for new community members to purchase housing at a low cost as land is cheaper and house values lower, compared to establishing themselves in the metropolitan area. This project also exposes a number of investment opportunities for business ventures within the Shire as the population is large enough to not only sustain and support a number of home based businesses, but to also ensure the success of developing businesses on small to large scales.

## 8.2 Businesses

As seen by the Shire of Dalwallinu business survey (2010), there was a shortage of unskilled, semi-skilled, and fully-skilled labour. This greatly impacted the growth and development of the local industries and was a major constraint to growth. These businesses saw benefits from the project through;

- Increased labour pool to grow and diversify existing businesses;
- Opportunities for new businesses to start or relocate to the area;
- Growth of existing industrial area within towns with potential expansion for the future.
- Increased potential to become a service centre for the agriculture, transport, and mining sector.
- Creating an environment for contractors to support the above industries.

As the population grows in this area it would also allow other retail and consultancy business to be attracted to the area.

## 8.3 Towns

Obviously any increase in the population will provide growth to our towns; however, the flow on effects would be seen far and wide such as increases in;

- Local health services including adequate General Practice doctors;
- School numbers by attracting families into the area;
- Sporting, craft & cultural groups and add diversity to these groups
- Improved utilisation of existing water and power infrastructure
- Volunteer emergency personnel that services an area from Miling to Payne's Find.

Although there are obvious benefits to the manufacturing and fabricating industries, this project also provides a workforce for other sectors, such as retail. Access to labour in the retail sector will allow for businesses to further develop and expand their services.

The satellite towns within the Shire will also benefit greatly out of this project. An example of each town's potential growth in economic activity would possibly include;

- Buntine - ability to increase numbers at the school as well as the scope to open a convenience store to service increased population;
- Kalannie – retaining current businesses as well as attracting new enterprises into the area;
- Pithara – assisting the development of current facilities (Tavern, convenience shop),
- Wubin – potential to attract and retain future transport and mine servicing industries and assist in the development of current assets. Wubin is an essential heavy vehicle service town on the Great Northern Highway, with planned private and government infrastructure development and expansion.

This project also provides the ability to attract population that supports current industries (agriculture, mining, manufacturing, fabrication, etc) and existing infrastructure. It will also provide the ability for each individual town to reach its critical mass of population and reinvigorate communities. It is imperative that the population is grown in the region to support existing infrastructure and allow the development of value added agricultural businesses that further assist in the development of the economy.

## 8.4 Local, State, & Federal Government

### 8.4.1 Local Government

Recently there has been a move to consolidate and combine Local Government into larger areas. The promotion and revitalisation of the shire will need a strong localised focus of resources which will assist in justifying the maintenance of the existing shire identity. Benefits of the project will include;

- Promotion and growth of all towns in the shire will better utilise town facilities and increase community spirit;
- Continued economic diversification will broaden the shires future growth and sustainability;
- Becoming a 'best practice' model for other rural shires; and
- Increasing community capacity through social diversity.

### 8.4.2 State Government

This research demonstrates a real need for this type of program, not only within the Dalwallinu Shire but State wide. As a 'best practice' model, this program could be rolled out through the rest of regional Western Australia which would cause a repopulation in rural and remote areas. In recent years there has been a refocus on the regional areas and this project will increase this exposure by creating an increase in regional capacity and providing the opportunity to value add to current activities.

### 8.4.3 Federal Government

A speech by the Minister for Regional Australia stated that he wanted to empower local communities to drive their own regional development investments. This project is the ideal demonstration of that. By encouraging new migrants into rural areas it will allow for positive outcomes for both new migrants and rural areas.

## 8.5 Agriculture

This industry is finding it harder to find permanent and seasonal labour, showing similar signs to local business owners in town. This project would present opportunities such as;

- Increased access to labour market; and
- Job sharing arrangements with the mining industry;

This would allow to value add to traditional and non-traditional grains and potential processing of these grains using the knowledge of new migrants to supply both domestic and international markets. This would not be limited to cereal grains but would also include pulses and oil seeds.

The area has also demonstrated a credible ability to promote and conduct research and development in agriculture through the guidance of the Liebe Group and the local industry. The Liebe Group is a local Research & Development (R&D) group that was started by local farmers to service their current and future needs. It has gained a reputation as one of the premium "grower groups" across Australia and has a track record of delivering on its R&D projects. Value adding agriculture with R&D into areas such as aquaculture, new methods of intensive livestock production and algal production for bio-fuel are among future opportunities within the area. These could be developed if there was the capacity to source extra labour.

Although little research has been conducted into this project's potential to value add to the agricultural industry, it is an area that will be explored further. There are huge benefits to the community and the economy by diversifying agricultural enterprises which will provide economic growth.

## **8.6 Environment**

On a large scale, we are constantly struggling with a variety of environmental issues. A major local issue is salinity of which a large number of environmental works still needs to be done with tree planting and salt reducing schemes could fund potential employment positions.

Such projects are coupled by the Rainbow Bee-Eater initiative which aims at turning Oil Mallee into electricity and bio-char as a by-product which returns carbon to the soil. Another recent study indicated that 75% of farmers surveyed in the North Eastern Agricultural Region (NEAR) would be willing to permanently revegetate soils which have become consistently unproductive to crop. The Shire of Dalwallinu is at the southern end of this survey and has a strong environmental ethos. This is evident through the recently completed Dalwallinu Discovery Centre which houses a local environmental interpretive centre and relevant information on the environmental initiatives being conducted in the area.

A concentrated effort could be made to promote the use of environmentally and sustainable dwellings. This could also demonstrate how we can repopulate rural area without a large impact on the environment. Concepts such as community food production could be developed.

## **9. Conclusion**

The Regional Repopulation Project provides a unique opportunity to develop a pilot project within the Shire of Dalwallinu. The project aims to permanently attract and retain migrants. It shows a win-win situation for all parties involved including the migrants, the Shire communities, and other stakeholders such as the migrant support services. The initiative aims to repopulate the region to assist in diversifying the economic base and community capacity as well as reinvigorating current infrastructure that is underutilised within the region. It also provides an opportunity for migrants to relocate to an area that provides balanced work and family life, with the opportunity to invest locally at lower cost than other areas.

The project has formed two (2) groups to implement action plans; on a local level the Regional Repopulation Advisory Committee (based in Dalwallinu), and on a broader scale the Perth Working Group. Each group has their relevant role to play in the advancement of the initiative. The Perth Working Group liaises directly with relevant State and Federal Government agencies as well as migrant support services. The Advisory Committee is the local driver of the initiative.

The Regional Repopulation Plan aims to be a working document that has been developed by the two steering committees and is expected to evolve and form a major part of the pilot project and the regional model in the coming years.