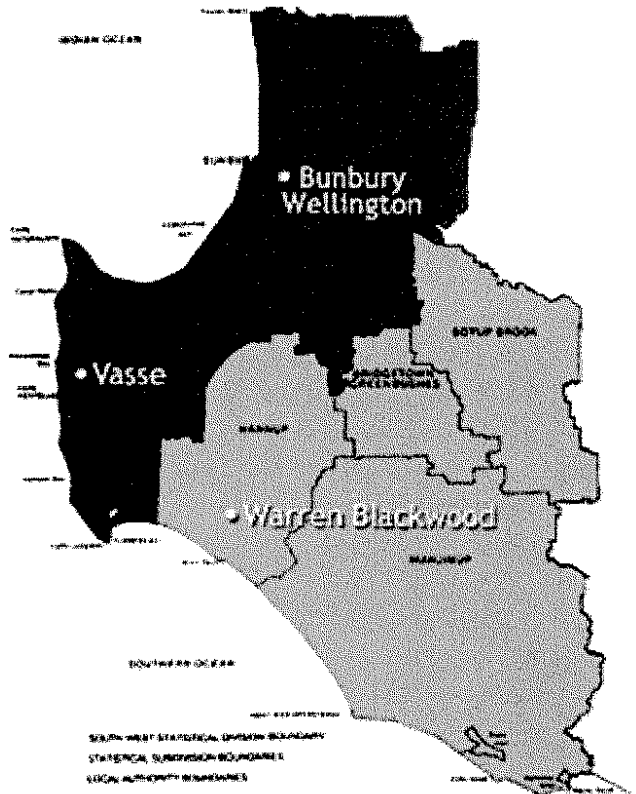


The South West Region

The South West Area Consultative Committee region of responsibility is the South West Region of Western Australia.

One of nine regions in Western Australia, the South West covers an area of 23,970 square kilometres and is located in the south-west corner of the State.

The region has the largest population of any region in the State, one of the fastest population growth rates, enjoys a strong, diverse economy and is recognised as one of the most desirable regional areas in WA in which to live, invest and visit.



Population

While the region has 6.82 per cent of the total State population, it has one-quarter (25 per cent) of the total population living in regional Western Australia. Currently with around 132,026 people, the region's population is expected to grow to 142,200 by 2006, 157,300 by 2011 and 172,300 by 2016 or an average of 2.6 per cent per annum.

The South West has two distinct population corridors represented by 12 local governments:

- ◆ The Coastal Corridor includes Bunbury, Busselton, Margaret River, Augusta, all towns, villages and hamlets in between and has an annual population growth rate of about 6 per cent. The population distribution favours the coastal

corridor with the biggest increases in recent years being around Greater Bunbury, Busselton and Margaret River. More than one-third of the region's population is concentrated in the City of Bunbury and surrounding shires.

- ◆ The Inland Corridor includes Harvey, Brunswick, Collie, Donnybrook, Balingup, Bridgetown, Boyup Brook, Manjimup, Nannup, Pemberton, Walpole, all towns, villages and hamlets in between and has a relatively static growth rate.

The age distribution of the region shows that approximately 24 per cent are aged under 15 years; 36 per cent are aged 20-44 years; and 15 per cent are aged over 60 years.

Economy

The South West has a broadly based and diverse economy with an annual gross regional product in excess of \$5 billion.

Agriculture, including wool, meat, dairy, fruit and vegetables and viticulture; forestry and timber products; mineral extraction, processing and manufacturing; other manufacturing; construction; tourism, especially nature based tourism; and the retail and service sectors are the main contributors to the economy and employment in the region.

The region's business community is characterised by a large number of small to medium enterprises - more than 7800 - with more than one-third operating in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries.

Value of key sectors per annum:

- ◆ Mineral extraction, processing and manufacturing - \$2.2 billion. Coal mining is valued at \$258 million, while alumina export production is worth more than \$1.1 billion. Mineral sands mining and processing has a production value of nearly \$304 million.
- ◆ Agriculture - \$590 million. The South West accounts for 10 per cent of WA's total value of agricultural production. The region has 80 per cent of the State's dairying herds, about 14 per cent of the prime beef cattle and nearly 1 million sheep and lambs. It produces 33 per cent of the State's vegetables (the highest of any region) and more than 46 per cent of orchard fruit (again, the highest of any region). The region contributed 64 per cent of the State's grapes for wine production making it by far the highest producing region in WA.
- ◆ Forestry and timber products - The region generates about 80 per cent of the State's hardwood and softwood log production. Unprocessed forestry products are worth \$60 million per annum.
- ◆ Tourism - \$531 million per annum. Most of the 1.68 million overnight visitors annually are drawn from Perth and other parts of Western Australia by the natural beauty of the forests and spectacular coastline. Wine tourism and nature based tourism are the fastest growing sectors of the industry.
- ◆ Construction - \$433 million. With strong population and investment growth, the region's construction industry has been traditionally buoyant.
- ◆ Retail and services - \$1.1 billion. The City of Bunbury, the surrounding area and the Busselton-Dunsborough urban areas in the Shire of Busselton are the main retail centres.
- ◆ Manufacturing - \$2.96 billion annual turnover. There are 420 manufacturing locations in the region, with the majority in wood and paper products, food and beverage, metal products and machinery and equipment.

Employment

The South West Region has a workforce of around 69,000 people, some 52 per cent of the population, which is slightly lower than the State percentage of people in work.

The unemployment rate is about 4.4 per cent (March, 2005), which is lower than the overall rate for Western Australia, a position the region has generally enjoyed for a number of years. However, the range of unemployment across the region varies from a high of 7.6 in Collie to a low of 2.4 per cent in part of the Shire of Dardanup.

Significantly, there are sectors in the community where unemployment rates are much higher than the rate for the community at large. These include the Indigenous community, where unemployment rates are as high as 23 per cent (Indigenous males) and young people, where the regional rate is around 15 per cent.

In a number of smaller inland communities, the unemployment rate is artificially low, as people leave to find work in other, larger centres in the region or leave the region altogether.