

# **LIVING IN THE REGIONS**

**THE VIEWS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIANS**

## **The Peel Report**

*A Study Undertaken for*

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND TRADE**

•

**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**

•

**MINISTRY FOR PLANNING**

•

**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSIONS**

[Gascoyne Development Commission](#)

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[Great Southern Development Commission](#)

[Kimberley Development Commission](#)

[Mid West Development Commission](#)

[Peel Development Commission](#)

[Pilbara Development Commission](#)

[South West Development Commission](#)

[Wheatbelt Development Commission](#)

*By*

***Patterson Market Research***

***in conjunction with Focused Management and Hames Sharley***

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LIVING IN THE REGIONS: THE VIEWS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIANS  
THE PEEL REPORT

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## FOREWORD

The Living in the Regions project was commissioned by the Regional Development Council to provide much needed information about why people decide to live in or move away from the regional areas of the State.

The Regional Development Council is the peak advisory body to Regional Development Minister, Hendy Cowan. The Council is made up of the Chairs of the nine Regional Development Commissions, a representative of the Department of Commerce and Trade and representation from Local Government.

The Living in the Regions reports provide statistical data which will be useful for all spheres of government, the private sector and community groups. There will no longer be the need to rely on anecdotal data in areas such as policy, planning or preparing submissions in matters relating to the retention or attraction of people to live in regional Western Australia.

The suite of ten reports contain the results of a statewide study which involved over 20 focus groups and 1500 telephone interviews. The State Report provides the survey findings for all of the nine regions in the one document. There is also one report for each of the nine Regional Development Commission regions of Western Australia, which highlight significant regional results.

I would like to thank all the people who took part in the surveys. Through the contribution of their time we now have a much greater understanding of why Western Australians choose to live where they do, what makes them stay and what makes them decide to move on.

This project will point the way to further research into issues such as higher education and professional development. The Regional Development Council would welcome any feedback you may have on the Living in the Regions project or suggestions for further research, both within the regions and the Perth metropolitan area.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Morgan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

STUART MORGAN, AM  
CHAIRPERSON  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The *Living in the Regions* project was conceived by the Regional Development Council in conjunction with the State's nine Regional Development Commissions, the Department of Commerce and Trade and the Ministry for Planning. The project management committee commissioned Patterson Market Research in an open tender process to undertake the comprehensive survey which forms the basis of this regional report.

The State Report which gives an overview of the survey results in all Western Australian regions is also available from the Department of Commerce and Trade or Regional Development Commissions in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Mid West, Wheatbelt, Goldfields-Esperance, Peel, South West and Great Southern regions. Highlights of the State Report are included at the end of this report.

## **BACKGROUND**

In June, 1996 the Ministry for Planning released its population report *Migration Trends in Western Australia 1986-1991* which used census data to show the numbers of people migrating to, from and within Western Australia. This provided valuable data on population movement but did not set out to give reasons why migration occurs.

With 72 per cent of the State's population living in Perth (and this figure is showing a gradual increase) there is a need to determine if more should be done to encourage people to move to the regions and persuade those already there to remain.

The purpose of the Living in the Regions project is to determine the key factors which influence individuals and families on where they will or will not live in Western Australia. It also looks at likely movement in the future.

The information will assist Western Australia's nine Regional Development Commissions to form policies and strategies which address misconceptions and also promote the benefits of regional living.

## **SURVEY METHOD**

The survey was conducted in two stages. First, an extensive series of focus discussion groups were established to gather profile information on attitudes to living in the regions and the propensity for movement. This information was used to help develop the survey questionnaires.

The focus groups, comprising people who had moved or were considering moving to or from the regions, included two groups in each of the nine regions and two in Perth, augmented, at the request of individual Development Commissions, by an extra group in the Pilbara and two extra groups in the Wheatbelt.

The second stage of the survey involved extensive telephone interviews with 1500 people aged 18 and over across the whole of Western Australia in October and November 1997.

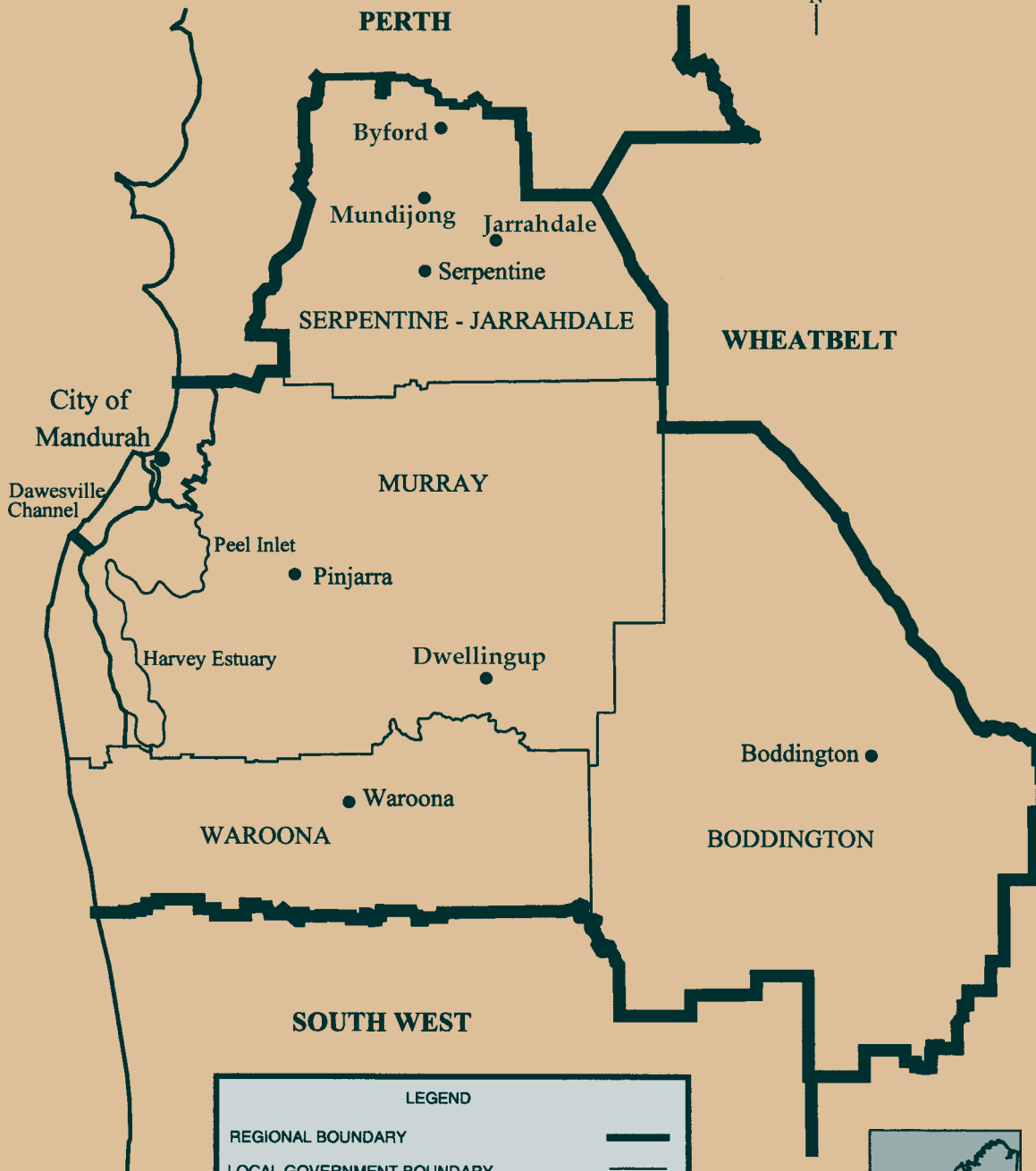
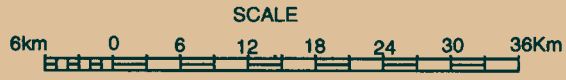
This included 150 telephone interviews in Perth using a Perth-specific questionnaire and 1350 throughout regional Western Australia (150 in each of the nine regions) using a regions-specific questionnaire.

Because of the disparity in population sizes, it was inevitable that some regions were over-sampled relative to their more populated neighbours. This was adjusted using correction weights to align the regional survey numbers with populations from the 1996 census.

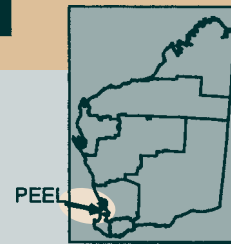
The effect of the weighting procedure is that each region has survey estimates based on 150 interviews, producing a sample error of plus or minus 5.5 per cent, but the all-regions averages reflect the average of all people in Western Australia.

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# PEEL REGION



| LEGEND                                 |         |
|--|---------|
| REGIONAL BOUNDARY                      |         |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY              |         |
| REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION OFFICE |         |
| TOWN OR CITY                           |         |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA e.g.             | WAROONA |



## PROFILE

The Peel Region is located immediately to the south of the Perth metropolitan area and comprises the City of Mandurah and the four shires of Murray, Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Waroona and Boddington. The region consists of a wide coastal plain extending to the Darling Range and a large expanse of native forests and farmland to the east.

In 1997, the Peel Region had a total population of 67,161. Its population growth is leading the State and this is expected to continue well into the next century. Over the past 20 years the number of people living in the region has more than tripled, compared with a population increase of 55 per cent for the Perth metropolitan area. By the year 2000, the Peel Region will be the second most populous region in the State.

The Peel population has the highest median age of the State's regions. In 1997, the median age was 36.6 years compared to 33.3 years for the State as a whole.

The region has a diverse economic base. While it is dominated by mining and mineral processing, other primary industries and tourism also make valuable contributions. The Peel Region with its extensive bauxite deposits supplies feed to the State's four alumina refineries two of which are located within the Peel Region at Pinjarra and Wagerup. There are also large gold deposits being mined in the Boddington Shire, and there are considerable deposits of mineral sands.

Agriculture is based predominantly around cattle for dairy and beef production, although fruit and vegetable production is growing. Tourism is a major source of activity both in the coastal strip and in the forested areas of the escarpment, attracting 556,000 visitors in 1996. The manufacturing sector includes alumina refineries and mineral sands processing, wood products, food processing, transport equipment and metal fabrication.

# THE PEEL REPORT

*The survey results were compiled using responses to 1500 random telephone interviews conducted throughout Western Australia, but also include feedback from discussion groups held in various localities. In the Peel, this included both Mandurah and Pinjarra. Information from these discussion groups is referred to in this report.*

*While the telephone survey involved 150 people in each of the nine regions and 150 in Perth, the results need to be viewed with care. A feature of this type of survey is that households without a phone and those in communities serviced by a 'communal phone' are not represented.*

## Where People Live

Most people in regional Western Australia live in towns or cities and the Peel is no exception. The survey suggests that 75 per cent of Peel residents live in a town or city, seven per cent live on a commercial rural property and 18 per cent in some other out of town situation.

The 18 per cent who live out of town on a non-farm property is a substantially higher proportion than for any other region.

It was noticeable that many more respondents (85 per cent) said they grew up in a town or city than those now living in one (75 per cent). This suggests a particular tendency to move to the Peel for a change of lifestyle away from town or city living.

There was considerable movement by people in all regions but Peel residents were among the most mobile. Just seven per cent still live in the area they grew up, leaving a massive 93 per cent who have moved to the Peel from elsewhere. This high mobility is second only to the Pilbara where it is linked to very different factors, primarily employment.

Forty-one per cent of respondents who had moved to the Peel from elsewhere came from Perth - one of the highest incidence of Perth migration for any region.

The next most likely origin was overseas/interstate (29 per cent), followed by another region in Western Australia (21 per cent). The remaining nine per cent had moved to their present location from somewhere else in the Peel.

| Period in region | Peel residents |
|------------------|----------------|
| under 6 years    | 39%            |
| 6 – 10 years     | 24%            |
| 11 – 20 years    | 21%            |
| 21 + years       | 16%            |
| Total            | 100%           |

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 9 to 11 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Why People Move

Employment is the single main reason for moving to any region, but in the Peel it only just made it into the top spot, nominated by 28 per cent of respondents. This was substantially below the all-regions average of 47 per cent.

The next most common main reason for moving to the Peel was family/marriage, followed by lifestyle.

The results put the Peel in sharp contrast with other regions. The 28 per cent who moved for employment reasons was the lowest proportion for any region, and the 16 per cent moving for lifestyle reasons was the highest result recorded.

Compared with other regions, a relatively high proportion of respondents nominated other reasons for moving, outside the top responses of employment, family/marriage and lifestyle. These included such things as environment, cheap housing and the ocean - some of which may also be regarded as approximations of lifestyle, lifting that result even higher. It was also noticeable that many of the responses were connected to retirement issues.

| Single main reason for moving | Peel respondents % | All regions average % |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Employment                    | 28                 | 47                    |
| Family/marriage               | 25                 | 21                    |
| Lifestyle                     | 16                 | 9                     |
| Other                         | 31                 | 23                    |

Because there is generally more than one reason behind any decision to move, the survey then asked respondents to nominate all of their main reasons for moving. This brought lifestyle into even greater prominence, mentioned by 75 per cent of respondents as at least one of their main reasons for moving to the Peel. The attraction of the ocean/seaside was also evident with 37 per cent mentioning this as one of their main motivations. Employment fell back into third place, followed by family/marriage and then retirement. The percentage mentioning retirement (17 per cent) was noticeably higher than the 10 per cent all-regions average.

The results indicate that while lifestyle is not always the principal reason for moving to the Peel, it is certainly a major influence for most people.

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 12 to 13 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Feeling Safe

Perceived safety was the most universally held attitude throughout the regions where many people have a particular perception that their children are less at risk from the 'stranger danger' they associate with Perth. This was also true in the Peel but to a lesser extent than all other regions.

A contributing factor may be the Peel Region's relatively close proximity to Perth. However, it was noticeable that the focus group from Mandurah made several references to increased crime, relating it to factors such as unemployment among young people and the paradox of relatively asset-rich retirees being attracted to the region along with low income families utilising its proximity to Kwinana and other industrial centres, combined with the availability of cheap housing and the attractive coastal lifestyle.

| "Feel safer here than in a place like Perth" | Agree %   |
|--|-----------|
| Great Southern                               | 96        |
| Kimberley                                    | 92        |
| South West                                   | 92        |
| Pilbara                                      | 90        |
| Wheatbelt                                    | 86        |
| Gascoyne                                     | 84        |
| Goldfields-Esperance                         | 80        |
| Mid West                                     | 78        |
| <b>Peel</b>                                  | <b>71</b> |

*(Further information and comparative regional data page 15 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Affinity with the Region

The great majority of regional people have a strong affinity with their region but it seems none more so than people living in the Peel. More than four out of five respondents agreed that they would be sad to leave to live in Perth, the highest proportion for any region. Contributing factors would be the relatively high retirement component of people moving to the region (notably from Perth), the already close proximity to Perth and the enjoyable lifestyle and low housing costs of the region. It was noted in the focus groups that the region is close enough to Perth to access the city's specialist health services, entertainment and recreational activities.

| Agreement that "I would be sad to leave this place to live in Perth" | Agree %   |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Peel</b>  | <b>82</b> |
| Great Southern   | 80        |
| Kimberley  | 79        |
| Wheatbelt  | 76        |
| South West   | 76        |
| Pilbara  | 70        |
| Gascoyne   | 70        |
| Mid West   | 70        |
| Goldfields-Esperance   | 49        |

*(Further information and comparative regional data page 15 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Community Facilities

People in the Peel had one of the highest levels of satisfaction with community facilities - particularly those provided for recreation activities.

The 82 per cent who felt recreation facilities were good was the second highest result for any region and compared with extremes ranging from just 63 per cent in the Kimberley to 89 per cent in the Great Southern.

A similarly high percentage of Peel respondents (80 per cent) agreed that local sporting facilities were good. While this was slightly under the all-regions average (83 per cent), both results are an overwhelming endorsement of facilities presently available in the Peel.

There was very little support for the notion that modern communications were a real problem in the area. The 16 per cent who perceived a problem in the Peel included just seven per cent who strongly agreed. All of the southern regions fared well on this measure, compared to very real concerns evident in some of the more remote regions.

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 16 to 17 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Perceived Community Spirit

Issues including friendliness, community division, stress on families, privacy and environment for children were considered when trying to determine people's broad perception of community spirit.

When views on all these issues were factored together, all regions achieved mean scores comfortably above the mid-point of 3, with the Peel scoring a credible 3.6. Other regions ranged between 3.4 and 3.8.

There was overwhelming agreement that the area was "a really friendly place to live" (86 per cent) and "a great place for kids to grow up" (86 per cent) - painting a positive picture of life in the Peel.

As well, most Peel respondents did not perceive significant problems with community division or lack of privacy in the area - two of the survey negatives. Of those who did perceive these problems, there was very little strong agreement.

While 37 per cent felt there were "great stresses on family life in the area", this was slightly better than the all-regions average of 39 per cent and well below the level of concern in some regions. While it is disturbing that such a large proportion of any community perceive this family stress factor, it needs to be acknowledged that the issue has currency worldwide, not just in the regions of Western Australia, and very few Peel respondents 'strongly' agreed.

While the vast majority of respondents thought the Peel was a great place for children to grow up in, the result was nonetheless a little below the all-regions average. There was also a sharp contrast in the low level of strong agreement in the Peel compared to other regions. The disparity may be a function of concerns about crime in the region, as reported by the focus groups, combined with concern about employment opportunities for young people growing up there.

| The Peel                      | Generally agree % | Strongly agree % | Total % | All regions average % |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Really friendly place to live | 65                | 21               | 86      | 85                    |
| Lots of community division    | 28                | 7                | 35      | 36                    |
| Great stresses on family life | 31                | 6                | 37      | 39                    |
| Lack of privacy               | 15                | 3                | 18      | 27                    |
| Great place for kids          | 52                | 34               | 86      | 89                    |

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 17 to 19 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Environmental Values

While recognising the problems inherent in trying to assess people's attitudes to the environment from just a few questions, the survey sought to get a broad indication using three specific measures. These included the importance of clean air, the benefits of the climate and likely acceptance of environmental cost in exchange for jobs.

When factored together, the views of Peel respondents on each issue suggest a very high regard for the local environment with a mean score of 3.8 out of a possible 5, one of the highest ratings achieved.

Ninety-two per cent of Peel respondents agreed that clean air was "one of the best things" about the area while 75 per cent felt the climate was a major benefit.

The third statement asked respondents to agree or disagree that they would "accept some environmental cost in exchange for more job opportunities". Across all regions there were strong indications that residents want to maintain and protect the local environment.

While responses would be influenced by the availability of jobs in a region, they nonetheless give a strong indication of the extent to which people are prepared to trade off environmental factors for economic benefits.

In the Peel, 42 per cent of respondents agreed they would accept some environmental cost in exchange for more jobs, although only seven per cent of these 'strongly' agreed. The Peel result compares with extremes ranging from 59 per cent agreement in the Mid West down to 41 per cent in the Kimberley.

| "I would accept some environmental cost in exchange for more job opportunities in this region" | Generally Agree % | Strongly Agree % | Total %   |
|--|-------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Mid West   | 46                | 13               | 59        |
| Great Southern   | 45                | 10               | 55        |
| South West   | 47                | 5                | 52        |
| Gascoyne   | 42                | 8                | 50        |
| Pilbara  | 43                | 6                | 49        |
| Wheatbelt  | 36                | 12               | 48        |
| Goldfields-Esperance   | 38                | 7                | 45        |
| <b>Peel</b>  | <b>35</b>         | <b>7</b>         | <b>42</b> |
| Kimberley  | 32                | 9                | 41        |

The Table indicates a reluctance in the Peel to accept developments which have an environmental cost attached. This no doubt reflects the significant value residents place on the unique environment and lifestyle of the Peel. However, the result is interesting because Peel residents also have particularly strong concerns about local employment opportunities (this issue is discussed shortly). While more jobs are wanted, development in the region will need to take careful account of the environment if it is to win any broad support.

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 19 to 20 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Perceived Economic Benefits

The survey examined cost of living, earning potential, retirement barriers and economic future to give an indication of how residents perceive the economic well-being of their region.

In total, 84 per cent of Peel respondents agreed the cost of living was not too bad, 47 per cent felt you could earn a lot of money if you work hard, 55 per cent thought the region had a strong economic future and just 17 per cent felt cost of living makes it hard to retire in the Peel.

The results reveal a number of sharp contrasts. When compared to other regions, the Peel is easily the most satisfied with cost of living and one of the least inclined to see local costs as a barrier to retirement. Given these sentiments, it is easy to see why it is such an attractive region for people in retirement. It has a popular coastal environment, is close to Perth, and yet maintains a low cost of living. While cost appears to be a specific factor causing older people to leave some regions, the Peel is clearly better placed than most.

| Agree that cost of living makes it hard for people to retire here | Agree %   |
|---|-----------|
| Pilbara   | 80        |
| Kimberley   | 72        |
| Goldfields-Esperance  | 54        |
| Gascoyne  | 43        |
| Wheatbelt   | 28        |
| Mid West  | 25        |
| Great Southern  | 18        |
| <b>Peel</b>   | <b>17</b> |
| South West  | 14        |

At the other end of the scale, the Peel had the lowest proportion of respondents of any region who felt you could “earn a lot of money if you work hard”. The 47 per cent who did agree with the statement is well under the all-regions average of 62 per cent. While industry sectors operating in the Peel cover areas as diverse as tourism, mineral processing, aquaculture, building and construction, alumina, equine, horticulture, services and retail, opportunities to pursue high paying career paths are perceived to be limited.

Compared to other regions, there also appears to be little confidence among residents about the economic future of the Peel, possibly linked again to concerns about employment opportunities.

| "This area has a strong economic future" | Agree %   |
|--|-----------|
| Pilbara                                  | 88        |
| Goldfields-Esperance                     | 82        |
| South West                               | 82        |
| Mid West                                 | 78        |
| Kimberley                                | 71        |
| Great Southern                           | 65        |
| Wheatbelt                                | 63        |
| Gascoyne                                 | 62        |
| <b>Peel</b>                              | <b>55</b> |

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 21 to 22 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Employment Perceptions and Attitudes

The survey asked people to agree or disagree with four statements relating to job security, the range of jobs available and the need for new development to provide jobs.

The results revealed a strong level of underlying concern about job security in the Peel. Two-thirds of respondents agreed they were often concerned about job security, including 27 per cent who ‘strongly’ agreed. Both results were the highest for any region.

The Peel also reported the highest level of agreement that a wider range of job opportunities is needed in the area and significant concern about the number of career opportunities for people with higher education. Almost three-quarters of respondents felt new development was needed to provide more jobs.

It was noticeable that even while Peel respondents consistently recorded the most concern about job security and the range of jobs available, the proportion agreeing that new development is needed was actually a little under the all-regions average. This may be a function of the bi-polar nature of the population where those in the 'retired' age groups recognise there are employment problems but perhaps have less interest in new development than people in the younger age groups. But it is also likely to reflect the already stated strong value residents place on the existing lifestyle attributes of the region which they are loathe to change. The 71 per cent at least generally agreeing that new development is needed is nevertheless a sizeable proportion of the community.

| Peel Respondents  | Generally agree % | Strongly agree % | Peel Total % | All regions average % |
|---|-------------------|------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Often concerned about job security here                   | 40                | 27               | 67           | 54                    |
| Wider range of job opportunities needed                   | 49                | 35               | 84           | 71                    |
| Few career opportunities for people with higher education | 44                | 28               | 72           | 65                    |
| Area needs new development to provide more jobs           | 41                | 30               | 71           | 73                    |

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 23 to 24 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Diversity in Recreation/Entertainment

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with five statements to determine attitudes to recreation/entertainment in the regions. These related to sport, entertainment and the availability of restaurants and nightlife.

The Peel recorded the highest level of satisfaction on every measure except 'nightlife', and even this was rated well by almost two thirds of respondents. It was noticeable, however, that there was very little strong agreement about nightlife, suggesting residents are not overly satisfied with what they get.

The Peel nevertheless stood out from other regions for its perceived diversity of entertainment/recreation activities. Only around a third of respondents felt the area relied on sport to keep it together socially, compared with as many as two-thirds in some regions. Importantly, less than a quarter of respondents felt there was "not much to do" if you weren't into sport, again well below the average and suggesting a good range of other activities are available.

It was not particularly surprising that people in the Peel were the least inclined of all regions to "miss the entertainment that comes with a large city". Certainly, it was noted in the local discussion groups that one of the advantages to living in the Peel was that it was less than

an hour's drive to Perth if you wanted to avail yourself of entertainment there. This close proximity would also assist the region to attract name entertainers on tour in Perth to also perform at local venues.

| Views of Peel respondents                              | Agree % | All regions average % |
|--|---------|-----------------------|
| This area relies on sport to keep it together socially | 37      | 51                    |
| If you're not into sport, there's not much to do       | 24      | 36                    |
| I miss the entertainment of a large city               | 31      | 37                    |
| There is a good range of eating establishments here    | 81      | 66                    |
| Area has enough night life                             | 63      | 64                    |

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 25 to 27 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Standard of Health Services

Almost three-quarters of respondents agreed the standard of general medical practice in the Peel was good, although less than one in seven were inclined to strongly agree. While this was still a strong result and several points above the all-regions average, it was nonetheless a noticeably lower level of satisfaction than in regions such as the Great Southern and South West. One factor could be the rapid influx of older people into the Peel in recent years which has brought a high level of demand for general medical practice combined with a lack of long term familiarity with local practitioners. It may also relate to the adequacy of hospital facilities. At the time the survey was being conducted, the region was in transition. New major hospital facilities were under construction in Mandurah while other existing nearby hospital services were to be reorganised to work with the new facilities.

Compared with other regions, there was much less concern in the Peel than elsewhere about the availability of specialist medical services. This would inevitably be influenced by the relative ease of access to specialist services in Perth. While 51 per cent agreed the availability of specialist services is a real concern, less than a quarter strongly agreed. This compares with up to 80 per cent agreement in the more remote regions.

There was particularly keen interest in the availability of aged health and care facilities, which would no doubt be influenced by the high number of people aged 50 and over in the Peel. But it was noticeable that people of all ages in most regional communities shared this sentiment. While not asked to judge the quality of services currently available, respondents were asked if it was important to them that good aged health and care facilities were available locally. Eighty-eight per cent said it was.

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 27 to 28 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Perceived Isolation

Not surprisingly, people in the Peel are not particularly inclined to feel a sense of isolation. While 30 per cent agreed the area could be lonely for homemakers, this was the lowest incidence of any region and included just four per cent who strongly agreed.

A slightly higher proportion (34 per cent) said they would like to live closer to their extended family. This was again below the all-regions average but still higher than for regions such as

the South West, Wheatbelt and Mid West. The result would be influenced by the comparatively high proportion of people (93 per cent) who have moved to the Peel from elsewhere, rather than grown up there. The fact that many of the movers were originally from (nearby) Perth would dilute the sense of dislocation and probably explains why the results were not much higher.

While the region has a relatively high proportion of both older residents and very young people, the findings give little indication that these represent multiple generations of families, as occurs in regions such as the South West.

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 29 to 30 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Schooling

*Only respondents with school age children took part in this section of the survey. Across the regions, this amounted to 470 respondents. The results should be viewed with care as the sample for each region was inevitably quite small.*

Parents in the Peel were among the most satisfied of all regions with the schooling solution they had chosen for their high school children. The fact that eight out of 10 were happy with their schooling situation is probably due to the overwhelming proportion of children who live at home and commute to a local high school.

Just two per cent of parents opted to have their children live away from home to attend a high school in Perth and another two per cent have children living away to attend a regional high school. All of the remainder commuted from home.

The findings fit with a trend evident in almost all regions for parents to be most satisfied the less distance their children have to travel to attend school. The 81 per cent who were satisfied with their schooling solution compares with 70 per cent across the regions.

| High school solutions adopted by Peel parents | %   |
|---|-----|
| Commute to a local school                     | 102 |
| Move family to area served by school          | –   |
| Send to Perth                                 | 2   |
| Send away to regional school                  | 2   |
| Distance education                            | –   |

*Table adds beyond 100% due to multiple responses from parents who opt for different education options for their children. For example, they could use a local school for one child and send another away to Perth.*

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 30 to 33 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Future Movement

The overwhelming majority of people in the Peel either plan to stay in the region or at least have no plans to move.

In all, 65 per cent of respondents said they would stay and 12 per cent have no particular plans to move. This was the highest propensity to stay in any region.

Those tending to leave include just eight per cent with definite plans to move and 11 per cent who said they would probably move. The remainder were not sure.

Of those planning to go, around half said they would do so within five years. This is equivalent to about 11 per cent of the population - compared with as much as a third of the population in some regions. To a great many people living in the Peel, it appears there is simply no incentive for them to leave.

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 34 to 36 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Where People Would Go

While there will always be barriers which stop people living exactly where they choose, respondents were asked to ignore those obstacles and nominate where they would most prefer to live if they had the choice.

While 30 per cent said they would not leave their present location in the Peel for any inducement, and a further two per cent would simply relocate to another part of the Peel, the most popular choice among the others was the South West (nominated by 18 per cent). This was followed by Perth (15 per cent) and the Great Southern (seven per cent).

| Desired Location     | Average % | CURRENT LOCATION |           |            |            |             |                        |        |              |                  |
|----------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|------------------------|--------|--------------|------------------|
|                      |           | Kimberley %      | Pilbara % | Gascoyne % | Mid West % | Wheatbelt % | Goldfields-Esperance % | Peel % | South West % | Great Southern % |
| Will not move        | 21        | 17               | 9         | 8          | 21         | 20          | 13                     | 30     | 25           | 26               |
| Perth                | 19        | 21               | 28        | 20         | 17         | 22          | 26                     | 15     | 15           | 17               |
| Kimberley            | 7         | 16               | 9         | 13         | 14         | 7           | 1                      | 5      | 4            | 6                |
| Pilbara              | 3         | 2                | 3         | 5          | 3          | 3           | 1                      | 4      | 2            | 1                |
| Gascoyne             | 1         | 2                | 1         | 4          | 2          | 1           | -                      | 4      | 1            | -                |
| Mid West             | 5         | 6                | 8         | 13         | 9          | 4           | 3                      | 1      | 3            | 2                |
| Wheatbelt            | 2         | 1                | 3         | 2          | 1          | 6           | 2                      | -      | -            | 3                |
| Goldfields-Esperance | 3         | 1                | 5         | 2          | -          | 2           | 10                     | 1      | 1            | 3                |
| Peel                 | 3         | 1                | 3         | 2          | 5          | 5           | 4                      | 2      | 3            | 4                |
| South West           | 14        | 7                | 11        | 13         | 6          | 14          | 10                     | 18     | 23           | 13               |
| Great Southern       | 6         | 3                | 2         | 2          | 3          | 6           | 6                      | 7      | 9            | 9                |
| Interstate/overseas  | 6         | 14               | 12        | 7          | 4          | 1           | 11                     | 5      | 5            | 6                |
| Other                | 2         | 2                | 1         | 5          | 6          | 3           | 2                      | 7      | 1            | 4                |
| Don't Know           | 8         | 7                | 5         | 4          | 9          | 6           | 11                     | 1      | 8            | 6                |
| Total                | 100       | 100              | 100       | 100        | 100        | 100         | 100                    | 100    | 100          | 100              |

*The shaded cells indicate the proportion of people moving from one part of a region to another. For example, at the top left shaded cell, you find 16% of people in the Kimberley would move elsewhere within the Kimberley given their choice of living anywhere in Western Australia. Places which could not be identified through the Department of Land Administration database are categorised as 'other'.*

*Note that in calculating State averages, results from each region are weighted to take account of the impact of population size. Without this weighting, responses from a smaller population region would have a much greater impact on the whole of regional Western Australia than it should. The weighting reinstates the relativities of the nine regions in population terms.*

The most common reasons for choosing to leave the Peel were career move or change of lifestyle. However, the issues of climate and 'escaping the population growth' also featured quite often.

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 36 to 40 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## Why People Move

Having determined which locations are most popular as 'ideal' destinations, the obvious question is why.

It has to be said that the Peel was selected as a preferred destination by just three per cent of respondents from throughout the regions, with most interest coming from the Wheatbelt and Mid West.

However, respondents in all regions were asked to nominate things which would attract them to a region, and on this measure people throughout the State nominated attractive environment, family influences, social/cultural opportunities and fishing as the major attractions of the Peel.

To determine which factors are particularly important in any decision to leave the regions or to stay, respondents were read a list of eight issues and asked to rate their importance. Across the regions, this showed clean environment, career opportunity, simpler lifestyle and community services as the most important issues for regional people generally.

Responses in the Peel varied from this quite considerably. Career opportunity was pushed well down the list into seventh place. The Peel priorities were clean environment, simpler lifestyle, community services and cost of living. It was noticeable that the Peel placed much greater weight on the importance of clean environment. It was selected by 81 per cent of respondents as quite or very important in a decision to leave or stay in the regions, compared to the all-regions average of 67 per cent.

*(Further information and comparative regional data page 41 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## The View from Perth

The survey included 150 interviews conducted with people in Perth to ascertain their views on a range of issues affecting the regions.

A significant finding was that while 57 per cent of Perth respondents said they would not want to leave Perth, a solid 43 per cent indicated they would prefer to live somewhere else in Western Australia. Most commonly, they would head south to either the South West or Great Southern. Three per cent nominated the Peel as their ideal location.

| Where Perth people want to live | %        |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| Perth                           | 57       |
| Kimberley                       | 4        |
| Pilbara                         | 2        |
| Gascoyne                        | 1        |
| Mid West                        | 3        |
| Wheatbelt                       | 4        |
| Goldfields-Esperance            | 1        |
| <b>Peel</b>                     | <b>3</b> |
| South West                      | 16       |
| Great Southern                  | 9        |
| Don't Know                      | 3        |

*Note: This was a multiple response question and therefore does not equal 100%.*

When asked why they would choose to leave or remain in Perth, a number of common themes emerged. Those who chose Perth did so on the basis of family connections, facilities and lifestyle. Those wanting to live in the regions cited physical environment and a quieter, more relaxed lifestyle as their major motivations.

A striking feature was the relative lack of knowledge people in Perth have about the regions. More than half could not name any towns in some regions, although the Peel fared comparatively well with 72 per cent able to name at least one place. Most commonly this was Mandurah, followed by Pinjarra. However, it was noticeable that a large number of South West towns were named in error, suggesting a deal of confusion over regional boundaries.

Almost half the Perth respondents saw the Peel as a region with a strong economic future, one of the higher registers. This was interesting when you consider that people living in the Peel were themselves among the least inclined to see their region as having a strong economic future. A quite high proportion of Perth people were unable to make a decision, which tended to offset the overall result. This included 28 per cent who didn't know and 16 per cent who were ambivalent. But in general terms, the Peel was viewed very positively.

The Peel was also perceived by the majority of Perth respondents as having a good quality of life (64 per cent), good essential services (56 per cent), good social life (61 per cent) and attractive natural environment (66 per cent). All of these results were well above the all-regions average. On each measure, there was also a quite high 'don't know' vote, but very few people had a negative view. This was a consistently better result than for any other region except the South West.

Sixty-seven per cent of Perth respondents said they had visited the Peel Region (assessed by their understanding of Peel perimeters, not necessarily the true perimeters). This was one of the highest visitation rates for any region, second only to the South West. Most of the visits were for holiday purposes. The regions seems to be particularly attractive as a place where Perth people would like to live. Only the South West was more popular.

## A Place I Would Like to Live:

| Perth respondents | Kimberley % | Pilbara % | Gascoyne % | Mid West % | Wheatbelt % | Goldfields-Esperance % | <b>Peel %</b> | South West % | Great Southern % |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|------------|-------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------|------------------|
| Net Disagree      | 58          | 67        | 68         | 63         | 69          | 63                     | <b>37</b>     | 21           | 41               |
| Net Agree         | 23          | 14        | 11         | 13         | 13          | 22                     | <b>42</b>     | 66           | 35               |
| Neither           | 7           | 5         | 5          | 8          | 7           | 7                      | <b>7</b>      | 6            | 7                |
| Don't Know        | 12          | 14        | 16         | 16         | 11          | 8                      | <b>14</b>     | 7            | 17               |

*(Further information and comparative regional data pages 42 to 51 Living in the Regions - State Report)*

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STATE REPORT

### **Mobility:**

The survey shows that regional Western Australia is highly mobile. Only 16 per cent of respondents had grown up in the area where they now live. More than half had been in their current region for 10 years or less and a third for five years or less.

The survey suggests that about a third of people who move to the regions come from Perth and a quarter from overseas or interstate. The remainder move from within their current region or from another Western Australian region.

One in five reported moving three or more times in the last 10 years.

The Mid West had the highest proportion of people who had not moved from their current town or district in the last 10 years, while the Peel and the Pilbara were the most mobile.

### **Motivation:**

Employment is the key factor prompting movement, followed by family/marriage influences and then lifestyle.

People living in the regions indicated they felt safe, had a strong affinity with their location and were generally happy with community facilities (particularly sports). Perceived safety was the most universally held attitude throughout the regions.

While in some regions there is a strong trend towards moving when children reach high school age, the survey suggests that overall 78 per cent of regional people with high school children send them to local high schools.

Attitudes to health care varied across regions, with particular concern evident in the northern regions. Overall, the standard of medical general practice was considered good, but the availability of specialist medical services was a significant concern.

### **The Future:**

Only half the people in regional Western Australia plan to stay where they are indefinitely, although another 11 per cent say they have no firm plans to move.

This leaves a solid 33 per cent of the population who say they will either definitely or probably move on. The residual 6 per cent are not sure.

The survey suggests that a fifth of the regional population will move from their current region within five years.

Asked where they would most prefer to live, two-thirds of the total sample chose a regional area in Western Australia. In other words, the majority of people living in regional Western Australia prefer that lifestyle to any other.

In total, 21 per cent said they would prefer to stay in their current location, 44 per cent said they would either transfer to another region or to another place in their current region, 19 per cent chose Perth, five per cent interstate and one per cent overseas. (A further eight per cent said they did not know and two per cent named places that could not be identified through the DOLA database.)

### **The Perth Perspective:**

Forty-two per cent of Perth respondents said they had lived at some stage in regional Western Australia, although most did not grow up there.

More than half said they would not move away from Perth, but a massive 43 per cent indicated they were open to the possibility. The South West was the most preferred destination (nominated by 16 per cent) followed by the Great Southern (nine per cent).

Major motivations for remaining in Perth include family and the availability of good services/facilities/shopping.

Major motivations for moving to the regions are a quieter lifestyle and country atmosphere.

Perth residents who wanted to move to the regions, but had not, said career structure was the overwhelming reason (28 per cent), followed by financial constraints (18 per cent) and children's education (14 per cent). There was a strong perception that they would not find suitable employment in the regions.

The view from Perth showed relatively little understanding of the economic opportunities available in regional Western Australia. Lifestyle values rather than economic opportunities were overwhelmingly the key attractions.

There was also limited awareness of specific regions, particularly those in the north. A significant number of respondents could not name any towns in some regions. Questions about perceived quality of life and essential services also drew a significant 'don't know' response.

There were clearly people in Perth who would like to live in the regions for perceived lifestyle benefits that appear to be borne out by the experiences of those living there. But most do not pursue a move unless they happen upon employment related opportunities.

# Notes

# Notes