

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES AND TRENDS

Peel has a rapidly growing population with annual average growth rates of 4.4% for the past year, 4.5% over the past five years and 4.0% over past ten years. This growth is significantly higher than for Western Australia which experienced growth rates of 2.4% for the past year, 2.7% over the past five years and 2.2% over the last 10 years. Over this time, Peel has been the second fastest growing regional population in the State, second only to the Pilbara. The estimated resident population of the Peel Region as at June 2011 was 112,677.

Peel has an economy based on mining, manufacturing and construction and in 2010-11 Peel's gross regional product of \$10.7 billion contributed 4.9% to the Western Australian economy. Gold and copper are mined at Newmont's Boddington gold mine and Alcoa and Worsley's bauxite mines in the region provide the entire feedstock for the State's alumina production. In 2010-11 mining contributed \$3,446 million to Peel's economy. Major manufacturing industries in Peel include metal products, machinery and equipment, as well as food processing. The construction sector, which is underpinned by residential projects, contributed \$431.4 million to the economy in 2010-11.

Other industry sectors integral to the Peel economy include agriculture, forestry and fishing, retail and tourism. Retail trade has been increasing in Peel over the last decade and increased by 6.1% in the twelve months to June 2011. This was larger than any other increase in the State.

Despite a growing and diverse economy, the Peel Region continues to experience higher than State average levels of unemployment. In March 2012, there were 49,591 people in Peel's labour force and the unemployment rate was 5.5% as compared to Western Australia at 4.4%, Perth 4.6% and Regional Western Australia 3.7%. At this time, Peel had the highest unemployment rate of all regional areas in Western Australia. Alongside high unemployment rates are relatively low levels of educational attainment. Data from the 2011 census showed that 49.1% of Western Australians aged over 15 years who are no longer at school had completed Year 12 compared to just 34.9% in the Peel Region.

Peel is also experiencing other social issues which were highlighted in the recently released Peel Away the Mask II report on social conditions in the Peel Region. The report noted that the Peel Region has a higher rate of reported drug-related offences than for Western Australia and also that levels of domestic violence in Peel are amongst the highest in the state.

Affordable housing continues to be an issue in the Peel Region and there are over 800 people on the Public Housing waiting list in the region.

The Peel Development Commission is actively addressing the region's challenges which include further developing the economy and working to address social problems while protecting the Region's precious environment which is already being impacted by a drying climate.

Significant developments include the Peel Economic Development Initiative, a targeted program of strategies designed to improve the region's economy, the Peel Recycled Water Scheme to ensure a secure, consistent and sustainable supply of water and a project designed to improve the wellbeing and career opportunities of local high school students.