



People with Disability in Local Government: Participation and Perceptions



July 2015

Baseline Research Report



Contents

1. Key Findings	1
2. Introduction	2
3. Methodology	2
4. West Australian regions and survey respondents	2
5. Research findings – survey	4
Recruitment of a person with disability, workforce statistics and records	5
Local government perspectives on the benefits of employing persons with disability	6
Barriers to the employment of people with disability	6
Relationship with a Disability Employment Service (DES) Provider	7
Professional development needs	8
6. Conclusion	10
Annex 1: Survey Questions	10
Annex 2: Full listing of local authorities and survey respondents	11

Tables

Table 1: West Australian regions	3
Table 2: West Australian regions – survey respondents	3
Table 3: Respondents involved in a recruitment process that has resulted in the employment of a person with disability	5
Table 4: Currently employed persons with disability (best knowledge)	5
Table 5: Employee data on disability held in records	6
Table 6 Benefits considered to apply to the employment of people with disability	6
Table 7: Barriers considered to apply to the employment of people with disability	7
Table 8: Relationship with a Disability Employment Service (DES) provider	7
Table 9: Professional development needs	8
Table 10: Professional development needs by region	9

It is clear from the research that local governments in Western Australia recognise the value of employing people with disability. This can contribute to creating a work environment that better reflects the diversity of the communities they serve. However, the research also shows there is a way to go in improving the environment and employment outcomes for people with disability in local governments. The key findings were:

- a total of 98 local governments participated in the survey and they represented 70 per cent of the sector
- almost half or 47 per cent of respondents indicated they had been involved in a recruitment process that resulted in the employment of a person with disability
- collectively, survey respondents (to the best of their knowledge) employ 118 full-time, 54 part-time and 170 casual persons with disability
- of those surveyed, 60 per cent hold employee data on disability in their records
- the majority of respondents believe the employment of people with disability would bring benefits such as diversity, retention of existing employees who acquire disability and more user-friendly workplaces for everyone
- survey respondents believed the most common barriers in employing persons with disability were:
 - people with disability have little or no interest in applying for advertised vacancies
 - a lack of knowledge of support available
 - the costs of modifications in the workplace
 - a lack of confidence in relating to people with disability in the workplace.
- more than half or 61 per cent of survey respondents do not have a relationship with a disability service provider
- more than 50 per cent of survey respondents selected knowing what financial and other supports were available and the link between Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIPs) and workforce plans as their top professional development needs, relating to the employment of people with disability.

DAIPs are a requirement of every local government. A DAIP ensures people with disability can access all information, services and facilities provided by local governments and be included in the community.

In 2013, a seventh outcome was added to all DAIPs:

Outcome 7: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with a public authority.

Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) in partnership with the Disability Services Commission has undertaken a research project to better understand disability employment in the local government sector.

The research objectives for the project are to establish:

- a baseline estimate of current employment levels of people with disability in local government
- an overview of general experience in the recruitment and management of people with disability
- an understanding of local government perceptions regarding:
 - the benefits of employing people with disability
 - barriers to employing people with disability
- current engagement levels with Disability Employment Service (DES) providers
- an understanding of the professional development needs to enable the local government sector to be engaged and fully informed on the employment of people with disability.

The findings and recommendations of the research project are intended to:

- provide useful information for local and state governments and other relevant stakeholders
- enable dialogue among stakeholders regarding employing people with disability in the local government sector
- guide stakeholders to develop practical measures to increase the employment of people with disability in the local government sector.

All local governments in Western Australia were invited to participate in an online survey. See Annex 1 for the survey questions.

This report categorises local government areas into regions. Table 1 shows the number and proportion of local governments in each region, plus the proportion of the West Australian population represented. Note Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island, which are Australian territories, are term “Special Districts”.

Table 1: West Australian regions

Region	Number of local governments	% of local governments	% of population
Gascoyne	4	3	0.4
Goldfields-Esperance	9	6	3
Great Southern	11	8	2
Kimberley	4	3	2
Metro Perth	29	21	73
Mid-West	17	12	2
Peel	5	4	5
Pilbara	4	3	3
South West	12	9	7
Special Districts	2	1	0
Wheatbelt	43	31	3
Total	140	100	100

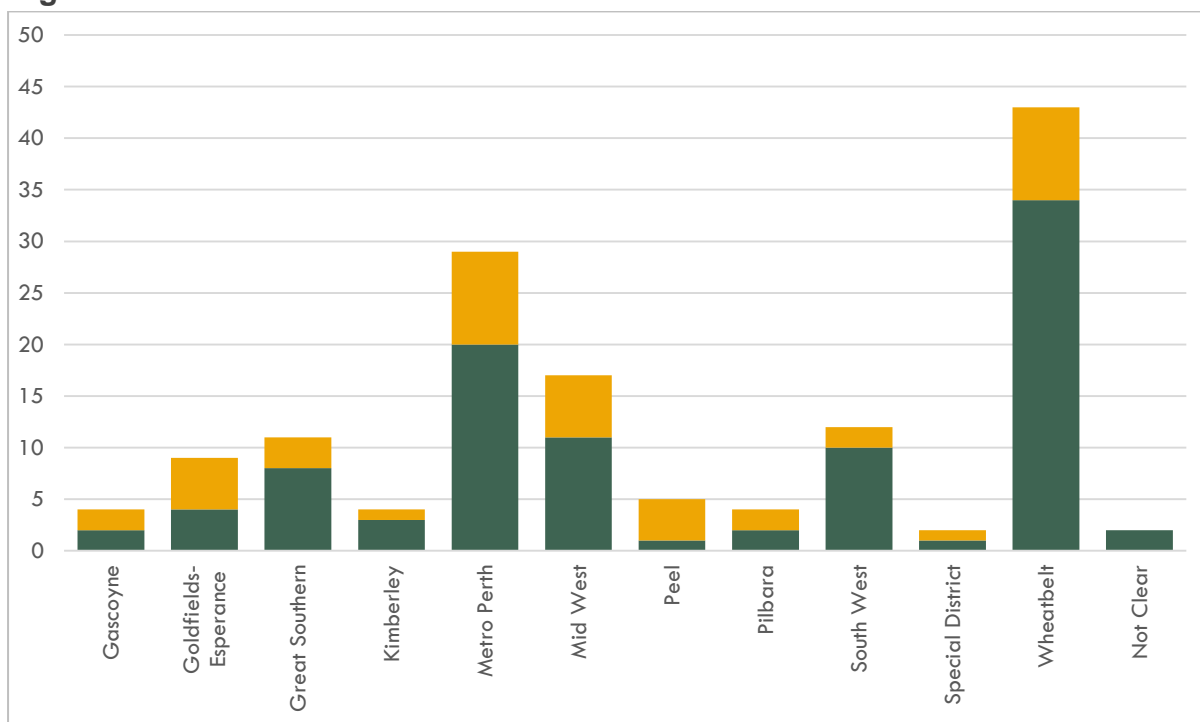
Table 2 shows the number and proportion of survey respondents by region. The total response rate represents 70 per cent of the sector. In terms of respondents, all regions are represented but to varying levels. The best responding region was the South West with a rate of 83 per cent, compared with only a 20 per cent response rate from the Peel region.

Table 2: West Australian regions – survey respondents

Region	Number of local governments	Survey respondents	% of region	% of survey
Gascoyne	4	2	50	2
Goldfields-Esperance	9	4	44	4
Great Southern	11	8	73	8
Kimberley	4	3	75	3
Metro Perth	29	20	69	20
Mid-West	17	11	65	11
Peel	5	1	20	1
Pilbara	4	2	50	2
South West	12	10	83	10
Special Districts	2	1	50	1
Wheatbelt	43	34	79	35
Not stated		2		2

Total	140	98	70	100
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Figure 1: Number of survey respondents compared to the total number in the region



Information was gathered to determine indicative workforce statistics on employees with disability, existence of formal records, understanding of benefits, perception of barriers, extent of relationships with DES providers and professional development needs in the local government sector. These are outlined in the following sections.

Respondents comprised people in different job positions including Chief and Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Community Development Manager/Officer, Human Resources Manager/Officer, Corporate Services Manager/Officer, and Finance and Administration Manager/Officer.

Recruitment of a person with disability, workforce statistics and records

Less than half (47 per cent) of survey respondents indicated they had been directly involved in a recruitment process that had resulted in the employment of a person with disability.

Table 3: Respondents involved in a recruitment process that has resulted in the employment of a person with disability

Answer options	Response count	Response %
Yes	46	47
No	51	52
Not clear	1	1
Total	98	100

The survey then asked for the number of persons with disability currently employed within the local authorities, to the best of their knowledge. The results demonstrate that casual employment is the most common arrangement (see Table 4).

The overall employment of people with disability in the local government sector reported in the survey (approximately 2 per cent of the total workforce on a headcount basis) matches the total percentage reported by local governments in the 2014 Equal Employment Opportunity annual returns (visit <http://data.gov.au> > Datasets> Public Sector Commission WA > Equal Employment Opportunity Survey). This is close to the estimated proportion in the WA working age population needing assistance with core activities (of mobility, communication and/or self-care) of 1.9 per cent. ([Australian Bureau of Statistics website](#), 2011 Census of Population and Housing, retrieved 27 July 2015).

This is a small proportion of the total estimated working age population with a disability (approximately 20 per cent). The total is growing, strongly correlated with the ageing population.

Table 4: Currently employed persons with disability (best knowledge)

Answer options	Response total
Full time	118
Part time	54
Casual	170
Total	342

Only 60 per cent of those surveyed actually hold employee data on disability in their records. This is likely to have an impact on overall employment statistics. There were also a number of comments regarding the possibility of non-disclosure by some employees.

Table 5: Employee data on disability held in records

Answer options	Response total	Response %
Yes	59	60
No	28	29
Not clear	11	11
Total	98	100

Local government perspectives on the benefits of employing persons with disability

The majority of respondents, as shown in Table 6, believe the employment of people with disability would bring benefits such as diversity, retention of existing employees who acquire disability and more user friendly workplaces for everyone.

Table 6: Benefits considered to apply to the employment of people with disability

Answer options	Response count	Response %
Reflection of diversity in the community	68	75
Retention of existing employees who acquire disability	60	66
More user-friendly workplace for everyone	58	64
Access to a wider talent pool	54	59
Strengthened workplace morale	42	46
Reduced sick leave and early medical retirements	14	15
Other (please specify)	9	10
Answered question	91	
Skipped question	7	

Barriers to the employment of people with disability

A majority of respondents believed that people with disability appeared uninterested in applying for advertised positions. The issue of support was another key barrier identified, especially by more remote local governments.

Table 7: Barriers considered to apply to the employment of people with disability

Answer options	Response count	Response %
People with disability do not seem to be interested in applying for advertised vacancies	48	55
Lack of knowledge of support available	37	43
Costs of modifications	34	39
Lack of confidence in relating to people with disability in the workplace	25	29
Other (please specify)	22	25
Workplace culture is not supportive	5	6
Answered question	87	
Skipped question	11	

Relationship with a DES provider

The majority of respondents (61 per cent) do not have a relationship with a DES provider.

Table 8: Relationship with a DES provider

Answer options	Response count	Response %
Yes	33	34
No	60	61
Not clear	5	5
Total	98	100

Professional development needs

The survey then asked about the professional development needs of the local government sector.

As can be seen in Table 9, the majority of respondents identified one or more professional development needs. Over 50 per cent selected knowing what financial and other supports are available and the link between DAIPs and workforce plans.

Table 9: Professional development needs

Answer options	Response count	Response %
Knowing what financial and other support is available	58	67
Link between DAIPs and workforce plans	44	51
Developing strategies and an action plan for Outcome 7 in the DAIP	36	41
Workplace auditing for disability friendliness	36	41
Confidence to relate to people with disability in the workplace	26	30
Other (please specify)	2	2
Answered question	79	
Skipped question	19	

Table 10 provides a detailed breakdown of identified professional development needs by local government region. This enables the Commission, LGMA and other relevant stakeholders to design targeted initiatives that respond directly to each region's needs. It also provides a baseline from which to measure, at a more detailed level, the local government sector's progress against the identified professional development needs.

Table 10: Professional development needs by region

Question 10 - By region (% of category)	Higher need	Medium need	Lower need									
	Gascoyne	Goldfields - Esperance	Great Southern	Kimberley	Metro Perth	Mid West	Peel	Pilbara	South West	Special Districts	Wheatbelt	Not Clear
Number of respondents	2	4	8	3	20	11	1	2	10	1	34	2
Developing strategies and an action plan for Outcome 7 in the DAIP	50%	25%	38%	100%	30%	27%	0%	50%	30%	0%	44%	0%
Confidence to relate to people with disability in the workplace	50%	25%	25%	33%	20%	27%	0%	50%	40%	0%	26%	0%
Link between DAIPs and workforce plans	0%	25%	63%	67%	35%	45%	0%	100%	30%	100%	50%	50%
Workplace auditing for disability friendliness	50%	25%	13%	67%	40%	45%	0%	100%	60%	100%	26%	0%
Knowing what financial and other support is available	100%	50%	50%	67%	65%	45%	0%	100%	70%	100%	53%	100%

Annex 1: Survey questions

Q1. Name of local government

Q2. Position

Q3. To the best of your knowledge, have you been directly involved in a recruitment process that has resulted in the employment of a person with disability? Note that disability may be physical, sensory, psychiatric, neurological, cognitive, intellectual or a combination of these.

Yes No

Q4. To the best of your knowledge, how many persons with disability are currently employed at your organisation?:

___ Full-time

___ Part-time

___ Casual

Q5. What percentage of your workforce does this represent?

Q6. Do you hold employee data on disability in your records?

Q7. In your opinion, which of the following benefits do/could apply to the employment of people with disability in your organisation? (Please tick all that apply)

- Access to a wider talent pool
- Reduced sick leave and early medical retirements
- Retention of existing employees who acquire disability
- Strengthened workplace morale
- Reflection of diversity in the community
- More user-friendly workplace for everyone
- Other (please specify)

Q8. In your opinion, which of the following barriers do/could apply to the employment of people with disability in your organisation? (Please tick all that apply)

- Costs of modifications
- Lack of confidence in relating to people with disability in the workplace
- Lack of knowledge of support available
- People with disability do not seem to be interested in applying for advertised vacancies
- Workplace culture is not supportive

Other (please specify)

Q9. Do you have a relationship with a Disability Employment Service (DES) provider?

Yes No

Q10. Do you or other relevant staff in your organisation have professional development needs in the following areas? (Please tick all that apply)

- Developing strategies and an action plan for Outcome 7 (people with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with a public authority) in the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP)
- Confidence to relate to people with disability in the workplace
- Link between DAIPs and workforce plans
- Workplace auditing for disability friendliness
- Knowing what financial and other support is available
- Other (please state)

Q11. What specific areas of training and development would Elected Members benefit from?

- Arts and cultural planning
- Understanding arts and culture in the community
- Creative community engagement
- Other (please state)

Q12. Is there anything else you would like to add that would help us to understand the current state of employment of people with disability in West Australian local government?

Local government by region	In survey?	Type	Population	Area (m ²)
Gascoyne				
Carnarvon, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	5,785	4,656,220
Exmouth, Shire of		Rural remote	2,393	648,807
Shark Bay, Shire of		Rural remote	855	2,414,020
Upper Gascoyne, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	250	5,788,340
Goldfields-Esperance				
Coolgardie, Shire of	Yes	Urban regional	4,000	3,035,390
Dundas, Shire of		Rural remote	1,143	9,258,720
Esperance, Shire of	Yes	Rural agriculture	13,477	4,503,880
Kalgoorlie-Boulder, City of		Urban regional	31,109	9,515,150
Laverton, Shire of		Rural remote	1,226	17,989,200
Leonora, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	2,512	3,189,320
Menzies, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	385	12,457,700
Ngaanyatjarraku, Shire of		Rural remote	1,436	16,037,800
Ravensthorpe, Shire of		Rural agricultural	2,126	982,900
Great Southern				
Albany, City of	Yes	Urban regional	33,651	430,994
Broomehill-Tambellup, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,140	260,913
Cranbrook, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,081	327,747
Denmark, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	5,194	185,990
Gnowangerup, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,271	426,557
Jerramungup, Shire of		Rural agricultural	1,053	650,748
Katanning, Shire of		Rural agricultural	4,184	151,829
Kent, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	510	563,011
Kojonup, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,982	293,114
Plantagenet, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	4,882	487,647
Woodanilling, Shire of		Rural agricultural	416	112,835

Local government by region	In survey?	Type	Population	Area (m ²)
Kimberley				
Broome, Shire of	Yes	Urban regional	14,998	5,463,180
Derby-West Kimberley, Shire of		Rural remote	8,434	11,984,200
Halls Creek, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	3,562	13,306,100
Wyndham-East Kimberley, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	7,800	11,202,300

Metropolitan Perth				
Armadale, City of	Yes	Urban fringe	62,297	55,992
Bassendean, Town of	Yes	Urban development	14,405	1,034
Bayswater, City of	Yes	Urban development	61,264	3,277
Belmont, City of		Urban development	35,207	3,969
Cambridge, Town of	Yes	Urban development	24,965	2,199
Canning, City of	Yes	Urban development	85,515	6,490
Claremont, Town of		Urban development	9,279	496
Cockburn, City of	Yes	Urban development	89,685	16,794
Cottesloe, Town of		Urban development	7,605	386
East Fremantle, Town of	Yes	Urban development	6,932	314
Fremantle, City of	Yes	Urban development	26,583	1,901
Gosnells, City of	Yes	Urban development	106,584	12,720
Joondalup, City of	Yes	Urban development	152,403	9,893
Kalamunda, Shire of		Urban fringe	53,568	32,420
Kwinana, City of	Yes	Urban development	29,227	12,001
Melville, City of		Urban development	95,702	5,282
Mosman Park, Town of	Yes	Urban development	8,599	435
Mundaring, Shire of	Yes	Urban fringe	36,530	64,325

Local government by region	In survey?	Type	Population	Area (m ²)
Nedlands, City of	Yes	Urban development	20,533	1,995
Peppermint Grove, Shire of	Yes	Urban development	1,527	107
Perth, City of		Urban development	16,715	1,202
Rockingham, City of	Yes	Urban development	104,105	25,689
South Perth, City of	Yes	Urban development	40,739	1,981
Stirling, City of	Yes	Urban development	195,699	10,473
Subiaco, City of	Yes	Urban development	17,575	698
Swan, City of		Urban fringe	108,462	104,322
Victoria Park, Town of	Yes	Urban development	32,433	1,793
Vincent, City of		Urban development	31,550	1,138
Wanneroo, City of		Urban fringe	152,076	68,506
Mid-West				
Carnamah, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	547	287,295
Chapman Valley, Shire of		Rural agricultural	1,173	398,258
Coorow, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,065	418,883
Cue, Shire of		Rural remote	272	1,358,490
Greater Geraldton, City of	Yes	Urban regional	37,162	988,911
Irwin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	3,567	237,196
Meekatharra, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	1,377	10,012,100
Mingenew, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	479	193,486
Morawa, Shire of		Rural agricultural	891	351,255
Mount Magnet, Shire of		Rural remote	643	1,387,290
Murchison, Shire of		Rural remote	115	4,503,020
Northampton, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	3,191	1,261,770
Perenjori, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	905	830,045

Local government by region	In survey?	Type	Population	Area (m ²)
Sandstone, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	105	3,266,650
Three Springs, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	614	265,291
Wiluna, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	1,159	18,129,400
Yalgoo, Shire of		Rural remote	402	2,793,640
Peel				
Boddington, Shire of		Rural agricultural	2,228	189,937
Mandurah, City of		Urban fringe	69,903	17,423
Murray, Shire of		Rural significant	14,150	171,005
Serpentine-Jarrahdale, Shire of		Rural significant	17,745	90,407
Waroona, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	3,582	83,185
Pilbara				
Ashburton, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	10,001	10,095,900
East Pilbara, Shire of	Yes	Rural remote	11,950	37,124,400
Karratha, City of		Urban regional	22,899	1,523,580
Port Hedland, Town of		Urban regional	15,046	1,843,110
South West				
Augusta-Margaret River, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	11,760	212,242
Boyup Brook, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,589	282,650
Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	4,318	133,938
Bunbury, City of		Urban regional	31,348	6,524
Busselton, City of	Yes	Urban regional	30,331	145,401
Capel, Shire of	Yes	Rural significant	14,637	55,781
Collie, Shire of		Rural agricultural	9,126	171,002
Dardanup, Shire of	Yes	Rural significant	12,404	52,592
Donnybrook-Balingup, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	5,322	155,997
Harvey, Shire of	Yes	Urban regional	23,238	172,788
Manjimup, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	9,182	702,575
Nannup, Shire of	Yes	Rural	1,263	305,371

Local government by region	In survey?	Type	Population	Area (m ²)
		agricultural		
Special Districts				
Christmas Island, Shire of		Special district	2,072	136,700
Cocos Keeling Islands, Shire of	Yes	Special district	550	14,200
Wheatbelt				
Beverley, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,567	237,052
Brookton, Shire of		Rural agricultural	932	160,115
Bruce Rock, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	975	272,471
Chittering, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	4,427	121,990
Corrigin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,063	268,060
Cuballing, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	871	119,495
Cunderdin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,311	186,245
Dalwallinu, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,266	722,722
Dandaragan, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	3,185	671,149
Dowerin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	675	186,308
Dumblebung, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	603	254,128
Gingin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	4,687	320,844
Goomalling, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	986	183,543
Kellerberrin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,180	191,558
Kondinin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,046	742,209
Koorda, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	434	283,235
Kulin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	826	471,686
Lake Grace, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,359	1,188,580
Merredin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	3,282	329,439
Moora, Shire of		Rural	2,476	376,298

Local government by region	In survey?	Type	Population	Area (m ²)
		agricultural		
Mt Marshall, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	486	1,018,590
Mukinbudin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	489	343,499
Narembeen, Shire of		Rural agricultural	813	383,325
Narrogin, Shire of		Rural agricultural	875	161,835
Narrogin, Town of		Urban regional	4,220	1,313
Northam, Shire of		Rural agricultural	10,557	143,122
Nungarin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	231	116,301
Pingelly, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,164	129,405
Quairading, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,044	201,693
Tammin, Shire of		Rural agricultural	405	110,169
Toodyay, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	4,387	169,165
Trayning, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	347	165,094
Victoria Plains, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	897	255,094
Wagin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,847	194,573
Wandering, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	438	189,962
West Arthur, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	868	283,265
Westonia, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	276	331,401
Wickepin, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	749	203,984
Williams, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	913	230,448
Wongan-Ballidu, Shire of		Rural agricultural	1,434	336,507
Wyalkatchem, Shire of		Rural agricultural	523	159,435
Yilgarn, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	1,637	3,037,630

Local government by region	In survey?	Type	Population	Area (m ²)
York, Shire of	Yes	Rural agricultural	3,395	213,159