



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia

PILBARA

Business Plan 2023-2024





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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present to you the Annual Business Plan of Regional Development Australia (RDA) Pilbara. As the Chair of RDA Pilbara, it is my privilege to lead a dedicated team that is deeply committed to driving sustainable growth and prosperity in the Pilbara region of Western Australia.

The Pilbara is a place of immense potential, characterised by its unique landscapes, diverse industries, and resilient communities. Our region is blessed with abundant natural resources, including iron ore, oil, gas, salt, and renewable energy sources. These resources have not only significantly contributed to the national economy but have also created enormous employment opportunities and supported the development of critical infrastructure.

However, we acknowledge that the Pilbara faces its own distinct set of challenges and opportunities. Our Annual Business Plan for the upcoming year reflects our unwavering commitment to addressing these challenges and capitalising on the opportunities before us. We have identified key focus areas that align with the aspirations and needs of our community, fostering an inclusive and sustainable future for all.

We continue to place a strong emphasis on collaboration, partnerships, and community engagement, in line with the Government's Regional Investment Framework. We firmly believe that successful regional development requires the active participation and support of all stakeholders. By working together, we can leverage our collective expertise, resources, and ideas to drive transformative change and create a thriving environment for businesses, residents, and visitors alike.

The RDA Pilbara team has diligently worked to develop actionable plans, secure funding opportunities, and forge partnerships to implement our vision. We are guided by evidence-based research industry insights, and the aspirations of our community, ensuring that our strategies are both realistic and forward-thinking.

We look forward to the future with excitement and remain cognisant of the need to maintain flexibility in our plans to match the rapidly changing requirements of industries within our region with the unprecedented levels of innovation in play.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nerida Kickett'.

Nerida Kickett
Chair, RDA Pilbara

Achievements 2022-2023

The RDA Pilbara Committee has made significant strides in advancing economic growth, fostering partnerships, and supporting local communities in the last financial year.



- **West Pilbara Communities for Children (WPC4C)**
– funded by Department of Social Services

This program plays a vital role in supporting early childhood development and well-being in the West Pilbara region by collaborating with local communities and stakeholders to address the unique needs and challenges faced by families in the area. In the 2022/23 funding year, 11 programs were delivered by seven local service providers in Karratha, Roebourne, Tom Price, and Onslow. For 2023/24, the WPC4C Committee is excited to be extending the program's reach to Pannawonica, Paraburdoo, Wickham, and Dampier with an increased number of service providers and greater diversity of programs.

- **Pilbara Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA)**

Since its implementation, the Pilbara DAMA has received an overwhelming response from local businesses. Of the 48 applications that were received in the first year, most applications were for the service worker industry including childcare and retail workers. With the arrival of overseas workers, it has allowed parents to return to the workforce and Child Care operators to offer more places for long and out of school care. RDA Pilbara has submitted a request for variation to the Department of Home Affairs to include the Shire of East Pilbara, and to add another 70 occupations.



- **North-West Defence Alliance (NWDA)**

RDA Pilbara is currently working with the nine local governments in the North-West and have formed the North-West Defence Alliance to advocate and assist with defence investment in Western Australia. Senior Defence personnel are already taking notice of the NWDA, and a visit has been planned to the region.



- **Northern Hub – Pilbara Node**

The Pilbara Node has been managing the Bullara Station Water Management Project – Stage 1. We were able to secure \$100,000 of funding from the Northern Hub for Bullara Station. This funding is assisting the Station Owners to get results sooner, rather than spreading it over as longer-term cash flow, which will benefit other pastoralists in the region, and the Station will be a demonstration site as to how to build drought resilience into the future.

- **Clean Energy Cluster**

RDA Pilbara has been instrumental in assisting with the Pilbara Hydrogen Hub. In collaboration with the Pilbara Development Commission (PDC) and the City of Karratha, RDA Pilbara are undertaking a program of engagement and consultation with Pilbara communities under a Community Education Action Plan to raise awareness and build community understanding and knowledge of clean energy and the emerging clean energy industries in the region.

RDA Pilbara Committee

The Committee are representative of the four local government areas in the Pilbara and collectively bring strong cross-sectoral experience in business, local government, education, accounting, advisory, Aboriginal culture and land ownership, and innovation, which are invaluable skills in supporting RDA Pilbara's 2023-24 strategic directions.

As of 1 July 2023, the RDA Pilbara Committee comprised:

Position	Name	Term of Office
Chair	Nerida Kickett	30/06/2025
Deputy Chair	John Lally OAM	30/06/2025
Member	Mark Bradley	30/06/2024
Member	Anthony Middleton	31/10/2023
Member	Lorraine Injie	31/10/2023
Member	Nancy Milligan	30/06/2024
Member	Robby Chibawe	30/06/2024
Member	Chantelle King	30/06/2024



Governance Self-Assessment

RDA Pilbara completed the Governance Self-Assessment to ensure governance structures had been developed and implemented according to best practice. The assessment was completed in November 2022, with all 8 actions and recommendations completed by April 2023.

Strategic Plan Review

A Strategic Plan Review was conducted in February 2023 by the Committee and RDA Pilbara staff members.

The **Vision** of RDA Pilbara was:

“The Pilbara region is an economically vibrant and socially inclusive region that promotes investment and lifestyle opportunities”.

The Committee agreed to update the Vision to:

“Producing Local,
Selling Global”

The **Mission** was also discussed, and was shortened from:

“To develop and strengthen Pilbara communities through effective leadership and collaboration and the provision of responsive and innovative services”.

to

“To develop and strengthen
Pilbara communities”.

The current **core values** of RDA Pilbara are:

- Transparent
- Accountable
- Collaborative
- Fair
- Ambitious

With an additional two values added:

- Integrity
- Courageous



Strategic Context and Regional Priorities

In line with the RDA Charter, and the newly announced Regional Investment Framework, the focus for 2023-24 will be to continue promoting the Pilbara and other local regional areas, while facilitating greater economic outcomes.

RDA regional stakeholders will be key to the identification and realisation of strategic initiatives under the Annual Business Plan.

Stakeholders

RDA Pilbara's major stakeholders continue to be:

- Representative members of Parliament;
- Pilbara communities;
- Regional infrastructure planning bodies;
- Regional economic (and other) development bodies;
- Pilbara Development Commission;
- Pilbara local government authorities;
- Pilbara Chambers of Commerce and Industry;
- Non-government and community organisations;
- Industry and regional industry peak bodies;
- Education and employment providers;
- Aboriginal Corporations.



Regional Profile

Population and People

As per the 2021 ABS Census, the population in the Pilbara on census night was 55,037 people, with 29,594 living in the West Pilbara (Karratha, Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Onslow, Pannawonica), and East Pilbara 25,443 (Port Hedland, Newman, Marble Bar, Nullagine, Pardoo, Telfer, Jigalong).

The Pilbara's population fluctuates in line with the economy and is not always linear. The Pilbara's strong positioning regarding iron ore; concerted effort by Federal and State Government and industry sectors on diversifying the economy; Pilbara resource sector majors' commitments to progressively achieving net zero emissions between 2030 and 2050; and demand for battery minerals and renewables will likely position the Pilbara for continued growth.

The Pilbara is continuing to experience a critical housing shortage, accompanied by inflated median house prices/rents and increasing costs of living. The State Government, Local Governments and other regional organisations are working together to try to fast-track additional land and housing.

Cost of living and doing business remains a significant challenge with higher costs attributable to eating out, inflated fuel costs and critical labour shortages in mining and resources and trades and services with a concomitant increase by many Pilbara-based businesses in salary packages to attract new staff.



55,037 total population



29,594 living in West Pilbara

25,443 living in East Pilbara



Strategic Priorities

A continued strong facilitative policy and investment environment exists across Federal, State and Local Governments, centred on renewable energy transformation, mining and METS, improving the materials supply chain through value-adding processes and advanced manufacturing.

Economic Volatility

Some threats to the economy exist and need to be considered including:

- The continuing war in Ukraine, ongoing concerns relating to global recession, rising inflation and tightening of financial markets.
- Labour supply is impacting existing Australian operations and replacement capacity.

Human Capital and Skills

It is expected that 6,500 workers will be required for new Pilbara projects, just in the City of Karratha, as announced on the ASX in July 2022. Whether this is by FIFO workers, or local workers, this is a large number of workers required for new projects in the region, primarily in the mining sector.

Childcare and retail are two industries that are currently feeling the effects of staff shortages. It is estimated that in the City of Karratha/Town of Port Hedland there are over 1,000 children on childcare wait lists, which represents approximately ten percent of the waitlist total in Western Australia. Centres are not operating at full capacity due to staff shortages.

Labour shortages are a cyclical issue in the Pilbara associated with an economic upturn, with skills shortages in the resources sector creating competition for labour in the local economy, wage inflation, employment incentivisation and increases in the cost of doing business. Labour shortages differ from the previous economic upturn, 2007-2013, given competition with the eastern states for labour, particularly in the resources sector.

The unemployment rate in the Pilbara region has significantly declined over the years. The unemployment rate in the Pilbara was 3.5% in December 2019, which decreased to 1.5% in March 2023.

The Pilbara Designated Area Migration Agreement has now been operational for over 12 months, with a high level of uptake by businesses in the City of Karratha and Town of Port Hedland.



Infrastructure

The Pilbara region is a large, sparsely populated area that is rich in mineral resources. Despite its economic potential, the region faces several infrastructure challenges that is impacting its development and growth.

Some of the infrastructure issues in the Pilbara include:



Transport and connectivity: The Pilbara is a vast region with a dispersed population and a lack of adequate transportation infrastructure. Road networks are limited, and the existing ones are often poorly maintained, which can lead to accidents and increased travel times. There are also limited options for public transportation, which can make it difficult for people to access employment and essential services.



Water supply: The Pilbara is an arid region that experiences long periods of drought. The availability of water is a significant issue. The City of Karratha relies heavily on groundwater, with water being piped from the Millstream aquifer over 100 kilometres away. Annual rainfall is 300ml, with evaporation 3000ml.



Energy supply: The Pilbara is a significant producer of natural gas, but the region still relies on diesel generators to power many of its remote communities. The cost of transporting fuel to these communities is high.



Housing: The Pilbara is experiencing rapid growth, however, there is a shortage of affordable housing in the region. The high cost of living in the Pilbara also makes it difficult for low-income households to access essential services.



Environmental degradation: The mining industry is a significant contributor to the Pilbara's economy but is also impacting the environment by loss of habitat, soil erosion and water pollution.



Telecommunications: There is a lack of telecommunication around the Pilbara, which has been identified, and there is ongoing work by RDA Pilbara in conjunction with Telstra and NBN to look at increasing mobile phone service around the Pilbara.

RDA Pilbara are continuing to address these infrastructure issues with cooperation between government, industry, and local communities, to develop solutions that balance economic growth with environmental and social sustainability.



Regional Priorities

Priorities and activities for 2023-24 were determined by the RDA Pilbara Committee giving due consideration to the following:

- the RDA Charter and the Regional Investment Framework;
- identified regional priorities that have cross-sectoral support and will realise high-value economic (and social) outcomes;
- alignment to key regional development, Federal and State strategic and funding priorities;
- capacity to improve productivity, create competitive advantage and capture emerging opportunities for a diversified economy; and
- building on initiatives commenced in 2021-22 and 2022-23;

Performance measures applied are outlined in the financial agreement between RDA Pilbara and the Commonwealth.

1. North-West Defence Alliance

RDA Pilbara Strategy 1 – Business development and economic diversification
RIF Investing in Services & Investing in Industries and Local Economies

RDA Pilbara are supporting this alliance by providing administrative support. There are nine local governments (eight with coastlines on the Indian Ocean) between the Shires of Exmouth in the south and Wyndham/ East Kimberley in the north. These local governments agree that an alliance would assist in lobbying the Federal and State Government to increase their investment in defence-related infrastructure and personnel in the northern half of Western Australia.

Objectives of the Alliance:

- To promote the case for increased defence infrastructure and personnel expenditure across local governments in the Northwest.
- To act as a point of liaison for the Department of Defence and associated authorities.
- To communicate key defence priorities to all levels of government, relevant stakeholders and to the public.
- To maintain effective communication and collaboration between the Alliance members and to promote one another's strategic objectives.



2. Expansion of Aviation in the Pilbara

RDA Pilbara Strategy 1 – Business development and economic diversification

RIF Investing in Services & Investing in Industries and Local Economies

RDA Pilbara has been involved in discussions with a new airline provider, local governments, and airport managers in the Pilbara regarding airline services from the Pilbara to other intrastate and interstate destinations, other than Perth. RDA Pilbara will continue to advocate by:

- Working with the consultant engaged by the City of Karratha and Town of Port Hedland Airports to deliver a report which will be presented to the Airlines;
- Providing funding to the City of Karratha and Town of Port Hedland for the report;
- Continue to lobby for flights to other intrastate/interstate destinations other than Perth.



RDA Pilbara has been involved in discussions with a new airline provider, local governments, and airport managers in the Pilbara regarding airline services from the Pilbara to other intrastate and interstate destinations, other than Perth.

3. Pilbara Designated Area Migration Agreement Expansion

RDA Pilbara Strategy 2 – skilled workforce attraction and development

RDA Pilbara Strategy 3 – Leadership and collaboration

RIF Across all priority focus areas

RDA Pilbara continues to be the Designated Area Representative for the Pilbara Designated Area Migration Agreement. The first year of the five-year deed of agreement has just been completed, and an annual review and request for variation has been submitted to the Department of Home Affairs. RDA Pilbara will continue to undertake the following activities:

- Provide advisory services on the DAMA program.
- Accept and assess applications from businesses within the parameters of the eligible DAMA occupations listing (labour agreement streams).
- Ensure genuine attempts have been made by applicant employers in the first instance to ensure recruitment of Australian citizens and permanent residents.
- Annual review of the DAMA to ensure it meets the economic and labour needs of the region.
- Collaborate with DAMA stakeholders to ensure efficient and effective functioning of the DAMA program.
- Continue discussions with the Shire of East Pilbara to gather information to extend the current Pilbara DAMA to the East Pilbara.

4. West Pilbara Communities for Children Initiative and East Pilbara Expansion

Strategy 3 – Infrastructure and services

Strategy 4 – Leadership and collaboration

RIF Investing in People & Investing in Places & Investing in Services

RDA Pilbara continues to deliver the West Pilbara Communities for Children Initiative, funded by the Department of Social Services, as a facilitating partner. The program delivers tailored local level approaches to support family and child wellbeing, with a focus on families experiencing vulnerability and multiple complex needs. Service delivery is evidenced-based to ensure alignment to identified need with partner organisations contracted to deliver services in West Pilbara communities. Through carer capacity building, supporting child health, education, and development, and collaborating with key service providers, the program aims to achieve improved socio-economic outcomes for predominantly disadvantaged communities.

The focus of RDA Pilbara for the 2023-24 financial year will include but not be limited to:

- Continue to investigate and gather information regarding the need for an East Pilbara Communities for Children Initiative and report to the Department of Social Services
- Continual program assessment to ensure alignment to federal program objectives and achievement of outcomes in provider agreements.
- Capacity building and training of community partners and facilitating opportunities for information sharing on best practice approaches and service partnerships.
- Ensuring that changes to governance practices improve program effectiveness.

5. Connecting the Pilbara

RDA Pilbara Strategy 4 – Infrastructure and services investment is evidence-based and targeted to deliver sustainable, liveable, and economically vibrant communities.

RIF Investing in Services & Investing in Industries and Local Economies

RDA Pilbara, Pilbara local and regional development agencies and Chambers of Commerce and Industry, are well-positioned to leverage improved telecommunications for the Pilbara region and facilitate better business performance, social connectivity, and tourism outcomes. Specifically, RDA Pilbara can facilitate:

- Planning and delivering an advocacy agenda to the Federal and State Governments and telecommunications providers for improved telecommunications outcomes, including realisation of Governments' recent telecommunications strategy commitments.
- Support research that identifies system deficits, opportunities, and outcomes.
- Negotiate partnerships and apply evidence-based approaches to support funding investment that strengthens telecommunications in the region.

Operations

Funding and Governance

RDA Pilbara received approved funding of \$392,459.00 from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development for the 2022-2023 financial year, which included \$5,000 for the Self-Governance Assessment, \$6,266 indexation payment and \$3000 for professional coaching.

The RDA Pilbara Committee undertook training in Duties and Responsibilities and also Strategy and Risk for the Not-for-Profit Director, which was conducted by the AICD, in December 2022.

RDA Pilbara also undertook the Self-Governance Assessment with an external Auditor, who made 8 minor recommendations. All of the recommendations were addressed and completed by April 2023.

RDA Pilbara has reviewed its existing policies and procedures and updated accordingly. New policies and procedures have been created to strengthen corporate governance including finance, risk management, and business continuity.

Communications Plan

RDA Pilbara has recently engaged a Marketing/ Communications Consultant to assist with promoting the positive outcomes RDA Pilbara is delivering for a region that has significance across Australia. This includes scoping and proposal of a new communications plan, messaging and tactics that could be employed to highlight the work that RDA Pilbara is doing – and the success it is achieving – in growing industry, innovation, prosperity, and communities throughout the Pilbara region.






Since commencing the new marketing/ communications strategy in May 2023, all areas of our social media presence have increased.








Outcomes and Activities

Summary

Summary of top 5 strategic priorities for upcoming year:

-  1. Clean Energy Cluster
-  2. Indigenous Networks around the Pilbara
-  3. Aviation – Flights to anywhere but Perth
-  4. Connecting the Pilbara
-  5. Showcase WA

Summary of top 5 key business activities for upcoming year:

-  1. Expanding the Communities for Children program to the East Pilbara
-  2. Expanding the DAMA to the East Pilbara
-  3. Social Media/Marketing/Communications
-  4. Industrial Tourism
-  5. Medical Services in the Pilbara





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