

Shire of West Arthur Public Health Plan

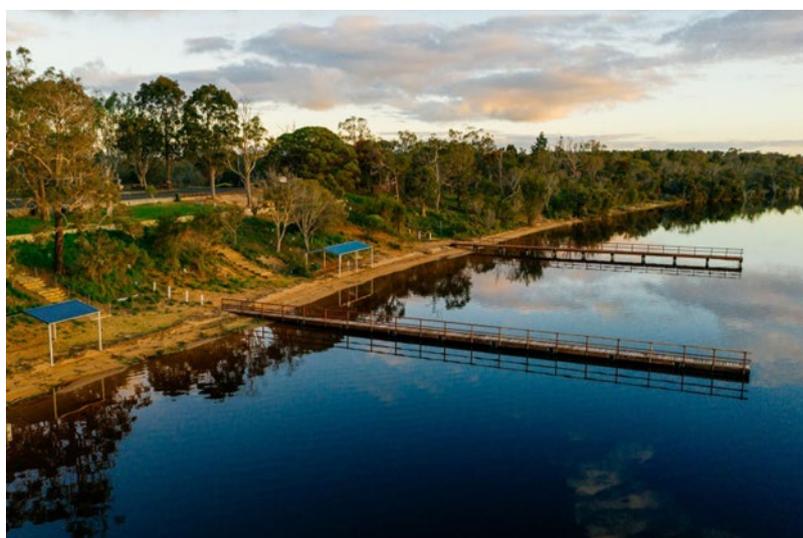
September 2023



Forest to Wheatbelt

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Shire of West Arthur respectfully acknowledges that the land upon which we work and live, is the traditional land of the Wilman and Kaneang Noongar peoples. We recognise their cultural heritage, beliefs, and continuing relationship with the land. We honour Elders past, present and emerging and we support the principles of a reconciled Australia for all its people.



About the Document

This document was prepared by the Shire of West Arthur.

Disclaimer

All information and content in this material is provided in good faith and is based on sources believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of development. The Shire of West Arthur and its respective officers, employees and consulting agents do not accept legal liability or responsibility for the material, or any consequences arising from its use.

Feedback

Any feedback related to this document should be emailed to: shire@westarthur.wa.gov.au

Acknowledgements

The Shire of West Arthur would like to thank the people and organisations who contributed time and expertise to the development of the Shire of West Arthur Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.

Message from the Shire President and Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the Shire of West Arthur's Public Health Plan 2023-2028. This plan is designed to be both a standalone plan and one that influences the periodic revisions of the Shire of West Arthur Community Strategic Plan – Towards 2031 and the Corporate Business Plan 2021-2025.

The development of the Public Health Plan has been a process of research and community consultation. The Plan will assist the community of West Arthur in being and continuing to be a place where cultural, economic and social benefits promote the quality of life necessary to maintain a healthy lifestyle and environment. The Plan will guide the community along a pathway of health and wellbeing.

Actions within this plan have been purposely aligned with State public health priorities, guiding us to enhance the health, wellbeing, and quality of life for the Shire of West Arthur community. Incorporating the outcomes and strategies of the State Public Health Plan 2019-2024 into this document ensures that the Plan will remain relevant to the community's needs.

This five-year plan supports the goals contained within the Shire of West Arthur Community Strategic Plan, which have been consolidated into three Public Health Priorities, to reflect the main priorities of the community:

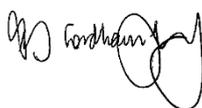
- Supported community;
- Sustainable (natural and built) environment; and
- Strong economy and services for everyone.

We would like you to enjoy reading this plan as we look forward to working collaboratively with the community to continuously improve the public health outcomes in the future.



Neil Morrell

**Shire President
2023**



Vin Fordham Lamont

**Chief Executive Officer
2023**



Executive Summary

The State Public Health Plan is a stand-alone plan. Each Local Government Authority is required to create its own Public Health Plan, which in turn is to be incorporated into the Council's Community Strategic Plan. The Community Strategic Plan connects with Council's Business Plan which is funded by each Local Government Authority through its revenue stream.

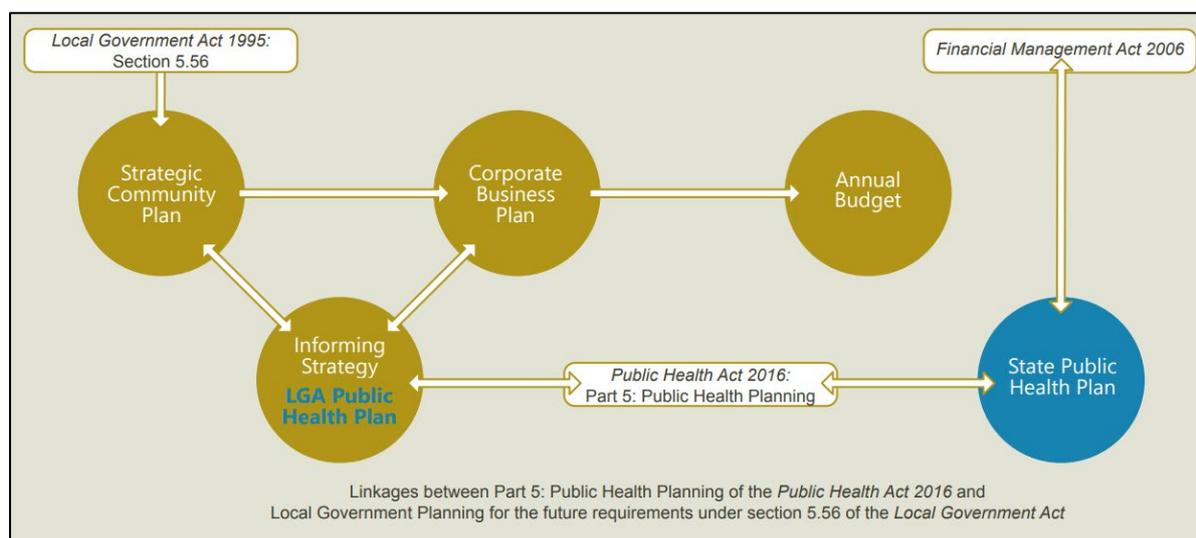


Figure 1: Integrated Planning

The purpose of the Shire of West Arthur Public Health Plan (the Plan) is to improve, promote and protect the public health and wellbeing for all residents in the Shire of West Arthur. It is the intent of the Plan to support all members of the community to enable good health and wellbeing.

The Plan focuses on what the Shire can achieve within its functions and capacity to enhance public health, while recognising that many factors influence health and wellbeing, including those that occur within the social, built, economic and natural environments.

The Shire of West Arthur is committed to implementing a range of initiatives that will contribute to the health and wellbeing of community members. This will include working with key stakeholders, including health, community, education and government organisations.

The methodology used in this Plan included identifying existing public health priorities within the Shire, identifying community needs and aspirations, involvement of key stakeholders to identify local public health risks and the integration of local health data.

Through this process, a list of five priority health issues were identified:

- Drug and alcohol abuse;
- Mental health;
- Access to fresh food and nutrition;
- Environmental health protection; and
- A more active lifestyle.

It is expected that the implementation of the Plan will occur through:

- The implementation of actions identified in the Plan; and

- The development and implementation of a range of actions that reflect the policy directions and community issues identified.

Our Current Health Role

The Shire of West Arthur supports the promotion of Public Health outcomes throughout its community.

These may be explained in more detail in the core business described here:

- Infrastructure and property services including provision of local roads, footpaths, drainage, waste collection and management.
- Environmental Health Services to prevent and control environmental health hazards, emissions, communicable disease, and vector-borne disease. To prevent and reduce the incidence of alcohol, other drug and tobacco health impacts, noise and air pollution, and to maintain water and food quality.
- Cultural facilities and services, such as libraries and places of historical importance which encourage community participation.
- Provision of recreational facilities such as parks, oval, golf course, swimming pool and recreation centre.
- Building services, planning and development control including inspections, licencing, certification, and enforcement.
- Administration of facilities such as cemetery, caravan park, and provision of waste management.
- Local Government Health Law Enforcement, Ranger and Emergency Services.
- Community Services such as provision of doctor, surgery, and chiropractor.



Figure 2: WHO's Ten Social Determinants for Public Health and Wellbeing

Key Areas

The Plan aims to identify the health and wellbeing needs of the community and establish priorities and strategies for a five year period with a focus on the following key areas:

Healthy People and Community

To guide and encourage the community to lead healthier lifestyles through the provision of lifestyle and educational opportunities.

Healthy Places and Spaces

To provide healthy places and spaces to encourage and support healthy lifestyle opportunities.

Healthy Partnerships

To develop collaborative partnerships with community, business, government, non-government and key stakeholders to improve health and wellbeing.

State Priority Objectives

This Plan references the State Public Health Plan Priority Objectives, represented below.

Empowering & enabling people to live healthy lives	Providing health protection for the community	Improving Aboriginal health & wellbeing
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Healthy eating2. A more active WA3. Curb the rise in overweight and obesity4. Make smoking history5. Reduce harmful alcohol use6. Reduce use of illicit drugs, misuse of pharmaceuticals and other drugs of concern7. Optimise mental health and wellbeing8. Prevent injuries and promote safer communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Reduce exposure to environmental health concerns2. Administer public health legislation3. Mitigate the impacts of public health emergencies4. Support immunisation5. Prevention and control of communicative diseases6. Promote oral health improvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Promote culturally secure initiatives and services2. Enhance partnership with the Aboriginal community3. Continue to develop and promote Aboriginal controlled services4. Ensure programs and services are accessible and equitable5. Promote Aboriginal health and wellbeing as core business for all stakeholders

Table1: WA State Priority Objectives

Background

The World Health Organization (WHO) in 2016, defined health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. In functional terms, health is a resource which permits people to lead an individually, socially, and economically profitable life.

Social commentator, researcher and writer on health and wellbeing, Richard Eckersley, describes community wellbeing in his book “Measuring Progress: Is Life Getting Better?” as the condition or state of being well, contented and satisfied with life. He describes wellbeing as having several components, including physical, mental, social, and spiritual. Wellbeing can be used in a collective sense, to describe how well a society satisfies people’s wants and needs.

For this Plan, health and wellbeing refers to a state of physical, mental, and social wellbeing, where individuals feel connected to their community and satisfied with their overall quality of life. Quality of life refers to the general wellbeing of a person or society, defined in terms of health and happiness rather than wealth.

An individual’s health and wellbeing are impacted by several factors often outside of their control which fall into the social, economic, built and natural environments in which people live, work and play.

From a community perspective, positive levels of health and wellbeing can contribute to the level of social interaction and the vitality of a community. For example, it enables participation in sports, volunteering, arts, culture, and other activities that connect the community. Of course, these activities also contribute to positive health and wellbeing. By contrast, poor health and wellbeing reduces this participation and brings with it the high costs of medical care and other community services.

A healthy community can be defined as one where people living within it come together to make life better for themselves and one another. One which connects people and resources, encourages communication, embraces diversity, fosters a sense of community, and shapes its future.



Shire of West Arthur Health Profile

Shire Profile

The Shire of West Arthur is located in the southern wheatbelt region of Western Australia and is nestled between the forests of the southwest and the wheatbelt. It is also part of the broader Gnaala Karla Booja region, including both Wilman and Kaneang peoples.

The Shire was first explored by Europeans in late 1830, with settlement in the 1850s at Arthur River. The town of Darkan was established in 1907, and with the establishment of the railway line from Collie, new prosperity came to the Shire.

The Shire is situated 204km south of Perth and 115km east of Bunbury. Darkan is the main town and administrative centre with several smaller localities and settlements scattered throughout the Shire. The western side of the Shire is typified by bush and forest, and the eastern side predominantly broad acre farming with less than 5% remnant bush.

At 2580km² it is one of the larger shires in the area and borders the Shires of Collie, Williams, Narrogin, Wagin, Woodanilling, Kojonup and Boyup Brook. Peaking in 1966 at 1427, the population of the Shire of West Arthur steadily decreased and is currently 773 (2021 Census), with females making up 46.8% of the population and males 53.2%.

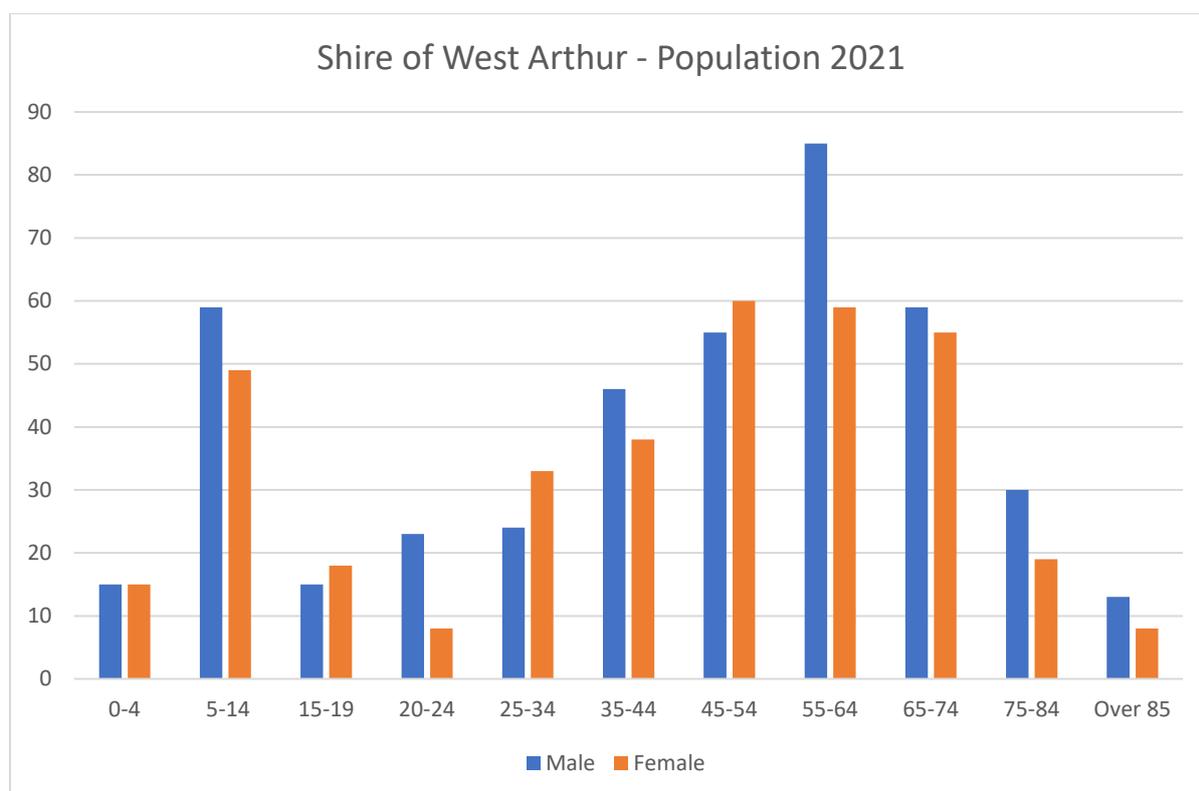


Figure 1: SoWA Population 2021

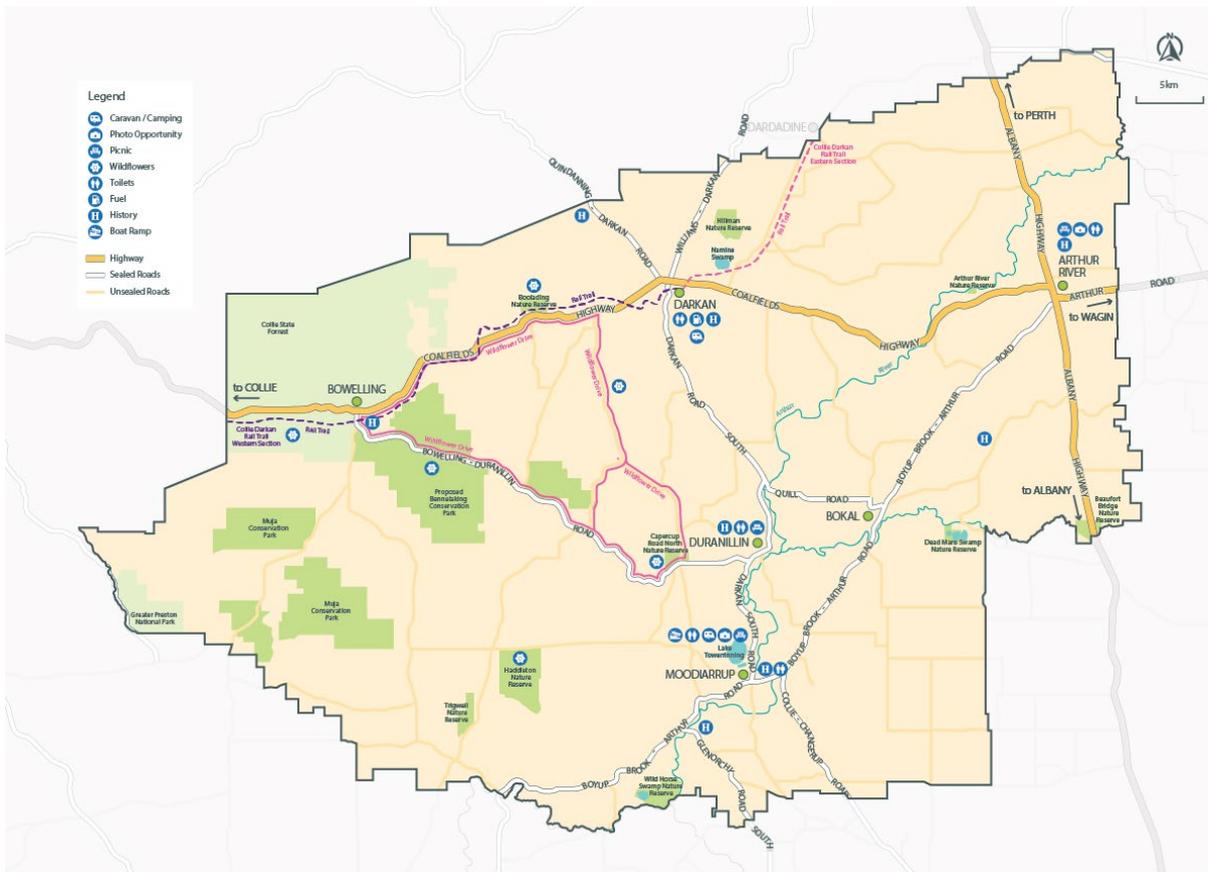


Figure 2: Shire of West Arthur Map

Health and Wellbeing

Health is impacted by a number of factors, often outside the control of the individual. These factors are referred to as the social determinants of health and include socio-economic status, employment, income, education, housing, social support, access to health care, drug addiction, transport, food security and community safety.

From a community perspective, the health and wellbeing of the population contributes to social interaction and the vitality of the community. For example, it enables participation in sports, volunteering, arts, culture and other activities that bring the community together. By contrast, poor health and wellbeing reduces this participation and brings with it the high costs of medical care and other community services.

The Rural Health West publication – Outreach in the Outback – Wheatbelt – population and health snapshot, has identified specific areas of public health, including Population forecasts, Measure of disadvantage, Major Health Services, Maternal Health, Child and adolescent health, Adult health, eye health, ear health, mental health, hospitalisations and mortality.

Socio-Economic Profile

There are several measures that can be used to evaluate the socio-economic status of residents. One is the weekly income.

The average weekly income across Australia in August 2022 was \$1,250, an increase of \$50 (4.2%) since August 2021. Figures for West Arthur are shown below.

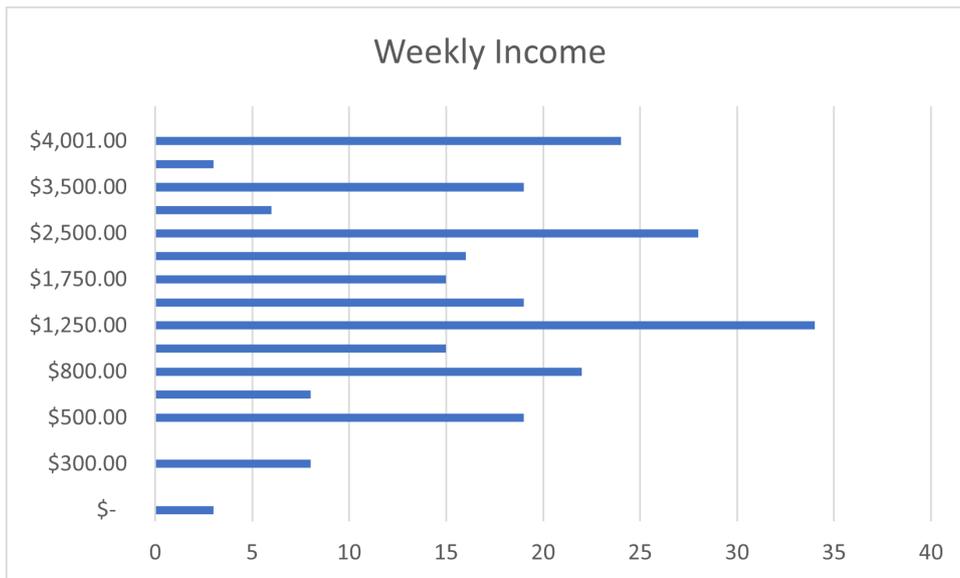


Figure 3: SoWA Weekly Income

Data from Services Australia show that in 2020 there were 136 people in the Shire that received some form of assistance, with 70 people receiving an Age Pension, 26 receiving a Disability Support Pension, 22 on Jobseeker and 18 on carer or parenting allowances. All pensions and allowances are means tested.

Indigenous populations have been consistently shown to have an overall lower socio-economic status. In the 2021 Census, data shows that 3.5% of the Shire population identified as being indigenous; however, this figure could be higher as 13% of the population did not state their indigenous status.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) also analyses statistics from various aspects of the census, along with other data to develop Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). The ABS broadly defines relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in terms of people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society. A lower score for a Statistical Area Level 1 (SA1) indicates that an area is relatively disadvantaged compared to an area with a higher score. However, it is important to remember that the scores are a ranked measure, so care should be taken when comparing scores.

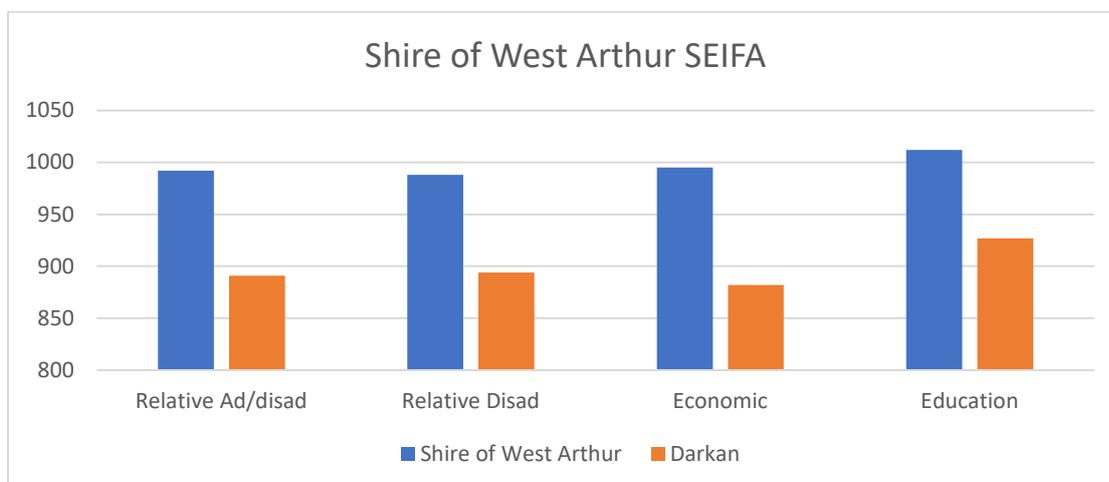


Figure 4: SOWA SEIFA Data

The four indexes of SEIFA each capture a slightly different concept of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage.

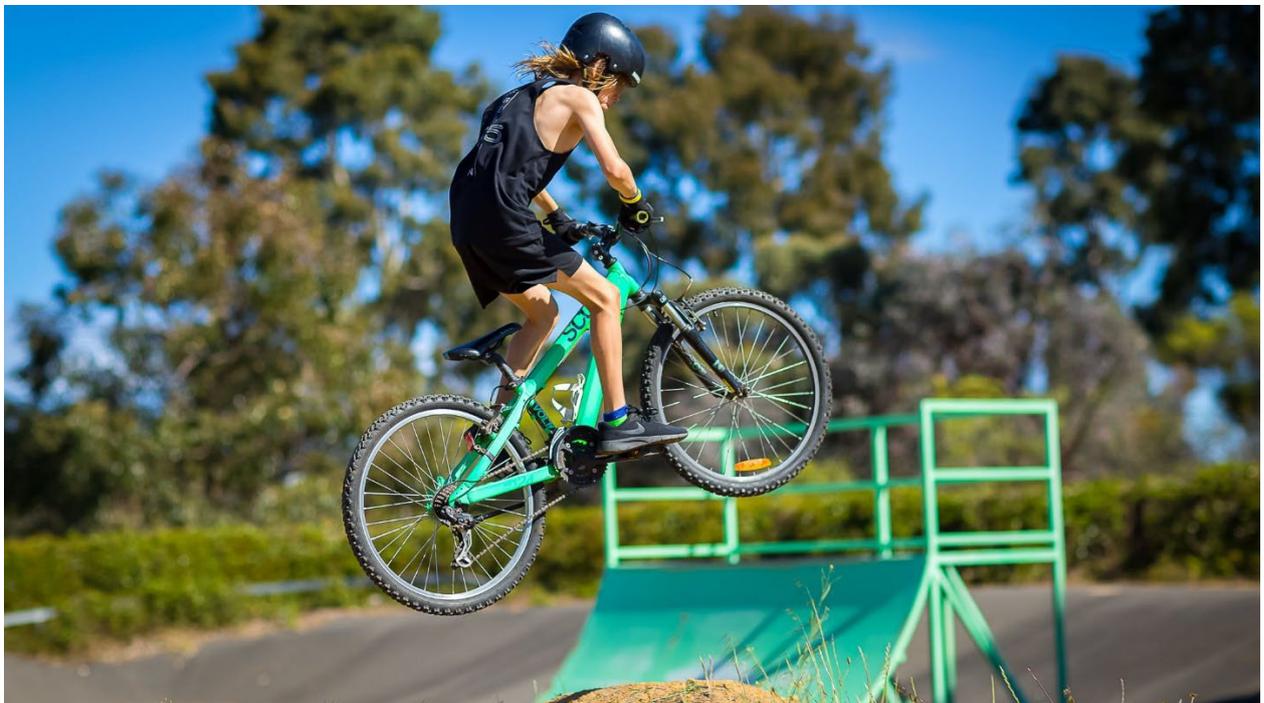
It is therefore important to clarify what is meant by relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, as this is the concept SEIFA aims to summarise from the numerous Census variables available for analysis.

For SEIFA 2016, the concept of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage, the ABS broadly defines relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage in terms of people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society.

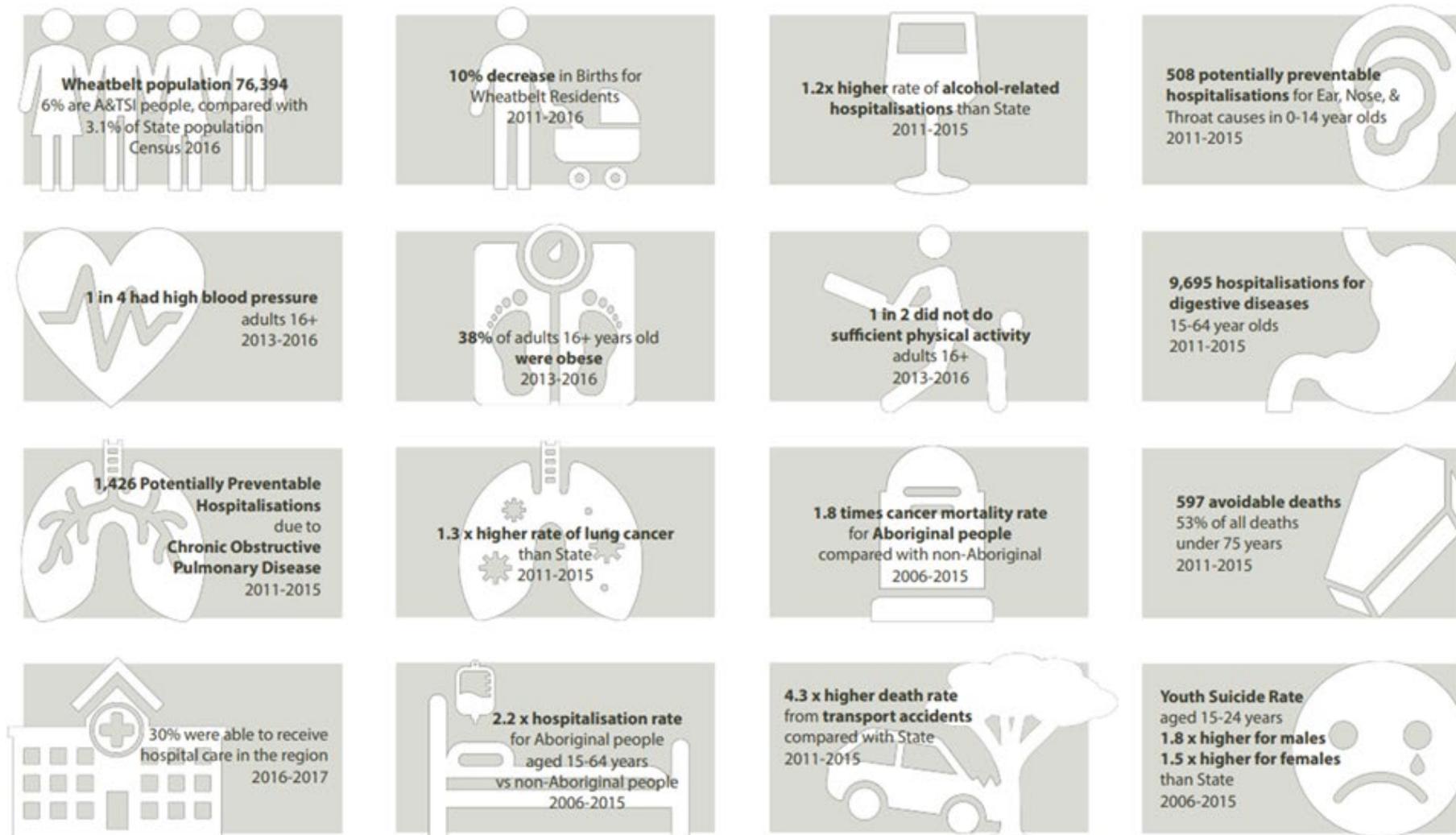
The Index of Relative Disadvantage identifies and ranks areas in terms of their relative socio-economic disadvantage. The Index of Relative Advantage and Disadvantage broadly measures both advantage and disadvantage, while the Index of Education and Occupation and the Index of Economic Resources both measure particular aspects of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage.

It is important to note that while the Shire overall rating is in the 4th quintile, the town of Darkan's overall rating is in the 1st quintile, putting it in the most disadvantaged category. Potentially, this could be because of the number of aged people living in the community.

SEIFA scores do not measure accumulated wealth, infrastructure, transport, and differences in cost of living. When used in the rural context these issues need to be considered.



Snapshot of the Health of the Wheatbelt



*Western Australian Country Health Services

**Compared with the WA State average

The People of West Arthur Have Their Say

The Shire of West Arthur consulted with the community by a survey process using social media, the Shire website and local newsletter 'The Bleat'. This method was successful, attracting a number of respondents.

Over 59% of respondents were from Darkan, with the remainder from the surrounding rural areas. Ages of the respondents were from 18 up to 75+, with the largest cohort (40.9%) being in the 55-64 age bracket. Just over

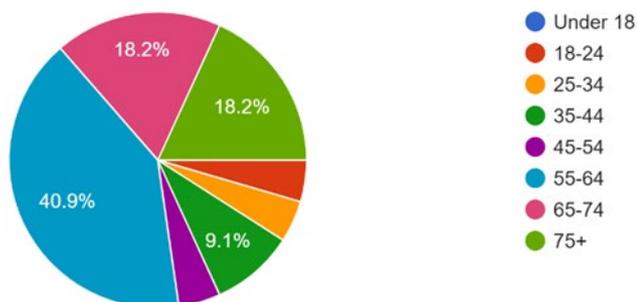


Figure 5: Respondents percentage

77% of respondents were female. No respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Health and Social Issues

Top health concerns	Top mental & social health concerns	Top health programs requested	Access to healthy food
Use of illegal drugs (63.6%)	Depression (63.6%)	Routine health screenings (85.7%)	Healthier foods available locally (68.2%)
Not enough exercise (45.5%)	Anxiety (50%)	Mental wellbeing programs (76.2%)	Healthier takeaway food options (50%)
Alcohol and tobacco/cigarette smoking equal at 36.4%	Loneliness (45.5%)	Safety and security (23.8%)	Healthy options at community events and sporting events were equal (36.4%)

Table 2: Health and Social Issues

Drug addiction (40.9%) was also a major concern to the community.

Community members suggested programs to reduce alcohol and drug abuse, as well as group fitness exercises as ways to improve the overall health of the community.

Interest was shown for healthy cooking classes, as well as sessions on how to read food labels.

Volunteering

All respondents identified as being volunteers across a wide range of sectors. The top three are:

- Community groups and services (59.1%)

- Sporting (54.5%)
- Public event operations (36.4%)

Other sectors that ranked highly were aged citizens, environmental and arts and culture. It is important to note that very few respondents only volunteered in one sector, most are volunteering in at least three different sectors.

Sports and Recreation Facilities

Most popular recreation facilities	Top facilities for good community health	Top programs to help the community be more active
Darkan Recreation Centre (59.1%)	Recreation facilities (72.7%)	More recreational community activities and events (66.7%)
Lake Towerrinning (45.5%)	Safe roads and parks and public open spaces equal at 68.2%	Free fitness classes (50%)
Collie-Darkan Rail Trail and Darkan Swimming Pool equal at 40.9%	Disability access to buildings and recreation facilities (45.5%)	Public exercise equipment (44.4%)

Table 3: Sports and Recreations Facilities

Darkan Golf Course, the Community Gym and Tennis also ranked highly in the most popular recreation facilities. Access to affordable housing was also a priority (40.9%) in the top facilities for good community health.

Both the fitness classes and public exercise equipment are available in Darkan; however, the fitness classes are only available to those aged over 55 (seniors).

COVID-19

COVID-19 proved to be a major concern for the community:

- 61.9% concerned about ongoing health issues,
- Future health problems 33.3%,
- Future finances 14.3%.

There is a percentage of the community that were not concerned about COVID-19, however a small percentage were concerned about job losses and maintaining a workforce.

Life in West Arthur

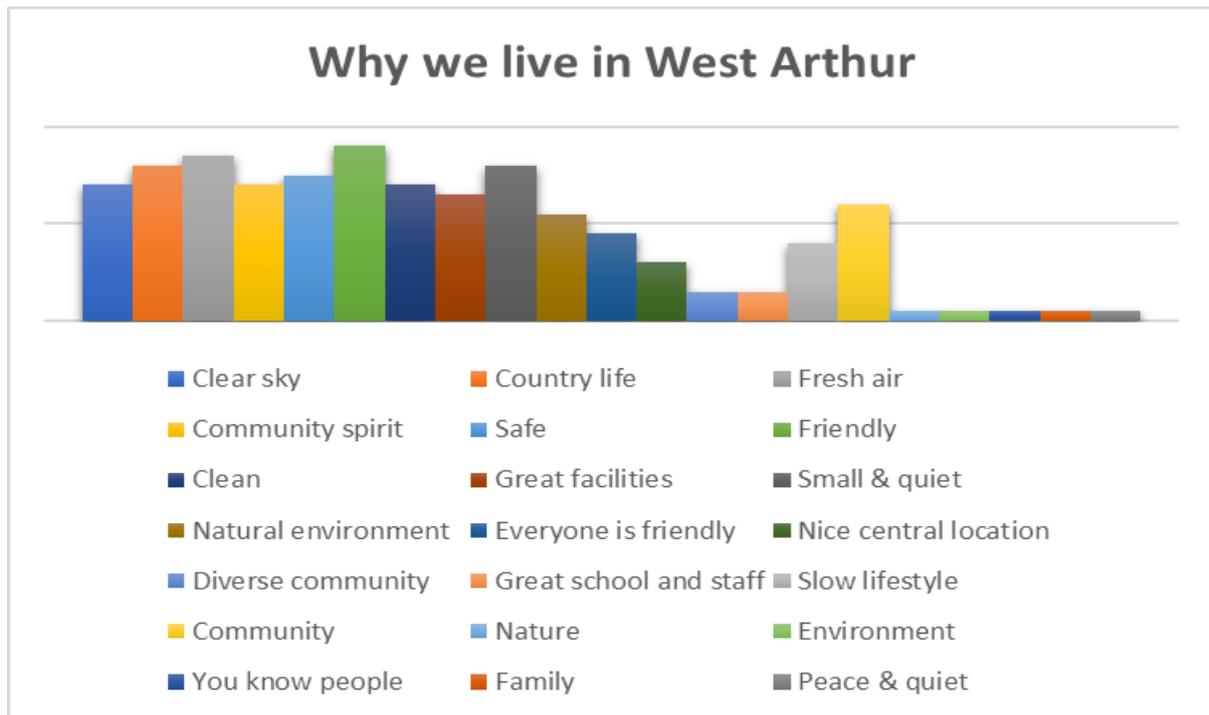


Figure 5: Words used to describe West Arthur

Within the Community Strategic Plan, the statement for Our Community is “our community is safe, friendly, and inclusive”. Respondents showed that 81.8% think the community is friendly, with 68.2% indicating that it was safe. 77.3% of respondents indicated that fresh air was also a priority about living in the Shire.

When talking about life in West Arthur, respondents indicated that social connectivity was a major asset to the overall social wellbeing of the community.



Environment

The community showed concern about the environment and identified their top priorities.



Other priorities included safe chemical usage, along with a healthy river system. Renewable energy was also identified, both solar and wind.

The Public Health Vision added to the Community Strategic Plan

Our Community	Our Economy	Our Natural Environment	Our Built Environment	Our Leadership	Our Health
<p>1.1 A safe place to work, live and visit: We will support the provision of emergency services and volunteers, prevent crime and communicate risks and hazards to the community</p>	<p>2.1 Improved employment through diversification in agriculture: We will investigate opportunities for diversification, water security and liaise with key stakeholders</p>	<p>3.1 Maintain and improve our key natural assets: We will maintain Lake Towerrinning, our trails, protect our night skies and protect and improve additional natural assets.</p>	<p>4.1 Our road network is well maintained: We will regularly review and update our long term road construction and maintenance program, collaborate with surrounding Shires and State government to ensure sound planning and resource utilisation, and enhance road safety strategies for road users.</p>	<p>5.1 Councillors represent the community and are well-trained: The Council is representative of the community, collaborate with Shire staff to achieve the best outcomes for the community, elected members have training and skills relevant in order to act in the best interest of the Shire, and the Council process is open and transparent to the general community.</p>	<p>6.1 Minimise harm: from abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.</p>
<p>1.2 Support is available for people of all ages and abilities: We will actively support and promote a range of activities for all ages and abilities, maintain and support the growth of medical, childcare and aged service facilities, and provide services and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community</p>	<p>2.2 A growing, diverse business community: We will investigate tourism opportunities, maintain and enhance our existing assets, promote the LIA, advocate for improved communication facilities, promote the Shire and investigate opportunities for growth within the local economy</p>	<p>3.2 Our water resources are well defined and used sustainably: We will develop a whole of Shire Water Strategy to better manage our water resources, invest in water security, manage existing water resources in a sustainable manner, and encourage development of private water supplies.</p>	<p>4.2 Our built infrastructure is well maintained, attractive and inviting: We will maintain our parks and gardens, review and upgrade our community facilities as required, and our townscapes are attractive and well developed with consideration for current and future usage.</p>	<p>5.2 Shire staff are well trained, motivated and customer focused: by ensuring staff have opportunities to continue professional development, provide flexible working arrangements where possible, and continuously strive to be customer focused and serve Council and the community.</p>	<p>6.2 Provide facilities that promote active recreation and healthy lifestyle choices, including access to healthy, affordable food.</p>

<p>1.3 A unique identity and a strong connection to our past: We will maintain and preserve our cultural and heritage assets, reconnect to our Aboriginal heritage and support community events that connect to our history</p>	<p>2.3 Existing businesses develop and grow: We will communicate opportunities with existing businesses, encourage regular meetings, and ensure services and products are sourced locally whenever possible</p>	<p>3.3 Our natural biodiversity is maintained and valued: We will support Blackwood Biosecurity Group to manage pests, weeds are managed or eliminated in areas of high biodiversity, protect our unique flora and fauna, and consider biodiversity in all land use applications and developments</p>	<p>4.3 Our cultural heritage is preserved and promoted: by maintaining the integrity of our heritage buildings, investigate opportunities to develop our historical assets, and take into consideration planning and development for our heritage values.</p>	<p>5.3 Establish and maintain sound business and governance structures: by ensuring that the community is provided with value for money through the prudent expenditure of rates, provide informed decision making based on strategic directions and legal requirements, and comply with regulations and best practise standards to drive good decision making by Council and staff.</p>	<p>6.3 Assist and advocate for community access to relevant health services for all demographics.</p>
		<p>3.4 Water is minimised and environmentally sustainable practices are employed: by providing an effective waste management service, and promote environmentally sustainable principles</p>	<p>4.4 Appropriate planning and development: We will implement the town planning scheme and policies to ensure any planning and development is appropriate throughout the Shire.</p>	<p>5.4 Actively engage with community, business and other stakeholders to grow and develop the community: by continuing to collaborate with other regional Shires to achieve maximum benefits for the region, advocate on behalf of the community, continue to improve communication with the community, and continuously review and revise the Community Plan to reflect the changing needs of the community.</p>	<p>6.4 A safe environment: environmental health protection to reduce risks to health.</p>

Better Health – Community and Public Health Strategies

Minimise Harm	Active and Healthy Lifestyles	A Healthy and Sustainable Community	A Safe Environment
6.1 Minimise harm: from abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.	6.2 Provide facilities that promote active recreation and healthy lifestyle choices, including access to healthy, affordable food.	6.3 Assist and advocate for community access to relevant health services for all demographics.	6.4 A safe environment: environmental health protection to reduce risks to health.
6.1.1 Support education to reduce alcohol and drug consumption and family violence.	6.2.1 Support community recreation activities and provision of age-appropriate exercise equipment and classes.	6.3.1 Support health and wellbeing initiatives to improve mental and physical health.	6.4.1 Provide public health education on matters such as COVID, FoodSafe and other disease control.
6.1.2 Encourage safe sale and service of alcohol and tobacco, and support no/low alcohol and smoke-free community venues and events at Shire facilities.	6.2.2 Promote healthy eating and affordable meals and drinks in food outlets and at venues and events.	6.3.2 Encourage personal health screenings such as cancers, blood pressure and mammograms.	6.4.2 Maintain safe food standards by regular surveillance of food premises.
6.1.3 Encourage the community to reduce smoking and promote smoke-free public spaces such as playgrounds.	6.2.3 Provide safe and accessible public open spaces and walking trails.	6.3.3 Engage with agencies to maintain safe roads, provide bushfire prevention, and manage climate change impacts.	6.4.3 Monitor drinking and recreation waters, public aquatic facilities to maintain standards and reduce public health risk.
6.1.4 In conjunction with stakeholders, conduct a Safety Audit to improve safety and prevent crime and anti-social behaviour	6.2.4 Support a community campaign to raise awareness in healthy eating and living.	6.3.4 Create accessible spaces and encourage disabled participation.	6.4.4 Monitor public health indicators and encourage other government intervention.
			6.4.5 Monitor the safe use of chemicals and their equipment and disposal of waste and containers.

The Path Forwards

This Plan was developed over eight months in consultation with the community, elected members, and stakeholders.

While public health is the responsibility of everyone within the community, this plan is focused on addressing the present shortcomings to improve the health of the community. Key messages from the community showed that community health can be improved by access to quality nutritional food, physical activity, as well as attention to mental and social health.

Council will provide leadership to improve public health outcomes by:

- Leading the community by advocating for better health outcomes;
- Having a whole of Council approach;
- Developing appropriate policies, including:
 - Healthy Eating Policy
 - Active West Arthur Policy
 - Alcohol and Drug Policy
 - Environmental Health Policy
 - Health and Wellbeing Policy
 - Mental Health Policy;
- Encouraging partnerships with Government and NGOs for health planning; and
- Elected members encouraging and mentoring to promote healthy lifestyles.

The strategies contained within the Plan mirror work that is currently underway. The Shire of West Arthur will initiate activities that will assist the community to reach the desired outcomes. Initiatives and activities will be reviewed annually and evolve to meet the needs of the community.

The Plan requires Council to ensure that the community is afforded:

- Protection from disease,
- Minimised harm,
- Promotion of active healthy lifestyles, and
- A safe environment by reducing risks to public health.

References

Information used in the research phase of this plan was primarily drawn from: ABS Census (2021), SEIFA Index, WA Health (Wheatbelt) and the Shire of West Arthur Health and Wellbeing Survey.