

# Significant Issues and Trends

## Global economic downturn

- The global economic downturn has resulted in a general decline in economic activity including a slowing in demand for urban residential subdivision and a weakened demand for commodity resources. Western Australia needs to invest in an efficient and nationally competitive planning system and processes to support government measures to stimulate economic activity.
- Under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Reform Agenda, streamlining and simplification of approval processes is required. Streamlining the approvals process will provide transparency and consistency in the application of subdivision conditions and development approval outcomes across varying local municipalities. There is a requirement for the development of a performance management system to measure the volume of development approval outcomes and timeframes achieved to benchmark local government performance.

[www.planning.wa.gov.au](http://www.planning.wa.gov.au)

## Population growth

- Western Australia's population growth and recent high levels of net migration are impacting heavily on the planning for and delivery of government services, with the impact being felt most significantly in the metropolitan and regional coastal areas of the State.
- The population increase throughout the State has placed an unprecedented demand on infrastructure, services, developable land and housing stocks. The uncertainty in the resources sector has caused deferments in investment; however, the Kimberley population growth rate is expected to outstrip the general State growth rate, while over the past decade there has been almost a 20 per cent population increase in the south-west of Western Australia, with some regional urban centres such as Bunbury and Vasse growing by 30 to 40 per cent.. The Department will continue to support planning for key new multi-user infrastructure, particularly in the Pilbara, Kimberley and Mid-West regions.

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## Housing affordability

- While the market for land and housing has fallen over the past year, strong population growth has continued. This, combined with low rental vacancy rates, means demand for dwellings is likely to increase over the coming years in both the construction and established markets. This highlights the importance of planning for growth and the integration of land-use and transport infrastructure, as well as ensuring the capacity to deal with a high level of demand for statutory approvals.

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## Climate change

- Climate change impacts are now a renewed focus of activity of the new Commonwealth Government through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). Coordination and integration of water management planning in the land-use planning system will continue to be a high priority.
- There is increasing pressure from local government for the provision of technical advice on the coastal impacts of climate change, in particular with respect to coastal planning, development and coastal protection; and the demand for regulatory advice will continue to grow as the State's population expands. For example, significant resources are being diverted to assist the Shire of Busselton, the Port Geographe Marina developer and other state government agencies to solve seaweed and sand issues at the entrance to the Port Geographe Marina.

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## Environment

- The bulk of the State's natural resources are located in regional areas and industry requires highly complex infrastructure delivery in natural environments that are often fragile and sometimes invested with particular significance for Indigenous people.

[www.planning.wa.gov.au](http://www.planning.wa.gov.au)

## Freight transportation

- In freight logistics the emphasis is now on the total demand-supply chain between producer and consumer rather than the individual linkages. Public and private sectors need to work cooperatively to develop solutions to freight logistics issues, taking into account economic, social and environmental considerations.
- The volume of freight to be transported is expected to increase at about 3.5 per cent per annum resulting in a doubling of freight over the next 20 years. Rail will need to play an increased role to minimise the impact on the community and existing infrastructure. The Government needs to play an active role in ensuring the growth and sustainability of the rail freight network.

[www.transport.wa.gov.au/freight](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/freight)

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## Rail safety

- The existing state-based rail safety legislation is to be replaced with a single National rail safety regime to improve safety and, importantly, to provide efficiency and industry harmonisation between track and rolling stock operators that conduct business in more than one State or Territory, thus providing a more level playing field for rail in comparison with the road freight industry.

[www.transport.wa.gov.au/rail](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/rail)

## Pastoral land management

- Some of the trends and issues relating to the management of pastoral land include:
  - a shift to multiple land use;
  - the move to purchase pastoral leases for non-pastoral purposes, such as for private conservation interests and as lifestyle blocks; and
  - issues with pastoral leases, such as inappropriate forms of land tenure and non-compliance with lease conditions.

The Pastoral Lands Board is contributing to Ministerial committees established during 2008–09 to review issues relating to diversification opportunities on pastoral leases and to investigate issues affecting pastoral profitability in the southern rangelands.

<http://lands.rdl.wa.gov.au/pastoral>

## Taxi services

- Taxi industry performance remains a challenge, with service falling significantly below the levels taxi customers are entitled to expect. While Government reforms have seen the cost structure of the industry reduced to significantly less than in other Australian capital cities, and resulted in more taxis on the road, the tight labour market is making it difficult to achieve sufficiently strong service levels. This remains a particular challenge for services in peak periods, in the outer suburbs and with multi-purpose taxi services for the disabled.

[www.transport.wa.gov.au/taxis](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/taxis)

## Licensing services

- There is a growing national agenda for greater harmonisation of motor driver licensing and motor vehicle registration across Australia. The management issue is identifying options that will work for both customers and agencies across Australia.

[www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing)

## Air services

- The global economic downturn has had an impact on the Western Australian aviation sector with a fall in passenger numbers and a decrease in profitability. This has led to some regional communities receiving reduced or cancelled air services and increased air fare costs. In the worse case scenario, the State Government may be required to subsidise some intrastate air service routes in order to maintain services to regional communities. Western Australia's intrastate air service policies must achieve a balance between promoting sustainable competition and ensuring that services to regional and remote communities are maintained.

[www.transport.wa.gov.au/aviation](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/aviation)

## Marine services and facilities

- There is growing congestion on our navigable waterways as people pursue maritime-centred leisure activities in the Perth Metropolitan area as well as in regional centres. A sustained three to four per cent growth in private vessel registration reflects this trend. The issue is how to regulate in a way to ensure that interactions between all vessels, whether recreational or commercial, are managed safely.
- Better information to assist decision-making is now available from geographic data such as oceanographic, bathymetric, cartographic and geographic information systems; and the volume of data being collected is increasing rapidly. However, web-based access and the capture, management and dissemination of this data has not kept pace with demand or technological advancement; and our existing IS systems and hardware are inadequate to support our current or future data needs.

[www.transport.wa.gov.au/marine](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/marine)

## Regional services

- As the East Kimberley's regional shipping hub, the infrastructure at the Port of Wyndham will require major refurbishments and significant future planning in view of the likely additional product handling needs arising from the Ord Stage 2 development project and increased tourism.
- Current and future service needs for the oil and gas industry are being considered through a possible expansion to Exmouth Boat Harbour, which would provide benefits to industry and the community.

[www.transport.wa.gov.au](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au)