

DRAFT

**CITY OF WANNEROO**  
Agribusiness Position Paper

# **A THRIVING AGRI-PRECINCT IN WANNEROO**

**Agri-precinct Objective (draft):**

Celebrate and recharge our history to create a vibrant, competitive and innovative agri-food sector within the broader North Perth Food Zone that supports substantial employment for our growing community

# CURRENT PROJECT STATUS

The main projects currently being undertaken at a State and Local Government level relevant to addressing the issues affecting agriculture in the City include:

- State Government Taskforce: The State Government created a taskforce to address water allocation and land use issues in North Wanneroo by bringing together key government and industry stakeholders. The taskforce delivered its recommendations to The Hon. Alannah MacTiernan, MLC Minister for Agriculture and Food 16 August 2018.
- Minister MacTiernan responded to the Taskforce report on behalf of the McGowan Government, releasing a statement 30 January 2019 announcing a proposed 10 percent reduction to water allocations in North Wanneroo from 2028, water efficiency programs and the commencement of a business case for a new agri-precinct in State Forest 65 using recycled wastewater.
- The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) is expected to release the draft new Gnangara Groundwater Area Allocation Plan for public comment in 2019. The draft plan is expected to include the State Government's 10% reduction to groundwater allocations for North Wanneroo growers.
- The City has recently completed several studies related to agriculture in Wanneroo which have informed this position paper. Related current projects include a drone trial, water and nutrient benchmarking project in partnership with Perth Region NRM and the Rail Smart project in partnership with UWA, Department of Transport and Planning and Transport Research Centre (PATREC).
- Planning updates: recommendations relating to future land use and zoning from the above and future studies will inform the current preparation of a Local Planning Strategy and Local Planning Scheme 3 and these are anticipated to be presented to Council for adoption as drafts in mid 2020.

## Council Endorsed Position:

At its Council Meeting on 7 May 2019, Council endorsed a formal position on the Minister's Response to the Taskforce Report. A summary of key elements of the City's position include:

- The City acknowledges that the system is currently over-allocated and that less water needs to be abstracted or Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) used to bring the groundwater system back into balance. However the City cannot support a blanket 10% reduction to all licence holders and would like to work with the State Government to find a long term solution to this issue.
- The City is supportive of initiatives to increase water use efficiency.
- The City welcomes investigation into growing the agribusiness industry and the establishment of a recycled water supply for agriculture. The City would like to see the current licence holders included in the scope of this business case.
- The City would like to see incentives for licence holders who expend resources into becoming more efficient to accommodate the 10% reduction to their allocation.
- The City is supportive of stormwater in East Wanneroo being used to recharge the aquifer. The City would like further investigation into how excess groundwater created through the urbanisation of East Wanneroo could be used most effectively.
- The City urges the State Government to address key recommendations from the Taskforce that have not yet been addressed:
  - Reduce grower uncertainty on groundwater supply. A long term solution for water security in Wanneroo is required;
  - Maintain and enhance the opportunity for long-term alternative water supply options by considering the objectives and requirements for a recycled water scheme; and
  - State Government and City undertake further investigation of the City's preferred alternative water supply options of enhanced rainwater infiltration in State Forest 65 and transfer of groundwater from East Wanneroo.





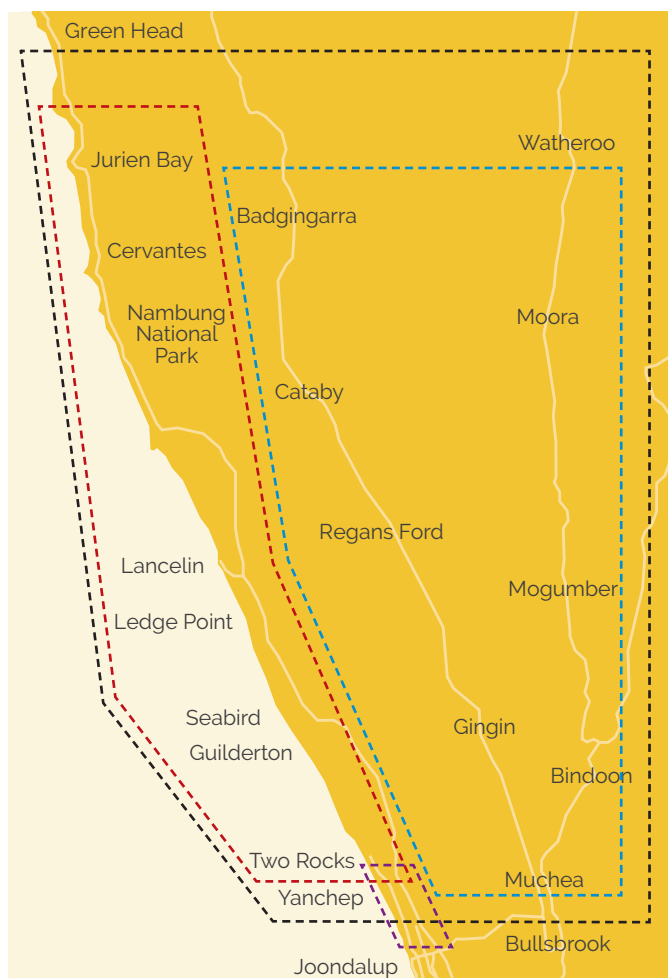
# CONTEXT

The City of Wanneroo (the City) is part of a regional agricultural ecosystem that stretches north along the Turquoise Coast through the Wheatbelt region. It is collectively referred to as the North of Perth Food Zone. Wanneroo is the southern point of this \$1 billion per annum regional food zone producing over 60 agricultural products, playing a vital role in both the food production chain and a critical linkage to local suburban markets. This region is integral to Perth and WA's future food security, providing an important source of high quality, healthy, local produce for Perth's growing urban population and potential export markets.

Perth's expansion and escalating population are placing ever-increasing pressure on agricultural land in the City due to urban encroachment. It is accepted that some land traditionally used for agricultural production across the City, particularly in East Wanneroo, has and will continue to be urbanised over the longer term. The Future of East Wanneroo (WAPC, 2007) recommended that productive agricultural land lost to urbanisation in East Wanneroo be replaced through the expansion of the existing agri-precinct in North Wanneroo.

The North Wanneroo agricultural precinct, including Carabooda and Nowergup has been identified by both the City and the State Government as being strategically significant with both indicating their intention to keep this precinct for agricultural production by retaining the existing rural zoning and not supporting residential sub-division in this precinct. Expansion of agriculture in the City is being investigated by the State Government for a new leasehold precinct in State Forest 65 using recycled water.

Water is the major limiting factor for agribusinesses in the City and in a drying climate, water security is becoming an increasingly important problem. This issue has been compounded by the announcement from the McGowan Government on 30 January 2019 proposing a 10 percent reduction to groundwater allocations for growers in the North Wanneroo area from 2028. There is wide concern for the effects this proposed reduction will have on profitability, productivity and viability of agribusinesses in Wanneroo.



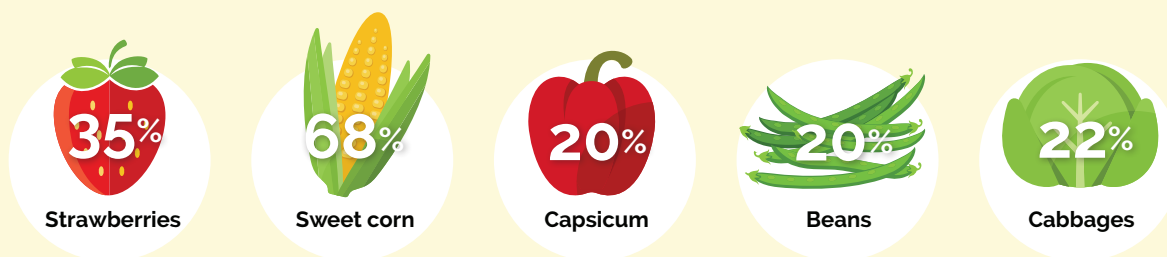
# WANNEROO

Wanneroo has played a significant role in food production since the Whadjuk and Yued people followed the seasons. Since settlement, Wanneroo has been a food bowl for Perth and for travellers to the north, with agricultural activities an integral part of the area's cultural history.

In 2017/18, agriculture in the City contributed \$327.71m Output/Total Sales and 1,040 total jobs (National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, 2018).

The City contributes 34% of the total Gross Value of Agricultural Commodities produced in the Perth region (ABS, Agricultural Census, 2015-2016). The City's agri-supply is strategically significant to both Perth and Western Australia.

**The region produces and/or processes 17.5% of West Australia's total vegetable production. Production includes:**



**of the State's total production, ABS, Agricultural Census, 2015-2016**

## WHY WANNEROO – THE OPPORTUNITIES

Historically, Wanneroo offered the existence of relatively good quality Spearwood soils, low transport costs and travel time, availability of labour, groundwater and temperate weather patterns which encouraged settlement and establishment of the current agri-industry. Other strengths and opportunities include:

- Multi-generational knowledge, land ownership resulting in low land costs for agricultural development;
- Implementing improved water use practices;
- Access to large tracts of potential agricultural land including State Forest 65;
- Proximity of industrial development areas and potential supply chain linkages including Neerabup Industrial Area, Muchea and the metro food supply chain;
- Possible new sources of water available;
- Use of processed urban waste for fertilisers and soil improvements;
- Access to food precincts north of Perth;
- Ready access to population and labour;
- Growing population to support agriculture-based tourism, education and other recreational activities;
- Planned new road alignments;
- Existing zoning and ongoing strategic identification of the area as rural is likely to have attracted limited speculation in respect to urbanisation;
- Presence and interest in tourism activities;
- Increased interest in local food provenance and local branding;
- Role of the City in research and development, opportunity to be a peri-urban 'test bed' for the agricultural industry with access to universities and research bodies; and
- Increasing local, national and global demand for food, particularly food grown using high health and environmental standards.



## WHAT'S IN OUR WAY – THE CHALLENGES

A hotter, dryer climate has reduced both natural rainfall and available groundwater for agriculture in Wanneroo. Availability of water including short and long-term water security is the most significant constraint and challenge facing the area at present. Other constraints and challenges include:

- Land size/availability;
- Expansion/growth potential;
- Access to labour force (417 visa);
- Presence of essential services;
- Access to supply chain;
- Land use certainty and speculation regarding non-agricultural rural uses such as rural residential;
- Political support and public investment;
- Viability of assets;
- Reliance of industry on low value, price taking commodities with limited value adding or niche products grown and/or processed in the area;
- Potential land use conflict including the impacts of spray drift, noise, dust and odour;
- Wetlands;
- Bush forever areas;
- Bush fire prone areas;
- Presence of karst;
- The existence of basic raw materials;
- Long term mining of basic raw materials; and
- Generational change, with low incentive for the next generation to continue farming.

## CONSEQUENCES OF NON-DELIVERY

The consequences for the City and State of Wanneroo ceasing to be a significant agricultural area include:

- Loss of economic activity, economic diversity, jobs and future economic growth;
- Loss of viable agricultural lands;
- Food security threat with an increasing reliance on imported food;
- Affordability and quality of produce could be negatively impacted;
- Loss of historical and cultural value; and
- Loss of tourism opportunities.

# MOVING FORWARD

Listed below are key initiatives required to address the identified challenges and leverage opportunities in North Wanneroo:

## State & Federal Government Initiatives:

- Leadership is required if Perth's foodbowl is to be preserved for current and future generations with a clear Statewide plan developed to achieve this;
- No net reduction to water allocations for North Wanneroo agribusinesses;
- A solution to the water crisis including long term water security for Wanneroo by addressing key recommendations from the Taskforce report that require action;
- Enact legislation to implement the State joining the National Water Initiative;
- Leverage funding available through the National Water Infrastructure Fund for a Wanneroo water solution; and
- Clear and consistent messaging from all levels of government on land use.

## Key Stakeholders:

- Stakeholder alliance: the industry would benefit significantly from coordinated activity amongst stakeholders including tourism operators. This alliance could provide recommendations to Government, explore opportunities for a regional food brand and facilitate and advocate for funding;
- Business development for the industry of the future: with support from the State and Local Government an opportunity exists for further development of innovative farming techniques, value-adding, agri-tourism, water use efficiency practices, study tours, exemplar projects, local in residences, research grants and research and development.

## City Led Initiatives:

- Advocacy
  - Continue to advocate for agribusiness in line with the City's Advocacy Factsheet: Agribusiness Preservation and Growth in the City of Wanneroo (endorsed by council October 2017);
  - Advocate for adequate core infrastructure services – telecommunications infrastructure has a close relationship with advanced technology agricultural practices. Continue to work with industry and research partners on a solution for Wanneroo;
- Partnership Building: strengthen and build on current regional partnerships and collaboration efforts including the North of Perth Food Zone, Wheatbelt Development Commission, vegetablesWA, government departments and key industry stakeholders;
- Smart Land Uses: undertake a detailed review of land uses and zoning in North Wanneroo. Provide adequate flexibility for business development without encouraging subdivision, urbanisation or encroachment of residential development. Minimise conflict between food production and other land uses. Provide clear guidelines and criteria for administration and council to make decision on discretionary uses in rural zones to allow consistent decision making;
- Water Security: work with key stakeholders to provide long term water security for agricultural use; and
- Agri-tourism: explore agri-tourism linkages and opportunities through encouragement of agri-tourism experiences, value add and niche products.