



Western Australia: Perth and the South West

Economic context

Tourism employs over 54,000 people in Perth and the South West, contributing \$8.5 billion to the national economy. Tourism plays an important role in the South West, where 20 per cent of residents are employed directly or indirectly by the tourism industry.¹ In parts of Perth and the South West, the impacts of COVID-19 combined with high underlying rates of unemployment are predicted to lead to total unemployment of 15-19%.²

Conservation values

South West WA is internationally recognised as a conservation hotspot, due to its exceptional species diversity (>7,000 plant species, >80% endemic) and high proportion of habitat loss: over 70% of native vegetation in the region has been cleared, principally for agriculture. Native species and ecological communities in the region are further threatened by salinity, dieback, invasive weeds, feral animals and inappropriate fire regimes.

Conservation and land management outcomes

Western Australian conservation and land management organisations have proposed an ambitious program of work to deliver outcomes across four priority areas, in line with existing regional plans and strategies:

- 1. Working with landholders to support sustainable agriculture**
Enhance delivery of the National Landcare Program through outreach and practical land management, including fencing, tree planting, invasive species control and remediation of salt-scalded cropping land.
- 2. Restoring rivers, wetlands, estuaries and coastal habitats**
Scale up priority ecological restoration programs, including: Healthy Estuaries WA; community based river, wetland and dune restoration work; and, monitoring and restoration of coastal reefs and seagrass beds.
- 3. Supporting carbon farming by increasing native seed supply**
Work with traditional owners to establish sustainable seed collection and nursery enterprises to meet long-term demand for local native seed and seedlings for biodiverse carbon plantings.
- 4. Delivering strategic threatened species recovery actions**
Contribute to the delivery of Australia's *Strategy for Nature* by addressing key threatening processes and improving the condition of threatened ecological communities and threatened species habitat.³

¹ Tourism Western Australia (2018) *Economic Contribution of Tourism to Western Australia's Tourism Regions*.

² Centre for Conservation Geography (2020) *Preliminary analysis of the spatial distribution of COVID-19 related employment loss in Australia*.

³ For example: reducing threats to Banksia and Tuart Woodlands; stabilising or increasing populations of Carnaby's, Baudin and Red Tailed Cockatoos, Numbat, Brush-tail Bettong, Woylie, Chuditch, Western Quoll, Matchstick Banksia, Red-tailed Phascogale and Malleefowl

Regional delivery capacity

Government, industry and charitable investment in South West WA has fostered substantial conservation and land management capacity in the region, including well-established NRM regional bodies, active community networks, private conservancies and state conservation agencies. There is substantial scope to expand existing successful programs and to accelerate new initiatives, working with trusted delivery partners (*see list below*).

Proposed investment and associated employment

Federal investment of \$150 million, matched by \$50 million in state funding, would create **1,200 full-time equivalent positions** over four years. Recent analysis by Ernst & Young indicates that this investment would create >\$450 million in long-term economic benefits for local communities and regional economies.⁴

Proposed delivery approach

It is recommended that this federal investment be delivered through three complementary funding pathways: (a) regional conservation and land management partnerships (one per region); (b) direct funding to state conservation agencies; and, (c) a competitive funding round administered by the Australian Government.

Table 1: Predicted employment impacts⁵

Statistical regions	Workforce	Predicted employment loss (%)	Predicted total unemployment (%)
Mandurah	37,123	9%	19%
Perth - South East	228,100	9%	17%
Perth - North East	120,044	9%	16%
Perth - South West	187,962	8%	16%
Perth - North West	261,906	8%	15%
Perth - Inner	85,041	9%	15%
Bunbury	77,615	8%	15%
	997,791	8%	16%

Potential delivery partners

Australian Government (Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (National Landcare Program), National Indigenous Australians Agency); **WA Government** (Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (Parks and Wildlife Service), WA Indigenous Ranger Program, Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development), **NRM Regions** (South West Catchments Council, Peel Harvey Catchment Council, Perth Region NRM), **Conservation, farming and fishing organisations** (WA Landcare Network, Greening Australia, Australian Association of Bush Regenerators, Bush Heritage Australia, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, Gondwana Link, The Nature Conservancy, Restore Australia, RecFish West, Conservation Council of WA), **Indigenous Land Management Organisations, Local Government, Tourism operators.**

⁴ Ernst & Young (2020) *Delivering economic stimulus through the conservation and land management sector*, June 2020.

⁵ Centre for Conservation Geography (2020) *Preliminary analysis of the spatial distribution of COVID-19 related employment loss in Australia*.