

COMMERCIALISATION PROJECT BRIEF

The Gascoyne-Murchison Strategy (GMS) is a joint state/federal initiative established to develop and implement strategies that provide sustainable and revitalised communities in the Gascoyne and Murchison region. The extensive public consultation process conducted by the GMS has resulted in an effective partnership between government and rural communities to achieve a common objective.

GMS Goal:

A socially and economically viable community, involved in a diverse range of industries, based on the use of the rangelands in an environmentally sustainable way.

As a key component of the Strategy, the Commercialisation Project contributes to the achievement of this goal through its

Vision:

Increased economic and employment prospects in the region through the development of new industries and the expansion of existing industries on a regional and individual business basis.

And its

Objective:

Sustainable habitation in the rangelands through robust and developing communities operating viable enterprises.

Key stakeholders (internal/external)

- Some 340 pastoral businesses and other stakeholders in the southern rangelands who will benefit from the experiences and processes developed for the GMS region.
- Commercial investors
- State Government - lead agency Department of Agriculture Western Australia (DAWA)
- Rural Adjustment Scheme (Commonwealth)
- Rural Assistance Fund (State)

Process and timing

In 1996, the GMS conducted extensive consultation across industry, community and public sectors of the Gascoyne-Murchison region. The GMS Steering Committee developed a series of recommendations to address the issues that emerged from this consultative process. These recommendations were returned to the community for ratification prior to being presented to Cabinet. On 12 May 1997, Cabinet approved the GMS Report and directed that the GMS Action Plan be developed to address the recommendations.

Seven regional-scale development initiatives viewed as having potential to broaden the economic base of the Gascoyne Murchison region were officially approved by Cabinet on 1 December 1997. These included:

- Inland aquaculture
- Inland horticulture precincts

- Outback tourism pathways
- Extensive mineral exploration
- Prioritisation of infrastructure development
- Betterment and expansion of existing primary industries
- Provision of diversification advice and engaging institutional impediments

To oversee and facilitate project activities, the GMS Board established the Regional Based Alternative sub-committee (RBASC) composed of representatives from the lead development agencies in the region. These include the Department of Commerce and Trade, the Mid-West Development Commission, the Gascoyne Development Commission and the Department of Agriculture Western Australia. This sub-committee has the authority to co-opted participation and information from other state government agencies and bodies such as Conservation & Land Management, Fisheries and Waters & Rivers Commission, if and when required. The Goldfields Esperance Development Commission has recently expressed a keen interest in becoming involved in future initiatives that may eventuate as a result of this project.

Following the GMS midterm review last year, the thrust of the Commercialisation Project's activities were underpinned by two major objectives:

- the need to transform rangeland industries from supply-oriented to market-driven economies, and
- the need to attract commercial investment in the region.

The Project Sub-committee has identified four key activities/initiatives deemed critical to this effect.

1. Strategic audit and inventory of the region's resources

The thinking behind the development of a regional strategic audit was to create an instrument that regional development bodies, local governments and other authorities could use to test development priorities and impediments once these had been identified conceptually. Such testing is deemed an essential prerequisite to undertaking further action. Sixty-three databases from various government sources have been collated into a user-friendly information product known as the **Outback Resource Atlas (ORA)**. Information is arranged under eight general themes: infrastructure, water resources, tourism, mining, meat & wool production, alternative meat production, horticulture and aquaculture. . ORA provides useful information to potential investors/developers interested in the southern rangelands region.

2. Rangeland industry pre-feasibility studies and related activities

Detailed work plans have been devised and progress has already been achieved in a number of areas, including wool, meat, and horticultural development, inland aquaculture and outback tourism industries development, mineral prospectivity, enhanced transport, communications infrastructure and the provision of 24-hour power in remote areas. Achievements/developments in anyone area/industry will be cross-referenced to capture any spin-off benefits in others.

3. Development of Investment Attraction Packages

Attracting significant capital investment from external sources is a very competitive process. From whatever source, be it a pooled development fund or private investor, money is rarely handed over unless the project or group seeking assistance can present a very strong business case. This is normally presented by means of a well thought out and professionally developed business plan containing an audit of the region's/proposed venture's strategic advantages.

There are a number of commonwealth and state programs that can provide seed funding to industry groups/bodies for the development of business plans. These will be identified and approached. Development of a number of best-bet projects from the Resource Inventory (ORA) process and "testing" the market for a range of investment "wraps" including tax-based schemes will be investigated.

4. Brokering Industry Support Packages

A number of best-bet projects (as determined from the Resource Inventory process) will be developed. Submissions to relevant industry and government bodies interested in partnering the market testing for a range of investment "wraps" will be prepared.

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