



Evaluation of Housing Projects

Summary Report

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This summary is prepared by Hyde Park Media and based on the evaluation '*Evaluation of Housing Projects*' by Umwelt.

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How Royalties for Regions affects housing in regional WA

Since its inception, the Royalties for Regions program has provided more than \$600 million to fund 40 housing-related projects across Western Australia. These projects aimed to address key issues such as providing affordable housing in regional WA and more housing for regional workers.

To determine the effects of such spending, the Department of Regional Development (DRD) commissioned an independent evaluation. This summary document is intended to give people a brief overview of the evaluation's findings to help people provide feedback to DRD and guide future decisions.

The evaluation focused on nine projects that received Royalties for Regions (RfR) funding. These projects were located in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Great Southern and Wheatbelt regions.

The evaluation's overall finding is that housing shortages and affordable housing in the regions evaluated improved, and are continuing to improve, subsequent to implementing the RfR funding program.

It found the projects resulted in several substantial community benefits including:

- Increased housing availability
- Improved housing affordability
- Local and regional economic benefits
- Retention of staff
- Increased service capacity
- Improved the retention of elderly people in their host communities
- Cross-sector benefits, and
- Improved social capital.

From an agency and local government perspective, the provision of new and subsidised housing was found to have enhanced the ability of regions to plan and accommodate future residential population growth.

From a business perspective, staff/employee retention and stability had also increased due to the provision of housing.

The evaluation also highlighted other, less expected, social and community capital benefits—such as increases in volunteering and an increase in community morale involving housing projects.

What did the evaluation look at?

The main question the evaluation looked at is:

What difference has Royalties for Regions made in addressing a shortage of affordable housing in regional WA? The evaluation looked at nine RfR-funded projects that provided housing for service workers, non-government organisations, service providers and general residents.

Each of the nine housing projects evaluated had been funded under RfR to address key issues such as:

- A significant shortage of affordable and appropriate housing
- Urgent infrastructure and amenity improvement needs
- The high costs of living in regional WA
- Risks to the ongoing delivery of government-funded services, and
- A shortage of needed services and facilities.

A total of 171 stakeholders were consulted, with stakeholders representing:

- State Government agencies
- Local Government/ Development commissions
- Residents/tenants/housing project users
- Local business and industry
- Service providers
- Aboriginal groups, and
- Community/residents.

As well as consulting stakeholders, the evaluation also looked at key socio-economic data such as population changes, unemployment rates; housing stress data, the number of houses available for sale or rent, and median rents and house prices.

What projects were involved?

The projects, and their regions, included:

Pilbara

- The provision of Karratha service workers' accommodation (SWA), involving the provision of 100 dwellings; and enhancements to existing service workers' accommodation involving things such as solar panels and inverters
- Housing for non-government organisation (NGO) workers/NGO strategic housing intervention (providing 32 units at Newman, Roebourne, South Hedland, Karratha)

- Hedland 125 House service worker intervention package (involving the provision of 125 accommodation units for service workers in Port Hedland)
- GP housing project (involving seven dwellings being built at Point Cooke at Port Hedland)
- Stage 1 of the South Hedland Town Centre Revitalisation (TCR) project

Kimberley

- Housing for NGO workers/NGO strategic housing intervention (involving 26 units being built at Broome, Derby, Halls Creek, Kununurra)

Great Southern and Wheatbelt

- Acquisition of housing stock for affordable housing (Albany Community Housing Complex), involving 12 dwellings for people on the public housing waiting list such as seniors and disabled people
- Well Aged Persons Housing (WAH) in the Lakes and 4WD districts. This involved providing 30 units in Dumbleyung, Lake Grace, Wagin, West Arthur, Williams, Woodanilling

Gascoyne

- Accommodation for seasonal staff working in Coral Bay involving the construction of 37 homes, an office and a community building to house 75 people.

What did the evaluation find?

The evaluation found that, overall, housing shortages and affordability in the regions evaluated improved, and are continuing to improve, following the RfR funding program and there were substantial community benefits arising from the projects.

The evaluation's eight key findings cover the following categories:



A more detailed summary of the evaluation's findings are in the following table:

Key RfR Funding Outcomes	Karratha SWA	Karratha Enhancements	Hedland 125	Coral Bay Seasonal Staff	NGO Strategic Housing	GP Housing	South Hedland TRC	Well Aged Housing	Albany Housing Complex	Project Examples
Improved affordability										<p>Local businesses consulted in Karratha believe that the Service Worker Accommodation has provided a more affordable housing option for their business (66.7 per cent) and helped ameliorate the impact of high costs of staff, and generally high costs on their business.</p> <p>The low cost of utilities such as power and water, relating to Karratha Service Worker Accommodation enhancements (in an otherwise expensive environment) was seen as contributing to the affordability of accommodation.</p>
Skilled Workforce - Staff Attraction and Retention										<p>Provision of NGO housing has been seen to address difficulties in attracting and retaining staff.</p> <p>Retention of key business staff was seen as having improved in Coral Bay, at least in part due to being able to offer a housing option to new employees.</p> <p>A large number of local business participants in Karratha identified that the Service Worker Accommodation has addressed their immediate housing needs to a very high extent (66.7 per cent) due to increased staff attraction, retention and stability.</p>
Key RfR Funding Outcomes	Karratha SWA	Karratha Enhancements	Hedland 125	Coral Bay Seasonal Staff	NGO Strategic Housing	GP Housing	South Hedland TRC	Well Aged Housing	Albany Housing Complex	Project Examples
Availability of Appropriate Housing (Housing Needs and Minimum Standards) -										<p>The Well Aged Housing was reported to have had a major impact in increasing housing availability; specifically housing that is appropriate to ageing residents, i.e. housing with low maintenance requirements and of an appropriate size.</p> <p>Prior to housing becoming available, NGO's were reliant on other staff housing options such as service workers accommodation. In Roebourne and Halls Creek, NGO staff had been travelling long distances or resided in temporary housing.</p>
Economic development and business opportunities										<p>Consulted stakeholders reported that access to the Service Worker Accommodation housing had improved the current and longer term economic and social development of the host towns, due to the retention of workers in the town.</p> <p>The Revitalisation Project reported to increase the number of national franchises in the shopping centre, particularly restaurants and cafes.</p>
Local Business and Organisations - Community Service Capacity and Cross Sector Benefits										<p>Acknowledgment that provision of the housing had a positive impact on the ability of service providers to attract and retain staff and in turn contributed to improved service provision at the local community level.</p> <p>The provision of housing prevented the reduction or withdrawal of government funded community services for those NGOs that received housing, therefore sustaining and improving the quality of existing NGO services and client numbers.</p> <p>NGOs reported to be benefiting from access to GPs for NGO health care services.</p>
Key RfR Funding Outcomes	Karratha SWA	Karratha Enhancements	Hedland 125	Coral Bay Seasonal Staff	NGO Strategic Housing	GP Housing	South Hedland TRC	Well Aged Housing	Albany Housing Complex	Project Examples
Social and Community Capital										<p>The South Hedland Town Centre Revitalisation project was seen to have improved the overall town aesthetic and amenity and subsequently had increased community morale and acted as an deterrent for inappropriate social behaviour. However, safety was still a concern for some residents.</p> <p>The Well Aged Housing and Albany projects were seen to have improved retention of the elderly in host communities with flow on benefits such as increased levels of volunteerism, particularly within the non for profit sector.</p>

Can you give some actual examples?

The assessment said that State Government agencies had found a lack of affordable housing in regional Western Australia, and in particular within the Pilbara region. This has had a significant impact on local businesses and their employees

It cited several regional details such as:

- A high rate of growth, and transience in the Pilbara along with a low level of unemployment and higher than average weekly incomes
- Negative population growth in the Great Southern, along with low weekly incomes
- Low population growth in the Gascoyne
- Relatively high levels of unemployment in the Kimberley, accompanied by a relatively low level of mortgage stress, and
- Ageing populations in the Wheatbelt and the Great Southern regions, with the Wheatbelt Regional Plan reporting that 10.3 per cent of the regions' population is more than 70 years old (compared to the State average of 8.2 per cent).

The evaluation found that the RfR-funded projects were well received by community members, key stakeholders and project proponents.

In Karratha, more than 65 per cent of local businesses consulted said they believed the service worker accommodation (SWA) provided a more affordable housing option for their business and helped offset the impact of high staff costs, and generally high costs, on their business.

In the Great Southern and Wheatbelt regions, the Well-Aged Persons Housing project was reported to have had a major impact in increasing the availability of appropriate housing, specifically housing appropriate for ageing residents.

The consultation also highlighted other, and less anticipated, social and community capital benefits such as increases in volunteering and community morale in housing project locations and reductions in anti-social behaviour.

The following are some typical comments recorded as part of the assessment:

“When things look nicer, it lifts morale—look at Karratha and look at Hedland.” (South Hedland town revitalisation respondent)

“We would lose a lot of knowledge, experience and volunteers if they [older population] left.” (Lake Grace respondent)

“Housing is now affordable—50 per cent reduction in rent since 2012.” (Karratha SWA respondent)



“I can’t afford to rent in Karratha without their assistance.” (Karratha SWA respondent)

“The size is OK and it’s affordable.” (Coral Bay respondent)

“NGO housing is brilliant and (we) didn’t have a hope without it.” (NGO respondent, Broome)

“We could not get doctors here without it.” (GP Housing Project respondent)

“Appropriate housing before this project simply wasn’t available.” (Well Aged Housing, Williams)