

**Wentworth Shire Sense of Place Report
Volume I, December 2003**

Community Profile and Strategic Plans

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This document and other supporting information about Wentworth Regional Development and the Community Action Teams is available on the Wentworth Shire Council website
www.wentworth.nsw.gov.au

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Section 1: Background

1.1 *Wentworth Shire Sense of Place Project*

The Wentworth Shire Sense of Place project was designed to stimulate social and economic development in the Wentworth Shire through a process of community engagement, leadership building and local action planning. Community participation and ownership of issues are the essential foundations for effective community development. These objectives have been implemented across the Shire from a place-based perspective.

The project was sponsored by the NSW Department of State and Regional Development, the NSW Premier's Department and the Wentworth Shire Council. It was established as a response to longstanding social and economic disadvantage, the poor integration of Government programs at a local level, and the need to improve links between local communities and Local Government, between Local Government and higher order planning institutions (Working Together 2002).

The project aimed to:

- develop active community leadership or Community Action Teams
- link and integrate development in the Shire
- structure the planning process for each locality
- develop a Community Profile & Action Plans for key communities
- investigate project-funding opportunities and assist with the development of funding submissions.

An important factor for the future will be the adoption of clear goals and a development policy by the Community Action Teams and Wentworth Regional Development Inc. They must formulate strategies to enhance local strengths, provide leadership and build the community's ability to act on its own behalf. Participation in the planning process will allow residents to be involved with decisions to improve the quality of life and prosperity of their communities and to enhance the communities' capacity to manage their future.

1.2 *The Process*

The Sense of Place project has been based on a process of facilitation and coordination and working with the community teams so they were able to identify the resources, the gaps, and best solutions for their communities. There has been a high degree of action learning and the teams have gained skills, knowledge and confidence through this process. To achieve the project aims has required a flexible approach to encourage individual participation and ownership and to build the team engagement. At the same time the project had to achieve its own aims and ensure planning goals were achieved.

Implementation involved (a), the establishment and facilitation of the local community Action Teams, (b) community research and consultation, and (c) identification of priorities and development of the Action Plans, and support for funding. In addition to the action team goals, the project involved significant networking, team building, negotiation and planning responsibilities.

1.3 *Project Goals and Outcomes*

The outcomes of the Sense of Place project will provide a benchmark against which development and services can be assessed in the future. The Action Plans provide a positive direction and practical steps to improve the quality of life and local amenities for the communities. In a broader context, outcomes will contribute to building the capacity of the community and business with long-term benefits for the economy in the Shire. See Table 1.1 for an overview of the Sense of Place project.

Wentworth Shire Sense of Place Project: Implementation Schedule			
Time	Phases	Key Actions	Milestones
Jan/Feb	1. Establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development of overall project plan and processes development of a communications strategy, relevant press releases, monthly newsletters for teams background research and interviews with key informants, consultations with La Trobe, ACC, & SMEDB re local economic data & models coordinate "Community Futures" meetings 	2500 flyers distribute. Press releases "Community Futures" meetings (4)
Feb/ Mar	2. Formation of Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the identification & development of the community teams, team building, relationships with community groups, the development of the process for community consultation group discussions re action planning purpose & role, and Leadership roles 	Teams established x 4 40 CAT meetings between March & July Leadership Workshop
April/May	3. Community Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> development of survey instruments with the Action Teams (x4), mail out (2500) development of survey instruments and processes for the business and youth sectors business survey mailing list and mail out (320 surveys) youth survey administered through Coomealla High School (210) youth workshop at Coomealla High School with DSRD Youth Dev. Officer (representatives from 6 schools) presentations to community organisations & relevant press releases 	Questionnaires developed. Community surveys Business survey Youth survey Youth workshop
April/May	4. Asset Mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collating information on assets and services developing asset maps, examining how the communities function, talking through the urban design aspects of communities Sense of Place Photo Competition for community assets 	Brief profile of community assets and services x 4 Photo Competition
May/June	5. Data Collection & Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> data collection, design of the data-bases, data entry for community surveys (x4) analysis of youth surveys and business surveys local mapping activity and analysis of survey data with the groups youth planning workshop with agencies for a development strategy 	Data collated for surveys (432 community, 70 business & 210 youth surveys) Youth Workshop
June/July	6. Priorities and Action Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identification of priorities and mentoring of the action planning with groups writing up, reviewing and refining the Action Plans with the groups presentations to Community Meetings (x4) and press releases 	Action Plans (x4) Community Meetings twice monthly. Press releases
July/Sep	7. Regional Development Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishment of the Wentworth Regional Development Group identification of aims and objectives, development role & support 	Develp Group operational Aims and Objectives develpd
August/ November	8. Shift to Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focusing teams on key projects and community activities funding submissions, skill building re volunteer workshops, DSRD conference 	Identifying projects Subs, training
December	9. Profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collating statistics, writing up Profile. Final report & recommendations. * See Appendix IV 	Community Profile Final report

Section 2: Community Profile

2.1 The Wentworth Shire – Towns and Villages

The Wentworth Shire comprises an area of 26170 sq. kilometres, with a population of 6,982 (ABS Census 2001) in south-western New South Wales. Australia's two largest rivers, the Murray and Darling, maintain a dominant influence in the environment, the economy, social life and culture of the Shire.

Wentworth is part of the Sunraysia region which comprises the three Statistical Local Areas of Wentworth, Mildura Rural City Part A and Mildura Rural City Part B (rural areas). The economic base is dominated by the irrigated horticultural industry, wineries, an extensive pastoral industry with dryland cropping, transport and an expanding tourism and service sector.

2.1.1 Towns

The key urban areas in the Shire are the towns of Wentworth, Dareton, and Buronga /Gol Gol and urban environs.

Wentworth

The historic Port of Wentworth, located on the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers, has a population of 1427 (ABS 2001) and is the administrative centre for the Shire. The town retains a number of heritage-listed buildings, has rebuilt the historic port, and is keen to conserve and redevelop the heritage precinct at the centre of the town. Wentworth has many heritage assets to support the town's development as a heritage tourism destination. A major project for the community is the restoration of the Paddle Steamer 'Ruby' which has become an icon for the historic town.

Dareton and Namatjira

Dareton, the centre of the Coomealla Irrigation district, has a population of 620 people (ABS 2001). The town was built as a service centre for the grape and citrus irrigation area in 1923, and in the past supported two large fruit packing sheds. A number of Government services are located at Dareton including the Coomealla High School, the Far West Area Health Service, the NSW Department of Agriculture Research Station, the district Police command, Rural Fire Service and the Riverina TAFE Coomealla Campus. It also is the headquarters for Western Murray Irrigation and the Barkinji Aboriginal settlement of Namatjira is situated close to Dareton and the Murray River.

Buronga /Gol Gol and environs

The communities of Buronga and Gol Gol are the nucleus for a rapidly expanding urban cluster and industrial area that extends from Buronga along the Murray River frontage through River Bend estate towards Trentham Cliffs. While the population is difficult to assess accurately because of the population flows across Census boundaries, estimates place the Buronga Gol Gol cluster in the vicinity of 2000 (ABS 2001). This cluster now forms the largest urban centre in the Sunraysia region outside of Mildura City and supports a thriving transport industry, in excess of sixty small businesses and is located close to two large wineries at Mourquong.

2.1.2 Villages and Rural Areas

Villages include Pooncarie, Palinyewah and a number of intensely settled areas at the heart of the irrigation areas of Ellerslie, Pomona, Curlwaa, Coomealla, Mourquong, Boeill Creek and Trentham Cliffs. Most of the Wentworth Shire is rural with dryland farming and grazing areas accounting for 96% of the Shire. This area is sparsely populated with special problems and difficulties concerning road maintenance and access to education facilities.

For more details on the facilities and services in these communities, see Sense of Place Report Volume III, Action Plans, Facilities and Services.

2.2 Demographics

ABS Census data (2001) for the Wentworth Shire demonstrate a small decline during the past decade. This trend is in line with the population of the rural sector of Mildura Rural City (Part B Statistical Local Area) and also rural Australia in general. In contrast, Mildura City, like other major regional centres, demonstrates a decade of population growth.

The Bureau of Transport & Regional Economics Report for the Lower Murray Darling (BTRE 2003) notes the population trends for the region as demonstrating an overall population growth rate on the Victorian side of Sunraysia at 10.5% with a decline on the NSW side (Wentworth Shire) of 2.6%.

Note that the BTRE figures differ slightly from the ABS 2001 Community Profile data below that claims the total for the Shire at 6984 persons.

The estimated population for the Shire as at June 30, 2002 was 7 218 (ABS Cat. No. 32180) demonstrating a considerable increase. Another indication of population growth is the number of new dwelling approvals in the Shire. These totalled 152 between January 2000 and June 2003, 108 of these in Buronga/Gol Gol areas.

Table 2.1 below provides an overview of population distribution and trends for all ABS Collector Districts in the Wentworth Shire.

Table 2.1: Population data (Enumerated Data) Census 2001 showing comparison with 1996 Census

Census Collector Districts	Population Comparison		
	1996	2001	Trend
Wentworth East (1020701)	1504	714	-69 (Total)
Wentworth West (1020705)	n/a	721	
Dareton (1020707)	652	620	-32
Namatjira (1020713)	269	113	-156
Buronga (1020711)	896	929	+33
Gol Gol (1020701)	619	591	-28
Gol Gol & North (1020804)	379	489	+110
Trentham Cliffs & South (1020805)	324	348	+24
Rural Areas - Outer (mostly dryland)			
Pooncarie, north & east (1020802)	181	202	+21
Ellerslie & East (1020803)	273	254	-19
Pomona & Area (1020702)	354	323	-31
Darling View (1020712) (north of Curlwaa)	223	189	-34
Anabran North (1020703)	203	94	-14 total
Anabran South (1020704)	n/a	95	
Rural Areas – Inner (mostly irrigation)			
Curlwaa (1020706)	427	418	-9
Boeill Creek & Mourquong (1020710)	308	318	+10
Coomealla West (1020708)	633	252	-67 total
Coomealla East (1020709)	n/a	95	
Total	7245	6984	- 261

Source: ABS, Community Profile, 2001.

Table 2.2: Population by Age and Local Areas (Enumerated Data) Census 2001.

Age	Wentworth	Dareton/ Namatjira	Curlwaa	Buronga/ Gol Gol/ Trentham Cliffs	Pooncarie & East	Rural /Other	Total
0-4	77	55	21	151	22	120	446
5-9	98	72	42	166	18	117	513
Sub-total 0-9	175	127	63	317	40	237	959
10-14	111	70	37	183	9	132	542
15-19	89	49	40	170	3	121	472
20-24	42	28	12	128	0	109	319
Sub-total 10-24	242	147	89	481	12	362	1333
25-29	66	49	21	157	3	118	414
30-34	67	55	25	145	12	121	425
35-39	91	41	42	167	25	120	486
Sub-total 25-39	224	145	88	469	40	359	1325
40-44	98	40	37	200	24	126	525
45-49	114	32	25	164	15	157	507
50-54	105	46	37	182	6	188	564
Sub-total 40-54	317	118	99	546	45	471	1596
55-59	95	48	17	156	22	125	463
60-64	90	53	20	105	6	107	381
Sub-total 55-64	185	101	37	261	28	232	844
64-69	65	34	15	86	21	69	290
70-74	70	36	12	75	22	44	259
75-79	66	25	3	45	3	41	183
80+	80	30	9	50	6	6	181
Sub-total 65-80+	281	125	39	256	52	160	913
O/s yrs Diff.	3	0	0	5	0	4	12
TOTALS	1427	763	415	2337	217	1825	6984

(ABS 2001 Community Profile)

The figures in Table 2.2 above show a breakdown by age groupings across communities. The table demonstrates higher numbers of people in the older age brackets in the town of Wentworth compared to higher numbers of young people in the Buronga/Gol Gol area.

The proportion of the population born overseas was 6% and the proportion speaking a language other than English at home was 4% (ABS 2001 Community Profile).

A table showing a breakdown of the population by age, gender and local areas and is contained in Appendix 1.

Table 2.3: Population Comparison (Enumerated Data) between Wentworth Township, Rural areas, Wentworth Shire as a whole, the Balance of Victoria, and Non-Metropolitan NSW

Age	Wentworth Township	Rural Areas (Went. Shire)	Wentworth Shire	Balance of Victoria	Non-Metropolitan NSW **
0-4	5.39	6.58	6.39	6.66	6.61
5-9	6.87	6.41	7.34	7.63	7.52
Sub-total	12.26	12.99	13.73	14.29	14.13
10-14	7.78	7.23	7.76	7.87	7.86
15-19	6.24	6.63	6.76	7.20	7.92
20-24	2.94	5.97	4.57	5.33	4.96
Sub-total	16.96	19.76	19.09	20.40	16.74
25-29	4.63	6.47	5.93	5.67	5.32
30-34	4.69	6.63	6.09	6.51	6.05
35-39	6.38	6.57	6.96	7.17	6.90
Sub-total	15.70	19.67	18.98	19.35	18.27
40-44	6.86	6.91	7.52	7.66	7.56
45-49	7.99	8.60	7.26	7.20	7.01
50-54	7.36	10.30	8.08	6.74	6.66
Sub-total	22.21	25.81	22.86	21.60	21.23
55-59	6.66	6.85	6.63	5.26	5.62
60-64	6.31	5.86	5.46	4.47	5.04
Sub-total	12.97	12.71	12.09	9.73	10.66
64-69	4.55	3.78	4.16	3.84	4.46
70-74	4.91	2.41	3.71	3.73	4.19
75-79	4.62	2.25	2.62	3.06	3.24
80+	5.61	0.33	2.59	3.60	3.59
Sub-total	19.69	8.77	13.08	14.23	15.48
O/s yrs Diff.	0.21	0.22	0.17	0.40	0.49
TOTALS	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: ABS Census 2001

** Non-Metropolitan New South Wales is based on State figures with the exception of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.

Table 2.3 shows comparative data with other rural areas against the town of Wentworth and rural areas of the Shire. Notable differences occur in the 20 to 34-year groups, demonstrating the post-school “trough” or absence of young adults in rural areas and significant number of older people among the Wentworth population.

Table 2.4 below demonstrates an increase in the proportion of people in the over 65 bracket in Wentworth, rural areas and Dareton as compared with 1996. The figures from Namatjira are consistent with the high morbidity rates amongst the indigenous population in Australia where few people are living beyond the age of 65.

Table 2.4: Wentworth Shire: Aged Population 65 Years and Over (Enumerated Data), Census – 2001

Groupings by Townships & Collector Districts	Population 65 Years & Older	
	1996	2001
Wentworth East/Wentworth West	260	287
Dareton	72	125
Namatjira	15	3
	87	128
Buronga	80	90
Gol Gol	74	87
Gol Gol & North	16	26
Trentham Cliffs & South	31	44
	201	247
Rural Areas (outer – mostly dryland)		
Pooncarie & East	22	40
Ellerslie & East	15	21
Pomona & Area	12	20
Darling & North	21	25
Anabranche (a & b)	27	39
	75	105
Rural Areas (inner - mostly irrigation)		
Curlwaa	38	37
Boeill Creek & Mourquong	31	35
Coomealla East/Coomealla West	44	38
	75	73
Total for Shire	870	917

Table 2.5: The distribution of young people 0-19 years across the Wentworth Shire as at 2001 Census.

Age	Wentworth	Curlwaa	Dareton/ Namatjira	Buronga/ Gol Gol/ Trentham Cliffs	Pooncarie & East	Rural /Other	Total	% of Shire Population
0-4	77	21	55	151	22	120	446	6.39%
5-9	98	42	72	166	18	117	513	7.35%
Sub-total 0-9	175	63	127	317	40	237	959	13.70%
10-14	111	37	70	183	9	132	542	7.76%
15-19	89	40	49	170	3	121	472	6.76%
Sub-Total 10-19	200	77	119	353	12	253	1014	14.52%
TOTAL 0-19	375	140	246	670	52	490	1973	28.28%

Source: ABS, Census 2001, (Expanded Community Profile), Enumerated Data.

An analysis of numbers of youth 0-19 years across the Wentworth Shire (Table 2.5) demonstrates that young people comprise 28.28 % of the Shire population and are distributed widely across the Shire. The largest cluster, 670 or approximately one third of the 0-19 group, are resident in the Buronga, Gol Gol and environs. Because of the extensive overflow of the 'urban' population outside of the defined ABS Collector Districts of 'Buronga' and 'Gol Gol', the Collector Districts of Gol Gol North and Trentham Cliffs have been included to reflect the extent of urban development and population growth that flows beyond the defined areas of the townships.

Table 2.6: Wentworth Shire, Aboriginal Population, Census Counts (Enumerated Data)

Groupings by Townships & Collector Districts	Population	
	1996	2001
Wentworth	152	119
Dareton	163	147
Namatjira	264	111
	427	258
Buronga	124	79
Gol Gol	15	13
Gol Gol & North	3	6
Trentham Cliffs & South	3	3
	145	101
Rural Areas (outer – mostly dryland)	37	38
Rural Areas (inner - mostly irrigation)	35	7
Total for Shire	797	539

The above table demonstrates the distribution of the indigenous population across the Shire. The accuracy of the 2001 Census data however is questionable in relation to the sharp decline reported for the indigenous population at Namatjira (-156) between the 1996 and 2001 Census. There has been an increase in the indigenous population of Mildura City of about 300 during this period (ABS Census 2001) and therefore a cross border drift of people may account for some variation in numbers between the two areas. The BTRE Report (2003, p.49) puts the indigenous population share of the Wentworth Shire at 7.8%.

Table 2.7: Average Household Size, Wentworth Shire, ABS 2001

Groupings by Townships & Collector Districts	Population	
	1996	2001
Wentworth	2.5	2.2
Dareton	2.8	2.3
Namatjira	5.3	5.0
Curlwaa	2.9	2.6
Buronga	2.9	2.5
Gol Gol	2.6	2.2
Gol Gol & North	3.1	2.9
Trentham Cliffs & South	2.5	2.4
Pooncarie & East	2.8	2.0
Rural Areas (outer – mostly dryland)		
Ellerslie & East	2.7	2.0
Pomona & Area	2.8	2.3
Darling & North	2.3	1.8
Anabranche (a & b)	2.9	2.7
Rural Areas (inner - mostly irrigation)		
Boeill Creek & Mourquong	2.8	2.6
Coomealla Coomealla West (708)	2.9	2.4
Total - Average	2.8	2.5

Table 2.7 demonstrates the declining in the Average Household Size between 1996 and 2001 Census as well as the significant differences between Namatjira, an indigenous community, and the Shire as a whole.

Table 2.8: Wentworth Shire, Dwelling Structure by Tenure Type, Census 2001

Tenure Type	Separate House	Town house	Flat/Apart.	Other	Not Stated	Total
Fully Owned	982	15	24	90	11	1122
Being Purchased	506	5	5	7	4	527
Being purch./ rent buy	13	9	0	0	0	22
	1501	29	29	97	15	1671
Rented House	38	0	0	0	0	38
Rented Other	365	38	66	45	12	526
Rented – not stated	7	0	3	0	0	10
	410	38	69	45	12	574
Other Type	122	3	3	32	3	163
Not Stated	137	12	6	58	27	240
TOTAL	2170	82	107	232	57	2648

Source: ABS Census Population & Housing – 2001, B19 Dwelling Structure by Tenure Type.

Table 2.9: Wentworth Shire, Weekly Household Income by Household Type, Census 2001

Weekly Income	Family Households		Non-Family Households		Total No. of Households
	No.	%	No.	%	
Negative Income	19	1.1	9	1.5	28
\$1 - \$299	50	2.8	248	41.2	298
\$300 - \$399	208	11.6	64	10.6	272
\$400 - \$499	174	9.7	72	12.0	246
\$500 - \$599	111	6.2	52	8.6	163
\$600 - \$799	252	14.1	46	7.6	298
\$800 - \$1199	352	19.6	43	7.1	395
\$1200 - \$1999	281	15.7	17	2.8	298
\$2000 or more	108	6.0	0	-	108
Part Income Stated	161	9.0	0	-	161
All Incomes Not Stated	76	4.2	52	8.6	128
Total	1792	100.0	603	100.0	2395

A Total of 65.3%, or the majority of Non-Family Households, are under \$500 per week compared with 25.2% of Family Households. The bulk of Family Households, 49.4% are in the \$600 to \$1999 bracket.

Table 2.9: Wentworth Shire, Labour Force (Enumerated Data) Census 2001, Population 15 Years and Above.

Labour Force Status	Males	Females	Total
Employed			
Full Time	1417	606	2023
Part Time	312	591	903
Not Stated	75	47	122
	1804	1244	3048
Unemployed	109	62	171
Not in Labour Force	773	1147	1920
Totals	2686	2453	5139

Source: ABS Census of Population & Housing, 2001, B22, Selected Characteristics.

Issues arising from this section are discussed under the relevant sectors such as aged care, or youth activities, increased services.

Map 1: Location of ABS Collector Districts for the Wentworth Shire

2.3 Environmental Profile

The Shire of Wentworth is sited in a predominantly semi-arid rangeland zone located within the Lower Murray Darling Basin region. The ancient river valleys of the Murray-Darling and the Willandra Lakes system combined with undulating sandy plains shape the Lower Murray environment and the Shire is noted for both its riverine areas and striking red sand hills. The area contains World Heritage environmental sites and many archaeological sites of international significance.

Management of the riverine environment, water quality and quantity, and salinity are major issues for the region. For environmental management and planning purposes the Shire is included in the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Strategy and the Lower Murray Darling Rangeland Management Action Plan, and the Shires of Wentworth and Balranald form the basis for NSW Southern Mallee Regional Planning area.

2.3.1 Climate

The climate in the region is generally warm and temperate, with an annual rainfall averaging under 300mm. Variations are significant and averages range from less than 200 to 250mm per year in the western and northern areas to 320 to 355mm in the southern and eastern areas. Average evaporation rates are six times higher than rainfall rates.

Key climate data for the region is as follows:

Average Daily Minimum Temperature	10.3°C
Average Daily Maximum Temperature	23.6°C
Average Annual Rainfall	293 mm
Warmest Month	January (average 31.9°C max)
Coolest Month	July (average 15.3°C max)
Average number of days over 30°C	78 days per annum
<i>(Mildura Rural City Council Regional Economic Profile 1997)</i>	

2.3.2 Geological Characteristics

The following summary of the geological profile and characteristics of soil, topography and vegetation in the Wentworth Shire has been taken from the *Southern Mallee Regional Guidelines for the Development of Land Use Agreements* (Southern Regional Planning Committee [SMRPC], 2000 pp. 1-2.

The geology of Southern Mallee Region is dominated by the Murray Geological Basin that is characterized by three layers:

- a basal sand, gravel and lignite unit which fills then deeper part of the Basin
- a continuous sheet of marine clay and limestone covering the entire area south of Menindee
- a sand sheet (up to 80 metres thick) and clayey floodplain sediments of the river system.

There are five broad soil groups in the Southern Mallee Regional:

- Solonized Brown Soils (Calcareous Brown Earths)
- Soft Red Earths
- Texture Contrast (Duplex) Soils
- Heavy Clays and
- Skeletal Soils (lithosols)

The characteristics of the soils, topography and vegetation have been grouped and classified into Land Systems and 'range types' for the region. The principal range types in the Southern Mallee Region (Wentworth & Balranald Shires) are

- Belah and Bluebush (40.1%)
- Mallee (30.8%)
- Saltbush Plains (19.4)
- Southern Riverine Woodlands (9.7%)
- Mulga (less than 1%)

2.3.3 Flora and Fauna

Useful summaries and maps of the flora and fauna of the region are contained in the *Lower Murray Darling Rangeland Management Action Plan* (LMD RMAP Committee 1999, p. 5).

Key vegetation areas or plant communities identified by the Rangeland Management Action Plan and which are relevant to the Wentworth Shire include:

1. Belah-rosewood: to be found on the red earth & solonized brown soils, and supported by cypress pine, wilga, sugarwood and Eremophila species with copperburrs, ruby saltbush, bluebush and speargrass in the understory.
2. Mallee: occurring on undulating sand plains. Deeper sand supports lerp Mallee, slender-leaf Mallee and red Mallee as well as yorrell, pointed Mallee, congoo Mallee and spinifex and shrubs of wattle, tea tree, cassia, hopbushes and tar bush.
3. Bluebush: occurring on undulating plains and alluvial plains of grey & brown clays with the black bluebush and pearl bluebush the dominating species.
4. Riverine communities: to be found along river margins on grey clays with red gum dominating on the edge of streams with black box dominating on the grey clay soils around ephemeral lakes. The understory includes lignum, river cooba and perennial grasses.

A detailed guide to the flora and fauna communities of the area is contained in '*Mallee Country Wildlife: the nature on the lower Murray-Darling basin*'¹.

The Southern Mallee Regional Guidelines for the Development of Land Use Agreements (2000) includes an Appendix outlining a description of the vegetation communities in the Southern Mallee, NSW, benchmark reserve targets for those vegetation communities, and a summary of their reservation status as of June 2000.

2.3.4 National Parks and Nature Reserves

There are large areas of riverine environment on the lower Murray Darling system that are of environmental significance. Notable areas within the Shire include:

- the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Region
- Thegoa Lagoon
- Lake Victoria
- Boeill Lagoon system.

National Parks include:

- Lake Mungo National Park
- Mallee Cliffs National Park

¹ ¹ "Mallee Country Wildlife: the nature on the lower Murray-Darling basin"¹ (Cowling 1993) and published by the Gould League of Victoria in conjunction with the Victorian Dept of Conservation & Natural Resources.

Nature reserves include:

- Nearie Lake
- Kemendoc Nature Reserve
- Joulmie Heritage Reserve
- Tarawi
- Junction Island (proclaimed Wild Life Reserve)

Scotia Sanctuary in the north-west of the Shire is a Western Lands Lease managed as a private nature reserve.

The number of voluntary conservation agreements being taken out on private property is increasing under then Native Vegetation Conservation Act of 1997 and *the South Mallee Regional Guidelines for the Development of Land Use Agreements* (SMRPC 2000).

In addition the Wentworth Shire also supports State Forest reserves.

Further information on Lake Mungo and the Willandra Lake System can be found under:

Fox, A. 1997 *Mungo National Park: part of the Willandra Lakes World heritage Area*, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service.

2.3.6 Archaeological Sites

Historically, the Lower Murray-Darling River systems were densely populated by Aborigines and there is evidence that Aboriginal occupation of the area has extends continuously for at least 60,000 years. The Willandra Lakes World Heritage Region was recognised in 1981 and gives international recognition of the cultural and scientific significance of the area and local Aboriginal occupation (Clark cited in LMD RMAP1999, p. 10).

The Shire of Wentworth contains some of the most significant findings of Aboriginal sites in Australia and evidence of Aboriginal occupation in Australia. There are more than 280 sites registered with the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service in addition to the many un-recorded sites.

Sites of significance within or partly within the Shire include: Perry Sand Hills, Lake Gol Gol and Gol Gol Swamp, Buronga Wetlands, Boeill Lagoon, Junction Island, Banks of the Murray River, Darling River and Anabranch, foreshore of Lake Victoria, Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area, Nearie Lake, and Tarawa Conservation Area.

(Shire of Wentworth Annual Report, 2001/2002, State of the Environment Report)

2.3.7 Water and Salinity

Water quality and quantity for the Lower Murray Darling is an issue of national concern. As identified by *The Living Murray: a discussion paper on restoring the health of the River Murray* (2002), the issues impacting on water include land-use, use of ground-water, town and farm run off, flood-plain salinity, stock access to river banks, river bank vegetation, wildlife habitat, and control of introduced pests.

The Murray Darling Water Management Action Plan 2002 and the *Lower Murray Darling Catchment Blueprint* (Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Board 2002, pp.5-6) identify strategies to tackle issues including:

- salination of the floodplains
- the decline of native fish, wildlife and native vegetation
- declining riverine health and water quality
- loss of community and cultural assets and associated socio-economic stress and

- increased risk of degradation of the region's World Heritage areas and values

Useful references on environmental issues for Wentworth Shire include:

Southern Mallee Regional Guidelines for the Development of Land Use Agreements (Southern Regional Planning Committee), 2000

The Lower Murray Darling Rangeland Management Action Plan (RMAP) 1999

The Living Murray: a discussion paper 2002

The Murray Darling Water Management Action Plan 2002

The Lower Murray Darling Catchment Blueprint 2002

The Darling Anabranch Management Plan 2002

Thegoa Lagoon Management Plan 2003-2006

Wentworth Shire Annual Report (State of the Environment Report)

Sense of Place Community Action Plans for Wentworth Shire.

2.3.8 Environmental Concerns for Wentworth Shire

Water quality and quantity

Water quality and quantity, salinity and rising levels of saline ground water are critical to the economic, environmental and social well being of the Wentworth Shire. Sustainable development through improved management of the riverine environment is a priority for the Governments at all levels and community groups.

Western Lands Leases, Native Title²

Waste management (*Wentworth Shire State of the Environment Report*)

Environmental management concerns arising from the Sense of Place Community consultation and planning process

Buronga/ Gol Gol

- conservation and management of river frontage areas
- increased access to river frontage for both recreation activities and tourism
- conservation strategies for local environmental areas to retain their natural state
- an open space strategy for public reserves and crown land in the Shire,
- enforcement of the 5% Rule relating to public space in development areas
- improved weed control and
- recycling facility
- promotion of environmentally friendly housing
- Western Lands Leases, Native Title and the restrictions to development

Dareton

- improved identification of river frontage with public access close to Dareton and better access
- improved conservation and management plans for open space and reserves including signage

² While a Bill was passed through the NSW Parliament to amend the Western Lands Act on 28 June 2002, the issue is still causing impediments to development in the Wentworth Shire. One of the amendments allows for the conversion to freehold of agriculture and similar leases (horticulture, cultivation and mixed farming), subject to a sustainability test. On 8th August 2002, the High Court of Australia found that all perpetual grazing leases under the NSW Western Land Act extinguished native title. There are still a number of areas where Native Title may continue to exist including reserves, vacant Crown land and other types of Western Lands Leases. (See document Appendix III)

Pooncarie

- improved water quality and improved water supply

Wentworth

- improved access to World Heritage areas
- promotion of eco-tourism
- Thegoa Lagoon
- identification and conservation of local natural resources
- walking tracks
- defining of protocols for heritage and cultural sites
- promote native gardens in Wentworth

See Section 4 this document for key environmental proposals from the Community Action Plans
See Volume III for complete Community Action Plans

2.4 Business and Industry Overview

The Wentworth Shire, on the northern side of the Lower Murray is an integral part of the Sunraysia regional economy based on Mildura City. It has strong economic links to Adelaide and Melbourne and functions as a sub-region within Sunraysia. The data on business activity should be interpreted from that perspective.

Economic Sectors

Traditionally Wentworth Shire's economy has been based around agriculture and dryland farming with intensive horticulture along the waterways. Apart from these industries specific industry data for the Shire is limited. The Bureau of Transport & Regional Economics report (BTRE 2003) also noted that information and data at the small area level is scarce.

Key economic sectors for the Wentworth Shire include:

- agriculture including horticulture with intensive irrigation supporting grape and citrus production, pastures for sheep production (wool and meat) and dryland cropping
- agribusiness, contractors and services
- manufacturing based on wineries and the food industry
- transport
- mineral sand mining
- the Government service sector including Dept of Natural Resources, National Parks & Wildlife, Health and Community Services, Education and Police.

General economic trends in the Sunraysia region are outlined in the BTRE Report (2003). They are:

2.4.1 Agriculture

The greater proportion of the Shire, with the exception of the clearly defined irrigated areas along the Darling and Murray Rivers is taken up by dryland farming. However, irrigated horticulture, even if only 0.6% (1999 data) of the area is now the most significant economic sector. The Lower Murray Darling Rangeland Management Action Plan 1999 provides the following outline of land use for agricultural purposes in the Shire.

Table 2.11: Proportions of agricultural land use for the Wentworth Shire

Land Use Patterns in the Wentworth Shire - 1999		
Grazing	Rangeland pastoral areas with a predominance of sheep for wool and meat production	93%
Dryland Farming	Dryland farming supporting cereal production, mainly wheat.	3%
Irrigated Horticulture	Main products include wine grapes, table grapes, dried fruit, citrus, avocados and vegetables.	0.6%

(LMD RMAP, 1999 pp.5-6)

Table 2.12: Land use by area under development (1999)

Shire	Cultivation	Clearing for grazing	Irrigation	Receding floodwater cropping	Total area
Wentworth	59,186 ha	24,406 ha	15,479 ha	12,996 ha	112,123 ha

(Source: DLWC GIS cited in Lower Murray Darling Rangeland Management Action Plan 1999)

Pastures and Dryland Farming Sector

Grazing and dryland farming occupies 96% of the Shire of Wentworth and is based on Western Lands Lease holdings. While the RMAP area is far greater than the Wentworth Shire, the figures on production are relevant to local grazing and dryland farming areas. Merino wool production predominates and is supported by limited beef cattle production and some opportunistic cropping of cereals such as wheat.

The harvesting and farming of feral goats is increasing as a means of income supplementation in rural areas along with the harvesting of native and feral animals such as pigs and kangaroos (LMD RMAP 1999).

Table 2.13: RMAP Property and Livestock Summary (1996)

	Grazing Properties	Hectares	Sheep	Cattle	Horses	Goats	Emu/Ostrich
Numbers for Shire	151	2 638 974	343 712	10 004	300	3505	130

(Source: LMD RMAP, p. 6)

Farm size and income (dryland)

A breakdown of Gross Income of the RMAP area, as at 1996, shows that sheep account for 60%, cattle for 10%, and wheat for 9%. Lowe notes that the major commodities of wool and wheat have demonstrated static or declining returns while business costs have risen to further reduce farm sector purchasing power (Lowe cited in LMD RMAP 1999). Average farm incomes for the Shire declined between 1981 to 1996 from around 90% of the State average to 79% of State average. This trend in turn has driven declining job availability and population in the pastoral areas. (Western Lands Review 1999, p.22)

Irrigated Horticulture

Irrigated horticulture in the Sunraysia is undergoing a major expansion. Irrigated plantings are extending along the Murray east of Wentworth, and north along the Darling River towards Pooncarie.

Key irrigation areas on the Murray are clustered at Paringi, Monak, Trentham Cliffs, Gol Gol, Buronga, Mourquong, Coomealla and Curlwaa. Along the Darling key areas are Wentworth, Pomona, Avoca, Ellerslie, and Burtundy.

There is no information available for irrigated crops upstream of Pooncarie.

TABLE 2.14: Irrigated Horticulture in the Wentworth Shire by Crop Type and area of Production.

Irrigated Horticulture Wentworth Shire 2003, Crops x Hectares							
	Grapevines	Citrus	Field Crops	Fruit/Nut Trees	Vegetables	Other	TOTAL AREA
Hectares	6 470	2 540	2 615	155	385	375	12 540

Source: SunRISE 21, October 2003. (Vacant 445 ha.)

The attached map, Map 2 Wentworth Shire 2003, Irrigated Horticulture (SunRISE 21, 2003), demonstrates the location of irrigated horticulture in the Shire and the hectares under production for specific crops.

The total area under irrigation for the Wentworth Shire (SunRISE 21 November 2003) is 12,540 hectares. The Bureau of Transport & Regional Economics report (BTRE 2003) identified only 2,643 hectares of irrigation area in NSW Sunraysia as per the 2001 ABS Agricultural Census. This may be a misprint but should be noted if comparing data.

The decade of the 1990s saw a major shift from traditional crops of citrus and dried fruit production to the growing of grapes for wine production across the Sunraysia region. Traditional plantings had included dried and table grape varieties, with citrus production focusing on Valencias. During 1990s, the switch to wine grapes saw a reduction in the sultana grape to specialist varieties for production of red and white wines, and a move from Valencias to late navel varieties to support the emerging export industry for fresh produce ([BTRE] 2003).

According to Lowe (2001), the local economy is dominated by horticulture. Lowe cites the feasibility study for the proposed Alfred Deakin Irrigation Project (SMEC Victoria Ltd, 2001) as predicting that new plantings are expected to favour wine production with wine grapes accounting for 65%, table grapes 17% and dried fruits 10%. Citrus will represent only 1% of predicted new permanent plantings. Smaller crops such as almonds and vegetable crops will make up the balance of 7%.

It should be noted that relativity between production levels, values and water use is not reliable due to incremental improvements in water use efficiencies by growers. Comparative data between areas irrigated and production levels and values also may be unreliable (Lowe 2001).

Farm Income

The BTRE report (2003) states that the value of agricultural production for the Wentworth Shire (ABS Agricultural Census 2001) totalled \$138.3million. Key areas of production were wine grapes, table grapes, dried fruits, almonds, other fruit and nuts, vegetables, and pastures.

The BRTE report also noted the high capital outlays for irrigation infrastructure. Capital stock in irrigated agriculture for the Wentworth Shire was estimated at \$200.1 million for 2001, wine grapes accounted for more than 50% of that total.

Changes in capital stock in irrigated agriculture from 1997 to 2001, based on the ABS Agricultural Census 1997 & 2001, were cited by BRTE (2003) as valued at \$73.4 million for wine grapes. The total value for Sunraysia for wine grapes was \$206.6 million.

The farming sector is supported by the NSW Dept of Agriculture Research and Advisory Station at Dareton. The station is sited on 243 hectares of land and the assets are valued at about \$2.6 million. The research station is a member of the Riverlink group, a collaborative network that also includes the CSIRO Plant Industry (Merbein), the Loxton Agricultural Centre and the DNRE Agriculture and Sunraysia Horticultural Centre (Mildura)

2.4.2 Manufacturing

The BTRE Report (2003, pp. 60-61) states that secondary industry is heavily biased towards downstream processing of agricultural and mining products. This includes labelling, wine tank manufacture, mineral sands processing and machinery and equipment manufacturing linked with agricultural production. Furthermore, food and beverage manufacturing “is dominated by wine production and bottling plants, fruit and vegetable processing, including citrus and dried fruit processing, plus meat, bakery and other food manufacturing”.

The BTRE Report (2003, pp 65-67) notes a considerable growth, 97%, in capital stock in manufacturing in Sunraysia between 1996/1997 and 2000/2001. Food and beverage capital stock made up 75% of that total.

Wentworth Shire's share of the total capital stock for manufacturing in 2000-2001 is estimated at \$47.4 million, with in excess of 75% in food and beverage capital stock, an increase estimated at \$24.8 million from the 1996/97 estimates.

The largest manufacturing industries in the Shire are the two large wineries, Buronga Hill (Simeon Wines) and BRL Hardy (Stanley) wines in the Mourquong area.

Table 2.15: Estimates of production and employment at the two bulk wineries for 2003/2004 vintages

Production estimates for 2003/2004 Vintage	Minimum Full Time Employment Nos	Minimum Casual Employment for Vintage	Minimum Value of Production 2004
> 200,000 tons (increasing each year)	>200	>160	>\$250 M

(Source: Pers Comm. Lowe, NSW DSRD, December 2003)

Employment in the manufacturing industry was 230, or 7.6% of the work force resident in Wentworth Shire in 2001 (ABS 2001).

Horticultural packing sheds have undergone significant expansion in Shire as marketing patterns for produce change. As at October 8, 2003, there were eight packing sheds in the Shire that supported a total of 28 full time positions and 115 part time positions. (Source: Pers. Comm. K. Cock (Citrus Growers Assoc) 8.10.2003.)

2.4.3 Transport

Sunraysia is an important regional hub for the transport industry. Employment in the transport and storage industry was 121, or 4% of the work force resident in Wentworth Shire in 2001 (ABS 2001). Estimates in January 2003 were 150 full time employment positions in the trucking and transport industry located in the NSW sector of the Sunraysia Region. These jobs would be valued in excess of \$38million to the local economy and expanding. (Pers. Comm. Lowe, DSRD December 2003)

2.4.4 Mining

Employment in the mining industry was 22 who were resident in Wentworth Shire in 2001 (ABS 2001). Estimates in January 2003 were that there were 20 full time employment positions with drilling rigs for the general mining and sand mining industry. These jobs would be valued in excess of \$17 million to the local economy. ((Pers. Comm. Lowe, DSRD December 2003).

2.4.5 Tourism

The tourism industry for Wentworth Shire has been based on river attractions and produce however; a transition is under way as events and environmental and cultural tourism increase significantly. The Wentworth Regional Tourism Association is a member of the Mildura Murray Outback Tourism Association and is linked strongly to a number of events and activities based in Mildura. Local tourism operators also have managed to stimulate local visitor numbers through local promotions and supporting cultural events in the Shire. There are no estimates for direct investment in tourism.

The Shire is an access point for Lake Mungo and the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area; Lake Victoria lies to the west of Wentworth. There are also several national parks to the north of the Shire.

Increasing investment in infrastructure for the conservation of cultural heritage and environmental management will increase access to these areas and allow them become significant attractions in the future.

2.4.6 Employment by Industry Sector

Employment by industry sector for the Wentworth Shire, as outlined by ABS (2001) figures in Table 2.16, indicate that Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing with 960 employed is the key employment sector for the Wentworth Shire. Other significant areas are Retail (316), Manufacturing (230) and Health and Community Services (200), Education, Wholesale Trade, Property and Business Services.

Retail is the biggest employer for those under 19 years. Employment numbers rise significantly over the age of 25 years. These figures reflect the 'employment trough' in the area for young adults and also the exodus from the regional areas by young people seeking education and employment after finishing school.

Table 2.16: Industry by Employed Persons by Age - Wentworth Shire

Industry x ANZIC Division	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	25-34 yrs	35-44 yrs	45-54 yrs	55-64 yrs	65 yrs & over	Total
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	24	46	148	232	247	169	94	960
Mining	0	3	12	4	3	0	0	22
Manufacturing,	12	19	46	50	58	37	8	230
Electricity Gas & Water	0	0	11	12	8	0	0	31
Construction	17	15	31	43	40	13	0	159
Wholesale Trade	12	20	27	54	43	19	4	179
Retail Trade	69	28	66	65	59	26	3	316
Accommodation, Cafes & Restaurants	15	20	34	30	55	31	0	185
Transport & Storage	4	7	21	37	33	16	3	121
Communication Services	0	0	3	6	3	0	0	12
Finance & Insurance	0	3	8	11	3	3	0	28
Prop. & Bus. Services	5	13	23	40	26	21	3	131
Public Administration & Defence	3	0	21	26	39	16	0	105
Education	6	8	26	65	53	20	0	178
Health & Community Services	6	5	41	49	74	25	0	200
Cultural & Recreational Services	6	0	9	8	11	6	0	40
Personal & Other Services	3	7	21	21	9	7	3	71
Non-Classifiable Economic Units	0	0	3	3	3	3	0	12
Not Stated	6	5	11	9	8	3	6	48
Total	188	199	562	765	775	415	124	3028

Source: ABS, 2001 Census of Population and Housing, Community Profile

The ABS figures for building and construction employment in Wentworth Shire in 2001 are 159. The rapid expansion of residential development in the Buronga /Gol Gol urban area should also be considered. New dwelling approvals by the Wentworth Shire Council from January 2000 to June 2003 show that 24 homes approved for Buronga and 84 for Gol Gol. Substantial areas have been subdivided or prepared for sub-division and a large number of development applications are under assessment and building and construction is likely to continue as a strong growth area. .

The Government Sector

The Government sector is a substantial employer for the Shire. Estimates in 2003 were that there are well in excess of 260 full time public sector employees in the Shire. Major employers include:

- Wentworth Shire Council: 85 Full time and 12 part time employees
- NSW Police (based at Dareton): 30
- Far West Area Health Service (based at Dareton): 30 Full Time (services extend also to Balranald Shire)
- Wentworth Hospital
- Rural Fire Board
- Coomealla High School: >50 Full time employees.
- Primary Schools in the Shire: approx 70 Full Time, plus part time
- TAFE staff.

Other Government employers include NSW Agriculture (Dareton), the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (Buronga), NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (Buronga), Dept of State & Regional Development (Buronga). (Estimates approx total of >50 staff)

2.4.7 Other Industries and Innovative Projects

Enviromission

Feasibility studies are being undertaken by Leighton Constructions for the world's largest solar powered generating plant to be constructed in the Wentworth Shire close to Buronga.

The Barkindji Biosphere Project

The Barkindji Biosphere is the initiative of a partnership of not-for-profit organisations specialising in conservation, research and education. The Barkindji Biosphere is a company created by La Trobe University, Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board and the Trust for Nature. The Barkindji Biosphere project aims to involve the local community and strategic partners in an integrated land, water and biodiversity management program, which will support work being undertaken by Local, State and Federal Government agencies and authorities (<http://www.barkindjibiosphere.org/>). One aspect of the Biosphere project will be support for large-scale re-forestation projects in the Sunraysia region.

2.4.8 Factors impacting on the Shire's economic development include:

1. The BTRE report (2003, p. 64) notes the far greater levels of economic activity and development on the Victorian side of the Murray River even though the NSW sector of Sunraysia (Wentworth Shire) has far greater physical potential to expand its irrigated areas.
2. The constraints of the Western Lands Lease Act (1903) on limiting land development. Limitations on industry and urban development posed by the majority of land (94%) in the Shire being Crown Land held under Western Lands Lease, leaves just 6% for freehold development. This has resulted "in strong competition between residential and irrigation interests". As noted by the BRTRE, this is in a Shire with a population density of 0.3 persons/sq.km.

3. Shortages of skilled trades people and professional workers.

Economic development concerns arising from the Sense of Place Community consultation process (Community Meetings and Community Surveys, 2003) include:

Shire wide issues

- all communities stressed that planning and development processes in the Shire are not adequate.
- there is an urgent need to overcome current impediments to planning and development
- local urban and industrial development needed to be managed and promoted to ensure the best outcomes
- long term zoning and planning is urgently required
- the area required a positive and managed approach (policy) to encourage economic development, enterprise development and local investment

Other general issues

- buffer zones for residential /industrial and horticultural areas
- rural roads
- a focus on more infrastructure for high tech business

Local issues

Buronga/ Gol Gol

- an identified (and zoned) commercial and civic area (place and space)

Dareton

- support for revitalization of the commercial area (development officer /main street program to assist)
- increased employment opportunities, investigate opportunities around an enterprise centre and community cooperative to drive this

Pooncarie

- heritage trail development and tourist facilities
- mobile phone coverage and viability of the Tele-Centre

Wentworth

- Wharf Street heritage development plans which include commercial, civic and cultural activities (including the 'Ruby') which will act as a catalyst for tourism and commercial development
- Improved development and promotion of tourism assets (especially cultural heritage and environmental tourism)

2.5 Social Profile

The purpose of this report is not to itemise particular venues and programs but to provide an outline of the community characteristics, their key facilities and services, and to identify critical gaps.

2.5.1 Education

The table below demonstrates attendance figures. There were 669 students attending primary school in Wentworth Shire in 2001, 496 at secondary school and a further 149 and 57 at TAFE and University respectively.

Table 2.17: Breakdown of Population by Full Time/ Part Time Attendance & by Sex, and Type of Educational Institution Attending (Enumerated Data), Census 2001

Educational Institutions	Females	Males	Total
Pre School	53	54	107
Primary School			
Government	304	245	549
Catholic	48	39	87
Other (Independent)	16	17	33
Sub Total	368	301	669
Secondary School			
Government	201	217	418
Catholic	31	34	65
Other (Independent)	7	6	13
	239	257	496
TAFE			
Full Time	17	34	51
Part Time	60	38	98
	77	72	149
University or other tertiary			
Full Time	7	9	16
Part Time	9	32	41
	16	41	57
Other			
Full Time	3	3	6
Part Time	15	15	30
Not Stated	3	0	3
	21	18	39
Not Attending	2672	2353	5025
Not Stated	232	207	432
Overseas Visitors	7	5	12
Totals	3676	3310	6986

Wentworth Shire has a very dispersed population in its rural areas, especially in the western and northern sectors. The location of schools and access to school buses is a critical issue for those residents. Primary schools are located at seven locations in the Shire, but there is just one high school, centrally located at Dareton.

The table below shows locations and staff numbers for schools and locations for higher education institutions. It should be noted that while there is a local campus of La Trobe University at Mildura, access is limited and for some courses such as nursing the first year studies are not available locally.

Table 2.18: Location of education and training facilities and numbers of staff (schools only).

Pre-Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wentworth Preschool, Murray St • Dareton Pre-School Centre, Sturt Place. • Gyndarma Aboriginal Pre-School Inc., Dareton • Alcheringa Pre-school, Gol Gol
Primary Schools NSW Dept Education & Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wentworth Public School. Staff – 15 f/t, 10 p/t, Students, 160. • Dareton Primary School, Matong/School Rd. • Buronga Primary School, Staff 15; • Gol Gol Primary School, Staff 10 f/t, 8 p/t; • Pomona Public School, Staff 2, Students 34 • Palinyewah Public School, Staff 2, Students 26. • Pooncarie Public School, Staff 2, Students 20.
Private Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Francis Xavier School, Staff , 10, Students, 66
High Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coomealla High School, Silver City Highway. (Staff: 48 f/t, 2 p/t (approx) Students: 450 • Buses to Mildura schools.
Training Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MADEC Short courses and Certificate Level • Sunraysia Murray Group Training & Skills Centre (Mildura)
TAFE Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riverina TAFE (commenced 2003), sharing Coomealla High School Campus, Silver City Highway. • Sunraysia TAFE Campus, Mildura
University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • La Trobe - On Campus access, Mildura

2.5.2 Health Facilities and Services

The Far West Area Health Service has a major service centre in Dareton servicing the Wentworth and Balranald Shires. Thirty (30) full time staff are employed in a range of positions including primary health care. These are supported by visiting specialists and access to Telehealth services. Services are delivered through the Dareton Community Health Centre and the Wentworth Hospital, plus a regular clinic at Buronga and Pooncarie. For a full listing of the extensive services available see *Sense of Place Report, Volume III, Section 4 (Community Action Plans, Services and Facilities)*.

The Cooperative Health Aboriginal Centre at Dareton is currently being replaced with a new building. This will operate in addition to the Far West Area Health Service and have an outreach service to Namatjira. The Far West Area Health Service works under a joint arrangement with Miira Ma Health.

Medical services are available at Dareton and Wentworth and the Flying Doctor has a regular scheduled visit Pooncarie. Wentworth District Hospital has a 24-hour emergency service and also provides acute care, long-term care, palliative care, respite care and diversional therapy and Community Health services. Mildura has a range of medical services available through the Mildura Base Hospital.

A limited ambulance service is based at the Wentworth District Hospital but there are no trained paramedics available. This leaves the Shire very dependent on services based across the Victorian border, adding to response times in an emergency.

2.5.3 Social Service Sector

Community Services

The Department of Community Service (DOCS) provides a range of services both directly to clients and through supporting community service organisations as outlined in Table 3.8 below. It is supported in some areas of its work by Mallee Family Care that set up operations in Dareton during 2003.

Table 2.19: Significant services for young people delivered by the Department of Community Services

Care Protection Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection: to assist in the protection of children from abuse and neglect through education, prevention and investigation • Substitute Care: to be responsible for the placement and support of children in temporary, long term and respite foster care • Adoptions: Family and Adolescent Support including support and counselling including positive parenting programs, family support services, D.V. court support scheme, A.D.H.D. - self help, Families First and Family Assistance, Adolescent support including living skills, personal development, parenting and supported accommodation and the • Youth Service
Disability Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention Program: education and therapy services to families with children 0-6 years who are delayed or disabled • Therapy services: therapists provide therapy and consultative services to people with disabilities in both the community and in government schools • Community worker: provides family and client support, referrals, advocacy, liaison and education with community groups • Residential services
Children Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support includes preschools, long day care centres, home-based care, family day care services, and occasional child care
Projects for youth and families receiving support from the Dept of Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mallee Family Care;

Significant issues for the Wentworth and Dareton Community Health Services include:

- the need to address then high rate of substance abuse, and alcohol induced domestic violence in the community
- the need for community awareness and information days for men and women around issues of violence and the impact for children
- the high needs for youth between 12-19 years especially to address parenting skills, the development of community support systems, young mothers/parents groups etc.

2.5.4 Aged Care

Aged Care services are limited in Wentworth Shire and are in high demand. As demonstrated by the population profile, the Shire has an aging population in its western areas and very few resources to support this sector except Murray House in Wentworth.

2.5.5 Public Transport

Public transport is limited in the Shire. Regular services run several times a day Monday to Friday but there are no late or weekend services which impacts heavily on youth and those without access to private transport.

2.5.6 Unemployment

Unemployment data for Statistical Local Area as of September Quarter 2002 to September Quarter 2003 indicates a slight increase in unemployment in the Wentworth Shire. The figures are quite significant and are outlined below.

- September 2002: 371 or 9.1% of the labour force.
- September 2003: 407 or 10.8% of the labour Force.

Indigenous people are more likely to be unemployed than non-indigenous, it is estimated about 45% of the unemployed people in Wentworth Shire are indigenous.

2.5.7 Indigenous Community

The indigenous population accounts for around 10% of the population of the Wentworth Shire. The Lower Murray Darling Rangeland Action Plan (LMD RMAP) provides an overview of Aboriginal occupation in this area. Traditionally the Lower Murray Darling area was occupied by the Barkindji (western sector), Mutthi Mutthi (eastern sector centred around Balranald) and the Nyampa in the northeast sector. The social organisation of the tribes was based on smaller units related to each other through family ties and cultural tradition. The tribal groups belonged to discrete language groups that approximate the tribal area boundaries of today (Pappin & Lawson cited in LMD RMAP 1999, p.10).

In addition to dislocation when European pastoralists first arrived in the area, a second major dislocation occurred when the Aboriginal people of the area were forcibly moved into 'missions'. Many still remain near these mission sites today that include the Wentworth, Dareton (and Namatjira) and Buronga areas. (Lawson cited in LMD RMAP 1999, p.10).

While current ABS data suggests a decline in the local indigenous population figures, general trends indicate an increasing Aboriginal population in the western sector of the State. National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (NIEIR) 1999, p. 17 states that "between 1981 and 1996 the indigenous population of the eight SLAs in the Western Division [of NSW] increased by 67%, in acute contrast to then decline of 16% in the non-indigenous population (in absolute terms, an increase of 2027 compared with a decline of 8 218)".

The report (p.17) also notes that "a significant social division between indigenous people and the rest arises because the indigenous population are in general are poorer and less likely to leave the general area".

"The social and economic benefits are not well distributed however, and a significant proportion of the population falls into the lower socio-economic bracket, have poor skills and poor employment prospects while particular geographic areas within Wentworth Shire are poorly serviced. While the gross value of production for the Wentworth Region exceeded \$1.7 billion in 1996/97, an extensive group within the Wentworth community endure poor social and economic conditions." (NIEIR 1999)

The comments from the NIEIR report are still relevant to Wentworth Shire and its future economic and social development options and the quality of life for all its citizens.

The young age of the Aboriginal population has serious implications for planning and the community will have to cater for an increasing demand for services and facilities for youth and early childhood groups across all service sectors such as health, education, housing and recreation.

2.5.8 Youth

Youth development issues and activities are an identified priority for the communities in Wentworth Shire. Youth policy needs to be recognised as being a bigger issue than just services and activities. Strategies for youth need to be an integral part of social plans for the whole community. This will ensure the inclusion of young people in community life via the provision of clearly defined places and spaces for youth in the community and on the streets.

There is a need for the youth policy to address the key principle of maintaining a 'focus on families' and assist in breaking the 'crisis cycle' for 'at risk' young people. Social planning at a community level will support young people through the promotion of and support for:

- an expansion of youth support and crisis services
- family health with a focus on inclusive services, family relationships, and general family support. An identified priority will be to take services to the people through the use of a mobile activity and resource service.
- positive parenting skills. To ensure access by those who need these skills, training information and delivery needs to be linked in with child care services
- life skills for young people and awareness of drugs, alcohol, teenage pregnancies
- mental health services including local social workers and endorse policy to promote value and respect in and for young people
- services and resources for people with disabilities and disadvantages. This will include access and equity issues, a key one is transport

Resources for Youth

Identified factors of concern for the Wentworth Shire which clearly impact upon planning and strategies for youth development include:

- the economic disparity in the community and associated problems for those disadvantaged sections of the community.
- young people from low socio-economic groups find the cost of accessing sporting and recreational facilities and clubs is prohibitive in many instances.
- the clustering of the Aboriginal community within well-defined neighbourhoods, especially in Namatjira, means that they are frequently physically separated from the mainstream community and have poor urban amenity and a lack of social infrastructure
- the changing demographic profile of the community. While the younger portion of the population is becoming increasingly Aboriginal, the older population is becoming increasingly white.

These factors all have growing implications for the provision and delivery of community services, housing, education and health, sport and recreation facilities and services, and employment, and ultimately, economic and social empowerment of a significant proportion of the population.

2.5.9 People with Disability

Identified issues for delivery and access to local disability programs include: access to respite services, difficulties in providing day programs for disability clients, limited access to employment and training programs within the district and transport for disability clients, especially transport services.

2.5.10 Social Issues for Wentworth Shire

The Wentworth Social Plan should operate as a framework for WSC planning and decision making in social areas. To do this it requires an identified Community Services function within the Wentworth Shire Council organisational structure to support a consistent and structured approach to social issues and planning.

In addition to the particular social issues identified by the Sense of Place community consultation process, a consistent message from across a range of social and educational service providers is that, even at a regional level, there is an urgent need for community development work to be undertaken with young people in Wentworth to improve both their quality of life and employment outcomes.

Strategies and action plans to build better facilities and conditions will require significant support from all levels of Government and across all areas including community planning and service delivery, housing, health and social well-being, education and employment.

The Dareton/ Wentworth Community Working Party has submitted a Community Plan for Namatjira. This document does not identify clear implementation processes and needs support to be integrated into the appropriate agency plans to ensure delivery.

The draft Wentworth Crime Prevention Plan (CPP) is now four years on from its initial consultation in 1999. This document is very general and does not identify specific responsibilities and implementation strategies. The CPP needs to be brought up to date and strongly linked with the WSC Social Plan, the Youth Strategy (draft), Community Action Plans and to other community groups to promote engagement and implementation.

Social and cultural issues arising from the Sense of Place Community Consultation process (Community Meetings and Community Surveys, 2003)

Buronga/Gol Gol

- child care services and vacation care, activities for young people
- urgent need for local aged care and respite care facilities

Dareton

- improved community safety and security & implementation of the Crime Prevention Plan
- improved responses into substance abuse, programs against domestic violence
- employment programs
- more recreational activities and facilities for young people
- a community managed facility such as a neighbourhood centre to increase access to information and services, community education programs and increase community engagement
- aged care

Pooncarie

- Improved access to community services such as HACC and youth activities

Wentworth

- promote youth development strategy, employment for youth, and local place for youth
- sport and recreational activities
- support implementation of the Crime Prevention Plan, more security and safety
- better access to health services (waiting times), ambulance upgrade
- more activities for the elderly

Section 3: Priorities: Sense of Place Project

3.1 Key objectives from the Community Action Plans

Complete Community Action Plans are contained in the Sense of Place Report Volume II, Community Action Plans, Facilities and Services.

Buronga/Gol Gol

Objective 1.

To promote a comprehensive approach to planning and zoning to ensure balanced development of residential, commercial, industrial, horticultural and open space areas

Objective 2

To improve management and conservation of local environmental assets

Objective 3.

To expand the range of community services and facilities & improve public transport links into the area

Objective 4.

To improve road & traffic safety in Buronga & Gol Gol

Objective 5:

Promote community image & events including sport & recreation

Objective 7:

Operational plan for Community Action Team

Dareton, Coomealla and Namatjira

Objective 1.

To support local development through appropriate planning and zoning

Objective 2

To improve access to open space areas and promote conservation and environmental protection

Objective 3

To encourage growth of existing business and development of new business, technology & employment

Objective 4

To provide enhanced training and employment opportunities for the community

Objective 5:

To improve community safety and security

Objective 6.

Build community participation, identity, and image.

Objective 7

To identify the role & forward planning for the Dareton, Coomealla & Namatjira Community Action Team.

Pooncarie

Objective 1

Improve emergency services in Pooncarie

Objective 2

Improve road safety & security in Pooncarie

Objective 3.

Conserve and develop local heritage and tourism assets in Pooncarie district

Objective 4

Improve access to transport services for Pooncarie

Objective 5

Improve access to community services & secure on-going viability of the Telecentre/ Rural Transaction Centre

Objective 6

To promote community leadership and community development activity in Pooncarie

Wentworth, Pomona and Curlwaa

Objective 1:

To initiate & support local economic development in order to enhance existing business and attract new businesses and professionals to Wentworth

Objective 2:

Support development of tourism strategy & service infrastructure

Objective 3:

To promote and support conservation and management of the local environmental & cultural assets

Objective 4:

To promote community building, community services & youth activities

Objective 5:

To improve security, law and order in Wentworth

Objective 6:

Operation of Community Action Team

3.2 Community Action Team Project Proposals

These are projects the CATs are seeking to develop. As a result they may be developing funding applications over the next year to the appropriate bodies. These projects are starting points. They may not be the most 'important' or needy, but they are a priority and are also those the Teams feel are feasible and achievable.

CAT Area	Identified Priorities / Goals	Proposed Project (these may change emphasis as funding submissions are developed)	Potential Funding sources or Partnerships
Buronga/Gol Gol	Improve access to local wetland area & River Front areas & ensure they are retained in their natural state (seek alternate ways of resourcing the management of local wetlands & river front areas)	Improve public access, conservation and management of area near Alcheringa Oval and both sides of Chaffey Bridge. (partnership between to manage conservation areas & develop walking tracks & facilities to improve both access and long-term conservation of areas (Promote links with Riverina TAFE & WSC re employment of Aboriginal trainees, Funding support be sought for development of locational & interpretive signage	Community group, WSC & Riverina TAFE Coomealla Campus, DSNR & NP& WL Natural Heritage Trust WSC
Dareton	Identified priorities included Activities for youth	The Dareton "playgrounds" and tennis /basketball court projects (goal to improve access to facilities for young people)	Coomealla Memorial Club Coomealla Lions Club Riverina TAFE "KOOL" group Wentworth Shire Council NSW Dept of Sport & Rec Young Foundation for Young Australians
Dareton	A commercial/community venue Community cooperative venture Main street re-vitalisation Improved community safety & security /reduction in crime Improved employment outcomes Improved business centre	Dareton Neighbourhood Centre/Skills Centre/ Community Kitchen (goal is to provide a community or "neighbourhood" style venue which would have a host of uses, including access to information and community activities, self-help projects, training of volunteers etc)	Approach philanthropy groups Sunraysia Area Consultative Committee, SMGT Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal – small grants fund (March 2004) Safer Communities Program – innovation grant Dept of Women, Microsoft Australia

CAT Area	Identified Priorities / Goals	Proposed Projects as at December 2003 (these will change emphasis as funding submissions are successfully developed)	Potential Funding sources or Partnerships
Pooncarie	Improved local amenities and points of interest for tourists.	Heritage Walkway including access to old "wharf" with signage, & landscaping, promotion of local history & Burke & Wills expedition etc via information board, and a Heritage trail around Pooncarie with markers Better links with Wentworth Regional Tourism	Cultural Heritage Program / DSRD Small Towns & Villages funding Wentworth Shire Council Heritage funding?? Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal – small grants fund (March 2004)
Wentworth	Wharf Street Development Project – extension of concept plans and integrated development if various facets	Promote "Heritage Precinct" development as a priority action Draw up ideas for Concept plan for the Wharf precinct to encompass commercial, cultural & civic activities with particular reference to The Ruby, Heritage assets & the environment.	DSRD Small Towns & Villages funding Wentworth Shire Council Heritage funding??
Shire Wide	Planning & zoning Open space strategy, Conservation & management of Riverine land Improve access to facilities and activities for young people		Natural Heritage Trust for environmental heritage funding sources – funds close about June/ July Links with WSC Environmental Officer
Development Group	Development Officer /Resource person	Aims & Objectives Working with CATs, Council and with Ted Lowe (DSRD) to identify strategic direction for the Shire and to support social and economic development projects and provision of development position	DSRD ACC WSC Community organisations such as Bendigo Bank

3.3 Wentworth Regional Development Inc

Vision

Wentworth Shire to have a strong, vibrant local economy with access to education, employment and community amenity for all.

Mission

To stimulate and enhance local social and economic development through the promotion of information flows, networking opportunities, partnerships, alliances and the building of leadership skills in conjunction with the Wentworth Shire Council.

Aims & Objectives

- to work with and to advise the Wentworth Council on matters of economic development
- to adhere to and promote principles of equity and social justice
- to work to both complement and encourage diversity in local business and industry
- to build the knowledge and skills required for the further development of services and infrastructure
- to build social and economic networks, partnerships and alliances with relevant state agencies, regional bodies and industry groups
- to build a sound information / knowledge base for decision-making which will include a business prospectus
- to promote the expansion of the workforce base through education & training
- to build governance and leadership skills
- to promote planning and development of core infrastructure
- to actively promote information technology to expand social equity, business and industry development
- to foster the development of the local CAT groups
- to develop a program for project and/or "grants" strategy funding

Section 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

Managing community change requires:

- community researching and consultation to identify issues
- developing skills and leadership for planning and decision making
- building networks and knowledge base
- identifying priorities and a strategic course of action.

4.1 Conclusions

The processes

A key qualitative outcome for the project has been to substantially increase the turnaround and coordination of information across the Shire, between agencies and community, between community groups, between business and community, directly between community and Councillors, and to the Shire Council as an organisation. It has also built processes for planning and decision-making.

However, social and economic information in the Shire requires consolidation and coordination. Factors contributing to the fragmentation of information and programs include the lack of a 'community services sector' or economic development position in the organisational structure of the Wentworth Shire Council. The committee structure of Council does not adequately address these areas either.

This situation places the broader community in the Shire at a considerable disadvantage with regard to accessing social programs, management and coordination of programs to ensure effective delivery and community well being. This function frequently sits within the planning department and supports a consistent and structured approach to social issues and to urban planning.

The Issues

Particular local issues have been identified under the sections for Environmental Profile, Economic Profile and Social Profile however Shire wide priority issues are:

- all communities stressed that planning and development processes in the Shire are not adequate
- there is an urgent need to overcome current impediments to planning and development
- local urban and industrial development needed to be managed and promoted to ensure the best outcomes
- long-term zoning and planning is urgently required
- the area requires a positive and managed approach (policy) to encourage economic development, enterprise development and local investment
- the Social Plan needs to become a functional and living document
- there is a need for an economic development policy and strategies to manage development and maximise benefits for the Shire

4.2 Building the Future

It is essential that the Wentworth Shire, at a community and a Local Government level, undertake positive action to build local strategies for development and implement plans to coordinate local resources. An integrated framework for social planning is essential and will give particular recognition to the needs of the various sectors.

Building the community from within and to continue to develop strategies for community capacity building will provide Wentworth with the direction and expertise to engage with external resources and programs as required.

The engagement of an experienced project officer and a youth coordinator, for instance, would both form part of such a strategy. To fund these positions requires clear long-term goals, community partnerships and forward planning.

To overcome current deficits in community planning processes and to drive the future direction of policy and the development strategies the promotion of the Wentworth Community Action Teams and the Wentworth Regional Development Group will need to secure funding for:

- community and economic project officer
- community projects
- industry development projects
- on-going education and support for leadership and action team development.

Wentworth Regional Development Inc. and The Wentworth Shire Council should work together on a policy for economic and social development for the Shire. Strategies can then be developed for particular areas within a coherent framework.

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Appendices

1. Wentworth Shire: Population by Males /Females (Enumerated Data), Census 2001
2. Map 2: Wentworth Shire: Irrigated Horticulture 2003
3. Native Title and the Western Lands Lease of NSW
4. Notes on the Sense of Place Project

Appendix I: Wentworth Shire: Population by Males /Females (Enumerated Data), Census 2001

Age	Wentworth		Dareton/ Namatjira		Curlwaa		Buronga/ Gol Gol/ Trentham Cliffs		Pooncarie & East		Rural /Other		Totals	
	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.	Male	Fem.
0-4	46	31	32	23	8	13	83	68	12	10	61	59	242	204
5-9	47	51	33	39	26	16	81	85	6	12	71	46	264	249
Sub-total 0-9	93	82	65	62	34	29	164	153	18	22	132	105	506	453
10-14	78	33	34	36	20	17	97	86	6	3	64	68	299	243
15-19	48	41	23	26	19	21	90	80	3	0	69	52	252	220
20-24	16	26	14	14	0	12	71	57	0	0	72	37	173	146
Sub-total 10-24														
25-29	36	30	25	24	12	9	75	82	0	3	74	44	222	192
30-34	32	35	26	29	11	14	67	78	3	9	69	52	208	217
35-39	40	51	28	13	20	22	96	71	12	13	64	56	260	226
Sub-total 25-39	108	116	79	66	43	45	238	231	15	25	207	152	690	635
40-44	45	53	19	21	19	18	95	105	12	12	75	51	265	260
45-49	58	56	12	20	16	9	86	78	15	0	76	81	263	244
50-54	60	45	22	24	23	14	102	80	3	3	91	97	301	263
Sub-total 40-54	163	154	53	65	58	41	283	263	30	15	242	229	829	767
55-59	46	49	23	25	13	4	88	68	13	9	71	54	254	209
60-64	47	43	32	21	12	8	58	47	3	3	55	52	207	174
Sub-total 55-64	93	92	55	46	25	12	146	115	16	12	126	106	461	383
65-69	33	32	17	17	3	12	39	47	8	13	52	17	152	138
70-74	37	33	16	20	9	3	40	35	13	9	31	13	146	113
75-79	31	35	11	14	0	3	23	22	0	3	24	17	89	94
80+	19	61	13	17	3	6	25	25	3	3	4	2	67	114
Sub-total 64-80+	120	161	57	68	15	24	127	129	24	28	111	49	454	459
O/s yrs	0	3	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	2	2	7	5
TOTALS	719	708	380	383	214	201	1221	1114	112	105	1025	800	3671	3311

