

The City of Greater Geraldton

Population: 38,000

The City of Greater Geraldton is a vibrant regional city situated on the Indian Ocean coast in the minerals rich Mid-West region of Western Australia. The City offers its people a strong sense of community, quality education and health services, diverse opportunities for employment and enterprise, cultural experiences and a relaxed, family-friendly lifestyle.

The City's population of 38,000 is growing rapidly and is predicted to reach 100,000 people within the next 20 years. Traditional high value fishing and agricultural industries are being matched by the expansion of the mining and resources sector and high tech projects such as world class radio astronomy facilities and digital broadband network which are attracting billions of dollars in investment. These will lead to significant changes in the regional economy and demography along with presenting significant challenges associated with climate change and the threats this poses to the natural and human environment.

The way these challenges have been met and overcome, along with plans to ensure ongoing liveability in an increasingly vulnerable world, is what sets Geraldton apart as a liveable community.

An innovative project, 2029 and Beyond, launched in March 2010, is the centrepiece strategy for the City's transformation. The project has been designed to fulfil the citizen's vision for a smart, sustainable city where a sense of community matters for current and future generations. The project aims to implement participative governance using ordinary citizens, government, industry and the non-government sector working together and to date have sought the views of the community through a community survey of randomly selected residents, Civic Evolution, an innovative online platform that allows members of the community to post good ideas and then work online in groups to develop a proposal, Community Cafés held at various locations for the public to discuss their views and ideas and most recently Designing our City forum.

The community survey showed that 90% of the community would like the City to start investing in going carbon neutral and as a result the 2029 and Beyond website hosts an Energy Saving Challenge to help reduce energy use and save money. The City has proactively encouraged and supported a number of renewable energy projects with Council approving an expansion of the current windfarm to 188 turbines and a new 50 turbine windfarm. The City is now considering a 40 megawatt solar power facility.

2029 and Beyond project has partnered with several significant organisations to deliver behavioural change programs to the community. Durack Institute of Technology delivered a free, innovative, seven week Living Smart program to build knowledge and skills in sustainable living practices while the State Government and Department of Sport and Recreation has delivered ActiveSmart, a program which aims to encourage participants to find more activity in their day. TravelSmart has been embraced by the broader community with Why Not Wednesday; a program which works to encourage the community to find alternative methods of transport to work or school every Wednesday. The City's Building Department has partnered with the Geraldton/Northwest branch of Master Builders Association (MBA) to form Build It Better Communities, a project aimed to assist homebuyers and homeowners with making positive sustainable choices.

The City's Water Conservation Plan has been acknowledged by the WA Government as the best plan in Western Australia. To meet the demands of a growing population and urban footprint the City is identifying and implementing water supply measures such as aquifer recharge. New stormwater retention systems have been used in major suburbs and in 2012 the City will install two large scale water sensitive urban design systems.

After a decade of planning and development the City of Greater Geraldton has transformed the Geraldton Foreshore. The old industrial aspect has become a magnificent community playground enjoyed by local families and tourists. In 2010, for the first time, Australia Day celebrations were held along the length of the foreshore and the day was a resounding success. In 2011 it was estimated that more than 8,000 people gathered to celebrate.

A major partnership with the Cooperative Bulk Handling (CBA) has resulted in rainwater harvesting from the roofs of the huge CBH grain storage sheds supplying approximately 50% of the irrigation water needs of the Geraldton Foreshore.

The City's pristine coastline has become a global destination for windsurfers, kitesurfers and other aquatic sport lovers. The Houtman Abrohlos Islands, scene of the 1629 Batavia mutiny, is home to one of nature's most spectacular marine areas with unique biodiversity. With these natural gifts in mind, the City is committed to enhance the natural environment by protecting areas of high biological diversity, ensuring environmentally responsive development, encouraging citizens to act as stewards of the environment and reducing vulnerability and risk from climate change.

From partnering with the Western Australian (WA) Government to produce the Geraldton Regional Flora and Vegetation Survey to creating natural walk trails allowing visitors and residents access to view beautiful rivers the City is committed to protecting environmentally sensitive areas.

The City, the Geraldton Port Authority, the Department of Transport and the Northern Agricultural Catchment Council have worked in partnership to produce a coastal processes study which provides the City with a sound, scientific basis for shared decision making on coastal management.

Offering a rich tapestry of cultural experiences the City supports Indigenous history and culture and is second Local Government in WA to have developed a Reconciliation Action Plan which encourages goodwill, mutual respect and recognition of the effects of non-Indigenous settlement on Australia's first peoples. The local community and visitors are able to learn about the ancient Indigenous culture through cultural trails, Wajarri language classes, dreamtime storytelling and 'bush tucker' experiences. In 2011, the City of Greater Geraldton Regional Library hosted the annual Good Heart Mid West Aboriginal Art Exhibition by proudly displaying some of the finest work from contemporary and traditional Mid West Indigenous artists.

Well known for its rich and fascinating history the City boasts major attractions including the Central Greenough Historical Settlement, one of Australia's best preserved nineteenth century towns, a significant monument, HMAS Sydney II which was built to commemorate the 645 Australian soldiers who were lost during a World War II battle with a German warship off the coast of Geraldton and the famous 'Batavia', a shipwreck from 1629 featured heavily at WA Museum Geraldton.

A number of festivals, markets and regional agricultural shows are featured in the annual program of community events. The City of Greater Geraldton Regional Library plays a major role in the annual Big Sky Readers and Writers Festival, a feature for the past six years and now attracts more than 350 annual participants and the Randolph Stow Young Writers Awards which has gained considerable prestige in the region with over 650 entries and 45 awards in 2010. To provide further inspiration, education and community development the City hosted the first annual Big Sky, Big Ideas Festival in 2010. Community members were able to participate in the Big Ideas Summit, the 2029 Hypothetical and numerous educational events and exhibitions during the Big Ideas Community Day.

As a result of the 2029 and Beyond initiative, the City is now moving the transformation process along much faster than it thought possible. Information gathered during community deliberations is already providing a resource to enable governments to make decisions that include the informed, considering views of the community. It is also providing a resource for industry, business and community organisations to develop more responsive strategies. Specifically, the results of the public deliberation process so far have provided the City to pursue carbon neutrality and innovation and to do this as soon as possible.

The City of Greater Geraldton believes that creating a culturally strong, sustainable and resilient future for the community requires that individuals, organisations and the City have a shared, compelling and clear image of what the community is and what it wants to become – 2029 and Beyond.

Insert Photo One

Insert Photo two

The City of Greater Geraldton is a vibrant regional city framed by the Chapman Valley to the North, the meandering Greenough River to the South, the Moresby Ranges to the East and the stunning Houtman Abrolhos Islands off the Western Indian Ocean coast.

This drawing was an entry from a recent 2029 and Beyond Project 'Geraldton feels right to me because...' More than 200 entries including poems, short stories, drawings and photographs were received. The entries received great community feedback and were on display at local shopping centres and published in local papers.

Insert Photo Three

More than 220 people participated in Designing our City forum – an Enquiry by Design process for Greater Geraldton 2029. Participants worked with urban planning experts over 3 days to develop potential plans and design options for the City region

Insert Photo Four

An exciting new initiative is the Million Trees project which will result in a million trees planted in the Greater Geraldton area by 2013 to improve biodiversity, land conservation, 'green infrastructure', carbon sequestration and aesthetic values. Four National Tree Planting events and multiple school planting days have taken place in conjunction with local community groups. More than 6000