

**Jan 2007**

**Bunbury Wellington Economic Alliance bringing government business and the community together.**

I have worked as the CEO of BWEA for the past six months and in that time I have moved from watching with frustration as the waiting lists for child care centres, schools and hospital beds grows to someone who is now actively involved in attempting to make the government do something about these problems. It is no easy task. Government has a unique ability to act as if it was asleep when it does not want to hear about public infrastructure needs but can suddenly come to life when it is time to take the credit for opening a long over due school. My job is to help them stay awake.

The region I represent includes nearly 80 000 people living within the local government boundaries of Bunbury, Collie, Harvey, Dardanup, Capel and Donnybrook-Balingup. As a region we are one of the fastest growing in Australia, which translates into one with very high needs for additional public infrastructure. In the last couple of years WA has done very well out of the State's mining boom but do we really need a capital city that grows ever bigger at the expense of the regions? Perth is rapidly heading towards becoming a sprawling city of 2 million people with 5 universities, 4 teaching hospitals and every major government department and agency being based there.

There is no doubt that Greater Bunbury with its sea and tree change life style opportunities its Port and strong economic base is in a unique position to grow rapidly.. The SW not only provides a more community orientated way of life but also offers a wide range of employment and business opportunities. But people will not move to take up these opportunities if city level government services and infrastructure are not here to support them.

Part of my role is to ensure that the issues that impede growth in our region are addressed by government. Key issues addressed during 2006 have included the Yaragadee and Wellington Dam water source options, coal export infrastructure, industrial and residential land supply shortages, the skills shortage and local transport links. We have taken a strategy to meet with key government decision makers directly. To that extent, we hosted a very successful function for senior State Cabinet Ministers at the Collie Cabinet meeting late last year.

In 2007/08 as we head towards Federal and State government elections BWEA will be reminding governments of their past election promises as well as identifying new issues that need to be addressed. As an organisation we will be highlighting both their successes and failures. For instance we applauded the State Government's move to commence work on the Peel Deviation and welcomed its commitment to the first stage of the Bunbury outer harbour redevelopment but will also continue to remind government of their promise of a new South West radiotherapy treatment facility and additional child care places.