

STATE OF THE **OUTBACK** REPORT



Executive Summary



Government
of South Australia



Foreword

The State of the Outback Report has been prepared for the Outback Areas Community Development Trust to provide a comprehensive snapshot in time of the social, economic and environmental condition of South Australia's outback areas. Working to a comprehensive brief prepared by the Trust, consultants URS Australia prepared the report.

Over 20 key result areas were identified across the social, economic and environmental 'triple bottom line'. This resulted in over 70 specific indicators being assembled and analysed. The indicators were selected to reflect the overlapping interests of outback stakeholders and, in particular the intent of the South Australian Strategic Plan.

Much of the information has not been available before in a public document, at least not in the form presented. This fact, together with the sheer breadth and depth of information presented, makes this a unique document that will be of interest and importance to residents and other key stakeholders throughout the State for many years to come.

The report will inform outback communities about their region, and how they compare with other parts of the State. South Australians will be better informed about the outback areas of the State.

Individual indicators generally compare the performance of the outback against the State average. This benchmarking of the outback's status against State averages will be of great assistance to Government in developing policy and making resource allocation decisions. In a sense it will become the definitive planning document for the outback.

An updateable database has also been produced to provide an ongoing tool for all organisations and agencies to utilise well into the future.

I invite all South Australians to have a close look at the State of the Outback Report. You will find it surprising, interesting and informative.



Hon Rory McEwen MP

MINISTER FOR STATE/LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

14 SEPTEMBER 2005

Acronyms

ABARE	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
APOMA	Andamooka Progress and Opal Miners Association Inc.
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
BRS	Bureau of Rural Sciences
CDMA	Code Division Multiple Access
CPT	Community Participation Teams
DECS	Department of Education and Children's Service
DEH	Department of Environment and Heritage
DTEI	Department of Transport and Energy Infrastructure
EPOS	Electronic Point of Sale
ERASS	Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey
FaCS	Federal Department of Family and Community Services
FIFO	Fly In, Fly Out
FRACC	Flinders Region Area Consultative Committee
GAB	Great Artesian Basin
IRAE	Indigenous Areas
IRSAD	Index of Relative Socio Economic Advantage/Disadvantage
KRA	Key Result Area
LPO	Licensed Post Office
NRDB	Northern Regional Development Board
OACDT	Outback Areas Community Development Trust
ORA	Office of Regional Affairs
OTNI	Outback Telecentre Network Inc
RAES	Remote Area Energy Supplies
RASS	Remote Air Service Subsidy
RICE	Remote and Isolated Childrens Exercise
RRRGP	Renewable Remote Power Generation Program
RTC	Rural Transaction Centre
SACE	South Australia Certificate of Education
SAMSS	South Australian Monitoring and Surveillance System
SD	Statistical Division
SEO	State Electoral Office
SLA	Statistical Local Area
SoER	State of the Environment Report
SoO	State of the Outback
TBL	Triple Bottom Line
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VIVASA	Venture, Innovation, Vision, Action, South Australia
WACOSS	WA Council of Social Services

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Introduction and rationale

About the Outback Areas Community Development Trust

The Outback Areas Community Development Trust (OACDT, or the "Trust") is the local statutory governance authority in non-Aboriginal lands of the unincorporated outback areas of South Australia, comprising small communities and townships and scattered populations across the region in pastoral properties, but excluding the towns of Roxby Downs and Coober Pedy. It undertakes its functions via partnership with its Outback communities, service providers, government and other planning organizations wherever possible.

Objectives

To progress its 2003-2008 Strategic Plan, the OACDT commissioned this State of the Outback Report (SoO) to provide a snapshot of the economic, environmental and social issues of the Region and provide a sound basis for strategic planning by both the Trust and other interested bodies. Underpinning the Report is a simple electronic Database that houses the collected information, which can be updated and expanded over time. Collation of the data and preparation of this Report was undertaken by URS Australia from November 2004 to August 2005. The Report is intended as a 'neutral' document, an informed summary of 'what is' and leaving judgements about the implications of that, including appropriate strategic planning, for others to make.

Methods

Report framework

The Report is structured along the accepted 'triple bottom line' categories of economic, social and environmental. This makes the structure of the SoO compatible with other major reports, which was a key requirement for this project. The structure of the Key Result Areas is deliberately consistent with the SA Strategic Plan Creating Opportunity (2004). The detailed indicator framework was finalised after reviewing the 'headline' indicators of a number of regional summary reports from across Australia, and reflects the overlapping interests of Outback stakeholders.

The framework was elaborated following consultation with Outback leaders at the Outback Leaders Forum in April 2005, which revealed the need to include some locally-important indicators that are 'non-issues' in the more settled areas of the State, especially in relation to infrastructure, and they are not dealt with in the SA Strategic Plan.

Data collection

The data were sourced from a very wide range of sources, from public databases where possible, and much via officers in individual agencies and departments. This will be streamlined in future because of the information in the Database about how to obtain updated data. Because the OACDT Region is not based on standard statistical boundaries, most data are not a perfect fit. The ABS prepared summaries of its data especially to fit the OACDT boundary, but even they include the Aboriginal Lands.

Data have been coded as to their degree of fit to the OACDT boundary, to help prevent inappropriate interpretations.

Some data were absolutely not available; estimates of those for which informed local expert judgement would provide a reasonable 'best guess' were obtained via postal questionnaire of Outback community leaders.

Summary overview description of the Outback region

The region is broadly the arid northern majority of South Australia's land mass, excluding the Aboriginal Lands. Its climate is characterised by dry conditions interspersed with short bursts of high rainfall, sometimes intense. Temperatures are hot especially in summer, which winter nights can frost under clear skies. The vegetation is adapted to this regime. Compared to archetypical arid deserts (e.g., the 'Sahara') the region is naturally relatively well-vegetated with shrubs, small trees and grasses and forbs that flush after rains. The region's watercourses drain internally to normally-dry salt lakes, the largest being Lake Eyre. The ephemeral rivers can be sizeable after heavy rains (e.g. the Warburton), when they feed extensive ephemeral wetlands.

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Native vegetation in the rangelands has remained largely intact due to the remoteness and dominant land management practices, with over 95% of the pre-European vegetation remaining. The majority of the wetlands located in the rangelands are in relatively good condition despite the prevailing arid to semi-arid conditions, often with unaltered flow regimes.

The region is endowed with rich geological resources – uranium, copper, some brown coal, and so on – and the Great Artesian Basin underlies much of the Outback and has been major source of water for stock purposes, and feeds the Regionally characteristic mound springs. Unsustainable extraction of water and poor management of the GAB has led a reduction in artesian pressure, which poses a threat to groundwater-dependent ecological communities and biodiversity values, economic and social benefits.

The Region's population is small (slightly less than 8,000) and scattered, located in small townships and communities – there are no 'large' centres in the region (given that Roxby Downs [ca. 3,500 people] and Coober Pedy [ca. 2,100 people] are excluded from the OACDT area). All centres are physically remote, and the improving information and communication technology is helping to overcome the associated challenges. The population is skewed towards young working age males, reflecting the nature of employment opportunities in the region. Residents strongly identify with their local community, rather than the Region as a whole.

Economic activity is dominated by the pastoral, mining and service industries that have always been the mainstays of the region, and with tourism now rising in importance. Land-use in the Outback SA region is dominated by domestic stock grazing on native rangelands, indigenous lands and conservation reserves. Conservation accounts for approximately 20% of the region, with the Flinders Ranges National Park having the highest profile. Mining includes oil and gas at Moomba, coal at Leigh Creek, and copper, uranium, silver and gold at Roxby Downs.

Unemployment is relatively high, but declining. Incomes are on average high for those employed, but there is increasing dependency on support services for the un/under-employed. Education levels (completion of Year 12) is significantly less than

the SA average, and there is low participation in TAFE/VET.

There is an increasing use of renewable energy sources, assisted by developments in technology.

Governance is led by the OACDT – which substitutes for many local government functions. The OACDT works in close partnership with relevant agencies to take to Region-wide view to address local disadvantage. There is some duplication of service delivery, but the recent amalgamation of NRM bodies into the SA Arid Lands NRM Board will help to diminish this. Many community leadership /service roles are undertaken by volunteers in the absence of institutionalised arrangements, and rising pressures of time and resources risk 'burn-out' of these key individuals.

Physical infrastructure has significant shortcomings for supporting economic development; much of this is infrastructure that is well-supplied elsewhere in the State.

Integrated assessment of the Outback Region

Table 1 provides a summary SWOT analysis of the Outback. This is followed by four sections which elaborate the economic, social, environmental and infrastructure status of the Region.

Table 1 – Summary SWOT of the Outback

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rich mineral resources 2. Strong regional ‘outback’ culture, and strong identification with the local community / township 3. Regional bodies are dynamic and progressive 4. OACDT takes a region-wide view to address local disadvantage 5. Those who are employed are comparatively well-paid 6. Steadily declining unemployment rate and growing diversity of employment 7. Improving communications and transport infrastructure is reducing the tyranny of distance 8. Strong adoption of renewable energy => more-reliable power supply 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relatively fragile vegetation 2. Dichotomies within the population => ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ 3. Weak regional identification by residents 4. Reliance on a few key individuals to fill needed roles in fragile local governance 5. Sporting clubs appear to be in decline 6. Physical remoteness in high cost-structures and management costs, poor public transport 7. Insurance costs are unreasonably high, and postcode too crude a basis to assess risk 8. Over-reliance on a few, traditionally male-dominated industries 9. Growing reliance on income support 10. The vastness and remoteness of the SA rangelands puts a significant amount of pressure on resources required to manage this area 11. Poor condition and non-standardisation of infrastructure adds to maintenance challenges 12. Deficiencies with some communications infrastructure 13. Inadequate availability of housing, and land / tenure for building 14. Very little recycling occurs in the SA outback, mainly due to the large distances 15. Emergency services capabilities are limited 16. Duplication of governance (i.e. publications, reports, initiatives) and services 17. There is little land designated and available for housing, despite the vastness of the region

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Table 1 – Summary SWOT of the Outback

Opportunities	Threats
1. Native vegetation has potential as basis for integrated enterprises incorporating carbon sink offsets, conservation, pastoralism and eco-tourism; including via mining industry offsets	1. Unsustainable extraction of water and poor management of the GAB is a threat to groundwater-dependent ecological communities and biodiversity values, as well as economic growth
2. Pioneer and expand use of certain alternative energy sources, e.g. geothermal energy, solar	2. The invasion and spread of exotic species, particularly <i>Phoenix dactylifera</i> (Date Palm), <i>Arundo donax</i> (Bamboo) and <i>Tamarix aphylla</i> (Athel Pine)
3. Create the conditions the enable rural communities to thrive, as identified by Plowman (2005)	3. Risk of 'burn-out' of community leaders
4. Conduct regular face-to-face regional problem-solving forums	4. Declining community populations jeopardise the provision of services needed to support the regional economy (e.g. tourism)
5. Provide support for people who provide key services to compensate for regional challenges, being careful not to inhibit the ethos of volunteerism	5. High fuel costs undermine the region's economy and the wellbeing of its people, and constrain the ability of people to volunteer for community roles
6. Ensure the provision of necessary services and the community and social environment that encourages families to stay in the region	6. Birdsville Track mail run is under threat due to dwindling population
7. Continue to diversify the industrial base and employment opportunities, particularly for women	
8. Diversity tourism opportunities to increase duration of visitor stays	
9. Make more use of information technology to reduce the impact of remoteness	

Assessment of economic status

The economic data reveal a region in transition from traditional pursuits of pastoralism and mining, to additional land uses and service industries that also capitalise on the region's natural advantages, with a young population enjoying a relatively affluent standard of living. Employment growth trends are rising, unemployment is falling and industrial diversity is reasonable.

However, while trend indicators reveal change in the direction that most people would desire, many aspects of the region are performing below that of

other regions. Furthermore, the trends are averages, which mask a likely diversity of performance across the region and within sectors.

For example, while employment growth trends are rapidly rising for both males and females, it remains negative (i.e., the region is still losing jobs, but not nearly as many as previously) and the improvement in performance has come largely in part-time, rather than full-time employment. Unemployment rates are falling, but this may be largely due to similar falls in the participation rate (those unemployed who are actively seeking work) and a declining population.

These outcomes have come at a time when international prices for major commodities produced in the region have, until recently, been very strong, and would normally promote economic strength in the region.

The challenge moving forward will be to maintain the performance of the region's traditionally strong industries, whilst creating the conditions that allow it to diversify in to new growth areas that might arrest or reverse the current trend of declining population.

Assessment of the status of Outback infrastructure

KRA (Section references)	Indicator	Summary key words	Data / Region*
KRA: Population	Population of OACDT and major centres	Slightly < 8000, slowly declining	A/B
Section 3.2	Net migration as a % of population	Variable, but overall decline	A/B
	Population distribution	Predominantly young, dominated by working age males	A/B
	Total dependency ratio	Steady decline until recent stability	A/B
KRA: Employment	Employment by industry	Slowly diversifying but traditional industries still strong	A/B
Section 3.3	Employment growth rate	Rapidly improving, but still losing jobs	A/B
	Participation rate	Now less than Australian average	A/B
	Unemployment rate	Improving trend, but still high	B/B
	Youth unemployment	Improving trend, but still high	B/B
KRA: Economic activity	Gross Regional Product	–	D/-
	Regional contribution to GSP	–	D/-
Section 3.4	Value of regional exports	–	D/-
	Industrial Diversity Index	Moderate to high diversity (but spread out over a very large area)	A/C
	Average no. of nights stayed in region	Improving, but less than other regions	A/D
	Total no. of overnight visitors	Second best in state after Adelaide	A/D
	KRA: Living standards and socioeconomics	Average individual annual taxable income	Above SA average
Section 3.5	Total selected income support customers	Increasing trend	A/B
	Index of relative socio-economic advantage/disadvantage (IRSAD)	Similarly to other rural regions	B/C

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Assessment of social status

KRA (Section references)	Indicator	Summary key words	Data/ Region*
KRA: Improving wellbeing	Life expectancy	76.5 years (3.5 years less than Adelaide)	A/D
	Infant mortality rate	Slight improvement; higher than State average	C/D
Section 4.2	Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10)	Low stress levels (better than State average)	B/D
	Sufficient Physical Activity	Increasing; better than Adelaide	A/D
KRA: Aboriginal wellbeing	Literacy at Primary School	Neutral	B/D
	Numeracy at Primary School	Neutral	B/D
Section 4.3	Convictions for offences	Higher in Outback	A/D
	Correctional services discharges	More time in prison	A/D
	Police arrests	Neutral	A/D
KRA: Community Safety	Armed robbery rate	Less than Adelaide	A/B
	Unarmed robbery rate	Less than Adelaide	A/B
Section 4.4	Residential break & enter rate	Less than Adelaide	A/B
	Non-residential break & enter rate	Neutral	A/B
	Motor vehicle theft rate	Neutral	A/B
	Road fatalities	Reduction	A/D
KRA: Participation	Informal votes in State and Federal Gov't elections	Fewer informal votes	A/D
Section 4.5	Eligible voter participation in local government elections	n/a	D/-
	Level of volunteerism	Higher than Adelaide	B**/D
KRA: Accessibility	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA)	Unchanged and remote	A/B
Section 4.6	Accessibility to: education, health services, transport, communication services, business services, employment services, jobs, retail services	Variable, but generally neutral to good for most services, exception being professional/ business services	D**/C
KRA: Housing	Housing Affordability Index	Downward trend and gradual convergence in housing affordability between Adelaide and regional SA	A/D
Section 4.7	Proportion of people experiencing housing stress	Lowest in nation	A/D
	Availability of housing	Poor, but depends largely on location	D**/C
	No. of visitor accommodation options	Satisfactory	A**/D
KRA: Disability Section 4.8	Disabled persons access to buildings	n/a	D/-
KRA: Education	Highest level of schooling Year 12	Significantly low	A/D
	SACE completion rates	Neutral	A/D
Section 4.9	TAFE participation rate	Significantly low	A/B
	Proportion of population with post-school qualifications	Significantly low	A/B

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Key observations of the social status of the Outback are:

- People in the Outback live on average 3.5 years less than people in Adelaide.
- Infant mortality rates and psychological distress levels have only seen slight improvement since 2000. Infant mortality rates for the Unincorporated Areas are higher than the State average.
- People living in Adelaide were statistically more likely to have psychological distress than people in the Northern and Far Western of the State.
- In 2002 South Australia recorded the highest proportional increase of any State in sport and recreation participation levels, equalling the national average. The data shows that people living in Northern & Far Western regions were statistically more likely to undertake sufficient physical activity at 53.3%, as compared to people living in Adelaide at 51.4% of the population.
- There is relatively little difference between the rate for literacy and numeracy amongst Outback Aboriginal Year 7 students, compared with Adelaide-based Aboriginal students. The conviction rate for offences by an aboriginal person appearing before a court are much higher in the Outback (44.5%) than in Adelaide (30%), and on average Outback aboriginals spend more time in prison (323 days) than Adelaide-based Aboriginals (188 days). Community service levels and apprehension/ arrest rates are approximately the same for Outback and Adelaide Aboriginals.
- Crime rates across the Outback were less than those of the metropolitan areas, although non-residential break and enter, and motor vehicle theft, were on par with Adelaide levels.
- Across the OACDT region there has been a reduction in road fatalities by an average of 4 deaths for the years 2003 to 2004. Crash data shows that rural residents make up over 66% of all drivers who are killed or seriously injured on rural South Australian roads.
- Outback residents have cast fewer informal votes in the two most recent State Government elections (1997 and 2003) and the 2004 Federal election, than metropolitan Adelaide residents.
- The ABS Survey of Voluntary Work (2000) showed that there were higher rates of volunteering outside national capital cities for most types of voluntary work, particularly for emergency services.
- The OACDT region is almost entirely remote or very remote, with only Pirie, Whyalla and the Riverland considered moderately accessible. The ARIA (remoteness) index has remained unchanged for years 1996 - 2001.
- Results from the Community Leaders questionnaire regarding accessibility to services and facilities showed that access to education is perceived to be good overall for primary school services, and neutral on balance for secondary education and TAFE. Access to doctors is considered acceptable on balance, whereas access to hospitals is slightly above neutral. Access to transport reveals the effect of location (i.e. bimodal distribution), and depends on proximity to transport hubs. On balance access to air services is considered to be poor. Access to communications is good for internet, which is surprising given the absence of broadband except via satellite, and good for post and landline. More respondents are dissatisfied with mobile phone access. Access to professional, business and employment services is poor. Access to retail services is good overall for general provisions such as groceries, and is worse for clothing.
- Housing affordability remains better in regional SA, however, recent trends show that affordability is falling and dwelling prices are rising at a much higher rate than Adelaide. The downward trend and gradual convergence in housing affordability between Adelaide and the rest of the State suggests that household incomes in regional SA have not kept pace with house prices in this period.
- The electorate of Grey has the lowest levels of mortgage stress in the nation (6.4%).
- The real issue is the lack of quality housing and the high costs associated with logistics of building a new home (e.g. transport of supplies and labour).

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- The number of establishments in the Outback SA and Flinders Ranges for all types of visitor accommodation options has remained relatively constant, with adequate quality and availability.
- There was no information relating to disabled person access to services or buildings.
- At the time of the 2001 Census, 25.4% of residents in the Northern region indicated they had completed Year 12, which is significantly below the State (36.2%) and Adelaide (40.5%) averages. It is also worth noting that a higher than State average proportion of individuals within the Northern region have indicated that they did not go to school, indicating a low level of compulsory educational attainment within the region.
- The percentage of potential completers actually completing SACE in the metropolitan and country areas is the same, and was around 88% in 2004.
- The region's VET/ TAFE participation rate is low; in 2003 it was 9% and decreasing. There is a correlation between poor access to TAFE facilities and low participation rates.
- At the time of the 2001 Census, the majority of residents in the OACDT Unincorporated Areas (70.9%) reported that they had no post-school qualifications, compared with 56% of individuals in Adelaide metropolitan area.

Assessment of environmental status

KRA (Section reference)	Indicator	Summary key words	Data/ Region*
KRA: Soil and water	Soil condition	Mainly erosion, but variable throughout region	B/D
Section 5.2	Groundwater dependent ecosystems	Extraction of GAB water much reduced, capping/rehab continuing	A/C
KRA: Native vegetation and biodiversity	Biodiversity corridors	Two major initiatives in region	A/D
Section 5.3	Area reserved for conservation	Protection of IBRA regions ranges from 0% to 53%, total 10m ha or 20% of total area	A/D
	Status of threatened fauna, ecological communities and plant species	Risks to threatened species exist and are well documented	A/D
	Distribution/abundance/impact of pest plants and animals	Feral species occur throughout region, hard to eradicate	A/D
KRA: Renewable energy use	Renewable electricity production	Mainly solar, total production 441kW	A/D
Section 5.4	Solar Schools Program	Well established in Outback area	A/D
	Energy efficiency of dwellings	n/a	D/-
KRA: Zero waste	Waste to landfill	Mainly town dumps or burn	D**/B
	Recycling	Very little information known, not expected to be high	D/-
	Recycling		D/-

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Environmental issues in the Outback SA are broadly the control of pest plants, animals and pathogens; soil degradation and decline (notably wind and water erosion) and arresting loss and modification of habitat loss. The environmental condition of the Outback is well described in recent reports of the SA Arid Lands NRM Board (previously, Rangelands Integrated NRM Group). Unless otherwise stated, data in the following sections is drawn from the Rangelands NRM Groups, NRM Plan (2004). To minimise duplication, the State of the Outback Report summarises the key points and cross-references to this and other original reports for those who require the detail.

Landuse in the Outback SA region is dominated by domestic stock grazing on native pastures, indigenous lands and nature reserves. Conservation accounts for approximately 20% of the region, with the Flinders Ranges National Park having the highest profile. Mining is prevalent, with oil and gas at Moomba, coal at Leigh Creek, and copper, uranium, silver and gold at Roxby Downs.

Native vegetation in the rangelands has remained largely intact due to the remoteness and dominant land management practices, with over 95% of the pre-European vegetation remaining.

Although 70% of wetlands in South Australia have been destroyed since early pastoral settlement, the majority of those located in the rangelands are in

relatively good condition despite the prevailing arid to semi-arid conditions, often with unaltered flow regimes. Episodic rainfall events provide flows for inland ephemeral rivers, streams, wetlands and waterholes.

A number of surface water systems are also supported by groundwater reserves, in particular the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) which underlies the majority of the Outback SA region and which supplies the mound springs. Unsustainable extraction of water and poor management of the GAB has led a reduction in artesian pressure, which poses a threat to groundwater-dependent ecological communities and biodiversity values, economic and social benefits.

All problems are being actively managed via regional integrated natural resource management planning.

The use and promotion of renewable energy in South Australia has increased significantly in South Australia, albeit from a very low base. The Australian Greenhouse Office's Renewable Remote Power Generation Program, and the SA Department of Education and Children's Services Solar Schools program, are both active in the Outback SA Region.

There are few data on waste management in the Outback, hence new data from a survey of regional leaders is presented. Very little recycling occurs because of the tyranny of distance.

Assessment of the status of Outback infrastructure

Infrastructure is an important vehicle for economic development. The NRDB Strategic Plan 2005-2010, states that the existing infrastructure to support economic development in the Outback has significant shortcomings, pointing to the unique characteristics of northern South Australia which make it extremely difficult to develop a viable case for commercially funded infrastructure.

The community's need for better infrastructure is very strong. Our research data, public consultations, and the focus of regional development initiatives reveal that there are significant shortcomings in the areas of:

- Basic tourism infrastructure including toilets and signs
- Water – both quality and quantity to support industry development including tourism and mining
- Communications – access to the equivalent standard of information technology and communications, including broadband internet access
- Waste Management – there is a pressing need for an holistic approach to waste management
- Power – access to a continuous adequate and secure source of power.

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KRA (Section reference)	Indicator	Summary key words	Data/ Region*
KRA: Water Section 6.2	Type of effluent disposal system	Majority individual property septic tank	B/A
	Management of rural and remote water supplies	Split between SA Water, local councils or Mining, and local progress association	B/A
	No. of public toilets	18	A/A
KRA: Transport Section 6.3	No. of airstrip/ aerodromes	16	A/B
	Length of sealed and unsealed roads	1,910 km sealed 10,065 km unsealed	A/B6.3
	Rate of traffic flow	See Figure 49 and Figure 50	A/D
KRA: Energy Section 6.4	Type and costs of power supply	Connected to State electricity grid, individual property generators, diesel generation and distribution by local authority	A/A
KRA: Communications Section 6.5	No. of video-conferencing/ 'telecentre' facilities	6, plus 5 additional internet access points	A/A
	No. of Rural Transaction Centres	4, no EPOS facilities	A/A
	No. of TAFE facilities	2	A/A
	No. of Australia Post & licensed postal outlets	19	A/A
	UHF radio coverage	See Figure 51 and Figure 52	A/B
	Mobile telephone coverage	Satellite phone and Internet; limited CDMA and GSM	A/D

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Assessment of the data, State of the Outback Database, and this Report

It is important to emphasise that this Report is a snapshot in time of the OACDT region, and is as good as the data allow. As is evident from the foregoing chapters there are various deficiencies in the data, and we explore these further here.

This Report and the associated Database is a significant achievement in pulling together information that has never been integrated before. Importantly, this includes data on a diversity of issues that are not featured in the State Strategic Plan because they are non-issues in the more populous areas of the state

(e.g., sources of power generation; regional transaction centres, public toilets). Comparing this final version of the Report with the report from the Outback Leaders Forum held at Woomera in April 2005 (Annex 3), which highlighted the need to include these kinds of issues, shows the substantial progress that has been achieved since that time.

However, there is more that can be done in future, as the following analysis shows.

Table 2 provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the data. It shows the significant progress made by this project in compiling the SoO Database and this Report, and indicates that there is more to be done.

Table 2 – Analysis of the Data and Database

Strengths	Weaknesses, gaps and deficiencies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Database provides a single central portal in which to store, revise, and view data and produce user-specified hardcopy summaries. Database can be made web-accessible if required 2. Most Economic TBL data is reasonably well matched to the actual OACDT boundary, having been generated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics via a customised re-aggregation of Statistical Local Area's (SLA) that best correspond to the OACDT region. While the ABS data includes the Aboriginal Lands, of most importance is that it does not include the major towns of Port Augusta, Whyalla, Roxby Downs, Ceduna and Coober Pedy 3. The Database includes data on issues that are locally important but not a focus elsewhere (and in other regional plans) 4. Improve understanding of the comparative differences between different parts of the state. 'We want to be equitable' – OACDT. The Report will help direct attention towards areas in need 5. Provides evidence for things that are known anecdotally 6. Issues are summarised via time series and snapshot data at a particular point in time. Can be used as a baseline to measure change 7. Competitive tendering – SoO Database will provide information to help community leaders develop statements and applications for grants 8. Could assist various agencies to interpret and report success/failures 9. The reader can identify leads as to where to go to get the latest information on any KRA/indicator 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The foregoing sections highlight the many gaps in the data 2. Of the limited data available for the Outback region, much of it relates to different geographical boundaries and regional definitions; i.e. there is little comparability across individual data sources. While this is a weakness, it also provides positive impetus for change 3. With such small populations, much of the officially collected data cannot be disaggregated in to smaller and potentially more useful sub-regional components - it is not collected at that resolution, often to protect privacy due to the small numbers of people involved 4. Data collected over annual or other large intervals, such as the ABS's five yearly Census surveys, are a crude method of measuring change which may vary considerably within the collection time frames. For example, Employment and Population can vary considerably by year and by season and by the movement of transient residents, and tourists 5. There is currently no measure of 'happiness' 6. ARIA index is too crude to be useful, and is based on road access that undervalues the benefits of communication technology 7. Absence of data on recycling activity

Executive Summary

Table 3 presents the strengths and benefits of this report.

Table 3 – Strengths and Benefits of this Report

1. Provides a sound baseline because it is in TBL format and there are few if any other integrated collations of the data
 2. Should help to debunk myths about the region
 3. By being TBL it means that issues can be explored (e.g. business viability) and strategic directions planned by examining how initiatives may impact across the TBL
 4. As an interpretation on the Database, the Report should also assist understanding of the comparative (dis)advantages of different parts of the region. The Report will help direct the funding into certain areas. May also help to understand communities' different abilities to apply for and manage projects
 5. Helps to gel the region – provides an identity. May help Outback community members think and act more regionally rather than just locally
 6. Newcomers can read this and get a quick overview of the region and its issues
 7. Assist government (silos) to think differently about the region
 8. SoO Report is an outward demonstration of success (i.e. regional governance team made up of all agencies working together)
 9. The summary of data, with its different boundaries, time-frames and sources, illustrates the inconsistencies in the institutional arrangements and governance responsibilities for the Outback region. While this is a weakness of the region, highlighting these complexities also provides significant evidence and positive impetus for change
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Opportunities to utilise this Report

This report is a presentation of, guide to and interpretation of the data in the Database, in a way that is intended to add value to the Database and make the Database more usable by the broad Outback community and other stakeholders.

To make this Report widely available it should be accessible via the internet (along with the Database) as updated from time to time.

Apart from benefits that stem from the strengths of the Report and the Database (Table 2 and Table 3; e.g., provides stakeholders with an understanding of the region, provides newcomers with an accessible and comprehensive TBL overview, and provides a baseline for planning, etc), the following are new opportunities that the Report provides:

1. Regional groups could undertake their own SWOT analyses to build on/refine those in this Report, as part of their local planning. Should there be errors of fact or interpretation in this Database and Report, they can serve as a stimulus for fresh insights and action by the Outback communities and agencies.
2. Outback communities can use this Database and Report (as updated from time to time) to make it easier to build cases for funding.
3. Agencies can use the information in the Database and Report to assist them to determine budget allocations that accurately reflect their policies.
4. Agencies and communities could use this Report as a baseline to measure change and progress, and to monitor outcomes, including for different sectors of the Outback community.
5. Updated snapshots of progress could inform major Outback forums, such as the Outback Community Forum held in Woomera in April 2005.
6. The broader Outback community could use this Report as the basis for discussions on future governance in the region.
7. The OACDT could use the Report (and the process used to develop it) to strengthen the partnerships between agencies (i.e. the SoO process is adding knowledge to the various key issues at a regional level).

Deriving maximum use of the SoO Database and this Report

The SoO Database and Report are intended for wide use to facilitate informed debate about and planning of the Outback. Accordingly, both the Database and the Report need to be made available via the internet.

The Database needs to be kept updated. This requires filling in missing data as the opportunity arises, and updating the Database as the underlying data are updated. We estimate that subsequent versions of the Database could be undertaken considerably more quickly and therefore, at less cost than was required for this initial exercise, because the information as to where and how to obtain the data are embedded in the Database – about 1-2 person-weeks of time spread over a period of approximately 1 month.

Conclusions

The compilation of the SoO Database and the preparation of this Report are a significant initiative of the OACDT to provide a comprehensive account of the OACDT Region as at mid-2005 which elaborates the key features of the Region.

The Database and the Report have significant potential to assist the Outback agencies and communities to plan and manage more confidently. Potential by itself is worth little; the value will come when the SoO Database and Report are fully utilised for the kinds of purposes indicated above, to capitalise on the strengths if the Database and Report. As part of this it is important that the SoO Database is made available via the internet and that it is kept up-to-date.

Recommendations for the OACDT and other regional stakeholders

About the Database and this Report

1. Make this Report widely available via the internet (along with the Database), and as it is updated from time to time. The intention is that the Database and Report gets wide usage, and this is the best way of ensuring this.
2. Fill gaps in the Database that are potentially able to be filled, according to need and opportunity, such as where it is possible in time to obtain data that matches the OACDT geographic boundary, and where more detailed data is expected to be available in the future.

3. The OACDT should identify the data it requires to be collected according to its geographical boundary and actively seek to influence the relevant agencies to ensure this happens, if the OACDT Region is to remain an entity for reporting and planning purposes. The key data on which the OACDT relies to plan and monitor its work need to be collected on the appropriate geographical bases – for many data are the OACDT boundaries which because they are ‘non-standard’ cause the most difficulty for obtaining data. Negotiations need to be made with the ABS to have an ABS dataset customised to the OACDT-boundary and made routinely available.
4. Update the data need at the frequency that the source data are updated, to keep the SoO Database relevant. This varies for the different data elements.
5. One agency must assume responsibility for looking after the Database to ensure that its integrity is maintained and that the data entered are accurate. This would seem to be the OACDT. The responsible agency should establish protocols for data updating. This agency will also need to take responsibility for maintenance of the web portal through which the Database is made available. The agency should consider delegating aspects of these responsibilities to other agencies or service providers.

About regional development

1. Agencies and communities should utilise the Database and Report to capture the strengths listed in Table 1 to realise the opportunities such as those listed.
2. The OACDT should use the opportunities highlighted in the SWOT in Table 1 to stimulate discussion within the region to explore opportunities.
3. The OACDT should encourage the circumstances that enable regional communities to thrive, as per the findings of Plowman (2005), at least for those issues under the influence of the OACDT and other agencies, paying particular attention to the elements of ‘soft’ infrastructure that invigorate the communities.