

A SOCIAL PROFILE OF THE EYRE AND WESTERN REGION: LITERATURE REVIEW AND COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

At a glance

Project title

Social profile of the Eyre and Western Region: literature review and community analysis

Project summary

To develop a social understanding of communities that may potentially be affected by development of an offshore oil and/or gas sector in the Great Australian Bight and to understand the processes currently driving change in communities across the Eyre Peninsula and West Coast region.

Project investigators

University of Adelaide

Program partners

CSIRO, BP, SARDI, the University of Adelaide and Flinders University are working on a \$20 million research program to better understand the environmental, economic and social value of the Great Australian Bight.

Project contacts

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Overview

Change has been evident in communities across the Eyre and West Coast region over the last three decades, including a decline in conventional agriculture, the rise of aquaculture and value-adding and the emergence of mining.

The Eyre Peninsula remains a major economic resource for South Australia and the nation, accounting for 30 percent of the State's grains crop and a major share of fisheries production. It is also home to more than 30,000 people and a major tourism destination in its own right.

The project will establish a baseline understanding of the nature of these communities, their dynamics, and potential and processes of change. It will provide a valuable resource for understanding how offshore oil and/or gas activities in the Great Australian Bight may affect these communities.

The Challenge

The social environment refers to a wide range of interrelated and diverse aspects and variables relating to or involving, a combination of social and economic factors.

One of the major challenges with undertaking social research on the Eyre Peninsula is the absence of a range of pre-existing knowledge on the region. As a sparsely-populated territory, many aspects of its social and economic structure remain unexplored.

Undertaking research in the social sciences is often qualitative and involves interviewing or

surveying people to gather information. It involves engaging with people to undertake the research and maintaining sensitivity while capturing people's opinions, values, thoughts and feelings.

The Research

In order to assess any impacts to the Eyre and West Coast region from human activities in the Great Australian Bight, it is necessary to understand the nature and structure of these communities. Many communities are based on agriculture, while others are important centres for fishing, administration or transport. Population loss has been a feature of the Eyre Peninsula over past decades and this trend remains evident in many inland centres.

Social science approaches will be used to form a baseline understanding of the nature and dynamics of these communities, as well as the structure of its labour forces and how they have dealt with change in the past.



Above: This project will assess the nature and structure of communities in the Eyre and West Coast region. Although communities have been affected by a decline in conventional agriculture over the past three decades, it continues to be an important part of their economy accounting for 30 percent of the State's grain crop.



Above: Tourism is an important part of the socio-economic profile of the Eyre and West Coast region.

The region's economy and the processes currently driving development will be studied, with much of the information drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data.

The project will use focus groups, surveys and interviews to inform how communities are structured socially. This will incorporate information on population size, distribution, age, labour force, education, religion, political persuasion, level of resilience and information on sentiment toward change.

The economic dependence of individual regional communities on activities related

to the Great Australian Bight will also be examined.

The Impact

Understanding the social ecology of communities residing in the Eyre Peninsula and West Coast region provides a valuable resource for understanding how development of oil and/or gas industries may reshape some of these communities.

This knowledge provides a baseline measurement against which any future changes may be assessed.

The People

Andrew Beer is a Professor of Geography at the University of Adelaide and the Director of the Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning. Professor Beer's interests include regional development in Australia, the operation of housing markets and policy development. He is a member of the UK's Academy of Social Sciences and is the Chair of the Regional Studies Association.

Dr Charmaine Thredgold is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning, University of Adelaide and has a Masters of Urban and Regional Planning. She has extensive research and practical experience in urban and regional planning, social analysis, structure planning, community engagement, developing urban and regional strategy and policy, and project management.



Left: The Eyre Peninsula is South Australia's centre for fishing and aquaculture.

For more information

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