

NYNGAN

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY CONDITIONS



Northern
Basin
Review



Nyngan and surrounds, What the research tells us

- Population
- Education
- Employment
- Land use
- Water availability

Nyngan and surrounds, From the locals' point of view

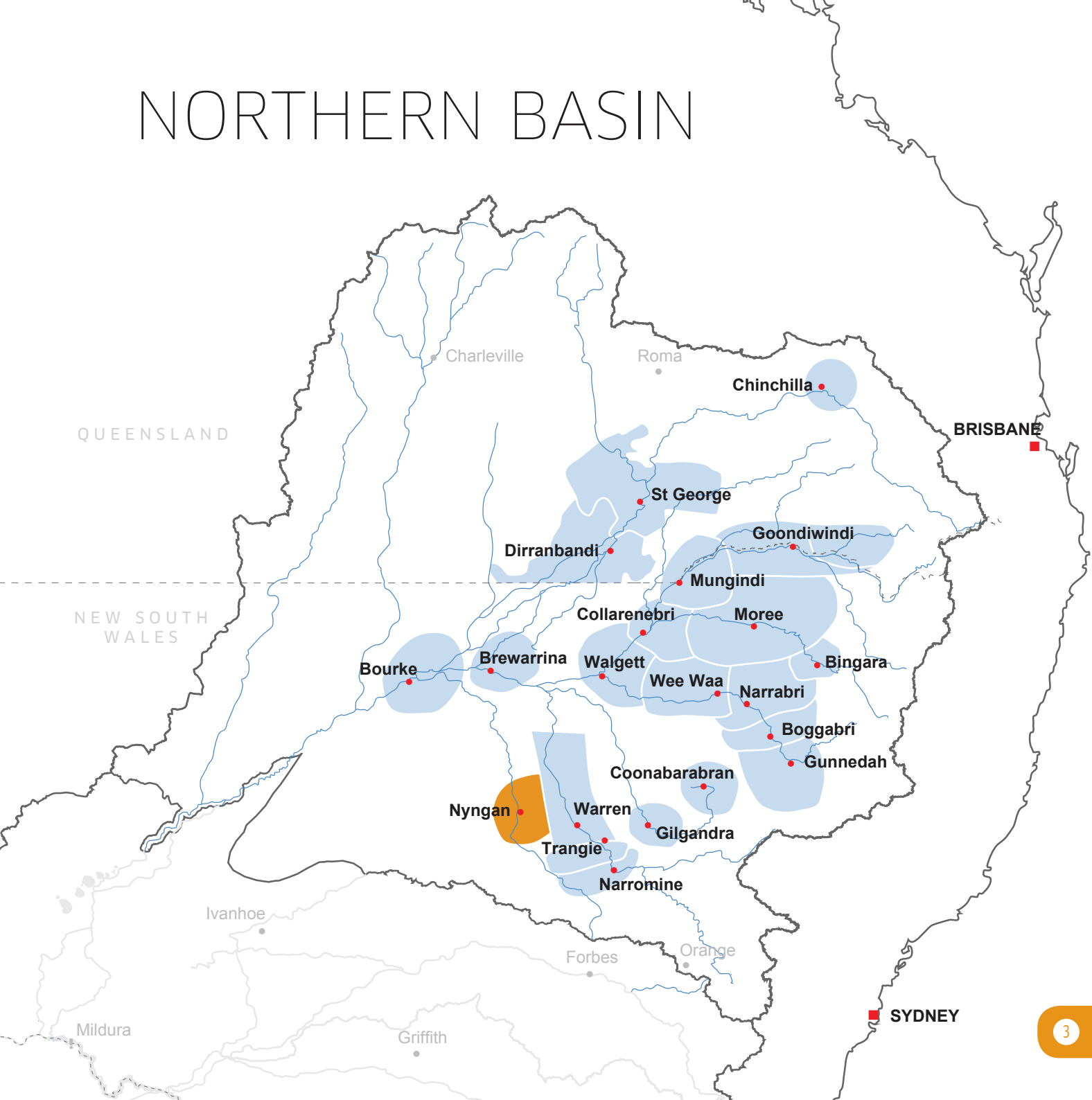
- Looking back
- Managing change
- What is happening

During the past 15 years, the economic structure of the Nyngan community has become more diverse. In addition to supporting agriculture, the local economy now includes mining and renewable energy.

Between 2001 and 2006, the population and employment in the town and farming areas of the community decreased. However, with the growth in the emerging sectors of the local economy, the town population and employment increased after 2006.

The general social and economic conditions in the Nyngan community are sound, indicating some potential to adapt to change. Most agricultural production in the community is based on grazing. There is limited irrigated production and to date, only a small volume of water has been recovered for the environment by the Australian Government.

NORTHERN BASIN



Nyngan and surrounds

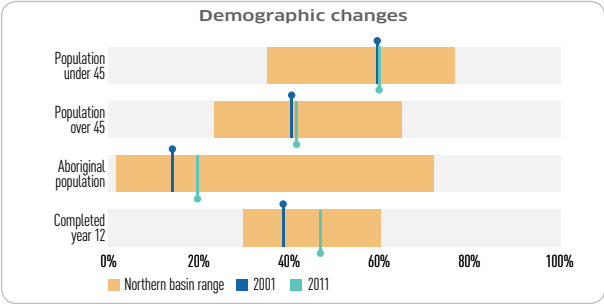
What the research tells us



POPULATION

	2001	2006	2011
Total area population	2,494	2,358	2,326
Total town population	2,067	1,974	2,075

Between 2001 and 2011, the Nyngan area population declined by 132 people (7%). Between 2001 and 2006, the town and farming populations each fell by around 5%. However, between 2006 and 2011, the town population increased by around 5%, while the farming area population continued to fall. In 2011, 18% of Nyngan's town population identified as Aboriginal.



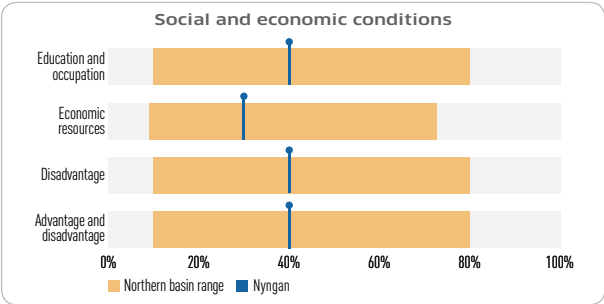
In both 2001 and 2011, about 40% of the town's population was 45 years or over. The proportions of people in the community aged 45 years or over and under 45 remained constant.

EDUCATION

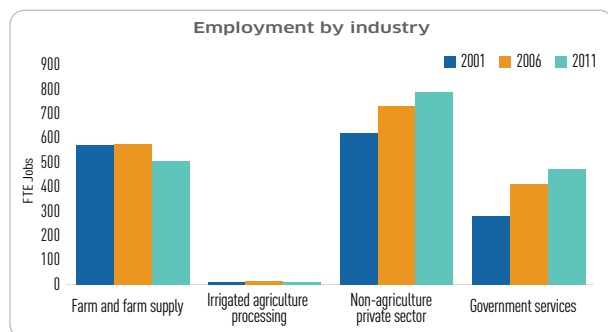
In 2011, 46% of people in the town (aged over 15) had completed year 12 and 24% had completed some post-school qualifications. The latter is an increase from 20% in 2001.

In 2011, Nyngan town had index scores of 4 for education and occupation, 4 for disadvantage, 4 for advantage and disadvantage, and 3 for economic resources. In 2006, index scores of 3 applied to all four indices.

General social and economic condition



EMPLOYMENT



In 2011, there were 804 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs in the Nyngan community (excluding seasonal workers). Between 2001 and 2011, there was a 5% (41 FTE) decrease in full time employment. Most of the change occurred between 2001 and 2006. Unemployment in the town was 6% in 2011.

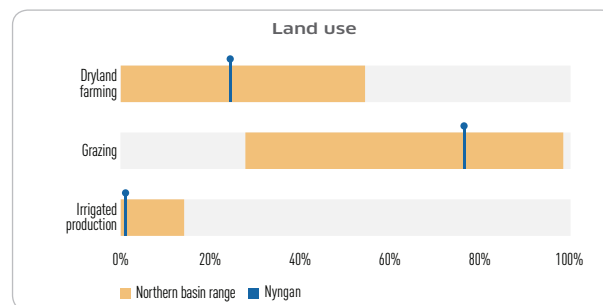
In 2001, the agriculture and agriculture supply sector represented 43% of all jobs. However, by 2011, there had been a significant shift in the structure of the local economy and the non-agriculture private sector had become the largest sector – representing 45% of all jobs in the community. Between 2001 and 2011, employment in the agriculture and agriculture supply sector declined by 31% (113 FTE) and employment in the non-agriculture private sector increased by 15% (46 FTE).

Government services sector employment increased by 15% (25 FTE) between 2001 and 2011. This is the net effect of a 21% increase between 2001 and 2006, and a 6% decrease from 2006 to 2011.

LAND USE

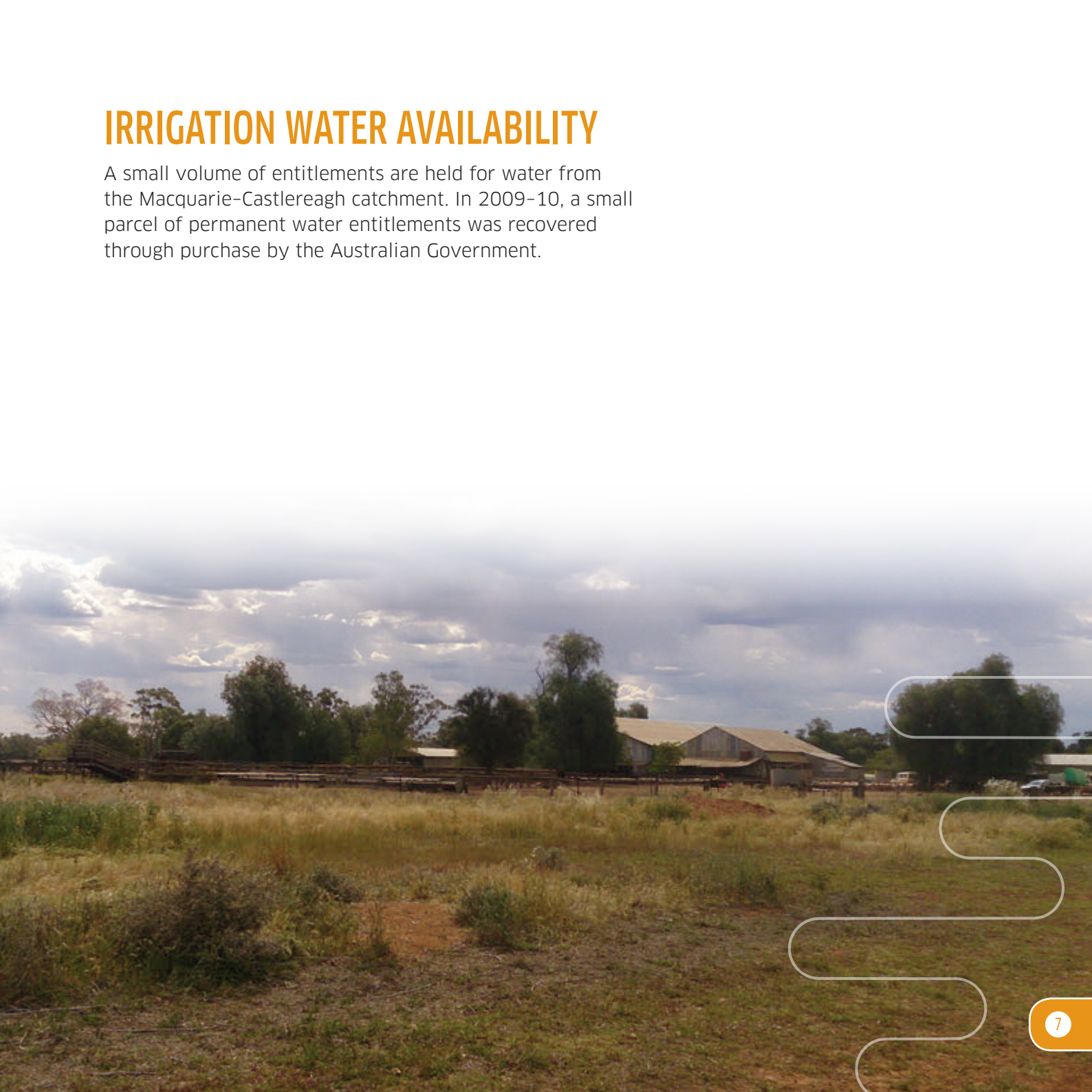
Nyngan's agricultural industry is predominantly grazing, which accounts for 76% of the land area. Dryland farming is 24% of the land use in this community. The maximum potential area for irrigated production is quite small with only a small number of hectares (less than 1% of the community land area) identified as being used to irrigate cotton crops.

The Nyngan area produces livestock including beef and sheep. Wheat is the dominant crop.



IRRIGATION WATER AVAILABILITY

A small volume of entitlements are held for water from the Macquarie-Castlereagh catchment. In 2009-10, a small parcel of permanent water entitlements was recovered through purchase by the Australian Government.





Nyngan and surrounds

From the locals' point of view

Looking back

Local historians say the town of Nyngan 'flourished' after completion of the railway line in 1883.

Wool and the sale of sheep have been the main industry for many decades. The grazing of cattle also became common as the area was developed.

In town, there is the Mid-State Shearing Shed Museum that was established by local retired shearers and towns people. The museum highlights the role shearing has played locally and throughout New South Wales.

During the 1960s, there was a major shift in farming enterprises around the Bogan Shire,

as some farmers started to move away from livestock and into cropping for the first time.

Local farmer and former President of NSW Farmers, Charlie Armstrong, said drought resistant crop varieties and improved cultivation methods allowed farmers to move into cropping, despite the climate conditions around Nyngan. Nyngan has an average rainfall of just 17 inches or 425 millimetres.

However, Mr Armstrong said the biggest change in agriculture over the last 40 years has been mechanisation and the diminished need for labour on local properties.

'Mechanisation and use of chemicals has enabled you to do a bigger job with less human resources.' Mr Armstrong said.

'We are now twice the size with half the amount of labour.' Charlie Armstrong

When he started his agricultural career in the 1970s, Charlie said their family property employed 3 men, himself and his father. Now he employs 1 farm-hand and his son also works on the farm.

Charlie said this is indicative of many farming operations around the Nyngan district. He described that people are now employing backpackers to come in to do the work in high demand times such as harvest – 'this is something you wouldn't have heard of around this area only 5 years ago'.

Like all farmers and graziers, those around Nyngan have always been at the mercy of the weather. In April 1990, unusually heavy rains caused major flooding in the town, despite a massive effort by local people to build levee walls using sandbags.

With the town almost completely flooded, all the residents had to be evacuated by helicopter from the railway station – which is the highest point of the town. Army helicopters, TV news helicopters and private helicopters all cooperated in the airlift.

The total damage bill of the 1990s floods came to \$50 million. Locals said that this one single event saw a lot of businesses leave the town as they chose not to rebuild.

Go forward a few decades, and the town became home to the largest solar farm in the southern hemisphere. The construction of the Nyngan Solar Plant began in 2013. At its peak, it employed more than 200 people. However, residents here say only a handful were local to Nyngan.

Local Bogan Shire Mayor, Councillor Ray Donald, has lived in the district for almost 70 years. He said while the town is 'progressing well for a small country town', Nyngan has seen a number of government jobs disappear.

Just recently, the courthouse has been closed. Ray said the town has lost jobs at the Roads and Maritime Services and there has been a significant number of jobs lost from the railway sector.

'Our proximity to Dubbo is an issue as quite a lot of things have been taken from rural centres like Nyngan.' Ray Donald

Mr Donald says job opportunities are limited and that one issue is affecting the retention of Nyngan's population.

'We lose a lot of young people as there isn't a lot of employment to come back to once they have gone away and gained their tertiary education.' Ray Donald

Managing change – a business owner's view

Tony Elias has worked in his family's Toyota business at Nyngan for more than 30 years. He has seen the business grow from 6 staff to 11 nowadays.

Tony said that the success of his business depends on the agriculture sector. While he says the mining industry does bring some business to town, money made by local farmers tends to stay in the town.

This Toyota dealership services a large area, with the business attracting customers west of Nyngan and into Queensland over the last two decades.

'We have basically doubled the number of cars we sell since 1990.' Tony Elias

While Mr Elias said he has always tried to employ local people and train them up through the business, recently he had to go overseas to find a mechanic after attempts to advertise the vacant position failed.

This business is now the only car dealership in town, with Holden, Mitsubishi and Ford leaving Nyngan after the 1990 flood.

Mr Elias said that despite a number of smaller shops in Nyngan closing their doors over the last few years, business in general is going well.

Tony has just been elected onto Bogan Shire Council for the first time and says he wants

to capture more of the passing trade, and encourage tourists to stop in Nyngan.

'I don't think we are doing enough. It's dollars going past your door and it's a growing market. I want to stop the tourists and pull them up in Nyngan.' Tony Elias

Clive Robb bought the butchery in Nyngan just over 8 years ago. He worked there as an apprentice before going to work as a farm hand. In 2008, he returned as the new owner.

When he started the business, he was buying meat in from out of town suppliers. Nowadays, he sells his own product at the butchery and says that is the secret to his success and increase in profits.

'You know the product is good – it's paddock to plate. You know what the animal has been eating and that is what helps in the flavour of the meat.' Clive Robb

Clive said his business has remained stable during the last 8 years. When he bought the business, he was selling two beasts (beef) and 15 lambs a week. He says his sales figures have remained steady.

In terms of competition, there is another butcher in town and two supermarkets, but Clive said his customers are loyal to his business.

What is happening now?

Manager of Elders, Wayne Judge, says the property market around Nyngan 'is on the increase' as there are farmers from southern New South Wales looking to expand and purchase more affordable country.

Wayne says properties that come on the market are priced between \$100 and \$250 an acre. In comparison, buyers in some other parts of southern New South Wales are paying anywhere from \$1,500-\$2,000 per acre.

Wayne said that the average property size around Nyngan is about 5,000 acres.

There are 2 primary schools in the town. Nyngan Public School currently has 130 students and that number has been stable for several years.

At the Catholic school, Deputy Principal Brad Toole says numbers have increased over the last few years and the school now has 145 students – up from 120. However, Mr Toole says numbers will come back down slightly in 2017 with a large year 6 class leaving and a smaller than normal kindergarten class starting.

There is only one high school in Nyngan and it has 180 students. This number has remained stable for the last few years.

While agriculture is the predominate industry, mining has emerged in the district in recent years. Currently, a copper mine outside Nyngan employs 300 people.

Mayor Ray Donald says it is hoped the development of a new scandium mine 25 kilometres west of the town will bring further employment opportunities.

The Nyngan Scandium Project is thought to be the world's only rare scandium mine. The feasibility study for the project was completed in May 2016, and construction is expected to start in early 2017. It is anticipated that the first production will begin in early 2018.

Ray says the town's new medical centre is almost complete and it's hoped to be up and running by the end of the year. This new facility will accommodate at least 2 doctors and other visiting medical staff.

'We don't have a machinery dealership here and that is a big blank for a town that has such a big agricultural industry.'

Ray Donald

Julie White is the owner of Foodworks, one of the supermarkets in town. Back in 2005, Julie and her family spent \$500,000 building the store that now houses her supermarket. She currently employs 25 people.

While Julie said that agriculture has driven the local economy for many years, the mining industry has had a positive effect on her business over the last few years.

'Mining has been good. Those blokes buy cigarettes and 6 packs. They are all on \$100,000 or more and have money to spend.'

Julie White

Julie says she keeps her store open in Nyngan until 9:30 pm each night to make sure she can meet the needs of the mining workforce.

When the solar farm was being built out of Nyngan, Julie said more than 300 workers lived in a 'man camp' near the hospital and that instant workforce saw her sales figures 'go through the roof'.

However, at the time of writing, this business is experiencing a 'green drought'. Since June 2016, the Nyngan area has seen a significant amount of rain and this has affected work opportunities for people such as shearers and earthwork contractors. Julie says this is having an impact on her business with a large number of local workers having less money to spend.

'There would be a few businesses in town doing it tough at the moment because of the wet. But it will all come good.'

Julie White

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