

LANDMARK POSTCODE

6239

Image courtesy of the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup.

Story: Sheryl Allen

LOCATION: Donnybrook
2 hours south of Perth

POPULATION: 2,370

INDUSTRIES: Fruit-growing, beef cattle,
tourism, stone quarrying

CLIMATE: Temperate
Summer: 13.9°C – 30.4°C
Winter: 5.7°C – 16.5°C
Rainfall: 985mm

Thanks to its central location, Western Australia's Donnybrook is sometimes called the "hub of the wheel". This affable country town is just 25 minutes from Bunbury (a city in its own right) and 40 minutes from the ocean at Busselton. The inland arc of the wheel includes Collie, Bridgetown and Nannup.

Being at the axis affords Donnybrook residents easy access to the many professional and recreational opportunities of the region. Following the highway "spokes" a little further takes them to Perth (two hours away), Margaret River or deeper into the South West region with its abundant national parks and wilderness experiences.

"This special position means that Donnybrook can leverage economically from nearby industry and tourism, yet still retain its very livable, country lifestyle," says Landmark's Kim Jackson. "Between coal mining at Collie, aluminium smelting at Worsley and sand mining at Capel Shire there is no shortage of work. Donnybrook is

close enough to be the dormitory town for them all so we benefit from the economic input from both itinerant and permanent workforces."

Donnybrook had its earliest origins as a goldfields settlement. Today activity in and around town itself is dominated by orchards, beef cattle grazing and quarrying of the famous Donnybrook Stone.

Donnybrook is at the core of Western Australia's largest apple-growing region. Since the planting of the first Granny Smith tree in 1900, the district has developed an outstanding apple-growing industry, with Pink Lady now the variety of choice.

The township is surrounded by orchards of many types – apples, stone-fruit, pears – lending a European character to the landscape and a sure signal of the changing seasons.

In spring the vista erupts into blossom, enticing visitors from afar.

From May to November backpackers flood in for the picking season, delivering a welcome boost for accommodation and hospitality operators.

Regional custom dictates that no visit is complete without a stop at Donnybrook to purchase supplies to top up the fruit bowl at home.

Like most rural towns, Donnybrook is evolving – and it's growing. This is one of Western Australia's fastest-growing municipalities.

As Kim explains, while fruit-growing is still the dominant industry, it is giving way to a new breed of urban refugees seeking a rural lifestyle in a convenient, accessible location.

"As traditional farmers retire, we're seeing a trend for their larger holdings to be split into smaller lifestyle-sized lots taken up by B&B operators, alpaca farmers and other diversified operators. Most of the interest we get now is from city-based people wanting a change of lifestyle."

Donnybrook fits that criteria well, providing a sense of simple country living alongside great services – schools, supermarkets, hotels, shops and sporting facilities, including a top-class recreation centre.

"Anything else you need in terms of services or shopping is just a short drive away at Bunbury. In the opposite direction, Donnybrook opens up to the South West region, a famous tourist destination known for its tall timber forests, winding rivers, stunning scenery and emerging wine industry."

Little wonder that so many are keen to give the "hub of the wheel" a whirl.

CONTACT:

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PROPERTY GUIDE:

Residential: older fibro home \$250,000 – \$350,000; modern home from \$400,000

Rural: picturesque unimproved 100-acre allotment \$480,000 – \$550,000; 50-150 acre property with good home and shedding \$850,000 – \$1.6 million; 150+ acre grazing property \$3,200 – \$4,000 per acre