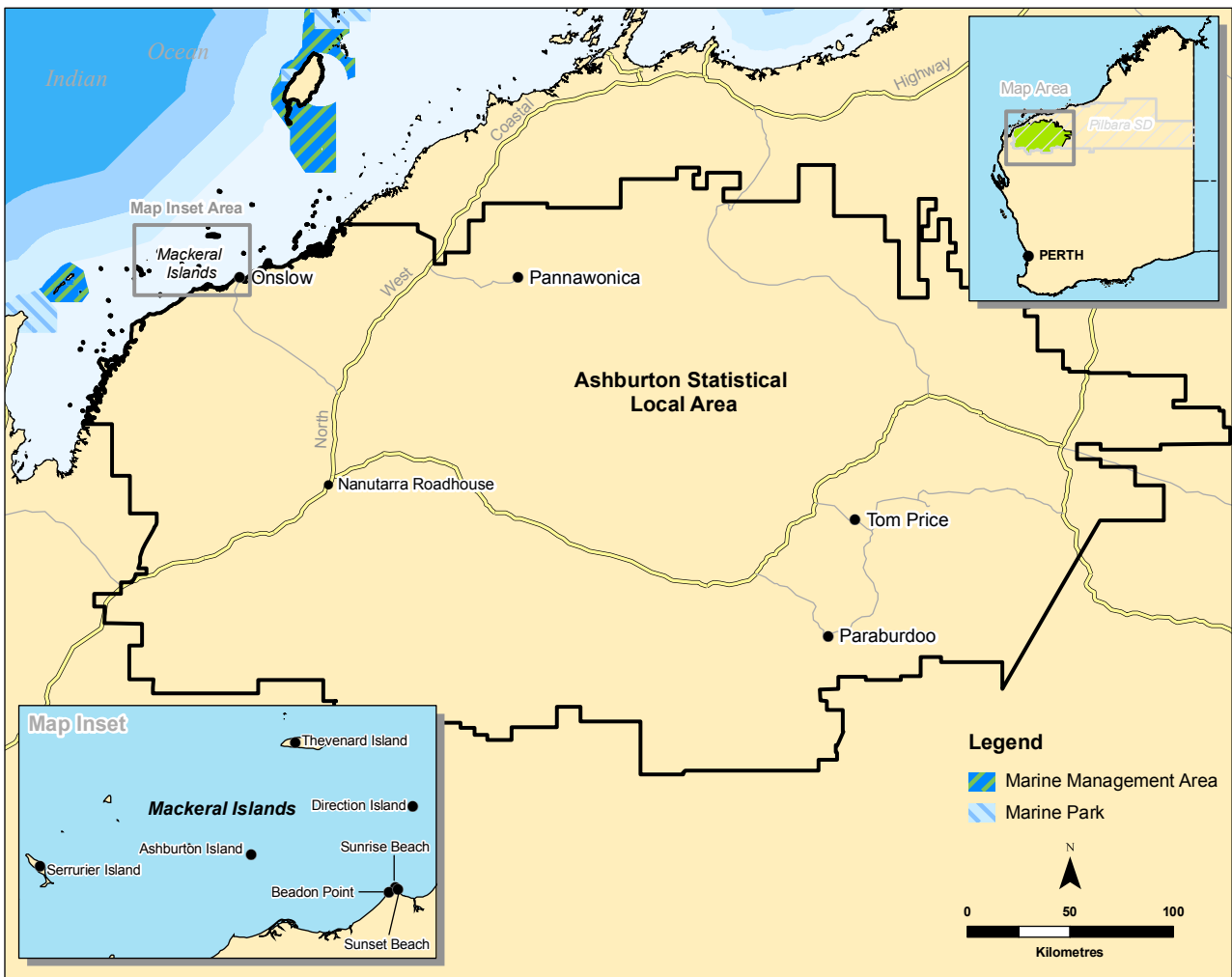


## 2.3 Ashburton

Ashburton Statistical Local Area has a sparsely populated coastline, with much of the coastal land forming part of pastoral and mining leases. The coast is home to significant salt mining activities. Offshore from Onslow are a number of productive oil and gas fields including the Griffin, Chinook and Scinian fields. The Mackerel Islands stretch along part of the Ashburton coast and are located approximately 20 kilometres offshore. The Mackerel Islands are not populated, however they are used for recreational purposes. Thevenard Island houses an onshore oil and gas processing facility and is also a popular destination for visitors. Figure 2.6 illustrates the location of Ashburton Statistical Local area.

**Figure 2.6 Ashburton Statistical Local Area**



Ashburton has a small population of approximately 8,000 people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Mining is the largest employment sector in the area. As this sector has moved towards employing fly-in-fly-out workers, patterns of population distribution and economic investment have shifted. Most inland towns in the area have suffered population loss. Onslow, the largest coastal settlement, has had a small population decline (permanent resident population is about 580 persons). However, Onslow has also experienced an increase in the number of semi-permanent residents, with about 500 people estimated to move into the town during the winter months.

In July 2006, 30% of the people counted in Ashburton were visitors to the area (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). A considerable proportion of these visitors were temporary

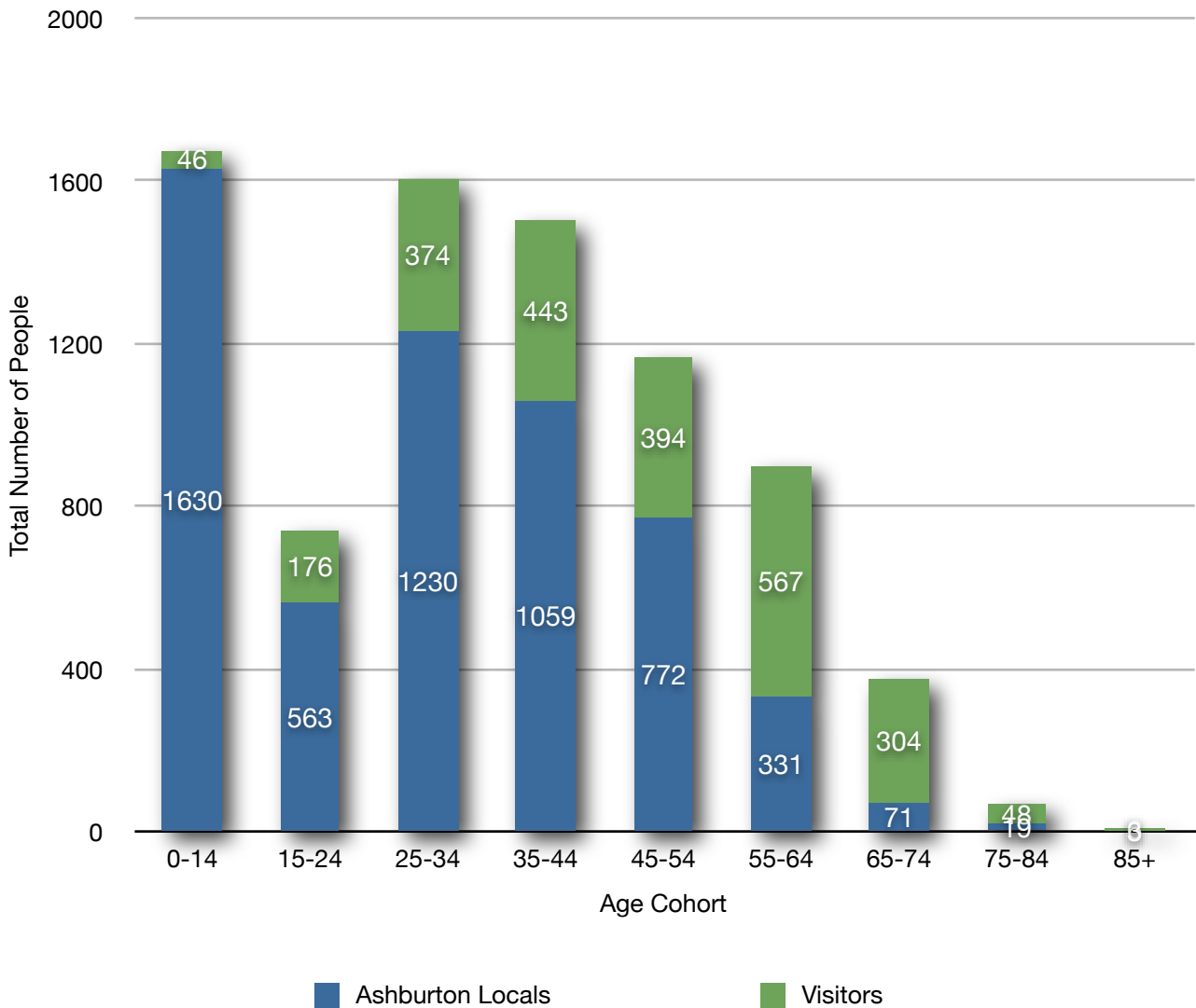
workers. Of the visitors, 76% were from Western Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). Table 2.3 shows the origin of visitors to the Ashburton area. Interestingly, 15% of visitors (or 4.5% of the total population) were aged over 65 years and were unlikely to be participants in the formal workforce. Figure 2.7 illustrates the proportion of visitors in each age cohort.

**Table 2.3 Ashburton Visitor Trends, July 2006**

	Age Cohort									Total
	0-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+	
Ashburton Residents	1630	563	1230	1059	772	331	71	19	3	5678
Visitors from New South Wales	7	7	0	7	11	55	21	7	0	115
Visitors from Victoria	10	10	13	23	27	78	49	0	3	213
Visitors from Queensland	0	4	9	16	17	35	13	0	0	94
Visitors from South Australia	0	0	10	9	11	32	30	0	0	92
Visitors from Western Australia	29	155	337	382	320	340	187	41	3	1794
Visitors from Tasmania	0	0	5	0	8	16	4	0	0	33
Visitors from Northern Territory	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Visitors from Australian Capital Territory	0	0	0	6	0	11	0	0	0	17
Total Visitors	46	176	374	443	394	567	304	48	6	2358
Total Persons	1676	739	1604	1502	1166	898	375	67	9	8036
% of Total Population Who Are Visitors	2.7%	24%	23%	29%	34%	63%	81%	71.6%	66%	30%

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007)

**Figure 2.7 Proportion of Visitors in Ashburton, July 2006**



(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007)

In 2008, there were four caravan parks in Ashburton. There is no data available which quantifies the number or type of camping sites available in Ashburton. Furthermore, there is no data quantifying the number of permanent or semi-permanent residents based at Ashburton caravan parks. Table 2.4 lists the informal coastal camping areas in Ashburton.

**Table 2.4 Coastal Camping Areas in Ashburton**

	Management Agency	Type
Onslow Road Bush Camp		Unpowered, self-sufficient visitors, free
Three Mile Pool	Shire of Ashburton	Unpowered, self-sufficient visitors, free
4 Mile Creek	Shire of Ashburton	Unpowered, self-sufficient visitors, free

Similar to most other camping locations along the Rangelands coast there are no comprehensive data that quantify the number of visitors to these camping sites. Most of the camping sites consist of little more than cleared ground. 4 Mile Creek and 3 Mile Pool both have rubbish collection services. Most campers to these sites are totally independent,

carrying their own water and food supplies, own power supplies and most have their own chemical toilets. Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show some of these camping sites.

**Figure 2.8 Camping at 4 Mile Creek**



**Figure 2.9 Facilities at 4 Mile Creek**



In addition to those sites described above, camping is permitted on some of the Mackerel Islands. Camping on these islands is managed by the Shire of Ashburton, Department of Environment and Conservation and caretakers at Thevenard Island and Direction Island. Some campers also camp along other parts of the coast, which are not recognised as camping areas. These non-recognised areas include remote parts of coastal pastoral stations. It is difficult to determine how many people participate in this type of camping, however field observations suggest that very few people are involved. Moreover, the environmental impact from this type of camping is minimal. Residents are concerned that there has been an increase in the number of fly-in-fly-out workers participating in camping at 'non-recognised' locations over recent years. Residents are concerned that few facilities have been provided to meet this presumed increase in coastal camping in Ashburton.