



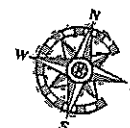
# Pilbara Development Commission

## Pilbara / Gascoyne Islands Ecotourism Management Strategy

### Volume 1

- Review of Study and Public Response
- Implementation Recommendations

by  
Tourism Co-ordinates  
1995



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## PROLOGUE

This strategy document is the distillation of 12 months of consultation and research. The technical and detail papers which set down the outcomes of the consultation and research comprise Volume 2.

Volume 2 provides the raw material for the implementation of the strategy outlined in Volume 1. It encompasses a detailed assessment of the environment, comprehensive consultation with the Aboriginal people of the study area and an examination of the planning implications for ecotourism into the future.

Volume 2 also contains a number of recommendations which the proposed Islands Consultative Committee can consider.

The two volumes together represent the detailed studies undertaken, and the resultant strategies.

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Members of the Study Steering Committee have also given generously of their time as have individuals and communities in the Pilbara, the Gascoyne and Perth in workshops and private discussions.

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## **FOREWORD**

### ***The Islands Region of the North-West - An Economic and Environmental Treasure Trove***

The islands off the Pilbara and Gascoyne coast represent one of the least known of Australia's natural wonders.

The Pilbara and Gascoyne offshore waters are host to one of the world's major petroleum resources and as such are of great economic significance to our nation's economy.

The islands and surrounding waters also contain another treasure of inestimable value, in its vast array of marine life, flora, fauna, coral reefs and Aboriginal sites.

Increasingly, people from around Australia and around the world want to visit here to experience a brand of nature like nowhere else on earth. Indeed, this should be a place for people to learn from, experience, and enjoy.

There are competing claims on the Pilbara/Gascoyne Offshore Islands. There is oil and gas extraction on a huge and growing scale. Aquaculture, in various forms, is developing. It is already a prominent commercial and recreational fishing area. There is potential for mining and an ecotourism opportunity. Aboriginal heritage is evident on some of the islands.

The challenge is to accommodate this range of activities while ensuring that the natural environment of the region is sustained for future generations. The vastness of the study area, and the range of interests that continue to exist within it, have demonstrated over time that a multiple use approach is appropriate.



Hence the decision of the Pilbara Development Commission to initiate a study to develop a co-ordinated ecotourism management plan for the islands and their environs, to ensure the dual objectives of commercial development and environmental sustainability can be achieved compatibly.

The study and assessment process has involved input from a wide range of people and organisations - members of the Project Steering Committee, the communities of the Pilbara and Exmouth, CALM, the Exmouth Trust, local shires, the Aboriginal community and others, and of course, members of our own Board and staff.

This document represents the implementation strategy resulting from the study and as such will be the basis for co-ordinating the future management of this economic and environmental treasure trove.

None of this would have been possible without the financial support provided through the National Ecotourism Strategy of the Commonwealth Department of Tourism. I thank them for that support. I am also grateful for the financial contribution from the Exmouth Trust which enabled us to expand the study area beyond the Pilbara's boundaries. My thanks to them also.

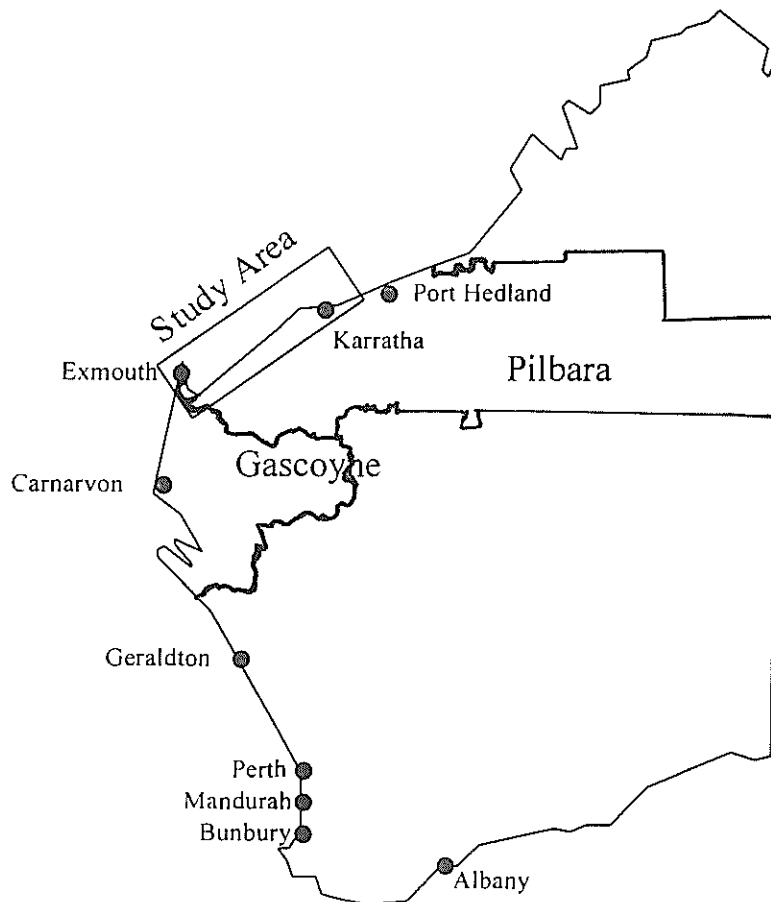
R.J. Carter  
Chairman

**Pilbara Development Commission**



## BACKGROUND

There are some 200 islands in the waters close to the Pilbara and Gascoyne coastline in north-western Australia, in the area from North-West Cape, north-east to Port Hedland.



See detailed map - Appendix A.

These islands vary in size from Barrow Island (more than 20,000 hectares) to small coral cays and rocky islets.

They are vested as nature reserves, Crown Land or for recreation and conservation. Some are covered by special leases to various resources companies (oil and gas, and mining).

Current uses of the area include:





- ♦ conservation
- ♦ oil and gas drilling, exploration and production
- ♦ mining - mainly lime leases
- ♦ some aquaculture development
- ♦ some basic tourism/recreation development
- ♦ commercial fishing
- ♦ transportation (shipping)

Most islands have not been subject to development and other than where relevant to resource development, there has been minimal pressure for development and exploitation.

Generally, the islands are arid and offer little in the way of resources for humans such as water, shade or shelter.

However, the islands and surrounding waters have important flora, fauna and archaeological values, historical importance and resources development potential.

Apart from the on-going resources (mainly oil and gas) interest in the region, a substantial increase in tourism/recreational related pressure appears inevitable. Such interest will relate to:

- ♦ flora and fauna
- ♦ fishing
- ♦ the coral reefs
- ♦ whale watching
- ♦ turtle observation
- ♦ other water-related activities
- ♦ Aboriginal history and involvement
- ♦ island "experience"
- ♦ the area's historical significance
- ♦ aquaculture

Other facts relevant to the future of the area include:



- ♦ the islands of the Dampier Archipelago and some adjacent islands are subject to Native Title claim by the Ngaluma and Injibandi people
- ♦ the atomic testing that took place on one of the major island groups, the Montebellos, in the 1950's
- ♦ the establishment of the new Pilbara Tourism Association and the change of focus of the Gascoyne Tourism Association, which will have a significant impact on the number of tourists visiting the study area, with an inevitable flow on to the islands
- ♦ an increasing local population of educated individuals with spending capacity and significant leisure time

The increasing pressure on the area and its major potential for tourism and recreation, once serviced and promoted, must be viewed in the context of the extreme fragility of some of the area's eco-systems.

It is against this background that the Pilbara Development Commission with the support of the Gascoyne Development Commission and the Department of Conservation and Land Management decided to undertake a study to determine a management strategy for the area, with particular emphasis on the islands. *Higgins Wood & Associates* was appointed to conduct this study.

A Steering Committee was established to assist the study.

Represented on the Committee were the:

- ♦ Pilbara Development Commission
- ♦ Gascoyne Development Commission
- ♦ Exmouth Tourism Bureaux
- ♦ Pilbara Regional Tourist Association
- ♦ Department of Conservation and Land Management
- ♦ Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission
- ♦ Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association
- ♦ Fisheries Department of WA



The aim of the Steering Committee was to arrive at a policy for developing sustainable tourism and recreation on the islands and their environs, while minimising harmful impacts on the ecology.

Following the presentation of the draft technical and detail papers by Higgins Wood & Associates, *Tourism Co-ordinates* was retained to review the Higgins Wood study, the responses to the public review process and other relevant information, and to produce a strategy summary and implementation plan.

Relevant to the strategy and implementation plan are other key studies:

- ◆ Gascoyne Regional Eco-Tourism Strategy (*Wood Fiocco* - in progress)
- ◆ A Strategy for the Co-ordination of the Pilbara Tourism Industry (*Tourism Co-ordinates*, April 1995)
- ◆ A Land Use Plan for the Pilbara Study (*Sinclair Knight Mertz* - in progress).
- ◆ Identifying Opportunities for Increasing Tourism in the Pilbara (*Market Equity* 1995)
- ◆ National Ecotourism Strategy
- ◆ WA Tourism Strategy
- ◆ BHP Resource Atlas

The prime focus of the project has been on the islands within the study area as these are the most obvious places of impact resulting from visitation. However, the waters of the study area are significant attractions in their own right and need to be subject to similar management strategies.

The decision by the Development Commissions and CALM to develop a management strategy for the islands and surrounding waters implies



that future policy will be based on controlled use of the islands and their environs by:

1. the resources companies continuing to develop the very significant oil and gas reserves in the area;
2. those seeking to use the area for recreational purposes, including tourists;
3. other commercial developers such as those involved in aquaculture; and,
4. those involved in fishing and transport activities.

The potential of indigenous people to play a key role in aspects of the management strategy is also recognised.

A complete "hands off" policy is not seen as a realistic or acceptable option for the study area.



## TOURISM POTENTIAL

An increase in tourism will create a major new impact on the islands. The rapidity of that impact will depend on the development policy adopted and the controls for sustainable use.

Like the adjacent mainland, the islands region is virtually virgin territory in terms of its tremendous tourism/recreation potential.

- ♦ many islands are in close proximity to the coast and to substantial population/industrial centres;
- ♦ the area has a multiplicity of islands of varying size and description, many having unique flora and fauna that have been virtually isolated for thousands of years;
- ♦ the weather is ideal for a large percentage of the year (although cyclone risk has to be taken into account in the October-March period);
- ♦ there is a great variety and proliferation of fish and other marine life; and,
- ♦ the north-west coast of Australia has immediate access to the major population centres of South-East Asia, and is serviced by international and international-capacity airports.

Tourism development will centre on:

- ♦ visitation to experience the natural beauty of the islands and their flora, fauna and marine life (tours, charters, private boats);
- ♦ reef diving;
- ♦ recreational fishing;
- ♦ water-related sports and recreation;
- ♦ camping (related to the above);
- ♦ accommodation related to the above; and,
- ♦ visitation related to scientific study of the islands and marine ecology.



Apart from the increasing recognition of the intrinsic attraction of the islands for tourism, visitation pressures will increase significantly from now on because of:

- ♦ the establishment of the new management structure for the co-ordination and development of the Pilbara tourism industry;
- ♦ the development of Exmouth as a major tourist and boating centre;
- ♦ a surge in resources-related development on the mainland Pilbara, especially related to coastal locations adjacent to the islands in question;
- ♦ the development of tourism/recreation facilities on the mainland (e.g. new accommodation, marina and general boating facilities) which will mean improved "base" facilities from which to "step off" to the islands; and,
- ♦ the potential for development of more extensive and sophisticated boat charter operations based on the coastal centres of the Pilbara and Gascoyne (i.e. Port Hedland, Dampier, Karratha, Wickham, Pt. Samson, Onslow, Exmouth, Carnarvon).

**Notwithstanding the above, it must be recognised that exploiting the obvious tourist potential of the region is not simply a matter of promotion and awareness. The facilities and services (including protection measures ) to cater for a significant increase in visitors are not in place.**

**Heavy promotion without a more advanced infrastructure would be dangerous environmentally and potentially counter-productive in terms of visitor satisfaction.**

**Quite simply, the islands region is not yet ready for large numbers of tourists.**



## THE FORCES AT PLAY

The major factors at play in the future of the region, which are relevant to management planning are:

- ♦ the likelihood of greater oil and gas exploration and production activity on islands and in the surrounding seas;
- ♦ the possibility of increased mining activity (on the islands);
- ♦ the certainty of substantially increased pressure from tourism/recreation related activities;
- ♦ the need to acknowledge and address issues related to Aboriginal peoples, i.e. Native Title claims on parts of the region, the need and desirability of involving Aboriginals in tourism-related enterprises, the special need to preserve and respect Aboriginal sites and archaeology; and,
- ♦ the issue of what should be done with existing private "holiday" accommodation on some of the islands.

All of these factors and interests need to be encompassed within the proposed management strategy, recognising the over-riding requirement to preserve the ecology of the islands and their environs.

For the management strategy to achieve its objectives into the future requires that very early in the process there be a philosophical pact of understanding and co-operation between the interests concerned. There is potential for co-operation. There is also significant potential for conflict.

The co-ordinating system proposed in this document is designed to achieve the required level of co-operation.



## **THE RESOURCE INDUSTRY**

Any consideration of the future of the islands region must acknowledge the existing and future presence of the resources industry in the area.

The resources industry and the tourism/recreational industry will be the two major impact elements on the islands and their environs.

Much of the area is subject to exploration or development tenements, being within one of the world's most significant and prospective oil and gas basins.

Some islands are subject to mining tenements and there is potential for increased exploration and possibly minerals extraction in the future. However, the major interest at present relates to oil/gas exploration and development. Significant shipping infrastructure servicing the salt, iron ore and oil and gas industries is in place.

It can be presumed that there will be significantly more oil and/or gas development in the years ahead.

Probably the greatest challenge in terms of co-operation and adjustment to changing circumstances confronts the resource industry. To date, the industry largely has been able to go about its business without substantial impact from other human-related pressures. That is not to say the industry has had unfettered rights in the area. The industry has become very used to careful and responsible management in respect to the environment. The economic and strategic significance of the oil and gas industry gives it a pre-eminent position in the region. Till now, meeting its environmental responsibilities has been its major non-mainstream concern. Now tourism and the people it brings with it, will be sharing the region and will become yet one more consideration for the industry.





Thevenard Island provides an excellent example where the resource industry and tourism exist side by side. Moreover, the inter-industry co-operation may well provide a model for some future development.

Increasing human presence can pose legitimate problems for resource companies in terms of security, safety, liability etc and the islands and surrounding waters will be no exception in this regard.

It is clear that ecotourism will develop and an accommodating policy would be wise from a public relations point of view.

There is opportunity for a very positive relationship which involves the resources industry not only co-operating in terms of facilities, but even in themselves becoming part of the tourism product.



## TOURISTS

Tourism interest in, and impact on, the islands is limited at present only because of:

- ♦ lack of knowledge (promotion); and,
- ♦ lack of facilities and services (mainland and island).

As these two factors diminish as each region and their tourism industries develop, there will be a significant increase in visitors to and around the islands.

The bulk of tourism to the islands region will be encompassed within the label of ecotourism.

The Commonwealth Department of Tourism defines ecotourism in these terms:

*"Ecotourism is nature-based tourism that involves education and interpretation of the natural environment and is managed to be ecologically sustainable. This definition recognises that "natural" environment includes cultural components and that "ecologically sustainable" involves an appropriate return to the local community and long-term conservation of the resource."*

Tourists come in many descriptions and with greatly varying habits and requirements.

In respect to the islands some will want to sail around them, some will want to fish around and from them, and some will want to swim and dive around them, others will want to walk around them. Some will want to be accommodated on the islands, others will want short visit facilities. Some will want to fly over them and land on them.



Needless to say such visitation poses a serious potential threat to the study area environment including, of course, Aboriginal heritage.

**Hence the need for strict management controls and carefully controlled and measured development and access rights.**

**Apart from the necessity for strict controls on development and access, education of tourists must be a key element of strategy.**

A growing percentage of visitors to areas such as this have ecology as their prime focus and they tend to be empathetic and responsible in terms of environmental care. Such people are very receptive to education in terms of ecology, history and heritage and also in care and conservation.

Nevertheless, there will be the potential for irresponsible visitors to do significant damage to extremely fragile ecosystems.

The proposed co-ordinating system, an advisory committee, should liaise with relevant authorities and responsible bodies to determine a policy of control and penalty for transgressors. The nature of the area will make policing extremely difficult and innovative measures will be necessary. There is not likely to be public opposition to tough punitive measures, extending to bans on visitation by individuals, groups, particular craft etc.



## **ABORIGINAL INVOLVEMENT**

There is ample evidence of substantial Aboriginal presence on many of the islands and the adjacent coastline.

There are numerous sites of cultural and religious significance to Aborigines as well as paintings and rock carvings.

As far as many sites are concerned, Aboriginal people do not object to them being available for tourism visitation. Aboriginal people have a strong desire to see the sites of significance preserved, while some sites may be "off limits" because of their deep cultural significance.

**There needs to be a balance between the obligation to respect and preserve Aboriginal sites and the huge potential for Aboriginal heritage to be a key element of the tourism product of the region. A critical aspect of management is for Aboriginal people to play a key role in the development and supervision of such product.**

The use of Aboriginal sites as a tourism product should be based on:

- ♦ involvement of Aboriginal people;
- ♦ education and understanding;
- ♦ strict control and management; and,
- ♦ restrained and respectful behaviour.

**Aboriginal people should have a central involvement in the development of terms and conditions for the use of sites as tourist product, and in on-going education and supervision. However, there should not be inordinate Aboriginal influence on the future of the islands as a whole, or restrictive policies relating to their future development, other than where such policies relate to proven areas of Aboriginal significance or Aboriginal land.**



The report by Higgins Wood & Associates makes the following recommendations in respect to Aboriginal involvement in islands tourism:

1. A "Regional Tourism Agreement" between local Aboriginal groups and other stakeholders (Tourism Associations and Land Managers) in the ecotourism industry should be considered to encourage a partnership approach. This agreement or individual agreements could be brokered by the co-ordinating system (advisory committee).
2. The Agreement should address opportunities for Aboriginal involvement in the ecotourism industry and should be integrated with economic development and employment returns to the local community.
3. The Agreement should adopt the recommendations of the draft guidelines on Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Plans, and the National Ecotourism Strategy objectives which emphasise **the right of Aboriginal people to manage and protect their cultural and intellectual property**.
4. The Agreement should address the means whereby comprehensive **identification and documentation of the cultural heritage** of the area can be appropriately controlled by the direct involvement of Aboriginal consultants.
5. The Agreement should address the "sustainable" factor in the development of Aboriginal tourism. This will involve **impact assessments** of the environmental, economic and cultural effects of tourism development.
6. Visitation to Aboriginal sites or areas of occupation on the islands must be monitored, and if necessary, controlled. The need to consider enforcement provisions which will protect Aboriginal heritage sites and possible strengthening of such provisions, will also have to be addressed.



7. The Agreement should address the **finance and funding** of Aboriginal tourism. It will involve consideration of both private sources of funding, and government funding. This will also involve consideration of the cultural as well as the commercial interests.
8. The Agreement should address the **market research** strategies needed to create an Aboriginal tourism image, identify niche markets, visitor expectations, and how to get the information about Aboriginal tourism out to the market.
9. The Agreement should address guidelines for **product development** that balance the requirement for sustainable and authentic product with the requirements for Aboriginal cultural integrity and protection.
10. The Agreement should address **employment and training** requirements for both the tourism industry and the Aboriginal community that is purpose designed for the region, is industry based and is high quality.
11. The Agreement should address the development of **Aboriginal tourism business plans**, linkages and networks, the appropriateness of forming a tourism association, and the establishment of an interpretation / visitor centre.

(A detailed report prepared by David Higgins and Associates on the Response by the Aboriginal Community to the Draft Strategy is contained in Volume 2, as an Appendix).



## **EXISTING ACCOMMODATION DEVELOPMENT**

The future of existing private dwellings on the islands within the Dampier Archipelago is a difficult issue which needs to be addressed as a priority within the framework of long-term development and management plans.

Many of these "shacks" have been developed in a haphazard manner (in terms of any master plan for the area) by individuals, but with a degree of official sanction.

With the exception of accommodation on Thevenard Island and Direction Island, licences have been renewed on an annual basis, so there should not be a sense of permanency in current arrangements.

In the context of the level of demand for island visitation, the "shacks" have played a significant role, especially in terms of local people, and can continue to do so at least until purpose-built tourist accommodation becomes available.

Central to the issue is that of access equity and management. The "shacks" could offer access to the area for local residents as well as visitors.

**The new advisory committee should consult with the Department of Conservation and Land Management and lease holders to establish terms, conditions and obligations for future use of the "shacks", but only after it has determined broad policy in respect to accommodation on the islands.**

The considerations within which negotiations should take place are:



1. the suitability of locations for permanent development should be determined
2. if the decision is that locations with buildings on CALM estate are not suitable for development, then the structures should be removed. Policy should be determined for removal of the shacks, with a period of notice to lessees; and,
3. if on the other hand, it is determined that these locations are suitable sites for permanent development, then the future of the "shacks" should be considered in the following context:
  - ♦ professional involvement in the management of accommodation;
  - ♦ standard of accommodation, and upgrade if necessary;
  - ♦ exclusive use arrangements to cease;
  - ♦ current lessees to have accommodation rights for a designated period of the year, and,
  - ♦ phasing in period of any changes to current practice.

## **COMMERCIAL FISHING / AQUACULTURE**

Commercial fishing has a prominent and commercially valuable role in the region.

Operations of commercial fishers will need to be monitored not only in terms of conventional controls relating to such matters as product sustainability, but also increasingly in future, emphasis will have to be placed on protecting the environment for recreational fishers associated with the visitor/tourist industry.

Aquaculture and commercial fishing, given the need for safeguards and security, have the opportunity to gain commercially from tourism because of the potential for their operations to become part of the tourism product.





The future development of commercial fishing and aquaculture needs to be in the context of:

- ♦ the need for careful environmental management to ensure sustainability of the industry and no negative ecosystem change;
- ♦ protection of recreational values of the area; and,
- ♦ a co-ordinated, co-operative approach to the integration of commercial fishing, pearling and other mariculture opportunities with other developments in the region

### **THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Sustainable management of the environment must be basic to the future management and development policies of the islands region.

Though humans have had some impact on many of the islands for a long time, it is only in recent times of modern access that a significant threat has emerged in terms of the environment. By and large responsible environmental policies by the resource companies and the contained and controlled nature of their operations has limited impact on the islands.

Mainland iron ore developments and the resultant major coastal towns development, has brought people to the proximity of some of the islands and this has resulted in some visitor impact as well as the development of some accommodation ("shacks" and commercial).

The advent of tourism deliberately based on the islands and their environs will bring a new dimension to challenge the sustainable management of the environment.



Attracting people to the region is a relatively simple proposition. A good publicity / information program can achieve that, quite quickly and relatively cheaply.

Incorporating sustainable management practices over a vast area of coastline, seas, reefs and some 200 islands is not quite so simple.

**The lessons of use by the resource industry should be utilised as a basis for future decision making. A first priority task of the proposed advisory committee will be to work with the relevant authorities and experts to define an efficient system of management. Implementation will require the bringing to bear of financial and manpower resources beyond the capacity of the development commissions, CALM and other bodies charged initially with responsibility for the islands.**

Implementation planning and its funding will have to be determined once the scale of requirements is known.



## **AUTHORITIES AND INTERESTS**

A wide range of authorities and interests play a role or have potential roles in the management and development of the islands. These include but are not limited to:

- ♦ the general community;
- ♦ the local Shires;
- ♦ CALM;
- ♦ the Fisheries Department;
- ♦ the State Planning Commission;
- ♦ the Police Department;
- ♦ the Regional Development Commissions;
- ♦ the Department of Land Administration;
- ♦ the Department of Minerals and Energy;
- ♦ local tourism associations/organisations;
- ♦ Aboriginal interests;
- ♦ oil and gas companies and organisations - APPEA.;
- ♦ mining tenements and lease holders;
- ♦ shipping interests;
- ♦ the Department of Transport (marine);
- ♦ commercial fishing and aquaculture interests;
- ♦ quarantine / customs; and,
- ♦ tourism operators working within the area.

**In establishing its operations the new structure proposed (pages 27 - 29) needs to recognise the role of vested interests such as CALM, lessees, local government, DOLA and Aboriginal people in terms of the islands.**



## **MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

### **ADVISORY STRUCTURE**

A significant increase in visitation to the islands region will require a major upgrading of infrastructure and services in the area.

This involves not only services directly relating to tourism, e.g.

- ◆ accommodation and related facilities (water, power, sanitation etc); and,
- ◆ boat charters and related services.

but also

- ◆ security and policing;
- ◆ quarantine and inspections; and,
- ◆ safety services.

Also involved is the need to improve charting in the area and the drawing up and implementation of a safety education program for island visitors.

These issues involve the co-ordination of a wide range of government agencies and other interested parties.

There are major issues to be tackled up front - e.g. a policy for existing accommodation.

The promotion program to attract visitors will need to be balanced with the provision of facilities and services.



It would be difficult and unwise to try to establish a formula from day one to solve all such complexities.

The key is to establish a structure that is dedicated to co-ordinating development of the islands and surrounding waters.

The following is recommended:

- ♦ The establishment of a representative committee (the Islands Consultative Committee). Its role would be to identify and facilitate ecotourism development and recommend to appropriate agencies related policy.
- ♦ The committee, for the first 12 months, should be serviced by the Pilbara Development Commission. The PDC should carry the costs of the committee meetings.
- ♦ The structure cannot have statutory powers. Such powers rest with CALM and other relevant bodies.

Its primary role will be one of planning, co-ordination and recommendation. It will have the task of facilitating the involvement of appropriate statutory authorities and others as necessary.

- ♦ After 12 months there should be a total review of the committee's scope and modus operandi.

(Because of its broad-based representation, it is appropriate that the Committee self-judges its effectiveness and role, but that it be accountable by reporting to the PDC. This should include a strategy for its continued operation).



## **THE COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**

1. The Islands Consultative Committee should be a broad-based committee with nominations invited from:

- ♦ the local community;
- ♦ the Pilbara and Gascoyne Development Commissions;
- ♦ the Pilbara and Gascoyne tourist associations;
- ♦ the Department of Conservation and Land Management;
- ♦ the Aboriginal Affairs Department ;
- ♦ the Australian and Torres Straits Islander Commission;
- ♦ the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association;
- ♦ Department of Fisheries;
- ♦ West Australian Fishing Industries Council;
- ♦ local government with responsibility for the area;
- ♦ The Ministry of Planning; and,
- ♦ the Department of Land Administration.

The Committee's role would be to devise and recommend general policy for the islands and their environs and propose guidelines for development.

## **FUNDING APPROACH**

The structure proposed and its attendant responsibilities will require funding.



The role of the structure will be largely to recommend policy, to co-ordinate the involvement of a multiplicity of existing organisations according to need and responsibility, and **to make things happen.**

It will not require a lot of manpower or other resources, nor will it be involved in promotion other than in a liaison sense.

Initially, it is proposed that its operations are funded through the PDC and that the PDC provide support facilities as well as adequate human resources and support.

**However, it is desirable that the operation seek to become financially independent within 12 months. It will be an early requirement of the new organisation to begin examining avenues of funding.**

Options might include:

- ◆ federal and State Government sources;
- ◆ sponsorship by the resource companies operating in the islands region;
- ◆ local Government contribution; and,
- ◆ special grants.

It is proposed that once in operation, the Islands Consultative Committee draw up a budget for an on-going operation, applying for 12 months from commencement.

The organisation will then have a basis on which to secure funding for its operations thereafter.



- ♦ having on-island development occur in a highly controlled manner, with development confined to specific islands and specific areas on those islands;
- ♦ recognition of the importance of the resources industry within the study area continuing its high level of activity in the region;
- ♦ acknowledgement of rights attaching to existing leases within the study area;
- ♦ the importance of Aboriginal involvement in the future development of ecotourism on the islands;
- ♦ the vital importance of engendering a spirit of co-operation between the different interests involved - tourism, the resources industry, existing chalet/shack owners, Aboriginal interests etc;
- ♦ the active promotion of tourism in the islands and coastal environment in conjunction with mainland tourism; and
- ♦ the need to significantly improve the mainland infrastructure required to service visitation to the islands (e.g. accommodation, boating facilities, charter services etc).





## **GENERAL TOURISM STRATEGY**

**Development of tourism infrastructure and promotion of the islands area for tourism should be undertaken in conjunction with Pilbara and Gascoyne mainland tourism.** The new Pilbara Tourism Association will be a professional, well-funded organisation which in itself and via local bureaux will provide an effective promotional and servicing infrastructure for tourism throughout the Pilbara region. This association should work closely with the Gascoyne Tourism Association and related bureaux. The islands should be considered an integral part of their promotional plans.

The key elements of the development of tourism in the islands region are

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Infrastructure emphasis should be mainland based.** However, there will be demand for on-island accommodation and a need for services related to day visitors, especially boating.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

**Provision of suitable tourist-type accommodation is a priority for development of the tourism industry throughout the Pilbara and the Gascoyne, both mainland and islands-related.**

The Pilbara and Gascoyne Development Commissions, in association with the relevant tourism associations, should play a key role in attracting investment in accommodation and liaising with relevant authorities to help fast-track approvals.



Existing facilities which may have outlived their original purpose but which have potential for refurbishment are seen as an area of potential accommodation for the short to medium term.

Other short-term options are extensions of existing facilities like hotels and extensions to caravan parks, especially chalet-type budget facilities. Improved facilities at campsites can provide for camper holiday makers.

At the same time as all short and medium term options are being investigated, opportunities for more substantial hotel and resort facilities should be actively pursued.

The identification of accommodation opportunities and the bringing to fruition of development opportunities will require close co-operation between the tourism organisations, Shires, Aboriginal interests, resource companies and the Development Commissions.

**It is recommended that a priority task of the Islands Consultative Committee be to identify and assess accommodation opportunities to service the islands and where opportunities are identified, to facilitate approvals and development .**

The task would be to:

- ◆ identify opportunities for conversion of existing facilities for tourist accommodation;
- ◆ facilitate such conversions;
- ◆ identify sites for new accommodation; and,
- ◆ generally encourage and assist investment and development of accommodation facilities.



In regard to infrastructure development relating to the islands, emphasis must be on very tight control and thorough and progressive assessment so that there is no danger of undisciplined or haphazard development.

As development (market and physical) proceeds, impacts must be monitored carefully and policy adjusted accordingly.

Flexibility of approach will be needed in respect to development and control policies to cater for unpredictable impacts that might result from new or expanded resource developments or unpredictably heavy tourism pressure. The key is to have in place, as proposed, a business-like advisory infrastructure which can guide development and recommend policy. Development philosophy should be based on predominantly mainland-based facilities with supporting development on the islands. Initially at least, island development should be based on islands where there is already some form of development and some form of visitation and control system in place.

It may mean that many, indeed most, islands will have no form of development while others will have only minimal development.

The Land Use matrix (See Appendix) provides a guide for assessment of development proposals.

Notwithstanding the desirability from an ecological point of view of restricting on-island development, it must be recognised that there will be demand for accommodation on the islands. A lot of people love the idea of staying on an island, rather than simply being a day visitor or viewing the islands from a boat or plane.



One possibility would be to choose one centrally placed island on which significant infrastructure and services are located and which provides a substantial base for inter-island visitation.

While there may be reluctance on the part of some to have an island heavily developed, this must be balanced against the benefit of relieving the need for lesser development of other islands ; in other words, develop one island so that the others can be left in a more natural, pristine state.

From a tourism point of view there is major benefit in having a centrally-located island providing accommodation, marina facilities and services, as well as providing the venue for the centralised basing of control services, rescue operations etc.

The logistics of siting infrastructure must also be considered in the light of the need for increased human safety services, e.g. rescue services.

N.B.: An assessment of potential land use for the islands, based on work done by *Higgins Wood & Associates*, is presented as an Appendix.

## **BOATING FACILITIES**

- ◆ **Improved boating facilities are critical to the development of island-related tourism.**

In the short term at least concentration should be on mainland-based facilities, with more basic short-stay landing and mooring facilities at selected locations on the islands.

The mainland facilities should cater for the mooring, housing and servicing of craft on both a long-term stay basis and a short-term stay basis.



- ◆ There should be a positive policy to encourage the development of charter operations based on the coastal towns.

Apart from attracting full-time professional charter operators (who might alternate between the north and south according to season), there is potential for existing, locally-based craft to be used commercially for chartering operations.

To encourage this development the PTA and GTA, in conjunction with the Islands Consultative Committee and the industry (including locals), should draw up guidelines covering requirements in terms of boat conformation, skipper credentials, safety etc.

There then needs to be a register of available craft drawn up, linked through a centralised booking system operated by all relevant tourist bureaux. Promotion of the service would be handled by the PTA/GTA and the bureaux.

## **INFORMATION**

As an early initiative, a "boaties" guide to the Pilbara/Gascoyne needs to be developed by the PTA and GTA which describes in detail the islands/offshore attractions, and related information.

It should include

- ◆ description of the islands and their facilities relating to boating services, accommodation, rates, availability etc;
- ◆ distances, access etc;
- ◆ reefs (for diving) and navigation;
- ◆ descriptions of the physical nature of the islands (flora, fauna, etc);



- ◆ access and usage restrictions;
- ◆ fishing areas;
- ◆ safety hints and rules;
- ◆ available facilities; and,
- ◆ penalties for breaches.

This guide would form the basis of promoting boating-related tourism in the region. Such promotion could target:

- ◆ registered boat owners;
- ◆ fishing/boating magazines; and,
- ◆ southern boat clubs.



## **TOURISM PROMOTION**

The three major tourist types who will be interested in the islands and their environs are:

1. those primarily interested in boating and water-related recreation;
2. "ecotourists" wanting to experience the flora and fauna of the islands and marine environment; and,
3. those wanting an island-stay experience.

**The level of promotion aimed at these target groups will have to be closely allied to the provision of services to cater for them, and to the establishment of control measures to minimise any harmful effects of increased visitation.**

As part of the general tourism study and implementation process a five-year marketing plan is being devised for the development of tourism in the Pilbara. This will incorporate proposals for the islands.

However, in terms of the key targets for island tourism (specified above), the key elements of promotion will be

### **BOAT RELATED TARGETS**

- ◆ direct mail to southern boat club members;
- ◆ publicity in boating/ fishing publications;
- ◆ advertising in specialist publications (boating, water sports, fishing);
- ◆ displays at boating fairs; and,
- ◆ displays or notice-board information in southern boat clubs.



## **ECOTOURISM TARGETS**

Attracting ecotourists will require similar promotion and information elements as for nature-based tourism in the Pilbara and Gascoyne generally.

The islands environment should be promoted both in its own right and as part of the huge diversity of ecology-related attractions available to the visitors to the Pilbara and Gascoyne regions.

For ecotourists whose main interest is mainland attractions, the islands can provide a reason for that all-important extra stay of one or two days.

Apart from being included as a key target of the general Pilbara/Gascoyne promotional push, specific activities aimed at ecotourists can include

- ◆ media publicity in publications for those interested in nature and the environment;
- ◆ production and distribution of brochures and information specifically related to the natural attractions of the islands;
- ◆ dissemination of authoritative information produced by CALM relating to flora and fauna, geology, ecosystems and landform;
- ◆ close co-operation between the PTA and the GTA; and,
- ◆ close liaison with the WA Tourism Commission to encourage its promotion of the islands and inclusion of more information on the islands in their international promotional and information materials.

**The PTA in conjunction with the GTA, needs to adopt a specific label/description for the islands. This might be a label in its own right or it might be encompassed within a label for the whole of the Pilbara or Gascoyne.**





Building on this theme, there needs to be a concentrated program to acquaint markets with the world-class attractions of the islands and their environs.

As previously emphasised, promotion should be measured with the tempo increased according to the capacity of control measures and facilities to cope.



## **PRIORITY ACTIONS (12 MONTHS)**

### **Funding / Professional Support**

- ♦ Consideration by the Board of the PDC of its preparedness to fund the operations of the proposed committee structure and provide professional support, for the immediate short term.
- ♦ Following establishment of the Islands Consultative Committee, identification of potential sources of funding with the aim of becoming self-funding within the interim period.

### **Co-ordinating System**

- ♦ Establishment of the Islands Consultative Committee and definition of its meeting program and operating arrangements.

### **Islands Accommodation**

- ♦ Liaison with relevant groups to establish terms and conditions for future use of "shacks".

### **Development / Management**

- ♦ Initiation of a development and management blueprint for the consideration of appropriate agencies, for the islands and their environs and for related mainland areas.



### **Aboriginal Involvement**

- ◆ Liaison and negotiation with the Aboriginal community and representatives to:
  - ◇ define Aboriginal sites of significance;
  - ◇ establish protection mechanisms; and,
  - ◇ involve Aboriginal people in tourism-related development.

### **Initiate Developments**

- ◆ Begin to invite / encourage development proposals for islands-related tourism.

### **Promotion / Marketing**

- ◆ Liaison with the new PTA and the GTA on the development and implementation of a measured promotional / marketing plan.

### **Review**

- ◆ After 12 months, review the operational and supervisory structure and make recommendations for any adjustment.



## **DRAFT PILBARA / GASCOYNE OFFSHORE ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT STRATEGY - SUBMISSIONS**

The Pilbara Development Commission gratefully acknowledges the input and comments from:

Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association Limited

D & B Catto

Conservation Council of Western Australia Incorporated

Dampier Archipelago Preservation Association

Dampier Archipelago Recreational Dwellers' Association

The Department of Conservation and Land Management

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L. Harris

G. Hart

Karratha and Districts Tourist Information Centre (Incorporated)

Max Margetts & Associates, on behalf of Mackerel Islands Pty Ltd

Pilbara Regional Tourism Association Incorporated

Fred Riebeling JP MLA

Shire of Ashburton

Shire of Roebourne

G & C Vincent

Western Australian Petroleum Pty Ltd

Western Australian Tourism Commission



**APPENDIX A.**

**Study Area Map  
(in envelope)**

## APPENDIX B

## Key to likely Ceilings for development

- 1: Scientific Research Only
- 2: Boat Visitation
- 3: Overnight Camping (regulated)
- 4: Accommodation - Small Scale
- 5: Accommodation - Large Scale

## APPENDIX B

### Key to likely Ceilings for development

- 1: Scientific Research Only
- 2: Boat Visitation
- 3: Overnight Camping (regulated)
- 4: Accommodation - Small Scale
- 5: Accommodation - Large Scale

