

A REPORT TO THE MINISTER FOR CONSERVATION

AND THE ENVIRONMENT

CONCERNING

"THE REPORT OF THE DAMPIER ARCHIPELAGO  
RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE - 1981"

JUNE 1981

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Dampier Archipelago is a group of about ten large islands and many small islands which are located on the north-west coast, within a 45 kilometre radius of Dampier. The islands have long been of interest to scientists, fishermen and tourists, and a recommendation for their reservation was included in the 1962 report of the Australian Academy of Science Committee on National Parks. Recreational pressures on the Archipelago are heavy and increasing, because the islands provide sheltered water for boating and fishing and contain the best sandy beaches in the region.
- 1.2 The archipelago is adjacent to an area of rapid development and increasing population. Legendre and Delambre Islands have both been investigated as possible port sites capable of handling much larger bulk carriers than can presently be accommodated in existing ports. There is also an interest in mining limestone on the islands.
- 1.3 The Archipelago comprises islands of varying character, which provides an opportunity to develop a multi-use approach to management. However, there is a diversity of use pressures on the islands, including a possible port and associated industrial development, mining, conservation and recreation. This complexity of use pressures makes planning a difficult process.
- 1.4 The recommendations contained in the EPA 1975, Red Book aimed to protect the high conservation value of the area, but also considered the representations of local groups and individuals seeking to retain recreational opportunities for the people of the Pilbara. Cabinet decisions were made to ensure that industrial and mining development in the area would not be impeded.
- 1.5 This report is primarily concerned with the proposed recreational use of the area as outlined in a report prepared by the Dampier Archipelago Recreational Advisory Committee (DARAC). However, in practice recreation should not be separated from other uses, if the land use planning process is to be undertaken properly.

Land use planning is a process involving the consideration of an area's resources, the lands ability to support particular uses, constraints on use and likely use pressures. The allocation of appropriate uses to areas of land capable of sustaining those uses is an essential step in management planning. If this step is not taken environmental degradation may occur resulting in the loss of amenity and increased management costs.

The DARAC Report makes a brief reference to the natural and manmade resources of the archipelago. But it does not describe them, show their location accurately, indicate their importance on a regional, state or national basis, or make any attempt to assess the likely impact of development upon them.

- 1.6 This report considers the recommendations of the DARAC report in the context of overall use, control and management of the Dampier Archipelago. Therefore it discusses first and makes recommendations on control and management of the archipelago, then moves onto the role of the DARAC and it's report. Particular recreational issues of importance, focussing on shack development, are then considered and recommendations made.
- 1.7 This report is provided as a basis for advice to the Hon. Minister for Conservation and the Environment. It is the consolidation of comments and recommendations provided by the Western Australian Museum, Departments of Youth, Sport and Recreation, Fisheries and Wildlife, Lands and Surveys, and Conservation and the Environment, the National Parks Authority and the Western Australian Heritage Commission.

## 2. Dampier Archipelago Control and Management

- 2.1 In February, 1976, Cabinet approved recommendations from the EPA for A class reservation of some of the islands of the Dampier Archipelago and the setting aside of portions of some islands for recreation purposes. Following discussions with the Departments of Mines, Lands and Industrial Development and with local residents and clubs, a submission was made to Cabinet in October, 1977 to amend the previously approved recommendations. Cabinet approved these variations subject to clarification of the rights of mining and petroleum tenement holders.
- 2.2 After lengthy negotiations, a joint Cabinet Minute from the Minister for Conservation and the Environment and the Minister for Mines detailing terms for reservation of various islands in the Archipelago, was agreed by Cabinet on the 17th March, 1978. These reservations were considered necessary to enable the continuing recreational use of the islands; and to provide some control over unacceptable activities such as illegal shack development, the use of unauthorised vehicles, littering and the presence of domestic pets on the islands.
- 2.3 The reservations approved by the Cabinet Minute have been put into effect by proclamations in the Government Gazette of 24 October 1980. The effect of these proclamations is to create reserves for the conservation of flora and fauna on most of the islands of the Archipelago with small areas of some of the islands set aside as recreation reserves, vested in the

Minister for Conservation and the Environment (green areas on attached map).

- 2.4 The resulting arrangement, with some islands gazetted as Nature Reserves while others are a combination of Nature Reserve and Recreation Reserve is confusing to the public, difficult to administer and does not provide adequate protection for the wildlife and historic resources of the area. In general, it would be preferable to have some entire islands dedicated to recreation while others of major conservation value dedicated wholly as nature reserves.
- 2.5 The Western Australian Wildlife Authority has agreed to allow discreet camping on the beaches of all islands under its control except Enderby, Dolphin and some of Rosemary.
- 2.6 In order to resolve this situation in a logical manner the following recommendation is made.
- 2.7 Recommendation 1  
The East and West Lewis Islands should be entirely Recreation Reserves. The existing C class reserves on Malus, Rosemary, Angel and Delambre Islands should be cancelled and the land incorporated into the Nature Reserves. These changes are recommended on the understanding that the WAWA will allow discreet camping on Norbill Bay on Rosemary Island and Goodwin, Malus, Angel, Gidley, North Gidley, Hany and Delambre Islands, provided that parties wishing to camp register beforehand with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Karratha.

### 3. The Dampier Archipelago Recreational Advisory Committee

- 3.1 A Cabinet decision of May 1978 approved the establishment of the Dampier Archipelago Recreation Advisory Committee (DARAC), to advise the Minister for Conservation and the Environment on aspects of recreation in the archipelago. The original DARAC had eight members, three from local government, three interested members of the public, a representative from WAWA and the Department of Conservation and Environment's Officer stationed at Karratha, who acted as Secretary.
- 3.2 Unfortunately, the high turnover in the population of the Pilbara, led to a number of resignations from the committee. Eventually 12 people served on the DARAC, but the two public service representatives were the only members to give service for its entire life. These rapid changes in membership resulted in a number of changes of direction for the committee, before it produced its final report in November 1981. With the exception of the secretary, all members of the committee have left the Pilbara, and it no longer exists.



- 3.3 The DARAC Report contains a number of recommendations relating to the future recreational use of the archipelago including day tripping, camping and the development of shacks. It also makes proposals for the establishment of a Management Board and the gazettal of by-laws.
- 3.4 Section 5.4 of the DARAC Report recommends .."the formation of a Board of Management appointed by the Minister for Conservation and the Environment under appropriate legislation to be enacted". However, the WAWA, Shire of Roebourne and the Department of Conservation and Environment already have some responsibility for managing the islands of the archipelago, and during this period of "small government" the creation of another statutory authority is not appropriate.
- 3.5 In addition, the DARAC's desire to have management of the archipelago made subject of a separate Statute uncompromised by existing Legislation, is not feasible when one notes the mineral and conservation concessions already made. The Mines and Fisheries and Wildlife Departments would both object.
- 3.6 It would be possible to establish a Board appointed pursuant to the Parks and Reserves Act, 1895. However, the DARAC report does not contain an estimate of the cost of establishing an Advisory Board. If a board is established under the Parks and Reserves Act with an allocation of funds each year, the annual cost would be in the order of \$50 000, plus the capital cost of providing an office, a suitable boat and other equipment. For the above reasons the formation of a Board of Management is not recommended, and it is considered desirable that the responsibility for the care and management of the recreation reserves be placed with an existing authority with management experience. The alternatives are :
- (i) The Shire of Roebourne, which currently has responsibility for administering building and health standards in the area. However, in the past the Shire has steadfastly refused to become involved in the management of the islands and is likely to maintain that attitude. Therefore, the Shire is not considered a suitable management authority at this time.
  - (ii) The WAWA currently manages the nature reserves in the area, some of which are A class reserves. However, current WAWA staffing levels and legislation are not appropriate for managing areas of developed land, and these factors would create

significant difficulties, if the Authority is given responsibility for the recreation reserves.

- (iii) The DCE officer, stationed at Karratha, could accept responsibility for supervising the work of a part-time ranger, employed to care for the Recreation Reserves. However, the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act are not appropriate for implementing this type of operation, and this option is not recommended.
- (iv) The National Parks Authority's Superintendent, based at Karratha, could accept responsibility for supervising a part-time Ranger employed to manage the Recreation Reserves. It is considered that the NPA's management presence and the National Parks Act provide a management operation to care for the Recreation Reserves and this is the basis for recommendation 2.

### 3.7 Recommendation 2 (which follows from Recommendation 1)

The East and West Lewis Islands should be entirely Recreation Reserves and vested in the NPA.

The efficient day to day management of the islands and the control of shack development and other recreational activity would depend upon the appointment of a National Park Ranger. However, the NPA currently controls many significant conservation areas, for which it does not have adequate management staff. These areas must take precedence over any national park in the Dampier Archipelago, when NPA allocates its management resources. Therefore the funding of the proposed Dampier Archipelago National Park should come from a special Treasury allocation which does not influence the normal appropriation to the NPA. The estimated cost of providing a full time ranger is shown in Appendix I.

## 4. Shack Development - Issues and Recommendations

- 4.1 The main thrust of the DARAC report concerns the proposed establishment of leases, which will legalise the construction of shacks or non-permanent structures in some of the Recreation Reserves on the archipelago. The report recommends the allocation of 49 sites on Malus and East Lewis Islands to private individuals. At present there are 12 shacks which have been constructed illegally throughout the archipelago, and one clubhouse built legally on a lease controlled by the Nor West Game Fishing Club.

- 4.2 In 1978 it was Cabinet's stated intention that existing developments on the Archipelago be rationalised, therefore the DARAC's proposal to remove or relocate the existing shacks appears acceptable, although they go beyond Cabinet's strict parameters by providing for more dwellings. It appears the committee may be under-estimating the problems associated with squatter settlements including sanitation, visual impact, territorial inclinations and environmental degradation.
- 4.3 There are a number of other areas of concern relating to the proposal to legalise shack construction as outlined in the DARAC report.
- 4.4 The report acknowledges that the archipelago provides some of the most valuable but limited recreational space in the region, and that pressure on this space will increase as the population of the Pilbara grows. However, if the recommendations of the report are implemented, approximately 10 hectares of the most valuable land will fall under the control of 49 individuals and cease to be available to the public. This is a relatively small number of sites compared to the existing and projected population of the region and leaves doubt about the long term value of setting aside sites for the development of private shacks. There would develop a group of people, i.e. those with huts, who were in a most advantageous position, compared with the rest of the community of the region. Already there is documented evidence that considerable animosity exists between shack occupiers and other recreational users of the area.
- 4.5 The recommended area of the proposed leases is 0.2 hectares per shack. This area has been determined by using information from a report "The Suitability of Certain Sites on Malus and West Lewis Islands for Shack Development" by Peter Woods, a consultant engaged by the Department of Conservation and Environment. The Woods Report states that shacks should not be any closer than 40-50 metres, unless coastal management is undertaken.
- 4.6 The 49 sites nominated in the Woods Report as being suitable for development as shack sites have been chosen on the basis of their safety in cyclones, oversight of moorings, the preservation of dune structure and space required for day trippers. However, the Woods Report does not consider the wildlife, botanical, historical or archaeological value of the islands or the growing number of campers in the area. Reports from the Wildlife Authority and WA Museum express considerable concern about the use of Malus Island and parts of Lewis Island for shack development purposes.



- 4.7 The area of 0.2 hectares has been calculated on the assumption that shacks would be located on 40-50 metre centres, and all land between them leased to shack occupiers. However, if shacks are legalised, the occupiers need only control approximately 100 square metres, the area of the shack and its immediate surrounds, providing shacks are no closer than 40 metres. The allocation of rows of 0.2 hectare sites would prevent public access to large areas of land and appears to provide the basis for a future subdivision and subsequent alienation of the affected land.
- 4.8 The other arguments concerning the need for leases over relatively large areas relate to the personal comfort of shack occupiers, wishing to avoid "psychological crowding" and maintain views of the water. It may be more equitable to fit more shack sites into given areas, and prevent erosion by undertaking beach management in the form of pathways and steps.
- 4.9 Section 5.3.2 of the DARAC report describes the evolution of the shack system and indicates that they were originally used as storage facilities not dwellings. Apparently this is still very much the case. It may be that a larger number of people can be accommodated with less environmental impact and without alienating land by developing a storage locker system. Cyclone resistant marine ply lockers or small sheds, could be used to store the camping equipment as described in the report. Groups of lockers could be located in unobstrusive locations near popular and approved camping areas. Camping in lockers would be prohibited.
- 4.10 Section 5.3.7.6 suggests that leases should be allocated to groups of 6 adults with one person acting as group signatory. This proposal would increase the number of people with legal access to shacks, but it would be subject to abuse in that "sleeping shareholders" could be organised easily. It would also enable the defacto sale of leases with the accrual of capital gain to the principal lease holder. This system is not recommended as it would allow a small section of the community to gain absolute control of the available leases.
- 4.11 Section 5.3.3 of the report rejects the concept of club control of shacks which would ensure the broadest public access to shack sites. The arguments used against club ownership are not convincing and appear to indicate a desire for private control of sites, not the fair allocation of scarce recreational space. The practicality of club control of sites is demonstrated by the success of the Nor West Game Fishing Club, which currently occupies a lease on Rosemary Island providing for the needs of 100 members.
- 4.12 The Director of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife and I agree that the area has considerable potential for the development of a public tourist facility, developed by private enterprise or the Shire of Roebourne. The construction of private shacks as proposed in the DARAC Report would sterilise some of the areas most suited to this type of development.

4.13 It would be desirable to remove shacks from all the islands and have normal short term camping on the proposed Recreation Reserves and discreet camping on the Nature Reserves with the exception of the Enderby, Dolphin Islands and part of Rosemary Island. This prohibition of shacks is desirable for environmental and aesthetic reasons, and it would be the most equitable approach as the archipelago would remain accessible to the entire community. However such a decision would result in some contention as existing and aspiring shack occupiers have developed an expectation that their activities will be legalised.

#### 4.14 Recommendation 3

The development of shacks on the Dampier Archipelago should be limited to that required to allow the rationalisation of the structures which existed before 1978.

The Norwest Game Fishing Club should vacate its lease on Rosemary Island when it expires on 31 December 1983. They should then be offered a 10 year lease on another site on West Lewis Island.

The occupiers of illegal structures should be directed to remove them, after which they could also be offered the lease of sites on West Lewis Island. This would concentrate all of the shacks and the problems associated with them onto one island. These leases should be granted under the following conditions :-

- (i) The lease and ownership of the improvements will revert to the control of the NPA after 3 years.
- (ii) Shacks should be built to a standard determined by the NPA.
- (iii) People erecting shacks should pay a bond of \$1,000 to cover the cost of demolishing badly maintained or abandoned structures.
- (iv) The lease or ownership of shacks is not transferable.
- (v) The Minister maintains the right to terminate a lease at any time.

### 5. Camping and Day Tripping

5.1 The DARAC report suggests that day tripping to the islands can occur with few controls and that unregulated camping should be allowed on all islands (maximum of 5 consecutive nights), with the exception of Enderby Island and part of Rosemary Island. It is suggested

that natural controls, for example the inhospitable interior of the islands and weather conditions will effectively limit public use of the area.

- 5.2 However, the uncontrolled use of remote, natural areas often leads to the development of undesirable use patterns, which can be difficult to alter without considerable management input. The compromises which are now occurring in relation to shack development are an example of this type of problem. It is considered that the activities of campers and day visitors should be monitored so that undesirable activities can be identified immediately they begin to occur. Some activities which should be monitored include :

- which beaches are most used;
- how many people visit particular beaches during peak periods;
- where boats are anchored and any associated damage to coral reefs;
- any effect of people on wildlife populations, e.g. turtle and shearwater nesting;
- use of and damage to the historic whaling station;
- any presence of domestic pets on the islands;
- any friction between day visitors, campers and shack occupiers;
- the occurrence of litter on any island.

- 5.3 Some minor restrictions should be introduced so that visitors become aware that their presence can create problems, and so they become familiar with and accept management controls.

Restrictions which are appropriate include :

- camping permits;
- notices prohibiting people from entering environmentally sensitive areas;
- specific camping areas;
- prohibition of boat anchoring on coral reefs;
- limitations on shell gathering and spear fishing.

#### 5.4 Recommendation 4

It is recommended that some low key camping facilities including toilets and defined camp sites be established on East and West Lewis Islands, and that discreet

camping be allowed on Norbill Bay of Rosemary Island and Goodwin, Malus, Angel, Gidley, North Gidley, Haui and Delambre Islands. The activities of campers on the National Park should be controlled by the Ranger. Activities of campers on the Nature Reserves should be controlled by the professional officer to be appointed by the Fisheries and Wildlife Department.

#### 6. Management Presence

Currently there is no effective management presence on the Dampier Archipelago and as a result a number of environmental and management problems have arisen including uncontrolled shack development, the use of off road vehicles, vandalism of historic sites and the presence of domestic pets. The impending appointment of a professional officer by the Fisheries and Wildlife Department and the proposed appointment of a National Park Ranger would overcome most of these problems.

#### 7. Conclusion

The Dampier Archipelago is a valuable conservation and recreation area, with considerable potential for industrial and tourist development. In the past the unvested tenure of the islands and their isolation has enabled significant abuses of their natural and manmade resources.

The changes in tenure and management presence recommended in this report, would enable a proper planning and development process to occur in the archipelago, and ensure that it retains its full potential for many years.

## APPENDIX 1

## ESTIMATED COST OF ESTABLISHING A NPA RANGER FOR THE PROPOSED DAMPIER ARCHIPELAGO NATIONAL PARK

Location                      Karratha

Area of  
Responsibility      East and West Lewis Islands Dampier Archipelago

Note                      The estimates are approximate and are based on prices at June 1982. They include running cost (wages, fuel, maintenance), but exclude provision of facilities on the islands.

ESTABLISHMENT COSTS

House                      (GEHA 3 bedroom costs about \$58000.      \$60000  
NPA design transportable probably  
similar

Vehicle                      (Toyota Landcruiser)                      10500

Boat                      (Fisheries and Wildlife officers  
who have experience patrolling  
these islands recommend:-  
21' Aluminium hull                      5250  
Jet motor (to avoid prop damage  
on shallow reefs)                      8500  
Auxiliary motor                      900  
Hull modification for Jet motor                      400  
Fuel Tank                      350  
Echosounder                      550  
Sundry items eg canopy, flares  
lifejackets etc                      1000

Boat Trailer                      With electric winch                      3000

Yard                      In Light Industrial area for storage  
of equipment, boats etc. Cyclone  
proof                      3000  
Fencing                      3000  
Shed (20' x 20') with apron etc                      25000

Radio                      100 watt SSB. Interchangeable  
between boat and vehicle                      3000

Sundry  
Equipment                      Tools, uniforms etc                      2000

TOTAL ESTABLISHMENT COST                      \$126450

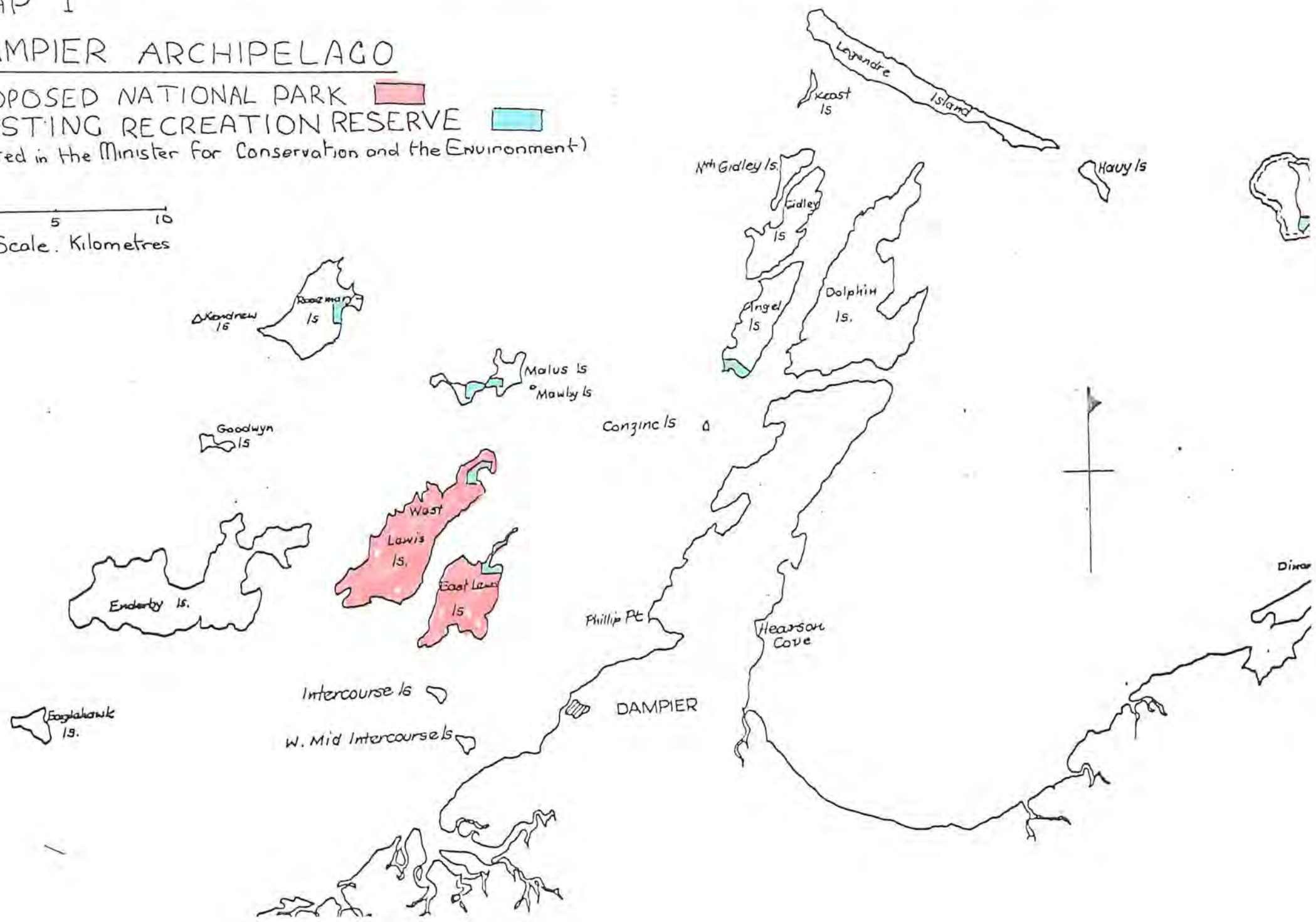


- MAP I

DAMPIER ARCHIPELAGO

PROPOSED NATIONAL PARK   
EXISTING RECREATION RESERVE   
(Vested in the Minister for Conservation and the Environment)

0 5 10  
Scale. Kilometres



RECURRING ANNUAL COSTS

<u>Wages</u> (1 man)	Including superannuation, insurance, pay-roll tax and relief staff	\$22000
<u>Vehicle running</u>	Including, fuel, repairs and maintenance (20000 km at 38¢)	7600
<u>Boat running</u>	Including fuel, repairs and maintenance	6000
<u>Essential Materials</u>	Including, timber, fencing materials, cement, gravel etc	10000
TOTAL ANNUAL COST		<hr/> \$45600 <hr/>