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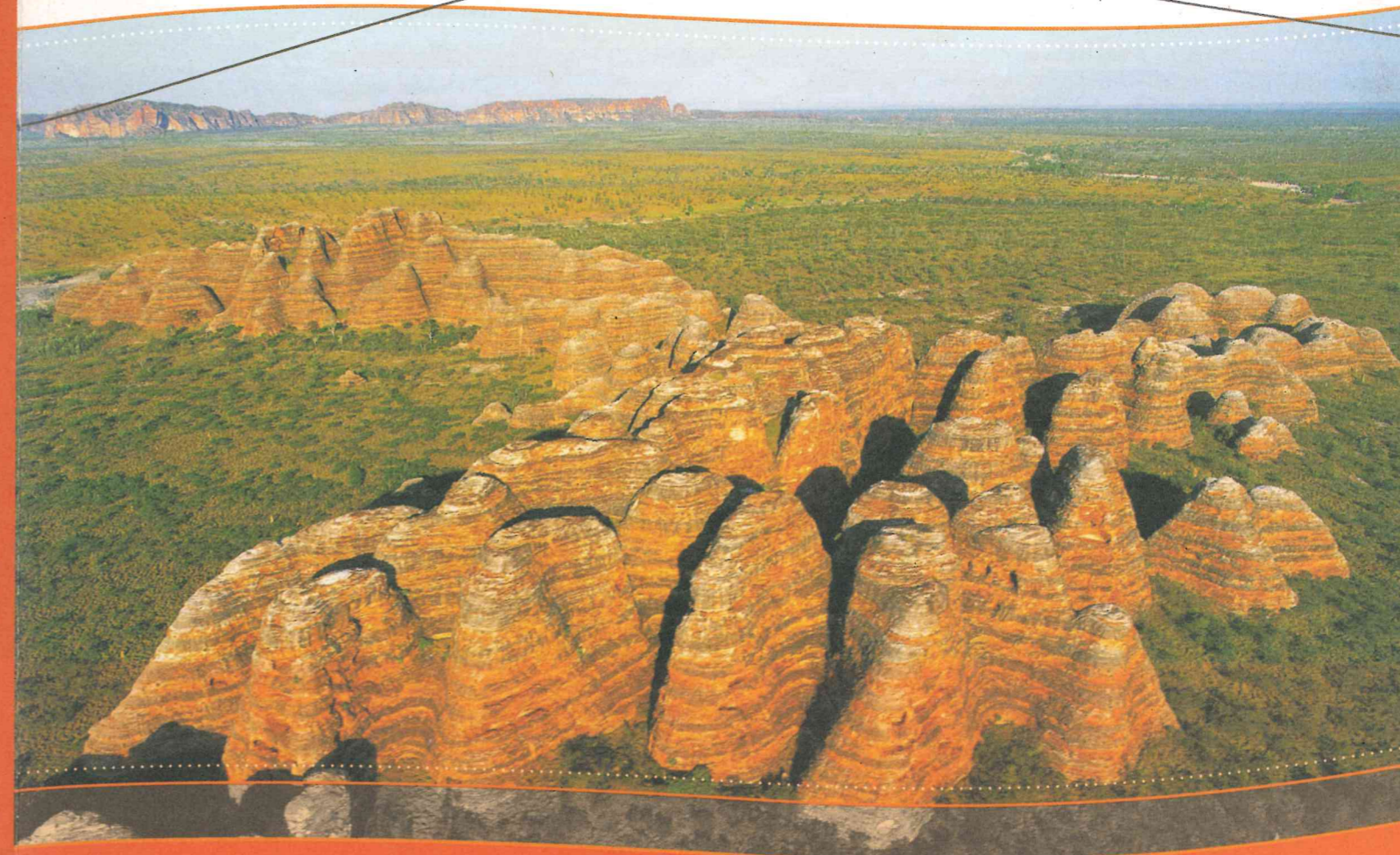
Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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# Naturebank

Natural Tourism in Western Australia



Experience nature and culture in Western Australia

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Department of  
Environment and Conservation





# Tourism Western Australia - Naturebank

**Naturebank** involves the assessment and release of 'investor-ready' land for low-impact visitor accommodation predominantly within Western Australia's protected areas managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). This is a partnership project involving Tourism Western Australia (Tourism WA) and DEC, aimed at promoting eco and nature-based tourism opportunities in regional WA. **Naturebank** is a new initiative launched by the State Government in October 2009.

The State's world-class national parks and other protected areas provide some of the most diverse flora and fauna as well as unique landscapes on the planet. **Naturebank** will offer prospects to establish environmentally and culturally rich tourism ventures near some of our most popular and iconic natural attractions.

This initiative promotes world's best practice in terms of business operation and interpretation of our natural and cultural environment. **Naturebank** projects will provide outstanding experiences for domestic and international visitors.

Successful **Naturebank** projects will help to stimulate regional economies. They will take employment and enterprise opportunities to remote parts of the State, including the prospects of sustainable social and economic benefits for Aboriginal communities.

Existing examples of this type of tourism in Western Australia include Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef and the Bungle Bungle Wilderness Lodge at Purnululu.

## The Partnership

DEC leads the protection and conservation of the State's environment on behalf of the people of Western Australia. This includes managing the State's national parks, marine parks, conservation parks, State forests and timber reserves, nature reserves, marine nature reserves and marine management areas.

Tourism WA is responsible for the development, promotion, and protection of Western Australia's iconic tourism experiences.

This partnership between Tourism WA and DEC aims to identify and prepare unique visitor opportunities that can operate as part of the ongoing sustainable management of the State's protected areas.

## Identifying a Tourism Site

**Naturebank** works by identifying potential visitor accommodation sites and undertaking the due diligence required to make a site investor-ready. The ultimate aim is to:

- identify and release investor-ready land for tourism projects near to significant iconic attractions;
- remove upfront uncertainty and reduce the time it takes for investors to commence tourism projects; and
- attract high-quality operators able to develop world-class visitor accommodation and experiences consistent with the sensitive needs of some of the State's natural and cultural attractions.

## Due Diligence for Site Preparation

Due diligence can include flora and fauna surveys, heritage assessments, native title clearance, or groundwater studies. It may also mean addressing park management plan requirements, site amenity, access, infrastructure, local community concerns and Traditional Owner requirements. Due diligence and planning considerations will vary from one site to another. These preparations help to ensure environmentally and culturally sustainable visitor accommodation and activities in our world-class park system.

**Naturebank** is not about fast tracking or cutting corners - quite the contrary. It is about having important work carried out before land release, rather than transferring this responsibility onto the developer. In effect, the State Government is accepting some of the costs and risks of site planning and site preparations.

The initial target localities are the Kimberley Region (examples include Purnululu and MG lands), the Central Coastal Region (Kalbarri, Shark Bay) and the South Coast. All are close to highly significant and environmentally important areas managed by DEC.

It is intended that **Naturebank** be an ongoing program with new localities and sites added as they are identified. Sites will be released as performance based leases on conservation estate with suitably qualified tourism developers providing tourism accommodation and other associated facilities. The period of lease will be relative to the capital investment necessary.

## Finding the Right Investor

Best practice low-impact visitor accommodation within the State's protected areas will require commitment to sensitive and sustainable environmental and cultural practices by private investors.

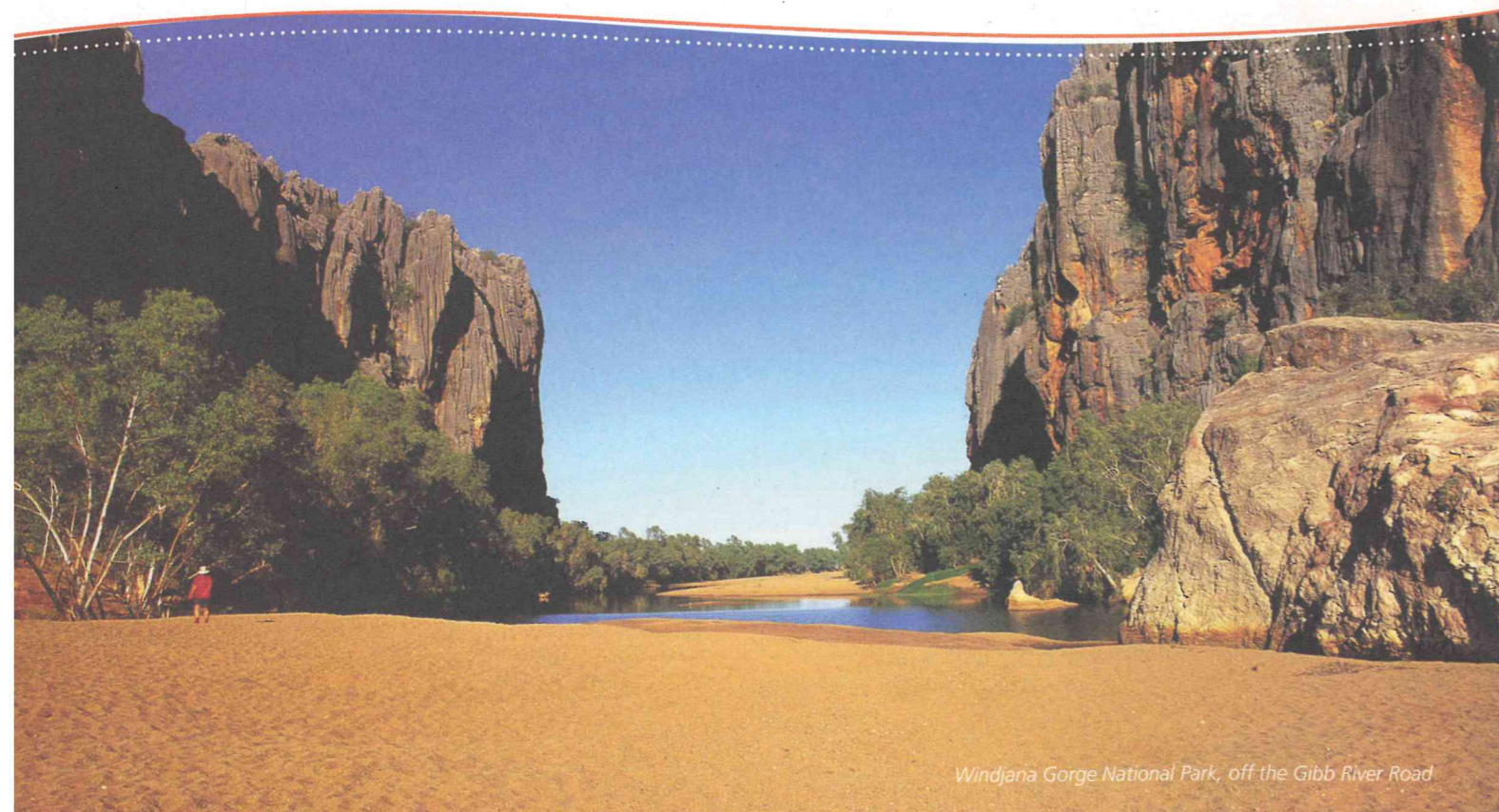
The **Naturebank** project seeks to find investment partners able to develop high-quality short stay accommodation that helps to optimise visitor experience and appreciation of our natural and cultural icon attractions, create unforgettable experiences and teach people about our environment.

Tourism WA and DEC will consult closely with industry to identify potential investors and, in the process, gain a better insight into the type of accommodation facilities that would likely be built. Consultation with industry will guide the State Government in aligning site identification with investor and market needs. It will help identify those areas of the State that should be treated as a priority and where public resources should be committed to planning and site preparations.

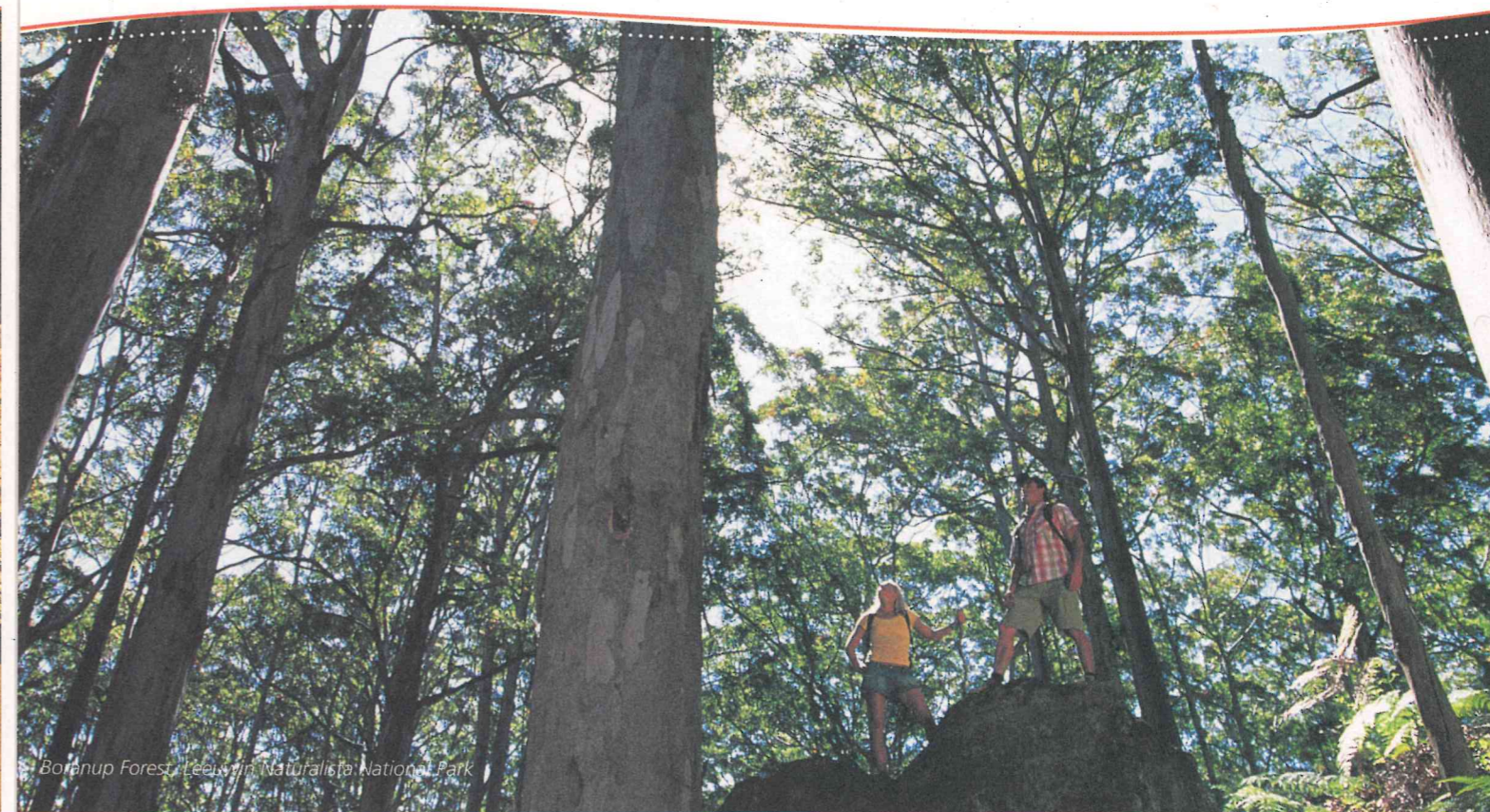
## Releasing the Land

Release of land for a **Naturebank** development will be by way of an open competitive process. Expressions of Interest (EOIs) will be invited from private developers. The successful proponent will be offered a performance based lease by DEC, with social and environmental performance conditions that reflect the values of the area.

The capital investment necessary and the operating risk profile will be considered in determining the period of lease.



Windjana Gorge National Park, off the Gibb River Road



Boranup Forest, Leeluparra National Park



# Priority Areas for Naturebank

## West and North Kimberley

The gorge and plateau country of the North and West Kimberley attracts a range of visitor types from the fully independent traveller to people on organised tours. Bells Gorge, Leonard Gorge, Mt Hart, Windjana Gorge and Tunnel Creek are all popular attractions. The more adventurous travellers venture further to Kalumburu and the Mitchell Plateau.

There is a range of accommodation types in this area. Anecdotal evidence points to an unmet demand for eco-retreat style development and for quality safari style facilities to service ground tour operations. The Windjana Gorge and Mitchell River national parks as well as the King Leopold Ranges Conservation Park are considered to have good potential and there is strong commitment to proceed with further planning should there be adequate industry interest in these areas.

Photo: Mitchell Falls, Mitchell River National Park



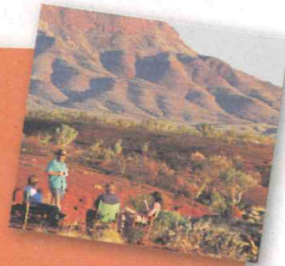
## Pilbara Environs – Millstream to Karijini

The tourism industry has been largely unable to compete with the resources sector in the Pilbara over the boom period of the past decade. There is now a shortage of accommodation for visitors to the region and a consequent shortage of tourism product.

Against this backdrop, the Karijini Eco Retreat has been established and now offers a quality option for visitors to the Karijini National Park. Tourism WA and DEC are exploring the prospects of new visitor accommodation in and around the Millstream-Chichester and Karijini national parks.

This part of the Pilbara has a broad range of natural and cultural attributes that lend themselves to high quality experiential style visitor accommodation. It is strategically positioned with respect to the Warlu Way. There is considerable aspiration for tourism among Aboriginal Traditional Owners in the area. The extent to which Naturebank sites are pursued will be largely dependent on the level of interest from industry.

Photo: Karijini National Park



## Coral Coast

The coastline between Geraldton and Exmouth is a drawcard with highly valued natural and cultural attributes providing world class environmental experiences. These range from swimming with whale sharks on the Ningaloo Reef to encounters with dolphins at Shark Bay. Surfing, windsurfing, and snorkelling enthusiasts are attracted to the area. There is considerable scope to develop additional accommodation and services that will improve the attraction for local, interstate and overseas visitors to the area. The existing Sal Salis Resort already provides world-class visitor accommodation on this coast.

Tourism WA and DEC have studied a number of prospective Naturebank sites along the Coral Coast. Multiple sites have been examined at Shark Bay and within Kalbarri National Park. There is commitment to further examine Shark Bay and Kalbarri options should industry express interest in these areas.

Photo: Ningaloo Reef, Exmouth



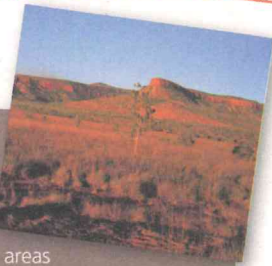
## Miriwung Gajerrong Country

Part of the historic Ord Final Agreement between the State Government and the Miriwung Gajerrong (MG) people of the East Kimberley involves the transfer of six new conservation areas to MG people. Land assembly and transfer is under way and detailed planning is being undertaken to set a framework for future use and management of the new conservation areas.

The MG people have shown a keen interest in exploring tourism options for the new conservation areas. They are working with Tourism WA and DEC to identify prospective sites for eco-retreat style developments.

Kununurra is WA's north eastern tourism gateway. The landscapes of the area are rugged and spectacular, and given the range of experiences potentially on offer, this area provides the ingredients for nature and culture-based tourism product. By the end of 2009, the MG people will have carried out an investigation of prospective visitor accommodation sites and they will be in a position to more clearly define their objectives for tourism. This may bring future opportunities for Naturebank projects

Photo: Cockburn Range, East Kimberley, Kununurra



## Purnululu National Park

The Bungle Bungles at Purnululu National Park are a major icon attraction for Western Australia. Each year 26,000 visitors travel to Purnululu to experience the unique landforms and the challenges of rugged walking trails and many more participate in scenic flights over the park. Public and commercial safari camp sites are already established in the area. Two up-market safari camps accommodate the needs of major ground tour operators as well as fully independent travellers.

There is scope for additional commercial visitor accommodation at Purnululu. DEC plans to release an additional commercial camping ground, and a site within the Purnululu Conservation Reserve adjacent to the national park is being considered.

Tourism WA and DEC plan to broaden the range of visitor accommodation types and experiences available at Purnululu.

Photo: Piccaniny Creek and the Bungle Bungle Range, Purnululu National Park



## The Southern Coast

Protected areas on the State's far south coast provide a window to some of Western Australia's most stunning landscapes and seascapes. Visitors to these areas are able to experience desolate stretches of secluded beach, witness whales close to shore and study some of the world's most diverse flora and fauna.

A Naturebank project on the southern coast would face an environment vastly different to one established in the north. It is likely that the tented safari camp model suited to the north would give way to environmentally sensitive eco lodge style developments. Tourism WA and DEC intend to explore prospects for Naturebank projects in the Cape Le Grand and Cape Arid national parks east of Esperance. Other protected areas along the southern coast may lend themselves to eco lodge style projects.

Photo: Lucky Bay, Cape Le Grand National Park

