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Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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## Development in and around World Heritage areas

The Western Australian Government recognises the Traditional Owners and custodians of Murujuga; the past, present and future generations of Ngarda-Ngarli, and their ongoing connection to this sacred country.

**World Heritage Listing will not affect development as long as there are no significant impacts on the World Heritage values. Australian governments of all levels must ensure that the ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ of the area are protected and managed for existing and future generations.**

Existing and future industrial developments of Murujuga are covered by existing State and Commonwealth environmental protection, planning, heritage and safety legislation and will continue to be assessed under these on a case-by-case basis, including taking into account cumulative emissions. With appropriate management, the Western Australian Government considers that industry and tourism can successfully co-exist with the cultural heritage and environmental values of Murujuga.

### Is development allowed in World Heritage areas?

Yes. Development and commercial activities can and do occur in World Heritage places around the world. In Australia, there are many examples: commercial fishing in Shark Bay World Heritage area; agriculture in Willandra Lakes World Heritage area; and extensive tourism infrastructure in the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage areas.

### Environmental impact assessment of development proposals

Environmentally significant development proposals in Western Australia are assessed by an independent body, the Environmental Protection Authority (WA EPA), under the Western Australian *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act). A development proponent is required to refer their proposal to the WA EPA if it is likely to have a significant impact on environmental values of an area. This requirement will not change with World Heritage Listing. Many development proposals are not environmentally significant and will continue to be considered through existing local and Western Australian Government statutory processes.

Under the Australian Government’s *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), an action will require approval from the Australian Government Minister for the Environment if the action has, will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance. Matters of national environmental significance include World Heritage properties and National Heritage places. As parts of Murujuga are already National Heritage Listed, this provision of the EPBC Act already applies, so there is little change to the statutory protection that arises from a World Heritage Listing over those areas that are already included within the National Heritage Listed area.

Under the EPBC Act, the Australian Government Minister for the Environment or their delegate will decide whether the likely environmental impacts of a referred project should be assessed under the EPBC Act.

If assessment under the EPBC Act is required, the relevant Australian Government agency will liaise with the WA EPA to



determine an appropriate way in which their assessment process can be coordinated with the WA EPA’s assessment process. This can be via an accredited assessment or a parallel process.

Emissions and discharges from industry are also regulated by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) under the EP Act. Approvals are subject to conditions for the prevention and control of pollution and environmental harm.

### How is the rock art of Murujuga being protected?

The Western Australian Government is strongly committed to ensuring that there is a strategy to guide the long-term management and monitoring to protect rock art of Murujuga from the impacts of anthropogenic emissions. The [Murujuga Rock Art Strategy](#), released on 15 February 2019, provides a framework for the Western Australian Government, in partnership with the [Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation](#) (MAC), to independently monitor, analyse, and address any impacts to rock art from emissions. DWER has primary responsibility for the day-to-day implementation of the Murujuga Rock Art Strategy on behalf of the Western Australian Government.

The Western Australian Minister for Environment has established the [Murujuga Rock Art Stakeholder Reference Group](#) to facilitate engagement between MAC and key government, industry and community representatives on the development and implementation of the Murujuga Rock Art Strategy.

The World Heritage nomination for Murujuga will need to include a comprehensive and effective management framework that outlines how the potential ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ of the area will be protected, conserved and monitored. As part of this framework, the Western Australian Government and MAC will demonstrate how they are working closely together to protect the rock art through the Murujuga Rock Art Strategy and Murujuga Rock Art Monitoring Program.

### How can I be involved in the nomination?

MAC and the Western Australian Government welcomes stakeholder involvement in the nomination process. To register for updates, please visit [pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/murujuga](https://pws.dbca.wa.gov.au/murujuga).

<sup>1</sup> The definition of ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ is in UNESCO’s Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.