



Joining hands
to care for

Nyinggulu

An historic agreement was recently signed between traditional owners and the government, which provides for the joint management and joint vesting of Ningaloo Marine Park (State waters) and Cape Range National Park, as well as the creation of Nyinggulu (Ningaloo) Coastal Reserves.

by Felicity Kelly





The Ningyngulu (Ningaloo) Coast is of significant cultural importance to Aboriginal people, who have an ongoing connection to the area spanning over 32,000 years. The marine park and the low-key, remote recreation experience are also enjoyed by many visitors each year.

An historical moment was marked on 4 August 2020 when the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) came together with traditional owners from the Nganhurra Thanardi Garrbu Aboriginal Corporation (NTGAC) to formally enter into the Ningyngulu Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) to jointly manage country.

“Today we come together to fulfil our past Elders’ vision with the joint management agreement between DBCA and traditional owners, working together

creating many opportunities for younger generations through employment, traineeships, cultural values and connecting to country,” said Baiyungu Elder and DBCA cultural advisor, Hazel Walgar.

KEEPING CULTURE STRONG

Today, the Ningyngulu (Ningaloo) Coast is still highly valued by traditional owners and they continue to uphold the binding responsibility to care for country and keep culture strong. The undertaking of customary activities on country is central to maintaining the cultural heritage of the land.

Sharing of knowledge, engaging in traditional practices, nurturing relationships with the land and water, as well as looking after significant places are important aspects of being a traditional owner.

The plants and animals that form *ngarrari* (land) and *thanardi* (sea) country of Ningyngulu have sustained traditional owners for thousands of years, providing them with food, water and medicine.

Being predominantly coastal dwelling people, they have strong connection to *thanardi* (sea) country relying on marine resources including *majun* (turtle), *gawangga* (egg), fish and shell fish.

Ngarrari and *thanardi* country are rich with cultural heritage sites and places of ceremonial and mythological significance including *thalus* which are places for ceremonies and rituals surrounding totemic species. Many historical remains have been found along the Ningyngulu (Ningaloo) Coast including middens, fish traps, burial grounds and the ‘mandu mandu beads’ – one of the world’s oldest pieces of jewellery.

Baiyungu strong statement

This area was always known as Ningyngulu which means in our Baiyungu language – nose. Stories passed down say that the Ningyngulu area would attract many people from other tribes especially from the Pilbara and Gascoyne and that they would gather for ceremonies. Still to this day Ningyngulu is a gathering place that attracts many people of many cultures. The beauty of our traditional country is so unique we Baiyungu people are proud to share it with the world.

Baiyungu people’s strong statement:
Respect and look after our country.
Our country will respect and look after you!
Hazel Walgar, Baiyungu Traditional Owner.



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Main Aerial view of the Ningyngulu (Ningaloo) Coast.

Photo – David Bettini

Inset from left Emu. Photo – Simon Cherriman; Camel bush (*Trichodesma zeylanicum*).

Photo – Aberline Attwood/DBCA; Spangled emperor.

Photo – Marc Russo; Green turtle hatchlings.

Photo – Grant Griffin; Whale shark.

Photo – Matt Kleczkowski

Above left Remote camping at South Lefroy.

Photo – Josh Baker

Above Ningyngulu ILUA signing at Bulbarli.

Photo – Thomas Nagle/DBCA

Left Traditional owner, Hazel Walgar with a grinding stone, Ningyngulu (Ningaloo) Coast.

Photo – Aberline Attwood/DBCA

Home on the range

Populations of threatened black-flanked rock-wallaby, majun (turtle) nesting areas, seabird and shorebird roosting areas, endemic reptiles and landsnails, karst habitats, and subterranean fauna, interglacial fossil reefs, culturally significant flora and fauna are some of key natural values of the new reserves along with the striking contrast of the rugged, arid Cape Range with the sparkling white beaches and clear, turquoise water of Ningaloo Reef.

There is a rich European heritage associated with the early exploration of the north-west cape, including shipping, pastoralism and settlement as well as the Afghan and North Indian cameleers and traders and whaling, rock lobster and turtle harvesting industries. Remains of this heritage can still be found throughout the area and pastoralists still manage adjacent land for stock such as goats and cattle and provide additional recreational opportunities in tourism enclaves within the planning area and adjacent homestead accommodation areas.



Above Lighthouse keepers' quarters at Point Cloates, built in 1910.
Photo – Tiffany Taylor

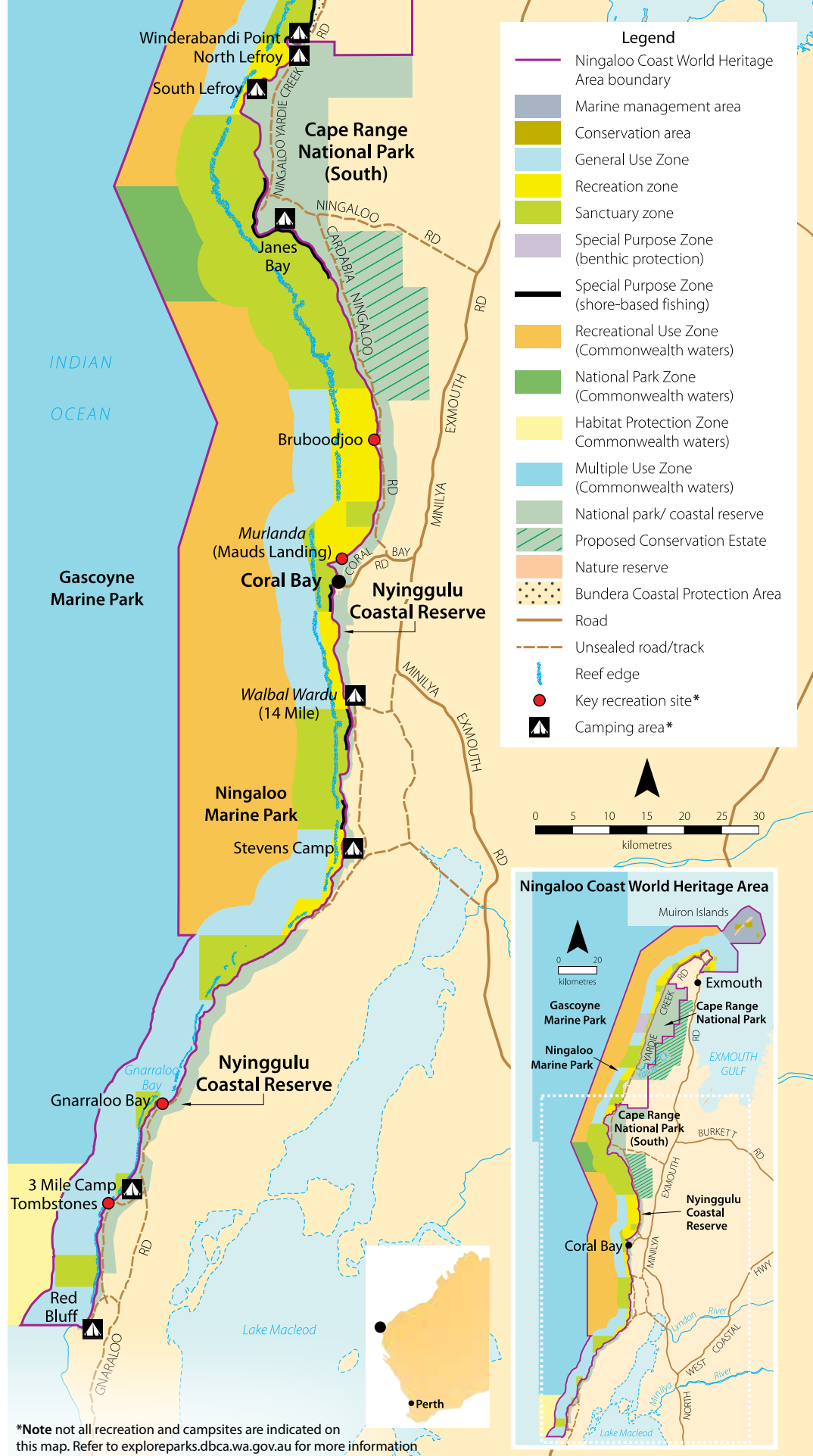
COMING TOGETHER

The Nyinggulu Coast ILUA enables the creation of about 78,000 hectares of new conservation estate including the establishment of the Nyinggulu Coastal Reserves and the eastern extension of Cape Range National Park.

The ILUA is the first under the State Government's Plan for Our Parks initiative, a plan to create five million hectares of new national and marine parks and conservation reserves across Western Australia.

Together, traditional owners and Government will oversee management of the area and make decisions to deliver positive outcomes for WA's conservation estate, Aboriginal people and for the general community.

The Nyinggulu ILUA also formalises the joint vesting and ongoing joint management of the new reserves and the



*Note not all recreation and campsites are indicated on this map. Refer to explore.parks.dbca.wa.gov.au for more information

“Warutharra Baiyungu ganyarajarri.
Nhubalu marnumanmayi ngarrari.

We Baiyung people are happy and proud to share our unique beauty with visitors from all over the world. Respect and look after our country, our country will respect and look after you.”
Hazel Walgar, Baiyungu Traditional Owner



World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Marine Park (State waters) and Cape Range National Park.

The ILUA and Joint Management Agreement provides an opportunity to gain a better understanding of traditional knowledge applicable to the planning area, and foster opportunities for integration of traditional knowledge with contemporary conservation science and management.

Joint management is about traditional and Western culture working together to look after country. DBCA has been jointly managing the area with the traditional owners on an informal basis, building relationships and trust while a joint management plan has been prepared to conserve the Nyinggulu (Ningaloo) Coast, through the collaborative identification of challenges and solutions.

Applying a joint management framework will enhance the protection

of culture and heritage, geology and landforms, plants, animals and habitats, while allowing culturally appropriate opportunities for recreation and tourism. The joint management plan will also apply to research and monitoring and the management of fire, weeds, introduced animals, resources and utilities.

NEW COASTAL RESERVES

The need to create public reserves along the Nyinggulu (Ningaloo) Coast was identified in the 1970s. Apart from a coastal strip 40 metres inland of the high-water mark along the coast from Red Bluff to Winderabandi (and other small Crown reserves), the new reserves were previously under pastoral lease. As part of the 2015 pastoral lease renewal process, the land was identified as being significant for conservation and the reserves were excised from pastoral leases.

The signing of the historic ILUA has allowed the creation of the conservation and recreation reserves, that are now jointly managed by DBCA and the Baiyungu and Thalanyji traditional owners through the Nganhurra Thanardi Garrbu Aboriginal Corporation. The new reserves will now have statutory protection under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, and joint management will ensure effective conservation of the significant natural and cultural values, while providing ongoing access for visitors.

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Above Lagoon day-use site.
Photo – Aberline Attwood/DBCA

Below left South Lefroy night sky.
Photo – Josh Baker

Below Threatened black-flanked rock-wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis*).
Photo – Simon Cherriman



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