



Norseman Woodlands to Eucla Coast

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Planning Unit
 Aboriginal Engagement, Planning and Lands Branch
 Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

via email: pscmp@dbca.wa.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

PROPOSED SOUTH COAST MARINE PARK SUBMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission on the proposed South Coast Marine Park and also for the extended time to lodge it.

In making this submission the Shire notes that the proposed **South Coast Marine Park** will be a combination of four (4) integrated proposed marine parks over the Western Australian coastal waters stretching from Bremer Bay to the WA/SA border, with two of these proposed marine parks—the **Western Bight Marine Park** and the **Mirning Marine Park**—lying directly offshore and adjacent to the whole of the Dundas Shire coastline.

Therefore, this submission is confined to the aforementioned two proposed parks only.

At the outset, given that the Shire's local government district does not extend beyond the low water mark of the Shire's coastline, the proposed Western Bight and Mirning Marine Parks and management of them will have minimal direct impact upon the Shire's jurisdiction, roles and responsibilities.

There may be, however, a number of indirect impacts affecting the Shire's roles and responsibilities. Whilst these have yet to be precisely identified the most likely principal indirect impact will be the provision, management and maintenance of landside access required to support maritime access to the two proposed parks and to any future landside management and operational support facilities and infrastructure.

To this end, and should the indicative management plans be finalised and adopted, the Shire requests that it has significant involvement or input into the more detailed planning and implementation of future park proposals, strategies and actions which require or are dependent upon the provision and management of landside access from within the Shire's local government district.

Additionally, the recommendation in both indicative management plans for the Ngadju and Mirning People to collaborate and partner with their respective neighbouring land and sea managers such as the Shire of Dundas to better manage park values and threats is certainly welcome. The Shire would appreciate initial dialogue in this regard being facilitated by DBCA upon the indicative management plans being finalised and adopted.

Notwithstanding the merit or otherwise of the two marine parks proposed off the coast of the Shire's local government district, the Shire submits that the current indicative management plans raise a number of matters and concerns that ought to be subject to further consideration and addressing by DBCA in finalising the marine park management plans, especially to **gain legitimacy among affected communities**.

These are outlined as follows:

1. Current and Proposed Management Arrangements

There is a lack of information in either management plan describing current management arrangements of the subject coastal waters, whether these are working well, what the management issues are (if any), and how they might be resolved or satisfactorily addressed.

Any finalised management plan ought to explain **how the proposed management plans will produce a better management regime, and/or management outcomes** than those (if any) currently in place, as opposed to say, increasing resources and/or undertaking more extensive surveillance or monitoring etc of the subject waters under current management arrangements or statutory functions.

If current management actions are considered inadequate, not fit for purpose, or no longer appropriate, then it is important to **publicly inform and provide the evidence and rationale as to why the proposed marine parks are needed**.

Without sounding trite, and acknowledging the cultural significance of some of the coastal waters to the Mirning people, it is also important to demonstrate the rationale and benefit of the proposed joint management arrangement, especially where **neither the Ngadju people nor the Mirning people possess native title over the subject waters**.

Presuming there are or will be **multiple current and likely future users of the coastal waters** included in the proposed marine parks (for example, commercial fishers, recreational boaties and fishers etc) and there are other land and sea managers as well having an intrinsic role in managing these waters e.g., the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), then perhaps a **broader representative management body** (such as a steering committee) ought to be established to inform or advise on the management of the parks.

This will allow for a broader and diverse range of views, thinking, and perspectives to be expressed in management deliberations, reflecting the various experiences of those who immerse themselves in the marine environments proposed to be managed.

This is not to say that neither the Ngadju people nor the Mirning people have no role in managing the parks. They should still be represented on the above suggested broader management body as well as having an 'on-ground' or 'hands-on' management role contracted through the DBCA.

2. *Purported Issues*

The two management plans list a range of issues (and highlight current major issues) **purportedly impacting the ecological values** (geomorphology, water and sediment quality, seagrass communities etc) of the subject coastal waters.

These range from commercial and recreational fishing damage to habitats, sewage discharge from vessels, major pollution events, sand mining, dredging and other sand bypassing works, large-scale coastal developments such as groynes, marinas, and ports.

Major issues purportedly identified include climate change (eg. rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification) and marine debris/litter.

However, both indicative management plans provide **no evidence** in support of the issues listed.

For example, apart from WGEH's proposed coastal infrastructure about 20 kilometres west of Eucla there are no other known small-scale or large-scale coastal developments planned or proposed along an almost 500-kilometre coastline that borders both proposed marine parks.

Some of the other listed issues seem to be operational in nature and relate to or are a result of vessels transiting through the subject waters. Arguably, these issues could be satisfactorily addressed through current statutory and licencing mechanisms of the State or **through enforcement**.

It is interesting to note that the transit of vessels through all zones of the 2 management plans will be permitted. It can be construed that this calls into question the need for the marine parks, or at least the inclusion of those waters identified as General Use zones in the proposed parks.

Of course, this is not to say that such (or some of these) issues aren't evident or present. However, where the evidence is available ought to be provided in order **to provide transparency and validation of the management proposals, and the need for the management plans**.

It also seems that the issues raised are a broad generalisation and not all may be present in parts of the subject coastal waters or may not be occurring to any significant degree.

Again, more evidence is required or ought to be produced to support the park proposals.

3. *Is There a Need for the Proposed Marine Parks?*

No rationale has been provided explaining why the two proposed marine parks need to include the full extent of the State coastal waters aligned with Bilbunya Dunes beach to the Eucla National Park beach.

Given that many sections of these waters are proposed to be zoned 'General Use' in the management plans (and that almost all of the uses/activities listed in Table 1 of the management plans are either permitted or an assess use) the necessity of including these waters within a marine park is again questioned.

Understandably, if a body of water or marine habitat is in a critical condition or parlous state requiring human access and activity to it being limited or restricted (for example an area is being overfished), then it **makes sense** to protect it through the mechanism of a marine park (or reserve).

However, including waters where general use and activities can occur, especially where the value of conservation of the marine environment is less critical than other areas (as expressed through the scheme zonings), seems to be **incongruent** with a marine park designation and the purpose of a marine park, as cited in cl.13B(1) of the **CALM Act 1984**) as follows—

'... allowing only that level of recreational and commercial activity which is consistent with the proper conservation and restoration of the natural environment, the protection of indigenous flora and fauna and the preservation of any feature of archaeological, historic or scientific interest.'

4. **What will be the impact on current commercial fishing activity in the proposed parks?**

Although the indicative management plans state that 75% of the parks (in totality) will be available for commercial fishing it does not say whether current licenced commercial fishing grounds will be **displaced or diminished by the park proposals?**

Reducing or eliminating current commercial fishing grounds has the potential to diminish the viability of the commercial fishing industry, and detrimentally impact the local and regional economies it supports. The State government ought to reassure this won't be the case.

Including relevant maps denoting current commercial fishing grounds in the finalized management plans could assist in reassuring this.

The lack of public mapping and associated information in the indicative and final management plans can lead to uninformed concerns and fear-mongering within local and regional fishing communities and the fishing industry generally about the future of their industry. This in turn can lead to **non-acceptance of the management plans by current users and a lack of legitimacy for the plans.**

The finalized plans—if adopted—ought to clearly demonstrate how any **adverse social and economic impacts** likely to be caused or result from the park proposals can be **offset equitably** as a consequence.

In other words, inclusion of a **cost-benefit analysis** of the park plans will be beneficial, especially to support the following claim in the introduction to each indicative management plan—

“It aims to find a balance between protecting the unique cultural and environmental values whilst supporting recreational and commercial uses, for the benefit of present and future generations, as development and visitation to the area grow.”

5. **Recreational Shore-based Fishing in the Sanctuary Zones**

The possibility of shifting the shore-line boundaries of the proposed sanctuary zones **at least 200 metres offshore** to allow for shore-based recreational fishing **makes sense**. Given that much of the coast adjacent to the proposed Western Bight and Mirning Marine Parks is remote and isolated, it is contended that policing unauthorized shore-line fishing within Sanctuary zones will be difficult to effect, especially if there are insufficient resources provided to enable effective policing.

6. **Customary Fishing Practices within the Sanctuary Zones**

Given the purpose of sanctuary zones is largely to “... protect areas of critical importance in maintaining healthy and functioning habitats and complex ecosystems ...”, and that customary fishing practices are proposed to be allowed in these zones, it will be **important to demonstrate** in any final management plan **how such practices will not affect the integrity and purpose of the proposed sanctuary zones**. The inclusion in the final management plans of illustrations and associated information as to how such practices are conducted would be helpful.

Ideally, all fishing ought to be precluded from within the sanctuary zones if the integrity and purpose of these zones is paramount.

Nevertheless, allowing customary fishing within the sanctuary zones has the **potential to increase all park-users knowledge of customary practices and ensure such practices are carried out in an authentic and customary way**, and not in some non-customary form or manner.

7. **Provision of Onshore Management and Operations Support Facilities**

The provision of any future onshore bases and infrastructure required to support the management and operation of the marine parks (eg. personnel, services, facilities) **ought to be localised, and within close proximity of the respective marine parks** (eg. not conducted from a central regional base).

For example, in respect to the proposed **Western Bight Marine Park**, a service base ought to be either located within the Nuytsland Nature Reserve, or alternatively adjacent to existing roadhouse locations such as those at Balladonia, Caiguna, or Cocklebidy. Or perhaps even from within the former Balladonia Telegraph Station if it was appropriately refurbished/renovated.

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In respect to servicing the proposed **Mirning Marine Park**, establishing a future base within the Eucla townsite seems logical, or alternatively, perhaps even from within the former Eucla Telegraph Station Master's House if this too was also appropriately reconstructed and refurbished.

Locating future support and operational facilities within former overland telegraph infrastructure adjacent to these parks can be the **catalyst to restoring and conserving these historic structures**, halting their current and ongoing deterioration.

I trust these considerations are welcome and acceptable, and taken in the spirit they're given. However, if you require further clarification or explanation of these please contact me.

Once again, I thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours faithfully

Peter Fitchat
Chief Executive Officer