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Submitted to **EPA Strategic Advice for the Exmouth Gulf - Consultation**

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Introduction

1 What is your name?

Surname:

[REDACTED]

Given name:

[REDACTED]

2 What is your email address?

Email:

[REDACTED]

3 Do your views officially represent those of an organisation?

No, these are my personal views

If yes, please specify the name of your organisation.:

4 Which of the following best describes the group or person you represent?

Private Citizen

If other, please specify.:

Comments

1 What are the values (environmental, social and cultural) you associate or identify with in and around Exmouth Gulf?

Please provide your comments on what information should be required here.:

The reason I remain and live in Exmouth is because of the diversity and ecology of the region, both terrestrial and marine. I was first attracted to the area for the marine life. The region's richness is incredible and the reason that it is a tourism hotspot.

The North West Cape peninsula forms the western side of the Exmouth Gulf. The fact that it is a peninsula gives another meaning to remote. There is one road all the way up from the main road which heads north from Perth/Geraldton/Canarvon and one road that feeds in from the east half-way up that 200km stretch. The remoteness of this town is by land and sea.

The aspect of remoteness has forged a strong community spirit among the residents of Exmouth town.

The Exmouth Gulf itself is the nursery for Ningaloo Reef and whilst Ningaloo Reef has the recognition as a World Heritage Area the Exmouth Gulf has not. This lack of recognition for the Exmouth Gulf is a travesty, as the interconnected nature of the Gulf to the Reef is intrinsic and fundamental.

If the species that use the Gulf could not benefit from the safety that this area affords it would impact the level of biodiversity on the Reef in a negative way. The often turbid water of the Gulf provides greater protection to juvenile marine life with the reduction in visibility as well as being able to hide in the mangrove roots.

This turbidity seems to be an aspect that industry latches onto, to justify that its impact might be minimal. Suggesting that any action taken by industry in creating an increase in turbidity is no more than the natural turbidity, but this is false and misleading. Any industry activity creating an increase in turbidity is, by definition, in addition to the natural occurrence and can affect species that need particular conditions to flourish.

It is perhaps this turbidity that enables a population of deepwater sponges to flourish in the Exmouth Gulf at Bundegi. Deepwater sponges that are more typical in depths up to 200 metres being found at 25 metres, within recreational scuba diving depth. <https://benthamopen.com/contents/pdf/TOMBJ/TOMBJ-4-3.pdf>

There are corals in the north east of the Gulf that are resistant to warming, these still need further study to see if they might have properties that may be useful for other global coral communities in the future.

The very uniqueness of this region and the fact that we still know so little about it is part of the attraction for me. Of course we need further studies to show us exactly what is here so that we can appreciate it in its fullness but we may have already lost some treasures here and we don't want to lose more before we even have appreciated their existence here.

2 What activities do you engage with in and around Exmouth Gulf?

Please provide your comments on how emissions should be considered here.:

I snorkel and scuba dive and after over [REDACTED] am still mesmerised by the astounding biodiversity and continue to find new marine life that I have not previously seen in the area. The more I hear from other people and research that is conducted the more I am convinced that I have not experienced or seen nearly enough of what is here. My fear is that it could be lost before I get a chance to discover it for myself.

I also go boating with friends observing megafauna and enjoying being on the water. The sunsets are almost as much of a joy to witness as the marine life!

The simplicity of walking along or sitting at the beach. Much of the time without any other person in sight. In solitude and with only the sounds of nature around.

3 What environmental pressures do you observe in and around Exmouth Gulf?

Please provide your comments here.:

There is a lot of boating activity on the Exmouth Gulf and moving in and out of the Gulf to explore Muiron Islands and Ningaloo Reef. The noise alone must have an impact on marine life.

Of course there are also the extractive activities that are undertaken from vessels, recreational and commercial fishing.

During the Covid-19 pandemic when WA allowed the regional borders to open within WA there was a large influx of visitors to the North West Cape and there were reports of the bins provided for fish offal at the marina cleaning station brimming over. There must have been a huge biomass removed from the Gulf and surrounds at that time.

The surveys for the prawning industry in Exmouth Gulf found in its own report that "Comprehensive habitat information for Exmouth Gulf is limited despite its size, proximity to the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area and State Marine Parks, mining activities and the presence of highly productive fisheries."

http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/Documents/wamsc_reports/wamsc_report_no_17.pdf

Fish harvesting for aquariums also takes place.

The increase in tourists can also have a negative impact with more litter and general waste, as well as the demand for potable water of which there is not an infinite supply. There has been impact on dune areas and 4WD tracks being made where there were none previously. Some being made so that people could get to areas to enjoy the Gulf avoiding the crowds.

Being so remote we can observe the milky way at night but light pollution can have an impact on this experience. Lighting can also alter the behaviour of marine life.

4 What environmental pressures in and around Exmouth Gulf affect you/your sector or business?

Label:

Anything that has an adverse environmental impact in and around Exmouth Gulf is likely to affect my enjoyment of the area. Whether that be visual amenity, noise, lighting, too many people, pollution, waste, litter it can all have an impact on my personal wellbeing and mental health.

It is interesting that people come to this area and fall in love with it, but then they want to "develop" it so that it no longer has the virtues that they fell in love with.

5 Are there other activities that are proposed (or likely to be proposed) that you are aware of, which will impact the Exmouth Gulf?

Label:

Subsea7 has a plan for a pipeline fabrication facility at the Bay of Rest just south of the airport. This will be one of the first things that the flights into Exmouth will see. Not a welcome to a pristine World Heritage wilderness that tourists might be expecting.

Ashburton Salt is a proposal on the east side of the Gulf.

The Lighthouse Caravan Park development may be seen as not having a direct effect as it is the upgrading of a current facility. But we don't know whether the facility will attract a different demographic or how the development will affect the town and the impact on the use of Exmouth Gulf.

The marine research centre of Munderoo will almost certainly take examples of the marine life into the centre for research. This will need to be managed carefully to ensure minimal impact to the environment.

The plan for a deepwater port has been publicly announced recently to the community at large. It has received a reaction of shock at the size of the project and the extent of the land proposed to service it.

An increase in tourist numbers will also have an impact. The town of Exmouth does not have the natural resources or the infrastructure to increase the capacity by a large margin and the water source demand would not be able to be satisfied by a large scale increase. There are already discussions taking place regarding the solar eclipse event that will take place in April 2023 when visitor numbers are likely to be unmanageable.

6 Is there any other information you would like to provide?

Please provide your comments here.:

At what point do we, the people of Exmouth, the people of WA, the people of Australia, the people of the world, pay the ultimate price for the lack of protecting places, such as the Exmouth Gulf, of significant biodiversity? The long term goal should be to still have such a pristine environment on this planet for future generations to explore and investigate, not only our human generations but for the generations of wildlife that we share this region with.

We should not be willing to sacrifice this for short term gains. The short term gains will only benefit a small number of people.

Please protect this unique and special environment.

7 If you have any documents to include with your submission, please upload here.

Upload document here.:

No file was uploaded

Upload additional document here.:

No file was uploaded

8 Information provided.

I Agree that my submission response does not contain confidential information, and that the submission may be published in full.