

# Response ID ANON-P8JT-DEHC-T

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 Exmouth area is a unique place in the world. It is a place where there is a strong sense of community and where people support each other, everyone feels like they know everyone else, a safe place where you don't lock your car or your house, a place where you are not a part of the rat race. It is an extreme environment with heat, wind and cyclones, desert, ranges, reef and the gulf. In a world of ever shrinking natural habitat, it has been a place where one can experience what the world was, slower, less populated and polluted, an intact natural environment. Though this is changing fast and has noticeably changed, for the worse in my time here.

Exmouth is a logistically difficult place to live which is often used as an excuse for the high cost of living. Seasonal fluctuations in population are predominantly due to the heat in summer and wildlife interactions that form the basis of the tourism industry.

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

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

The activities i engage in around Exmouth gulf include boating, diving, snorkeling, photography, camping, hiking and general exploring. I only occasionally go fishing though i grew up fishing and spearfishing.

We spend most of our outdoor time observing or interacting with wildlife. It is these interactions that make Exmouth such an amazing experience, watching whales, swimming with mantas, turtles, sharks, seeing corals and diverse invertebrates.

It has become increasingly difficult to enjoy these activities with the increasingly large number of tourists, developing infrastructure and industry.

I stopped fishing here because it was clear as a diver that the habit i was going to enjoy was no longer there, large resident grouper for example are very rare now, schools of snapper and mullet are now just the odd fish. There is also the fact that lost fishing gear kills many more animals after it is lost, something you only see as a diver, fish with hooks in their mouth, animals tangled in line its terrible. Its hard to understand until you have an animal approach you underwater with a hook in its mouth or tangled flipper and allow you to remove it.

Having lived here so long, i have a passion for the area and those who come for a short time, generally don't have any idea how severely their actions effect the environment here. The majority only come to Exmouth for fishing, imagine if i went to their National park and went hunting the animals that lived there, how is it that they can come here and in a world heritage National park they can hunt the animals that live there.

If the EPA and other Govt bodies are serious about protecting the environment they need to make better decisions based on science not dollars and politics.

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

Please provide your comments here.:

[REDACTED] i have lived in the area, and with the knowledge of an aquatic science degree and many years of diving the region, and the world, i have observed the serious decline in marine habitat and diversity.

For example there used to be a vibrant reef ecosystem in the Exmouth gulf stretching from Point Murat to Exmouth (about 15km), this is now a barren wasteland of rubble, climate change has been a major cause, though intense recreational fishing has removed several key species and increased sediment because the gulf

seabed has also been almost completely denuded of habitat by the activities of [REDACTED]. There are no efforts to help the struggling environment that sustains us all and as such the cumulative effects of commercial, charter boat and recreational fishing, industry and recreational boating, climate change, foreshore habitat destruction, cattle, goat and stock grazing, feral pests- rabbits, goats, cats, poor waste management releasing rubbish to the environment and inflating seagull numbers, tourist and industry vehicles killing large numbers of wildlife on the roads and gas and diesel power generation.

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

**Label:**

The destruction of our natural environment.  
The promotion of extractive fishing tourism by local government.  
The lack of education of locals, visitors and workers of the sensitivity of coastal ecosystems.

#### 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:**

The project that is of the greatest environmental concern is the Gascoyne Gateway proposal. This development proposal has been on the cards for at least 20 years. The proposal to build a port is neither surprising or entirely unwarranted, however its proposed design and construction method, as well as the impact from its use, if examined objectively, could only be found to be inappropriate for the region.

Some background, [REDACTED] extracts thousands of tons of limestone from their quarry and stockpiles it for building a wharf. They fortunately take so long to action their plan that their EPA approval expires yet they continue to try and push the project through, lucky for the community and the EPA that this was identified and the proposal was stopped. It was always going to rear its ugly head again.

The problems of this project begin with its construction method, which is not based on good design or sustainability, its based on the proponents access to cheap materials. A solid rock wall built km into the gulf will disrupt water flow and cause a massive sand build up on its southern side. The correct way to build a structure like this is on pylons, the existing Navy pier is an example of this, it provides one of the few remaining vibrant habits in the Gulf. The Exmouth marina in contrast provides very little habitat and suffers the aforementioned sand build up problems. As a scientist it is clear that this proposed construction method will have significant environmental impact and should never be approved. This same principal applies to the subsea7 project.

You then of course have the usage of the wharf, arguments were made a decade ago based on the oil and gas industry that was undergoing 100's of billions of dollars of works at Wheatstone and Gorgan projects and Exmouth had a small role in servicing the industry, though most work was based out of Karratha and Dampier. This argument is no longer valid as construction has finished and infrastructure desired to enable Exmouth to profit from it has finished. The expansion of the Exmouth marina facilitated the servicing of the marine vessels as required by industry in Exmouth.

If there is any hope for a sustainable world oil and gas industries need to be phased out in coming years rather than developed.

The adequate enforcement of environmental controls of the industry are also lacking with flaring still occurring on oil and gas facilities causing CO2 and light pollution.

Larger boats coming in and out of the Gulf is of major environmental concern, particularly international vessels that are flagged overseas and frequently breach environmental regulations.

Covid 19 will also be a significant threat and the revival of the cruise ship industry may be wishful thinking. There are also numerous examples worldwide of the destructive nature of this industry with waste dumping, illegal discharges, vessel accidents and poor fuel quality.

Larger vessels pose a far greater risk to the local environment, and release far greater quantities of pollutants than the local and smaller industry vessels that are adequately serviced at Exmouth marina.

The lighthouse caravan park development into a resort is also a project that could have significant environmental impact. Light pollution is a significant issue with turtle nesting beaches nearby, where even a small amount of light can cause hatchlings to become disorientated and head inland rather than to the sea. Visual amenity could also be a problem. Road and access issues are already evident for this project.

We have not heard much in recent times on the Salt project for the eastern side of the gulf. There has been significant local opposition to this project over many years and it is the type of development that has no place in the Exmouth gulf.

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

**Please provide your comments here.:**

There appears to be very little application of protection post 2011 declaration of the Ningaloo coast as a World heritage area. More concerning is that lack of appreciation that the Exmouth gulf is an integral part of that ecosystem and its development impacts the viability of the entire system, primarily because it is the nursery ground for many reef species.

Programs to protect and expand mangrove and seagrass beds in the Exmouth gulf need to be a priority to increase the robustness of the ecology and its ability to combat the cumulative effects of human development, the expansion of sanctuary zones would also greatly increase the effectiveness of these programs.

The EPA has significant work to do in order to regain public confidence in its ability to make decisions consistent with its charter and implement the controls prescribed to it.

The EPA has made decisions that future generations could only view as inadequate, we can only hope the department finds the courage and integrity to make decisions that are more in line with public desire for environmental protection rather than succumbing to the influence of those pursuing personal gain.

The EPA further needs to consider the huge personal sacrifice required to present arguments against proposals that have resources available and come to evaluation process with significant advanced notice and preparation.

#### 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.