

### **Protection of Exmouth Gulf a win for the environment**

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has welcomed the State Government's decision to protect the unique values of Exmouth Gulf.

The announcement today by Premier Mark McGowan and Minister for Environment Amber-Jade Sanderson follows strategic advice from the EPA which recommended a high level of protection for the Gulf and surrounds.

Professor Matthew Tonts said the commitment to establishing a marine park for the eastern and southern portions of the Gulf, and Class A reserves for other local areas of significance, was a win for the environment.

"Future activities and developments proposed for Exmouth Gulf will need to show they are compatible with the protection of the key values of this globally significant area," Professor Tonts said. "This will ensure important marine species such as humpback whales, dugongs, dolphins and turtles are protected for future generations."

The EPA's year-long study involved face-to-face engagement with stakeholders, traditional owners and Exmouth residents, community forums and targeted meetings with local government and businesses. This [strategic advice](#), under Section 16(e) of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, was delivered to Minister Sanderson in August.

Professor Tonts said working with traditional owners to co-design and manage the proposed marine park and reserves would ensure the values of Exmouth Gulf were recognised.

"This is a great outcome for the community and stakeholders who contributed to the cumulative impact study into the current and proposed pressures on the Exmouth Gulf," he said. "This protection from both existing and potential pressures will ensure the Gulf's activities are sustainable and will mean future developments will be required to consider alternative locations, climate change, dark skies, elevated cumulative impacts, and have explicit regard for the protection of Aboriginal heritage and culture."

The EPA also welcomed the decision to appoint a coordinating body to advise the Minister on the protection, planning and management of the Gulf.

Professor Tonts said this integrated approach would ensure that the EPA's concerns about knowledge gaps, particularly on the current state of bonefish, sawfish and dolphins in the Gulf, were addressed.

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