

## **EPA recognises unique values of Exmouth Gulf**

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, according to a cumulative impacts study by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

The EPA's strategic advice on the potential cumulative impacts on Exmouth Gulf was delivered to the Minister for Environment Amber-Jade Sanderson today.

The year-long study involved face-to-face engagement with stakeholders and the Exmouth community, public consultation and targeted meetings with local government, business and traditional owners.

EPA Chair Professor Matthew Tonts said the strategic advice was formed at the request of the Minister who sought a thorough understanding of how new proposals could add to the cumulative impacts on the environmental, social and cultural values of Exmouth Gulf.

Professor Tonts said the Authority recognised that Exmouth Gulf was under increasing pressure from uncoordinated human activities and development.

"While there is a broadly held view that Exmouth Gulf is a relatively pristine environment, its long history of development has contributed to considerable environmental change," he said. "Existing and emerging pressures are adding cumulatively to these environmental impacts.

"There is a risk that impacts from both existing and potential pressures may not be sustainable, so a high level of protection of the area needs to be a priority.

"Our strategic advice shows there is an opportunity to strengthen the protection of Exmouth Gulf through avoidance of activities and development that could use alternative locations."

The EPA considers the eastern and southern portions of Exmouth Gulf are critical WA assets that require a high level of protection.

"The state of many key values in the Gulf were found to be in poor condition and an integrated management approach is required to ensure current conditions do not deteriorate through further activities and development," Professor Tonts said.

“Within Exmouth Gulf, avoidance of environmental disturbance should be a key consideration for all new developments in site selection.”

The EPA recommends establishing a coordinating body, with a clearly defined role in the environmental protection, planning and management of Exmouth Gulf and its surrounds.

“The lack of cohesive coordination or integrated management of current activities in Exmouth Gulf has elevated the risk across most of the values,” Professor Tonts added. “This is also an opportunity to secure the knowledge and values of the Gulf’s traditional owners by ensuring they are key partners in future protection and management.”

The strategic advice on the potential cumulative impacts of the proposed activities and developments on the environmental, social and cultural values of Exmouth Gulf can be found [HERE](#).

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