

# Executive Summary

## ***What the report is about***

This report summarises the major human activities that occur within the coastal and marine environment from Carnarvon to Port Hedland. This area is the southern part of the Rangelands Region. The report also outlines local residents', visitors' and resource managers' priority concerns about the management of the coastal and marine environment. The report addresses the critical need for synthesised information outlining the location and nature of human activities within the Rangelands coastal and marine area.

## ***Background***

This study, funded by the Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group through the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust Stage 2 scheme, sought to identify how and where people use the coastal and marine environment and their priority concerns for natural resource(s) management. The study centred on the area between Carnarvon and Port Hedland, which is a diverse region containing world significant oil and gas reserves, large mining and shipping operations, a world heritage area and national parks and some of Western Australia's most significant fisheries. The area is also of special significance to a number of Aboriginal communities.

## ***Objectives***

The objectives of the study were:

- To describe the major human activities occurring within the Rangeland's coastal and marine environment.
- To identify users' priority concerns regarding the management of the coastal and marine environment.
- To identify probable development trends in the key coastal settlements within the Rangelands region, and implications that development trends might have for the uses of the coastal and marine environment.
- Given probable development trends within the study area, to identify users' perceptions of limitations and gaps within existing management frameworks and research programmes.

## ***Methods***

The study recognised that users and managers of the coastal and marine environment were well placed to describe the uses of the marine and coastal environment and identify priority concerns regarding the management of the natural resources. The study involved extensive community consultations and interviews to identify users' and managers' priority concerns about the use and management of the marine and coastal environment. Stakeholder workshops and focus groups were used to identify users' and managers' preferred approaches to addressing priority concerns. Other supporting information sources included: data sets compiled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics; management documents and research reports written by various government agencies, and; data releases prepared by mining companies.

## ***Results/ Recommendations***

Through interviews with stakeholders a range of priority concerns about the use and management of the Rangelands coastal and marine environment were identified. Priority concerns that were frequently raised by stakeholders from various backgrounds were presented to focus groups and community workshops for further discussion. Focus groups and workshop groups discussed the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the priority concerns and identified preferred approaches for addressing the issues. The four broad issues discussed during the focus groups and workshop groups were:

- How to improve the suitability and enforcement of recreational fishing regulations
- How to address issues of increasing numbers of fly-in-fly-out workers participating in consumptive recreational activities in coastal areas

- How to improve the suitability and maintenance of boat ramps and associated facilities
- How to manage coastal camping to ensure social, economic and environmental values are protected and enhanced

The workshop and focus groups recommended a number of preferred actions to be undertaken to address users' and managers' priority concerns. These recommendations were developed taking into account current management programmes and projects, and also probable social and economic development scenarios in the Rangelands coastal region. The preferred actions to address the four broad issues discussed during the focus groups and workshops are listed below.

***Issue 1: How to improve the suitability and enforcement of recreational fishing regulations***

Actions

1. Education pamphlets should be developed to advise visitors to the region of fishing regulations. These educational pamphlets should be freely available at caravan parks and tourist bureaus.
2. Indigenous ranger programmes should be expanded in the Pilbara and Gascoyne region with rangers monitoring recreational fishing effort in remote locations. Rangers should also participate in disseminating information about fishing regulations to visitors and recreational fishers and priority locations.
3. Current signage about recreational fishing regulations should be redesigned to simplify the message and provide succinct inter-agency priority messages.

***Issue 2: How to address issues of increasing numbers of fly-in-fly-out workers participating in consumptive recreational activities in coastal areas***

Actions

1. Develop a regionally specific educational DVD about the social, economic and environmental impacts of human uses of the marine and coastal environment. The DVD should outline sustainable practices and pay particular attention to the values of Traditional Owners and recreational fishing regulations. A copy of the DVD should be made available to all fly-in-fly-out workers, and presented to fly-in-fly-out workers in the mining sector at the commencement of their employment in the region.

***Issue 3: How to improve the suitability and maintenance of boat ramps and associated facilities***

Action

1. Develop a regional plan for boat ramps and associated infrastructure. The plan should identify current infrastructure maintenance priorities and future locations for infrastructure development. The plan should identify a strategy for resolving issues of tenure and management of boat ramps and associated facilities between local government, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, ports, Department of Environment and Conservation and Traditional Owner groups.

***Issue 4: How to manage coastal camping to ensure social, economic and environmental values are protected and enhanced***

Action

1. Develop a regional plan for coastal camping that ensures low cost, well-managed camping grounds are available for 'traditional' (surfers, recreational fishers, wildlife observers, Indigenous groups) and 'emerging' (grey nomads, fly-in-fly-out workers) users groups.

Further to the four core issues identified through the interviews and discussed during the workshops and focus groups, many participants in the study expressed concern about the effectiveness and appropriateness of various approaches to management. Specifically, concern centred on the 'nodal' development approach promoted through the *Ningaloo Coast Regional Strategy Carnarvon to Exmouth* and the nature, extent and suitability of proposed marine parks in the area. Local residents, visitors and managers were also concerned

about the adequacy of infrastructure to support activities at a number of different locations along the Rangelands coast. Users' and managers' concerns about the use and management of coastal and marine areas are summarised in Chapters Two to Six of this report.

In addition to this report, some of the results from the study have been included on a purpose built website. The website, which was constructed to provide data that describes the nature and location of human uses within the Rangelands marine and coastal environment, acts as a complementary resource for this report. The website can be accessed at <<http://www.rangelandswa.info>>.