

Chapter 2: Coastal Camping in the Rangelands

2.1 Introduction

In 2003, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure prepared an inventory of coastal usage patterns along the Carnarvon-Ningaloo coast. The findings of the inventory informed part of the *Ningaloo Coast Regional Strategy Exmouth-Carnarvon* (Western Australian Planning Commission, 2004) and underpinned subsequent management initiatives. The inventory included descriptions of the conditions of coastal camping locations and provided comment on existing management arrangements and the limitations of these. Despite the study only focusing on one small section of the coast, the general findings of the study have been popularly used to describe coastal camping along the entire Rangelands coast. The general findings about coastal camping from the study were (*inter alia*):

- Many recreation and tourist areas along the coast showed signs of unsustainable use with evident site degradation.
- Some areas that were intensively used were under severe environmental pressure from human activities.
- Rapidly increasing numbers of visitors altered long term visitors sense of remoteness and perceived naturalness and hence reduced their level of satisfaction.
- The 'laissez faire' approach to coastal recreation use has resulted in some unsustainable uses and a significant loss of values in some locations.
- Most residents and long term visitors supported continued protection and management for the 'remote wild experience'.
- As the standard of road access increased so did the potential for pressure on natural resources.

In addition to those findings listed above, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (2003) found that many remote, largely unmanaged, camping locations had little site disturbance. However, these sites were identified as having the potential to establish unsustainable usage patterns. Consequently, the *Ningaloo Coast Regional Strategy Exmouth-Carnarvon* outlined a comprehensive management approach for these remote coastal camping locations.

This study sought to identify if coastal camping as observed along the Ningaloo coast, and described in the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's (2003) report, was the same as that occurring along the greater part of the Rangelands coast. This investigation provides critical data for establishing appropriate and effective management approaches for coastal camping in the Rangelands.

This chapter discusses the nature of camping along the Rangelands coast. A description of broad visitor trends, a list of coastal camping locations and a summary of key usage patterns is provided. The analysis is centred on the area from Carnarvon Statistical Local Area to Broome Statistical Local Area (inclusive) (excluding Exmouth Statistical Local Area). The chapter concludes with a summary of core observations about coastal camping in the Rangelands region.