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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

This project is co-funded by the Australian Government under the T-QUAL Grants programme. Contributions were also made under the Western Australian Government’s Royalties for Region’s Gascoyne Regional Grant Scheme. Financial support for the project was also provided by Tourism WA, Shires of Exmouth, Carnarvon and Shark Bay.

Photos are courtesy of Tourism Western Australia’s Image Library unless otherwise specified.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ningaloo-Shark Bay is one of 16 National Landscapes included in Australia’s National Landscapes Program – a partnership between tourism and conservation agencies that is being implemented at a national, state and local level.

Ningaloo–Shark Bay National Landscape broadly covers the Western Australian coast from Exmouth in the north to Shark Bay in the south. It incorporates the Ningaloo Coast and Shark Bay World Heritage Areas and the area in between as well as associated national parks and marine parks and some inland areas.

The Experience Development Strategy outlines experiences that will strengthen the appeal of Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape in the minds of international Experience Seekers – Tourism Australia’s target market.

Three priority themes are put forward for creating tourism experiences that will deliver on the brand identified for Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape, being ‘uninhibited freedom’.

The first of these themes, unexpected encounters, is all about rare, up-close and personal experiences with the diverse flora and fauna of the landscape. The second, outback and ocean discovery, is about deepening the understanding and appreciation of the landscape and its people. The third theme, conservation through participation, is about sharing the landscape’s strong conservation stewardship practices with visitors to support ongoing conservation efforts and sustainable regional growth.

A series of hero experiences are identified for Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape that align with these themes (see over page). Hero experiences are the standout visitor experiences that best reflect a destination’s brand promise and positioning in the market. They help define the place, its people and stories.

The Experience Development Strategy recommends projects that will deliver each of the hero experiences within the landscape. In other words, these are the projects that will bring the hero experiences to life. The projects and their actions are outlined in the following pages.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Themes

unexpected encounters

outback and ocean discovery

conservation through participation

Hero Experiences

- Get up-close and personal with an ocean character on their annual journey home
- Meet a friendly local who is grazing on nature’s bounty and retell the story from the comfort of your camp
- Find a place rarely seen, wait, and watch it come to life

- Discover the origins of life on earth
- Explore spectacular tropical reefs, coast and islands or the real outback without the crowds
- Fill your camera with unbelievable moments in the landscape

- Get off the beaten track with an eco-accredited operator whose business makes a positive environmental impact
- Be part of caring for country working with the world’s oldest living culture and teams of dedicated locals
- Work side-by-side with world experts to protect this place for future generations
## ACTION PLAN

Activating the hero experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project/Theme</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Lead Body</th>
<th>Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1 – Unexpected Encounters</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Establish a Wildlife calendar and sightings program</td>
<td>Work with a variety of partners to develop and maintain a Ningaloo Shark Bay wildlife calendar that focuses on the full suite of experiences and the journeys of wildlife on offer across the year.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife, Tourism WA, Outback RTO, Tour Operators, VICs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implement an experiences driven social media campaign using the anchors of the wildlife calendar and events.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and linkages with Tourism Australia</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife, Tourism WA, Golden Outback RTO, Tour Operators, VICs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Through operator engagement and the use of social media, create a sightings program (similar to ‘Eye on the Reef’) that enables visitors to not only know what iconic species are being seen but to be involved themselves in sharing sightings as part of the research program.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Eco-accommodation with wildlife viewing</td>
<td>Offer a range of opportunities for investment in eco-accommodation through a well-managed process of investor engagement (as both a part of and beyond the Naturebank Program) and enabling environment in local Government.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link future investment in eco-accommodation to a global certification standard for ecologically sustainable design.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage all operators to link accommodation to experiences such as sea kayaking, wildlife viewing, night activities or voluntourism to strengthen competitive advantage.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project/Theme</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
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<td>Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Aerial journeys</td>
<td>Support the development of aerial journeys by ensuring proposals are well packaged and enable visitors to access areas or engage in activities that they would otherwise be unable to achieve and packages are well promoted.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
<td>Councils, Local Tourism Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with ground based tours, accommodation and on-station experiences, to encourage them to partner with an aviation company to develop aerial journeys (eg. Dirk Hartog Island).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
<td>Councils, Local Tourism Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2 – Outback and Ocean Discovery</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Linkages across the landscape</td>
<td>Support the development of the Shark Bay-Carnarvon-Mount Augustus-Karijini-Exmouth Loop to build on the current Outback Pathways program.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>Councils</td>
<td>RTOs, Tourism WA, Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create a series of drive, fly-drive and land and sea journeys that connect the land and sea experiences.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
<td>RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Prepare a range of itineraries for self-drive markets with accommodation options for camping and station stays.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
<td>Councils, Tourism WA, Gascoyne Development Commission, VICs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support the development and promotion of the Baiyungu Track as a catalyst project to attract visitors and stimulate product development through assisting in:</td>
<td>High priority to commence facilitation and sourcing of funding.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
<td>RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- accessing funding for infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- attracting and supporting a commercial operator</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- facilitating development of transport links</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- brand and merchandise development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Live-aboard experiences</td>
<td>Attract investment in a high quality live-aboard vessel (10-24 cabins) for ‘mini-cruises’ between Shark Bay and Exmouth, including some remote location visits.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
<td>RTOs, Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project/Theme</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
<td>Lead Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Tag-along tours to new destinations</td>
<td>Work with the land owners and community to establish preferred 4WD touring loops and routes, ensuring appropriate permit systems and tenure agreements are in place for travel and overnight stays.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Councils</td>
<td>RTOs, Tourism WA, Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investigate the appropriate campsites and infrastructure to establish overnight camps where commercial options or existing camps are not available.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission, Councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assist operators in marketing to international self-drive and hire drive visitors through push via partners (e.g. Britz/Maui in-car magazines).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage station stays to use high quality local produce to showcase the region’s natural bounty and lift visitor spend per person.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Food Council</td>
<td>Stations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theme 3 – Conservation through participation

<p>| 7. Interpretive programs linked to monitoring and research | Review interpretation and story-telling techniques used to ensure they meet contemporary visitor expectations for use of digital and interactive methods. | High | 1 to 2 years | RTOs | Tourism WA |
| | Investigate the feasibility of installing wildlife viewing and monitoring cameras in both the marine and terrestrial environments. | Medium | 1 to 2 years | Parks and Wildlife | RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA |
| | Develop a Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Guide School as an extension of the Savannah Guides model that will focus on interpretation and connection to country. | Medium | 1 to 2 years | Parks and Wildlife | RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA |
| | Create a whole of Landscape Partners Program to maximise industry engagement and support for the national landscape principles of conservation and interpretation. | High | 1 to 2 years | Parks and Wildlife | RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA |
| | Develop clever downloadable information and interpretation to help address long driving distances and lack of mobile coverage. | High | 1 to 2 years | RTOs | Tourism WA, Parks and Wildlife |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project/Theme</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Lead Body</th>
<th>Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Ningaloo-Shark Bay Guardians Program</td>
<td>Develop an <strong>agreed partnership model</strong> for the Guardians Program.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with local providers to develop a <strong>training program for the Guardians Program</strong> (potentially online).</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Establish a consistent brand</strong> with supporting merchandise and opportunities to make a financial contribution to this program to generate additional revenue.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>RTOs, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Create a hub for the conservation programs at the Ningaloo and Shark Bay Research Centres</td>
<td><strong>Link the existing research centres to the regional visitor centres</strong> including the Jurabi Turtle Discovery Centre in Cape Range, Carnarvon Visitor Centre, and the Shark Bay Discovery Centre and the Oceanarium to optimise visitor information with contemporary technology and visitor participation.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Voluntourism Program</td>
<td><strong>Establish a relationship with Conservation Volunteers Australia</strong> to better link tourism products to existing conservation programs.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>Conservation Volunteers Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop <strong>day and overnight voluntourism experiences</strong> for the long-haul drive market focussing on wildlife interaction and engagement.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Conservation Volunteers Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Work with wholesalers</strong> with a voluntourism segment to increase representation.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Conservation Volunteers Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create <strong>half day and full day Voluntourism products</strong> targeting the business events market and conference organisers.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Conservation Volunteers Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investigate the feasibility of a purpose-built <strong>year-round research, training and education facility</strong> at the existing Shark Bay Interpretive Centre that could house visiting academics and a voluntourism program.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Conservation Volunteers Australia, RTOs, Universities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**ACTION PLAN**

Enablers of success actions summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enabler</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Lead Body</th>
<th>Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved governance and partnership arrangements</td>
<td><strong>Source funding to improve</strong> the effectiveness of the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National landscape <strong>Steering Committee</strong> through employment of a part-time Coordinator/Administrator or support across the Gascoyne.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years and ongoing</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>Steering Committee agencies/GDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Strengthen the Steering Committee</strong> by inviting new members who have relevant knowledge of the hero experiences being developed in the Landscape.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>TWA/PaW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Form one regional tourism organisation</strong> (called the Ningaloo Shark Bay Tourism Board) to address strategic priorities and stimulate investment and funding for the region.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>GDC</td>
<td>TWA/PaW/ACC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop <strong>stronger partner links</strong> with conservation and community and Aboriginal groups to further develop experiences and interpretation in the region.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>Steering Committee agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry capacity building</td>
<td><strong>Build industry capacity</strong> to assist operators in developing market quality products that align with the hero experiences through the support of: • an audit of operators and their development needs • a Mentoring Program • incentives for products that deliver on the hero experiences</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Tourism Council of WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous interpretation and business support programs</td>
<td>Develop a <strong>dedicated business support program</strong> that encourages Aboriginal businesses and Indigenous interpretation alliances within the region.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>WAITOC</td>
<td>TWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved regional services</td>
<td><strong>Prepare an expression of interest</strong> (EOI) document of suitable sites for private sector accommodation development.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>GDC</td>
<td>TWA/Councils, Local Tourism Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabler</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
<td>Lead Body</td>
<td>Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Undertake a review of camping options</strong> across the landscape to identify opportunity areas for increased yield and develop an <strong>online booking system</strong> to increase conversion.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Councils</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continue to support package deals with airlines</strong> to increase awareness and demand.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Airlines, Industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Launch a distribution network for the supply of local produce</strong> to the region and improve the food experience via development of a <strong>food trail and signature dishes.</strong></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Food Council</td>
<td>Restaurants, Chambers of Commerce, retailers, accom. providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop a marketing plan for hero experiences</strong> with a focus on hero messages and experience packaging and investigate additional resourcing to assist in increasing representation in market.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>RTOs and VICs</td>
<td>Tourism WA, Tourism Australia, Local Tourism Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increase industry capacity to be international market ready</strong> through product bundling initiatives, and investigate the feasibility of a Great Drive.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Tourism WA, Tourism Australia, Local Tourism Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitate greater collaboration and a focus on experience messages by visitor centre staff and volunteers.</strong></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>VICs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organise and conduct a series of cross-regional product famils to showcase the experiences on offer.</strong></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
<td>Steering Committee agencies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Through the establishment of the annual tourism forum, host a discussion on improving access and linkages</strong> including the potential for lifting freight restrictions for visitors, one-way hire, and road improvements.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
<td>Councils, Tourism WA, Local Tourism Organisations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner with an academic institute or other partner to start a process of monitoring across the Landscape</strong> to ascertain and monitor benchmark data.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Steering Committee/GDC</td>
<td>All stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investigate the feasibility of adopting a central performance system</strong> to monitor:</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife, Councils, researchers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- health of the environment</td>
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<td>- consumption reductions</td>
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<td>- conservation efforts</td>
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BACKGROUND

Purpose of the document

The Experience Development Strategy (EDS) for the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape is a framework for developing sustainable, world-class experiences for the international Experience Seeker market over the next 10 to 15 years. The objectives of the EDS are to:

1. identify the hero or standout experiences that can deliver Ningaloo-Shark Bay as a distinctive destination based on its market positioning
2. recommend projects (such as products, infrastructure) to activate the hero experiences
3. assist stakeholders to work collaboratively to deliver the market positioning and compelling experiences
4. achieve sustainable tourism and conservation outcomes
5. achieve community social and economic benefits

The EDS will complement and provide an input to planning for tourism, conservation and sustainable development planning in the region. It provides direction for prioritising local and regional investment and infrastructure initiatives that will contribute to developing a distinctive destination.

The Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Steering Committee (current membership Appendix A) will drive implementation of the actions in the EDS, which will be carried out by the relevant local, regional and state government agencies, land and marine management agencies and the tourism industry.

Australia’s National Landscape Program

Australia’s National Landscape Program is a tourism and conservation partnership led jointly by Tourism Australia and Parks Australia that involves collaboration between state, regional and local stakeholders. The Program aims to increase Australia’s global tourism competitiveness by developing sustainable world-class experiences that appeal to Australia’s global target market, Experience Seekers.

Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape is one of 16 National Landscapes that showcase Australia’s most spectacular natural and cultural heritage.
BACKGROUND

Consultation

Development of the EDS was guided by the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Steering Committee representing tourism, conservation and government. It involved inclusive consultation with the range of stakeholders - group meetings, workshops and presentations, person-to-person interviews and field visits with operators. A project webpage provided information and a forum for stakeholders to express their views.

Stakeholders

Cross-collaboration across the region’s stakeholders will be important to maximising the effectiveness of this EDS and the value of the visitor economy. The major stakeholders that will need to collaborate in implementing this EDS are:

- **tourism industry** – local operators, service providers, retailers
- **Visitor Centres** - Jurabi Turtle Discovery Centre in Cape Range, Carnarvon Visitor Centre, Shark Bay Discovery Centre, the Oceanarium
- **regional and state tourism bodies** – Tourism WA, Australia’s Coral Coast tourism region and, to some extent, Australia’s Golden Outback (in relation to Mount Augustus)
- **land and marine management agencies** – the WA Department of Parks and Wildlife manages the region’s national parks, marine parks and other conservation reserves and the Department of Fisheries manages the State’s fishing
- **local government** – the Shires of Exmouth, Carnarvon and Shark Bay and the Shire of Upper Gascoyne (where the Kennedy Range and Mount Augustus National Parks are located)
- **regional planning agencies** – the Gascoyne Development Commission
- **regional communities** – including local residents, pastoralists, community groups, conservation groups, Indigenous communities and groups
- **research institutions** – which conduct research and monitoring in the area
- **voluntary conservation sector** – local and national volunteer organisations assist in a range of research and monitoring projects in the area.

Regional planning context

The Ningaloo Shark Bay EDS has been prepared in close consultation with stakeholders many of whom have also been involved in the development of other regional planning documents.

Management and strategic plans for the two World Heritage Areas and the national parks underpin the sustainable future directions for these critical assets which form the backbone to the National Landscape and tourism and conservation partnerships.

Various planning and economic development documents have been prepared to guide investment in the Gascoyne Region with the most recent strategic document being the Gascoyne Regional Development Blueprint. The Blueprint includes infrastructure initiatives that support tourism and some of the proposals in the EDS.

The development of the Gascoyne Tourism Strategy commenced whilst this EDS was being prepared, and will be a key driver to enable implementation of many of the recommendations in this EDS. It will be critical that the two strategies complement one another and are implemented through one region wide tourism body.
NINGALOO-SHARK BAY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Location

Ningaloo–Shark Bay National Landscape broadly covers the Western Australian (WA) coast from Exmouth in the north to Shark Bay in the south. It incorporates the Ningaloo Coast and Shark Bay World Heritage Areas, the area in between and associated national parks and marine parks.

The main population centres in the region are Exmouth, Carnarvon and Denham. Visitor destinations include the range of coastal waters, Cape Range National Park, Francois Peron National Park, the remote Dirk Hartog Island National Park and the waters of Shark Bay. It includes the stromatolites (the world’s oldest life form) at Hamelin Pool and the famous Monkey Mia dolphin resort.

The Kennedy Range and Mount Augustus National Parks to the east provide experiences that complement the offerings near the coast. Whilst these areas were not originally included in the National Landscape, stakeholders agreed on the importance of the experiences offered by this inland region being integrated into the EDS. Therefore, these areas have been included in some of the actions in this EDS.

Access to the region is by road, air (through airports at Denham/Shark Bay, Carnarvon and Learmouth near Exmouth) and private sea vessels.
NINGALOO SHARK BAY

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

What are the natural and cultural values that set it aside?

The Ningaloo–Shark Bay region is renowned for its natural environment and wildlife. A meeting point of temperate and tropical waters, it contains two World Heritage Areas in close proximity linked by a coastline that offers largely unfettered access for exploring, camping and touring.

Shark Bay is one of the few World Heritage properties in the world listed under all four outstanding universal natural values. It contains:

- the world’s largest and most diverse sea grass meadows
- the most abundant and diverse assemblage of living stromatolites, the oldest life form on earth
- a haven for marine fauna such as whales, dolphins and a population of around 10,000 dugong (one of the world’s largest most stable dugong populations)
- numerous rare and endangered marine species and terrestrial fauna species in Francois Peron National Park
- outstanding natural formations, features and scenic landscapes

The Ningaloo Coast is listed as a World Heritage property for its natural beauty and biological diversity. It is the only major coral reef system in the world on the west coast of a continent and contains:

- a sub-tropical coral reef of exceptionally high diversity
- one of the world’s largest annual aggregations of whale sharks (the largest fish in the world), the largest population of resting Group IV Humpback Whales in the southern hemisphere and many other marine animals year round including turtles and manta rays
- rare and diverse plants and animals at Cape Range, including subterranean cave creatures.

The marine waters of both Shark Bay and the Ningaloo Coast are protected by gazetted marine parks. Unique to the area is the occurrence of arid terrestrial environments and species in close proximity to a coral reef.

The terrestrial landscapes are expansive, arid and often rugged. The coastline includes areas of spectacular cliffs, lengthy beaches and the ancient gorges of Cape Range National Park. These provide a stunning contrast to the turquoise waters of the sea. Inland, the Kennedy Range is a vast plateau of sandstone cliffs and gorges with spectacular wildflower displays after winter rains. Mount Augustus National Park contains the world’s largest monocline rock formation which rises 1106 metres above sea level and estimated to be 1,750 million years old. Known as Burringurrah by the local Wadjari Indigenous people, Mount Augustus contains fascinating Indigenous rock art.

The Ningaloo–Shark Bay National Landscape has a rich Indigenous culture extending back 30,000 years, as seen in numerous archaeological sites. Several Indigenous communities reside in the region, some of whom are involved in, or are developing, tourism experiences that showcase the region and their culture.
NINGALOO SHARK BAY

NATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The region has an intriguing European heritage of maritime exploration, scientific discovery and use of natural resources through pearling, guano mining, sandalwood cutting, fishing and pastoralism. Shark Bay is the site of the first recorded landing on the Western Australian coast of a European on the Australian coast - the Dutch sea captain Dirk Hartog in 1616.

Tourism that protects the Landscape’s values

Remoteness has protected Ningaloo-Shark Bay from many of the pressures of human use.

Changes and increases in visitor use bring with them potential threats to the pristine quality of the region’s marine ecosystems and wildlife populations through impacts such as pollution, litter, damage of reefs from anchors, damage of seagrass beds, boat strike of dugong in shallow water, interference with wildlife (such as boat strike of dugong in shallow water, turtle nesting). With coral reefs considered to be sensitive to climate change impacts, it will be important to minimise human use impacts at Ningaloo.

The region’s arid environments are fragile and vulnerable to disturbance from vehicles, trampling, uncontrolled camping and the spread of weed species and animal pests. Habitat and sanctuary areas for rare wildlife can also be impacted by uncontrolled access.

The expansive natural scenic vistas could also be affected by poorly designed or sited developments.

The Landscape’s pristine environments and ecological integrity are the essence of its attraction for visitors and their protection will be fundamental to developing sustainable, world-class experiences. The experiences in this EDS (and associated actions) aim to build on the protection of the area provided by its national and marine parks and its World Heritage status. This will be achieved through stakeholder partnerships to assist in managing values and addressing threats, such as:

- sustainable tourism practices by operators, including encouragement of eco-certification
- visitor information, education and interpretation delivered by operators, agencies, Visitor Centres and online sources emphasising the values of the area and responsible behaviour to minimise impacts
- continuing and expanding opportunities for visitors to contribute through participation in research and monitoring programs. Several research institutions, Parks and Wildlife and volunteer conservation organisations are already involved in numerous research, monitoring and environmental management programs in the area, some of which provide opportunities for visitor participation – for example, the Ningaloo Turtle Program, the Loggerhead Turtle Nesting Program at Dirk Hartog Island.

Pastoral leases both on the coast and inland are due for renewal in 2015, which may present new opportunities for tourism and conservation partnerships.

The EDS is also built around developing high yield, rather than high volume, visitation.
TOURISM IN THE REGION

Defining the region

The Ningaloo–Shark Bay National Landscape fits within the Exmouth and Carnarvon Statistical Areas. The tourism information in this section is drawn from National and International Visitor Survey data for the Exmouth and Carnarvon Statistical Areas.

What are its current attractions for visitors?

Ningaloo–Shark Bay National Landscape is primarily a nature-based destination where the most popular visitor activities are marine encounters and outdoor activities. In general, the region attracts domestic visitors for wildlife experiences; beach, fishing and boating; exploring national parks; and 4WD touring.

Shark Bay’s nature experiences, such as close encounters with wild dolphins at Monkey Mia, have traditionally attracted significant international visitation over many years. Additional marine experiences in the region - including swimming with whale sharks, turtles, manta rays and viewing humpback whales and dugong - are also emerging on the global scene.

Regional visitation

Ningaloo–Shark Bay National Landscape receives approximately 174,700 domestic overnight visitors a year, the majority of whom come from Western Australia.

Domestic overnight visitor numbers have been increasing but their average length of stay in the region has been decreasing. Nevertheless, the average length of stay for Ningaloo-Shark Bay remains higher than the state average and is similar to the Kimberley National Landscape. A surprising result for some is that domestic daytrip visitor numbers are rising (74,000 annually), with visitors originating in Perth and from within the region on journeys of more than 40 kilometres.

Approximately 43,000 international visitors come to the Ningaloo – Shark Bay National Landscape each year, mainly originating from Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Europe. International visitor numbers have been declining. Their average length of stay has been increasing and is in the middle of the range of National Landscapes in Western Australia. Some of this increase is believed to be a result of visiting friends and relations employed in the resources boom. Of all visitors to the region, just over half (55%) are female and the majority (42%) are between 25 and 44 years of age.

Table 1: Regional Visitor Numbers (Exmouth and Carnarvon Statistical Areas)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitors</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Length of Stay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15.4 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Overnight</td>
<td>174,000</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>7.3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Day</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TOURISM IN THE REGION

Visitation patterns

The Ningaloo Shark Bay National Landscape experiences a similar seasonal fluctuation to many tropical coastal areas (see Figure 3 below). That is, the domestic market predominately arrives in the winter months and the international market is stronger in the spring and summer months (northern hemisphere autumn and winter).

Figure 3: Three Year average Seasonal Visitation (2010-2013)

Mode of transport

The primary mode of transport for most visitors to the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape region is by car/4WD (65%) followed by air transport (29%). Remaining visitors (6%) access the region via coach/bus or private tours.

Figure 4: Mode of Transport to the region (three year average 2010-2013)
TARGET MARKETS

The Experience Seekers

Global Experience Seekers are the target market for Australia’s National Landscapes. They are a varied group of travellers who differ in age, country of origin and spending power but share values, attitudes and motivations. Typically, Experience Seekers are well educated and motivated by opportunities for personal growth, fulfilment and learning. They are discerning visitors, seeking quality and authenticity in their experiences. Features which attract them to a destination include:

- immersion in people, culture and places
- points of difference
- physical and emotional challenges
- escape from the crowds
- learning opportunities.

Tourism Australia has identified seven experience themes thought to motivate Experience Seekers to travel to and within Australia. Ningaloo – Shark Bay has the potential to deliver on six of these themes – Nature in Australia, Aboriginal Australia, Journeys through Australia, Australian Coastal Lifestyle, Food and Wine and Outback Australia.

Domestic Discovers & Achievers

Experiences which attract global Experience Seekers are attractive to many domestic visitors who have similar aspirations. Two of Tourism WA’s domestic market segments for the State share characteristics with Experience Seekers:

Dedicated Discoverers – want something new, a voyage of discovery.

Aspirational Achievers – seek comfort and luxury, somewhere different (from mainstream resorts) where they can experience new things.

These markets provide an opportunity for Ningaloo–Shark Bay, particularly as financial conditions in recent years have resulted in an increase in intrastate holiday travel in Western Australia and to the Ningaloo – Shark Bay National Landscape region.

Delivering experiences to markets

Experiences are an interaction between visitors (their motivations, expectations, interests) and a place and its people. Experience Seekers are looking for quality (regardless of price point), authenticity and compatibility with a destination’s character and brand promise at every touch point in their interactions including:

- adequate information and ease of booking (which will affect the decision to visit)
- appropriate access to the destination and its activities
- the right services and accommodation for their needs
- memorable activities, products and storytelling authentic to the natural and cultural settings.

To develop world-class experiences for target markets, Ningaloo–Shark Bay tourism stakeholders will need to offer quality at all these touch points.
### FUTURE TRENDS

**Market trends**

Emerging trends in travel and visitor preferences will provide opportunities and challenges for developing successful experiences for the Ningaloo–Shark Bay National Landscape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Implications for Ningaloo–Shark Bay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature-based tourism increasing in Australia and globally.</td>
<td>Best practice approaches to experiences and conservation will be needed to remain competitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor experiences (walking, cycling, adventure) increasing in Australia and globally. Growth in products, trails, activity hubs.</td>
<td>Marketing of the unique qualities of Ningaloo-Shark Bay and development of quality, sustainable products are needed to compete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine-based activities increasing.</td>
<td>Marine-based experiences are a major drawcard for the region. Protection of the quality of the marine environment and landscape will be critical in maintaining a competitive advantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glamping. Eco-friendly, soft adventure camping (from top-end to mid-range) popular globally.</td>
<td>A potential product opportunity in areas of high scenic value and proximity to immersive activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Implications for Ningaloo–Shark Bay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmentally &amp; socially responsible travel. Environmental and social sustainability emerging as important factors in planning travel and the travel experiences sought.</td>
<td>A potential opportunity to build on Ningaloo–Shark Bay’s pristine environment through offering sustainable experiences and practising sustainable product design, operations and marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntourism. Global increase in travel for volunteer activities or participatory components to travel, including for conservation and cultural purposes. Linked to environmentally and socially responsible travel.</td>
<td>Potential opportunities to develop participatory conservation products leveraging on existing volunteer conservation activities (the Ningaloo Turtle Program, the Loggerhead Turtle Nesting Program at Dirk Hartog Island) and the region’s high biodiversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and heritage tourism is a growth area Increasing international and domestic visitor interest in Indigenous culture and spending time with Indigenous people.</td>
<td>Potential for building capacity in Indigenous cultural products (some of which are established or emerging) and European heritage experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instantaneous technology. Use of the internet, mobile phones and social media are increasing for purchases and information.</td>
<td>Online booking and information and social media marketing will be critical to attracting Ningaloo-Shark Bay visitor markets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### STRATEGY OVERVIEW

#### Vision for Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape

This Strategy guides Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape stakeholders in developing a distinctive destination and world-class experiences in a consistent and collaborative way. This is done through the following elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Positioning</th>
<th>Hero Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where the community and the tourism industry want to see Ningaloo-Shark Bay in 10 years’ time. Encapsulates the values that underlie the region’s goals.</td>
<td>What is distinctive about Ningaloo-Shark Bay. A conceptual framework to drive coherent development of unique experiences.</td>
<td>The standout experiences that express the positioning and showcase the region and its natural and cultural heritage. Define a place, its people and stories and provide a focus for marketing. Have the pulling power to persuade a visitor to come to a destination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Projects

The way the hero experiences are activated through specific visitor opportunities. The projects are seen as the main way for creating and delivering distinctive experiences. They address the Landscape’s greatest opportunities and challenges.

The projects can serve as catalysts for further experience development and as a focus for attracting funding and investment.

#### Enablers of Success

Cross-cutting initiatives and actions needed to support experience development through the projects. They include measures to assist implementation of the EDS, management of visitor experiences and provision of improved visitor services such as transport, camping and food.

#### Action Plan

A guide to implementing the hero experiences and projects.

The Action Plan identifies priorities, stakeholder responsibilities and timeframes. It includes high priority projects that will kick-start development of hero experiences and projects which can act as significant catalysts to stimulate visitation and investment in the region.
VISION AND VALUES

The vision statement for the Ningaloo Shark Bay National Landscape, as agreed by stakeholders and the Steering Committee is that in 10 years’ time:

“The character, unspoiled beauty and sense of uninhibited freedom of Ningaloo-Shark Bay has remained and having discovered the spectacular scenery, marine and terrestrial wildlife, heritage and people, every visitor will be an advocate for visiting and conserving this landscape”

The values that underpin the vision and guide the way the community and tourism industry operate are:

Engaging - The fundamental experience of this landscape is one of a sense of freedom for visitors to immerse themselves in the landscape and the experiences it offers – to be an active participant rather than an observer.

Trust and responsibility - The tourism industry and other stakeholders encourage environmental self-responsibility among visitors. They demonstrate that they believe visitors, once they understand the values of the landscape, will be prepared to look after it. It is also important to maintain a sense of freedom for visitors to explore the natural values and not be overwhelmed by increasing regulations.

World Heritage and Protected Areas - The long term sustainability of World Heritage and protected areas is recognised as fundamental to the region’s future prosperity.

Commitment to conservation – all stakeholders demonstrate environmental stewardship and the importance of protecting the values that make the region attractive to tourism.

Sharing - By sharing their knowledge and experiences, all stakeholders will have a role in creating advocates for conservation and sustainable tourism at Ningaloo-Shark Bay among visitors.

Recognition and participation of Aboriginal people - Aboriginal peoples’ culture and connection to country are recognised and communicated to visitors. Aboriginal peoples’ participation in tourism is encouraged.

Commitment to change - Working together in the Ningaloo Shark Bay National Landscape partners are committed to seeing measurable change in visitor engagement, measured through social media tracking. They are also committed to ensuring the quality of the environment and the integrity of the cultural landscape are first and foremost in the future planning and development of the region.
POSITIONING

The uniqueness of Ningaloo-Shark Bay as a destination is reflected in the Landscape’s positioning, developed in consultation with the region’s stakeholders. The positioning reflects the competitive advantages of Ningaloo-Shark Bay as compared with its competitor destinations (see Appendix B.) It will drive the development of the Landscape’s distinctive experiences, products, creative approaches and the way it communicates with visitor markets.

The positioning developed for Ningaloo–Shark Bay National Landscape is “Uninhibited Freedom”

There is freedom to explore the unique qualities of the landscape including:
- Unbelievable first (life on earth, archaeological finds)
- Accessible reef of outstanding quality
- Up-close encounters of rare wildlife
- Striking landscape features
- Unmatched abundance
- Spellbinding stories

Uninhibited freedom.

Raw, remote, free, abundant, accessible

Wild, contrasting, innocent, raw, passionate, caring, down to earth and friendly. Very engaging and earthed. No pretences.

Climatic conditions evolved over thousands of years have created a visual splendour of extraordinary contrasts between ocean and land, earth and sky. Protected by remoteness, the landscape offers a spectacular array and abundance of marine life and unspoilt terrestrial vistas that are unique.

The coastline along the most westerly point of Australia offering extraordinary migratory seasonality linked with climatic conditions unique to the area. There are some of the clearest skies in the world to view stromatolites and multitudes of protected areas offering biodiversity in mega fauna, species and phenomenal marine life. There are whale sharks, manta rays and turtles along Ningaloo Coast and at Shark Bay. There are sea grass beds within coral fringing reef, home to dugongs. The contrasts, isolation and wildlife and human interactions make this landscape a truly unique destination.
Delivering on Ningaloo-Shark Bay’s positioning to target markets involves the tourism industry, land and sea managers, the entire community and other stakeholders embracing the concept of *Uninhibited Freedom* and communicating it in their products, protection of the environment and encounters with visitors.

It means giving meaning to, and helping every visitor to experience:

“This western-most point of Australia is a meeting point teeming with life and movement. An uninhibited landscape connected with its surrounds through unparalleled access to land and sea activity. All around, it is a wonderfully spontaneous and naturally serene environment.”

This is already happening for some visitors to the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape. The challenge is to ensure every visitor leaves with this feeling and has the words to share it. This needs to continue to be a fundamental point of difference for the tourism industry and a focus on effort by every operator.

**Ningaloo-Shark Bay’s positioning needs to be expressed through the following:**

- Visitors are entrusted to appreciate the values of the environment and act to ensure they are protected
- Wildlife can be seen in *Uninhibited Freedom* in their own environment
- Tourism operators are communicating their love of Ningaloo-Shark Bay and understanding, appreciation and commitment to its conservation
- Visitors have freedom of choice for a spectrum of experiences to interact with the natural environment - for example, from snorkelling alone to managed interactions with dolphins, to encountering wildlife independently or with well-trained guides
- Visitors feel the freedom to travel the landscape, camp at a myriad of sites on the coast or inland, and swim in the sea or rivers and waterholes of the inland.
## Uninhibited Freedom

**NINGALOO-SHARK BAY NATIONAL LANDSCAPE**

### Themes

- **UNEXPECTED encounters**
  - Get up-close and personal with an ocean character on their annual journey home
  - Meet a friendly local who is grazing on nature’s bounty and retell the story from the comfort of your camp
  - Find a place rarely seen, wait, and watch it come to life

- **OUTBACK & OCEAN discovery**
  - Discover the origins of life on earth
  - Explore spectacular tropical reefs, coast and islands or the real outback without the crowds
  - Fill your camera with unbelievable moments in the landscape

- **CONSERVATION through participation**
  - Get off the beaten track with an eco-accredited operator whose business makes a positive
  - Be part of caring for country working with the world’s oldest living culture and teams of dedicated locals
  - Work side-by-side with world experts to protect this place for future generations

### Hero Experiences

1. **Wildlife calendar and sighting program**
2. **Eco-accommodation with wildlife viewing**
3. **Aerial journeys**
4. **Linkages across the Landscape:**
   - a) drive loops
   - b) the Baiyungu Track
5. **Live-aboard experiences**
6. **Tag-along tours to new destinations**
7. **Interpretive programs linked to monitoring and research**
8. **Ningaloo-Shark Bay Guardians Program**
9. **Ningaloo Centre and Shark Bay Research Centre**
10. **Voluntourism Program**

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1 Above turtle photo courtesy of Australia’s Coral Coast
Unexpected encounters
Unexpected encounters

While for many the region conjures images of swimming with a whale shark or hand-feeding a dolphin, the Ningaloo Shark Bay National Landscape offers an unrivalled depth of unexpected encounters. Through the development and promotion of a greater range of experiences in the visitor offering, the region can encourage visitors to stay longer and visit across more seasons.

Just some of the existing opportunities for Unexpected Encounters are:

- sea kayaking and snorkelling on Ningaloo Reef seeing dugong, turtles, humpback whales, fish of all shapes, sizes and colours and subtropical coral
- snorkelling and scuba diving at various locations to see manta rays, fish of all shapes, sizes and colours and subtropical coral
- sailing in Shark Bay in search of dugong and other wildlife
- exploring on foot, in the car or at your camp seeing turtles from the beach, kangaroos, wallabies, emus and colourful reptiles
- meeting friendly locals with stories to tell from their boats, tours, pubs, properties and accommodation
- Discovering the wild scenery of Dirk Hartog Island – the most westerly point of Australia where Europeans first set foot on the Australian continent
- exploring the Aboriginal and European pioneering heritage at Gwoonwardu Mia and the Carnarvon Heritage Precinct.

Observations for the road ahead

There are several significant challenges for industry, government and the community to deliver unexpected encounters:

Sustainable visitation

Visitor numbers need to remain at sustainable levels to enable experiences to remain true to the brand positioning of Uninhibited Freedom. This approach is preferable to other approaches that may, for example, involve high levels of management to ensure protection of the environment. This approach will require innovative experience offerings to improve visitor yield.

Wider wildlife and environmental focus

Currently experiences available tend to focus on a small number of iconic species. Building and promoting a wider range of experiences will strengthen the visitor offer of experiencing Uninhibited Freedom. This will also provide an opportunity to extend the seasonal experiences and increase visitor numbers and length of stay in the shoulder periods.

Building tourism industry capacity

To deliver world-class experiences of Uninhibited Freedom, operators will need to build capacity to offer consistently high quality products and customer service across the visitor cycle and deliver on international visitor expectations.

Promoting what we already have

One wonderful way to experience the Unexpected Encounters is SCUBA Diving which is readily available, yet poorly promoted. This is just one example of a range of great experiences that could be better promoted.
The meeting place of temperate and tropical ocean currents, far from population centres, home to the only coral reef system on the west coast of a continent, and protected by World Heritage status and committed conservation agencies – it is no wonder such a wide diversity of species call this place home.

The Ningaloo Shark Bay National Landscape redefines abundance, the world’s largest sea grass beds and diverse sub-tropical reefs, so it is a haven for marine life. The experiences available range from an up-close and personal encounter with an ocean giant such as a dugong, whale shark or humpback whale to watching the annual cycle of life for everything from turtles, dolphins, dugong and rays to fish, corals and microscopic marine life.

Who wouldn’t want to call this place home.

Offering the best of both worlds - a temperate and sub-tropical climate, abundant marine life and diverse terrestrial environments, access to services and facilities, and wilderness campsites - the Ningaloo Shark Bay National Landscape provides everything you could hope for.

The locals are friendly, why wouldn’t they be when they have everything you could dream of, and they know how to get the most from this unique environment. Don’t be surprised if you stumble across a friendly farmer or fisher ready to tell their story, an emu or kangaroo happy to pose for your photo, or a dedicated conservationist keen to share this special place with you.

With abundance comes time, generosity and Uninhibited Freedom.

**Hero EXPERIENCE 1**

Get up-close and personal with an ocean character on their annual journey home

**Hero EXPERIENCE 2**

Meet a friendly local who is grazing on nature’s bounty and retell the story from the comfort of your camp
Some places in the world sing their story from the rooftop, others offer fleeting moments. The Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape offers a place to just be, where you can escape the crowds (if you want to) and find a place to reflect on what’s important.

As you ponder life’s mysteries don’t be surprised if inquisitive local wildlife pops in to visit. This stunning landscape offers so many rare glimpses you can’t help but be inspired – be it sunrise over the world’s largest monocline rock formation, or sunset over an uncrowded beach, finding hidden caves, ancient rock art or a blanket of colourful wildflowers, or pondering the beginning of life on earth as you count the moments by the bubbles from a stromatolite.

You can’t help but think it’s a beautiful day - that just keeps getting better.
1. Wildlife calendar and sightings program

The hero experience of *Unexpected Encounters* can be delivered across the landscape. The marine environment is teeming with species, and while a visitor may be enticed by the opportunity to swim with a manta ray or a whale shark, they also encounter other species. There are also plenty of unexpected wildlife encounters to be had on land.

One of the Landscape’s challenges - of being seen as a limited season destination - can be addressed through promotion of the whole landscape in an integrated manner for the diversity of species across all seasons.

A Ningaloo Shark Bay wildlife calendar that focuses on the full suite of experiences and the journeys of wildlife on offer across the year (and across the landscape) could form the basis for a strong experience-driven campaign grounded in social media. The anchors of the wildlife calendar can be events such as the Whale Shark Festival.

Through use of social media, visitors can inform themselves about the seasons to find, see and, in many cases, swim with icon species, and to be involved themselves through a sightings program. Similar to the Great Barrier Reef ‘Eye on the Reef’ program, visitors can be engaged through their tour operator or as free and independent visitors to share their wildlife sightings.

For this concept to succeed there needs to be greater work done one-on-one with operators in experience development.

Opportunities

- The Shark Bay and Ningaloo marine parks area supports 10 percent of the world’s *dugong* population.

- **Humpback Whale watching** tours on Western Australia's Coral Coast run every year from June to November, when humpback whales migrate between their summer breeding grounds and their winter feeding grounds.

- Every year between mid-March and mid-July, *whale sharks* congregate in the Ningaloo Marine Park following the mass spawning of coral.

- You can swim with *manta rays* all year round at Coral Bay.

- *Sea turtles* can be encountered all year round and hatchlings may be sighted during turtle nesting season.

- Renowned as one of the best and most reliable places for dolphin interaction in the world, Monkey Mia is the only place in Australia where *dolphins* visit daily, not just seasonally.

- A breathtaking array of *tropical fish* can be seen over coral gardens.

- Shark Bay World Heritage Area has the longest wildflower season in Western Australia with over 700 species of flowering plants and Cape Range National Park is home to 630 species of flowering plants.

- Spotting rare rock wallabies or emus exhibiting unusual behaviour (such as a recent popular social media post of five emus swimming).

- Divers can access over 200 different species of marine animals from shore at the Navy Pier with a commercial guide.
**Best Practice Example: Gavin the Parrotfish Social Media Campaign**

Seawalker Green Island is an underwater viewing experience that allows visitors the opportunity to get up close and personal with the Great Barrier Reef in a safe and low stress way. Visitors are able to walk, not swim, on the sea floor, and immerse themselves in all the Great Barrier Reef has to offer while keeping the face and head completely dry.

In an attempt to further develop their customer experience and to make it more memorable and something that is talked about and shared, they recently embarked on a Facebook media campaign around Gavin the photo-bombing parrotfish, which has turned him into an international celebrity and drawcard overnight.

Since the launch of the campaign in 2013, Gavin has gone global, with over 700,000 people seeing Gavin’s photos on Facebook and counting. His story has also been featured in a variety of newspapers and media around the world.

**Best Practice Example: Eye on the Reef Sightings Network**

Eye on the Reef is a powerful monitoring program developed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) that enables anyone who visits the Great Barrier Reef to contribute to its long-term protection. The Program brings together assessment and monitoring programs that collect valuable information about reef health, marine animals and incidents.

One such program is their Sightings Network – an avenue for any Reef users to tell GBRMPA about the amazing creatures they see in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The observations, photographs and video recordings sent in through the program help to build knowledge about the diversity, abundance, habitats and range of marine animals. They also provide up-to-date information on the distribution and protected and iconic species such as marine turtles and Maori wrasse.

The Sightings Network program was developed in 2007 as a partnership between GBRMPA, the Queensland Government and the tourism industry. Since then, Reef users have used it to record more than 9,000 sightings of interesting marine animals.

As well as using the network to record interesting sightings, people can also use it to report reef health impacts such as coral bleaching and damage, marine incidents such as oil spills and chemical pollution, or strandings of marine animals.

2. Eco-accommodation and wildlife viewing

Experience Seeker markets are looking for ways to immerse themselves in world heritage and natural areas, and are often prepared to pay for distinctive and quality accommodation. The current range of accommodation across Ningaloo Shark Bay offers limited diversity and few iconic eco-accommodation properties that deliver a World Heritage experience and a setting from which a visitor can explore and experience unexpected encounters.

Recent Western Australian research on eco-accommodation indicates that international travellers are more likely to consider eco-accommodation compared to domestic travellers (82% versus 62%). Visitors seeking reward, pampering and comfort (luxury seekers) have a preference for the premium options (such as eco-resorts and ecolodges), while visitors seeking constant stimulation and action (adventure seekers) have a preference for more basic options (such as tented eco-accommodation at various standards).

Well-managed ecolodges or similar accommodation establishments operated by private enterprise are able to offer a range of levels and types of visitor experience, service and innovation that will enable a visitor to experience, learn about and become advocates for unique places they may not otherwise be able to visit. In the Ningaloo Shark Bay landscape there are some magnificent settings that could offer a site to combine eco-accommodation with wildlife interaction year round.

Offering opportunities for investment in eco-accommodation through a well-managed process of investor engagement and an enabling environment in local Government will attract new higher yield markets (including Experience Seekers) to Ningaloo-Shark Bay. Marketing for aspirational accommodation will also assist in attracting other visitors to current accommodation.

A recent call for expressions of interest under the Naturebank program for eco-accommodation in Francois Peron National Park may see a new development. Other precincts that have been identified as having potential include:
- Gnarakoo Bay
- Dirk Hartog Island
- Coral Bay
- An additional site within Cape Range National Park
- Mount Augustus

Affluent luxury seekers viewed eco-accommodation as an experience and expect:
- accommodation designed to have the minimum possible impact on the natural environment in which it is situated
- structurally designed to reduce environmental impact, usually with certification from an independent third party.
- sustainably integrated with the Natural, Built and Social Environments

It is suggested that future investment in eco-accommodation be linked to a global certification standard for ecologically sustainable design so that the destination acts as a showcase for leading design principles and measurable results.
Further, encouraging all operators to link accommodation to experiences such as sea kayaking, wildlife viewing or voluntourism could be a distinctive product for this region. Night time activities also present an opportunity as the lack of ambient light means the night sky is a spectacular experience, and could potentially be distinguished by:

- an experience linked to the region’s early history of navigators using the stars to sail to WA, or
- building an experience around the sounds of the sea at night, especially during the whale migration.

**Best Practice Example: Tao Expedition, Philippines**

Tao Expeditions is described as ‘one of the most pioneering cultural ecotourism projects in the Philippines’. It is a journey to the most remote region in Palawan to discover a tropical archipelago of hundreds of paradise islands, inaccessible to independent travellers through its remoteness and lack of tourist infrastructure.

Tao Expeditions have introduced a new concept of tourism where there is no need for unnecessary development and no cultural adjustment to accommodate tourists. They do not intrude and only utilise what is already available.

Tao Expeditions are a balance of adventure and rustic luxury where guests visit local villages and observe the day-to-day goings of the locals. Guests sleep in family homes and buy or barter for local produce and services.

http://www.taophilippines.com/

**Best Practice Example: EarthCheck BPDS**

The EarthCheck Building Planning and Design Standard (BPDS) is a globally recognised design standard for buildings. The Standard assists local governments and developers in the master planning and design of buildings and associated infrastructure to achieve ecologically sustainable development and to deliver ongoing operational efficiencies. It provides guidelines, tools and indicators for assessment and certification in the planning and design phases of sustainable building developments.

EarthCheck BPDS uses a performance-based platform that is supported by a range of benchmarking indicators (KPA’s) for design and construction.

www.earthcheck.org

3. **Aerial journeys**

Ningaloo-Shark Bay is a magnificent destination with significant potential to attract international visitors, but is located a long distance from ready air access. Aerial journeys have become established in many destinations as ways to access remote areas and provide distinctive experiences of the landscape. They are most successful when they cover spectacular country, are well packaged and enable visitors to access areas or engage in activities that they would otherwise be unable to achieve due to time or the need for special skills or four wheel drive vehicles.

Aerial journeys would offer a visitor to Ningaloo-Shark Bay an opportunity to link the coast and the outback and spend time in a number of locations using a range of accommodation. Packaging of flights (including sea planes) with ground based tours, accommodation and on-station experiences (for example)
PROJECTS

would be very popular with the Experience Seeker market. Subject to commercial viability, a **wide-range of itineraries** could be developed based on accommodation options such as station stays, iconic experience hubs (Exmouth, Coral Bay, Shark Bay) and outstanding features.

Ideally interaction with local characters at pastoral stations (for example) would be a component of the aerial journeys. Some potential examples of aerial journey locations include Denham, Gnarloo, Dirk Hartog Island, Warroora and Mount Augustus.

Aerial journeys could also be a means of attracting visitors to Ningaloo-Shark Bay by establishing links to other destinations with strong pulling power. This type of opportunity could allow for packaging of a Ningaloo-Shark Bay visit with one in the Kimberley National Landscape (which is linked by the Kimberley Aerial Highway).

**Best Practice Examples: Aerial Journeys**

*In the Kimberley, Western Australia* scenic flights operating from Broome and Kununurra provide day tours of remote and scenic gorges and to the iconic Mitchell Falls and Purnululu National Park. The Kimberley Aerial Highway is a network of airstrips in towns, pastoral stations, national parks and other locations which are increasingly being utilised for multi-day tours and/or access to remote accommodation. Some of these remote accommodation facilities themselves offer scenic flights, walking, four wheel driving and fishing experiences for guests.

*New Zealand* offers several distinctive aerial experiences to unique locations that are otherwise difficult to access. The appeal of these products is enhanced by well-packaged add-ons.

The iconic Siberia Experience is a flight from Makaroa over the spectacular Mount Aspiring National Park that can be combined with a landing and bushwalk in a remote valley with a return journey by jet boat.

**Lady Elliot Island** is a coral cay located at the southern tip of the World Heritage Listed Great Barrier Reef. The island is a sanctuary for over 1,200 species of marine life and is known for its abundance of manta rays, turtles, amazing array of spectacular marine life and unspoilt coral reef.

The Island offers competitive packages that include flights and accommodation at its un-pretentious 41 room eco-resort.

Experiencing the reef ecosystem is the focus of the island. The resort provides a range of free guided activities and/or tours three times a day, in the morning, afternoon and evening. The highlight activity is snorkelling. Guests can also explore the reef through walking and diving.

**Montague Island** Nature Reserve is a breathtaking wildlife sanctuary on NSW’s south coast. The island is known for its marine life, including seals, whales and penguin colonies.

Conservation Volunteers Australia and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service operate regular tours to the island where guests work alongside rangers to undertake Little Penguin surveys. Volunteers also help monitor and protect nesting boxes on the island provided for the Little Penguin colony.

Guests not only help conserve this natural environment for future generations but stay overnight in historic lighthouse keeper’s cottages. This accommodation has been restored and adds to an already unique nature experience.
EXPERIENCE VISION - 2020

An island adventure on Dirk Hartog Island

Our adventure began early this morning as we headed out in our 4WD for Dirk Hartog Island as part of a tag-along tour. After a couple of hours of driving we knew we were going to be in for a treat when we smelt the fresh coffee brewing as we knocked on the door of the homestead. Our hosts Kieren and Tory from Dirk Hartog Ecolodge welcomed us with a lavish morning tea overlooking the bay!

Tory and Kieran explained the island’s unique history and shared their stories and historical memorabilia while we took in the great ocean view. We were staying overnight at the homestead in the original limestone shearer’s quarter’s, built over a century ago. Situated in the pristine World Heritage Area off the Shark Bay coast and just meters from the Shark Bay Marine Park, Dirk Hartog Island is so unique it will not fail to impress even well-travelled adventurers!

We then grabbed the picnic lunch Kieran and Tory prepared for us ready for the day’s adventure. There is so much to do here - the island is teeming in wildlife! We headed for Turtle Bay, located at the island’s north - a prominent nesting ground for Loggerhead Turtles. On the way we learnt that Loggerhead Turtles are the most endangered species of turtles to nest in the Shark Bay Area and indeed the Australian region as a whole.

The waters surrounding the island are home to many pods of dolphins. Kieran told us that sharks are always spotted around the island, mostly Lemon Sharks, Shovel Nose Sharks and Tiger Sharks. This is no surprise as Kieran explained the waters surround the island are home to hundreds of fish species, including whiting, flathead, snapper, yellowfin tuna and dolphin fish, just to name a few!

Our time at Turtle Bay was very special – we even got to see where the turtles nest and learnt about the struggle for the hatchlings to get to the water. Next year I am definitely coming back to help out with the research program.

On the way back to the homestead we went to Cape Inscription where in 1616 Captain Dirk Hartog arrived on the ‘Eendracht’ and left an inscribed plate with his name and date of arrival. We were told that during the whale season you can see spectacular displays by breaching whales from the Cape Inscription cliffs.

As we relax, tasting the gourmet nibbles and watching the sun set we plan tomorrow’s 4WD adventure to explore more of the island’s rich history and wildlife.

Photo courtesy of www.tripadvisor.com
Outback and ocean discovery
THEME 2

Outback and ocean discovery

*Experience Seekers* are seeking adventurous journeys that get them off the beaten track. Offering a range of itineraries will introduce *Experience Seekers* to the contrasting coastal and arid outback landscapes and deepen their understanding and appreciation of the landscape and the region’s people. The outback, one of the experience themes that motivate *Experience Seekers*, is currently undersold. With interesting outback areas very close to the coast, there is scope for a range of journeys to be developed.

Examples of current opportunities for journeys include:

- land and boat-based gorge tours at Cape Range National Park
- four wheel drive trips at Francois Peron National Park, Shark Bay
- camping and walking at Mount Augustus and Kennedy Range
- the Gascoyne-Murchison Outback pathways – drive routes which extend into the outback and other regions from Exmouth and Carnarvon
- accessing world-class surf and kite surfing with a wilderness camping experience on the Red Bluff on the Gnaraloo coast where the desert meets the sea
- multi-day sea kayaking and camping on the Ningaloo coast
- exploring the many natural sites – such as Shell Beach, the stromatolites, Steep Point and the Zuytdorp Cliffs, the Cape Range National Park and the Carnarvon blow holes.

Observations for the road ahead

There are several significant challenges for industry, government and the community to create memorable journeys.

Improving access and transport linkages

Expensive and limited flights with restrictions on freight (such as diving gear, surfboards) limit the options available to short stay and fly-drive visitors to the region.

Allied with this is the limited availability of one-way car and campervan hire for visitors wishing to pick up or return a vehicle while in the region.

Car and campervan trailer hire, boat hire and bus transport arrangements to assist visitors to move around the region and link experiences is limited, including arrangements for linking places within the Landscape including the coast and the inland. For example, a water taxi, hovercraft or transfer vessel from Carnarvon to Shark Bay would enable easier access and longer trips that could take in the Shark Bay Marine Park and Dirk Hartog Island.

Unsealed roads and road conditions in the region affect access by visitors and private investment in tourism. Funding for improvements to the region’s road network and maintenance is affected by the low number of ratepayers.

In the Gascoyne Regional Investment Blueprint the Gascoyne Development Commission (GDC) has identified Road Accessibility Infrastructure as a Transformation Project that is essential for the future economic (including tourism) and social development of the region. Improvements in road infrastructure will be a major priority for the GDC in seeking funding and investment and in developing a proposed whole-of-Gascoyne regional road transport plan to provide a framework for investment in critical road infrastructure.
Current priority roads for improvement relevant to Ningaloo-Shark Bay hero experiences are the Minilya-Exmouth Road.

Within this context it is critical to ensure visitor safety and awareness of road conditions and lack of services while visitors are traveling in a remote location through education material, an awareness campaign, road signage and wildlife awareness.

Establishing a year-round destination

Due to promotion of specific species that are present at Ningaloo-Shark Bay only seasonally, consumers perceive the region as a seasonal destination. This is compounded by some operators opening only during some seasons.

Given that there are iconic marine species visible all year round across the landscape, an integrated approach promoting the seasonal diversity across the landscape is critical to creating a year-round destination that supports business viability. Inclusion of inland areas that complement the coast will also improve perceptions that Ningaloo-Shark Bay offers exceptional experiences throughout the year.

Improving accommodation diversity

The range of accommodation types and price points is limited in the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape and there are only a small number of properties (such as eco-accommodation) that express environmental stewardship and Uninhibited Freedom.

Access to land for accommodation development is affected by large areas of pastoral lease land and bed limits at Coral Bay, which is not a gazetted town.

Camping in some key locations is booked out by local people and repeat visitors from elsewhere travelling well in advance of the tourism season. Some station stays that could offer a distinctive experience of this landscape are not well promoted.

The development and marketing of a Pastoral Stay Cluster could have significant potential as a different way of experiencing the region. There are some excellent stations.
In a country as large as Australia, the best things take time to experience. While the Ningaloo Shark Bay National Landscape is no exception in its size, many of the best experiences can be enjoyed close to your accommodation. You can wake up at a beach camp spot, snorkel in the morning and be back for lunch. You can wander the beach to see the stromatolites and be back for a midday siesta. See dugongs feeding in the shallows from the beach, and be back for dinner and a drink at sunset.

With so much on offer, there is always something just around the corner.

While there are hundreds of individual reefs around the world, many thousands of islands and large areas of ‘outback’ in Australia, many of the best sites are either crowded, degraded, or a bit too ‘touristy’. The Ningaloo-Shark National Landscape offers authentic, uncrowded and rewarding engagement with the reef, coast and outback. It provides what many international Experience Seekers would see as the ‘best of Australia’ in many ways.

The experiences available include walking, swimming and exploring uncrowded beaches where you can swim straight onto the reef from the beach, see vast untouched landscapes that look as ancient as time itself, and meet the characters that live in paradise.
Whether it’s the reef, the coast, the islands, the outback or the people, Ningaloo-Shark Bay is a photographer’s dream. Social media pages are filled with images of sunrise and sunset, underwater vistas, stunning rock formations, white sandy beaches with clear blue water, diverse marine life, kangaroos on the beach and people reconnecting and communing with nature. In the words of today’s marketers, the images from this place are undoubtedly ‘shareable’.
4. Linkages across the landscape

There are a number of land-based journeys that offer potential for exceptional linkages across the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape. These are primarily drive loops and an emerging opportunity for an iconic walking, riding and kayak trail on the Baiyungu Trail. Some journey opportunities also link in with other well-positioned destinations.

a) Drive Loops

The region is predominantly a drive destination. To increase length of stay and reduce crowding at popular spots the National Landscape needs to offer a variety of drive loops. Some examples include:

- **Shark Bay-Carnarvon-Mount Augustus-Karijini-Exmouth Loop** - would build on the current Outback Pathways program to establish an exceptional drive route that would encourage visitors to travel from Carnarvon inland via Kennedy Range and Mount Augustus and north to Karijini, a comparable and exceptional natural destination, before returning to the northern end of the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape. This would encourage dispersal across the region and encourage longer stay.

- **Outback to Ocean pathways** – linking the coast and the outback, playing to a key strength of the region, the opportunity exists to create a series of drive, fly-drive and land and sea journeys that connect the land and sea experiences.

- **Itineraries for self-drive markets with accommodation options for camping and farm stay** – recognising that a large proportion of visitors (65%) come with their own vehicle, and many of those are self-contained, creating itineraries that link camping spots and farm stay opportunities could help to increase the length of stay and better disperse visitors from popular coastal spots including to accommodation such as station stays like Bullara Station near Coral Bay.

#### Best Practice Example: The Great Alpine Road – an iconic touring route

The Great Alpine Road is one of Victoria’s primary promoted drive journeys. It traverses the vast and spectacular Victorian Alps from Wangaratta in the north-east to Bairnsdale in the east of the state. The route is some 300kms long and has six shorter themed loops.

Development of the journey was guided by a strategic plan with significant engagement by stakeholders, including several local governments, competing ski resorts and private operators. An effective steering committee and marketing plan assisted in obtaining funding and investment from government and the private sector.

Local councils and Parks Victoria invested in high standard visitor facilities across all tenures. Some of the loops off the primary journey have become strong destinations in their own right, including a significant government investment in sealing one of the secondary routes – now known as the Bogong Alpine Way.

A new iconic walk from the touring route is now being developed.

Significant funding was directed towards establishing brand aligned interpretation and a broad suite of collateral - including website, interactive map, GPS linked waypoint and route guides.

Involvement of the private sector has been important for the development of products and services essential to attract visitors.
b) The Baiyungu Track

The Baiyungu Track (owned by the Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation) is proposed as a 320km track along the coast from Point Quobba to Exmouth that will result in a physical link along much of the coast of the Landscape. It is proposed to offer a range of opportunities for the Experience Seeker market including sections for walking, sea-kayaking and mountain biking. Over time it is proposed to include interpretation by local Aboriginal guides.

Different segments of the Track will be able to be completed as 2 to 5 day journeys and will include dedicated overnight camps with water supply, a toilet and a range of accommodation options. Development of Stage 1 is expected to raise the profile of the Track and generate some revenue. Stage 1 commences in Coral Bay and stretches from the new boat ramp south of the settlement north to Mauds Landing. It will include interpretive signage.

To proceed, the Baiyungu Track requires the following concurrent actions:

- funding to complete the physical infrastructure
- a dedicated publicity and social media program around the wildlife encounters and adventure experiences possible on the track with a focus on experiences that deliver the feeling of Uninhibited Freedom
- a commercial operator to begin running tours and provision of support for the operator to develop products that are ready for the international market
- transport links that support visitors travelling to trailheads, including assisting visitors return hired bikes and kayaks
- a brand with supporting merchandise and opportunities to make a financial contribution to this program to generate additional revenue.

Best Practice Example: Larapinta Trail, Central Australia

The Larapinta Trail is a 223 kilometre long walking trail through the arid, rugged West MacDonnell Ranges National Park west of Alice Springs. The Trail demonstrates how a remote, long distance walk in an arid region can be gradually developed for international and domestic markets and become a significant addition to regional tourism.

The Larapinta Trail is now emerging as a ‘must-do’ trail on the international and domestic scene which is seeing growth in independent walker numbers and commercial tours.

A critical feature in the development of the Trail was comprehensive strategic planning that was supported and implemented by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT. The Trail is planned for a range of markets – day walkers, short walk comfort seekers and remote adventurers – with track standards, facilities and services provided at locations appropriate to each market. This includes provision of different standards of campsite, access points for shorter walks, water, and food storage facilities for long walks.

Private sector partnerships have been fundamental to the success of the Trail. A dedicated website (run as a private sector partnership) provides comprehensive information on booking, fees, transport and access, weather conditions, equipment, facilities, water availability, health and safety, tours and interpretation. This is a vital aid to assist walkers to plan for walking in a remote area. The Trail is also being marketed as one of the premier experiences for the region. Commercial operators offer an increasing range of products including walks of various lengths, walker transport and walk packages including Aboriginal cultural experiences.
5. Live-aboard experiences

The marine environments in the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape are outstanding and vast. Linking a number of diverse locations into a marine itinerary would give the Experience Seeker the maximum opportunity to engage in the hero experiences. This can be one of the keys is the key to achieving the vision that every visitor leaves as an ambassador for the destination.

A high quality live-aboard vessel (12-20 PAX) could provide the ideal basis for a ‘mini-cruise’ between Shark Bay and Exmouth which included some remote location visits. Similar to the experiences offered on the Kimberley Coast, the vessel could offer a range of excursions such as canoeing, snorkelling and inclusion of other existing tours (such as the Whale Shark tour, Yardie Creek boat tour). This could be matched with an ‘open-jaw’ flight from Perth to Shark Bay, Exmouth-Perth or vice versa.

Best Practice Example: Kimberley Quest

Kimberley Quest is a luxury cruise company which operates extended wilderness expeditions along the stunning Kimberley coast cruising between Broome and Wyndham.

The Kimberley Quest II is a 25 metre custom-built vessel (see below image) which has been designed for relaxing and exploring the Kimberley coastline. Guests can enjoy indoor and outdoor alfresco areas, a refreshing dip in the spa and gourmet cuisine prepared by our on-board chef.

Cruising with a maximum of 18, guests enjoy the surrounds comfortably. The Kimberley is prolific with islands, whirlpools, inlets, extensive waterfalls, pristine beaches and unforgettable scenery. There is always plenty to see.

Activities include exploring untouched river systems, viewing ancient rock art, fishing the tidal creeks, discovering the history and viewing the rugged cliffs on a scenic tender excursion.

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2 The term ‘open jaw’ refers to a round-trip ticket where the passenger does not arrive and depart from the same location.
6. Tag-along tours to new destinations

With the increase in travellers' preferences for ‘soft adventure’, there need to be new options for how visitors experience the more remote parts of the region. The opportunity exists for both inexperienced international travellers and the next wave of adventurous but less experienced domestic travellers to create new ‘journeys’ and itineraries that link new products and experiences with existing product bundles. One of these opportunities is tag-along-tours into new parts of the region.

While locations such as Mt Augustus and Gnaraloo Lake MacLeod can offer superb guided opportunities, there is also a need to provide for self-drive travellers who wish to be more directly engaged in the driving experience. The creation of tag-along tours is primarily a commercial decision. The following actions will help to create an environment that supports investment.

- Work with the land owners and community to establish preferred 4WD touring loops and routes, including engagement of land owners/pastoral lease holders to map the routes and back tracks to Gnaraloo - Lake Macleod and Mt Augustus as immediate priorities. This includes ensuring appropriate permit systems and tenure agreements are in place for travel and overnight stays.
- Investigate appropriate campsites or links to station stays and, if required, seek infrastructure funding to establish overnight camps where commercial options or existing camps are not available or suitable.
- Once an operator (or operators) is in place, recognising the large contingent of international self-drive and hire drive visitors in marketing of these new tours through partners such as Britz/Maui to push these tour itineraries in their in-car magazine.
- Encourage station stays to use high quality local produce to showcase the region’s natural bounty and lift visitor spend per person.

Suggested tag-along tours to new destinations include:
- a Shark Bay – Carnarvon - Kennedy Ranges - Mt Augustus – Karrijini - Exmouth tour
- the Gascoyne River from Carnarvon
- Gnaraloo - Lake Macleod
- Steep Point-Dirk Hartog via the barge
- Blowholes – Gnaraloo – Warroora - Yardie Creek
- within Francois Peron National Park.

“You feel the clean white sand scrunch under your toes as your body moulds into your warm beach towel. The mesmerising sound of the gentle waves lapping the beach and the clean fresh air lull you into that pure sense of calm and peacefulness — now you feel like you’re on holidays. When you peep a quick look at the ocean the stunning azure coloured water entices you for a swim or a snorkel…or maybe that can wait…relax and enjoy the stunning Turquoise Bay beach…”

Turquoise Bay Beach Service (part of Yardie Creek Boat Tours)
Best Practice Example: Maria Island Lodge and Walk

Multi-award winning Maria Island Walk is a family owned and operated tourism experience which highlights authentic Tasmania and has been recognised for its environmental friendliness and leadership in the tourism industry. The four day walk through forests, along beaches and past historical remnants includes a champagne lunch on the last day and leaves ample time after a day’s walk to swim and relax before dinner. To rest between walking days, there are two wilderness camps adjacent to the beach, with comfortable beds and basic necessities. On the last night, walkers are rewarded with a more luxurious stay in the restored colonial, heritage listed home of entrepreneur Diego Bernacchi.

The multiple accommodation options of the Maria Island Walk make it a good model for Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape to investigate. This model of a combination of different, high quality accommodation types means that the Landscape could adapt and add to existing facilities to create one or more walking, cycling or kayaking multi-day itineraries. In this way, special interest activities are nurtured and layered to boost the destination’s appeal.
Cape Range and Yardie Creek Tag-along Tour

I can vaguely recall the rough four wheel track we had taken into the Cape Range National Park some ten years ago and the excitement I felt when I discovered its amazing red cliffs and crevices.

This time, I wanted to hear more about the park and understand how the landscape had formed and the relationship between the inland and the beautiful Ningaloo coast.

We booked a four wheel drive tag-along tour “Discover the secrets of Cape Range” and headed off with three other vehicles just before dawn. Our journey took us along the Ningaloo coast where we saw boats heading out early for fishing and marine life tours. The bush seemed to be waking up before our very eyes, and we spotted many wallabies, the occasional kangaroo, several emus and, to my delight, an echidna with its baby!

We followed the breathtaking coast for quite a while until we came to Yardie Creek, where we boarded a small boat that was to take us into the heart of the park. What an experience! It was the silence that enthralled me. We could hear so many birds, and in the quiet of the dawn, we watched yellow footed rock wallabies frolicking in the rough and rocky cliffs along the river.

Two hours later we returned to the vehicles where breakfast awaited us...local fish for breakfast, a cuppa and a yarn with our wonderful guide.

The rest of the day was spent tagging along onto some of the wonderful gorges and steep rocky paths of the Cape Range. I was so pleased I had taken this tour as I did come to understand the relationship between the outback and the reef, and to appreciate there is so much more to this country than the sparkling sea and its bountiful marine life.
Conservation through participation
Conservation through participation

This is an opportunity to express the region’s strong conservation stewardship of its remarkable World Heritage Areas by tapping into the trend towards environmentally and socially conscious travel. There is potential for Ningaloo-Shark Bay to become a world leader in the participatory conservation growth sector. Visitor participation in conservation is also an opportunity to generate financial support for ongoing conservation and sustainable regional growth.

There is a strong cooperative conservation protection and research agenda already in the region including:

- the cooperative Ningaloo Research Program that conducts research and monitoring of the area’s iconic species, reef and shore habitats and ecological communities
- proposed development of the Ningaloo Centre at Exmouth to provide facilities for research, teaching, training, and public education
- Shark Bay is considered to be the most important site in the world for research into Bottlenose Dolphin and Dugong and their conservation. Research is also conducted into critically endangered land mammals in the area
- voluntourism opportunities are established and emerging, and playing an important role in several research and monitoring programs including the Ningaloo Turtle Program, Gnaraloo Turtle Program, Loggerhead Turtle monitoring at Dirk Hartog Island and the Shark Bay Dolphin Project.

Observations for the road ahead

There are several significant challenges for industry, government and the community to deliver conservation outcomes through tourism.

High quality storytelling and interpretation

The appeal of the region’s Uninhibited Freedom to experience the pristine natural environment needs to be reinforced by consistent storytelling themes and messages across the region and in information and marketing. Interpretation needs to meet contemporary visitor expectations for use of digital and interactive methods.

Regional collaboration

Improvements in infrastructure and services for visitors across the region require collaborative efforts by the tourism industry, government and the community and the sourcing of effective funding and investment.

Collaboration between tourism operators is essential to add value to the hero experiences and to promote and market their products. With a suite of planning projects in train it will be critical that important recommendations for the region in this EDS are taken up through regional planning initiatives and funding programs.

Critical to the delivery of the destination’s conservation experience is the role played by visitor centres, supported by State, Regional and Local tourism organisations. Greater collaboration and a focus on experience messages by visitor centre staff and volunteers could have a significant impact on achieving the vision and goals for the National Landscape.
With over 20 accredited operators in sustainable, nature-based and eco-tourism (with Ecotourism Australia and EarthCheck) the region is blessed with operators who care as much about conserving this place as their visitors and the conservation agencies. For visitors, not only does this mean the quality of the interpretation they receive will be better, it also means these operators are contributing to the future conservation of the place.

Australia’s Aboriginal people are recognised as the oldest living culture on earth, in a place like the Ningaloo Shark Bay National Landscape this means hundreds of generations of Aboriginal people have lived in this place and know its secrets, its moods and its treasures, better than anyone. Aboriginal people are dedicated to conserving this landscape, as are people who now call Ningaloo-Shark Bay their home. Visitors can be a part of caring for this amazing place through wildlife monitoring, native vegetation restoration, coastal rehabilitation or community engagement.

The new motto could well be - leave more than footprints, make more than photos – leave a conservation legacy and take away a life changing experience!
Many conservation agencies and volunteer groups in Ningaloo-Shark Bay welcome volunteer involvement and participation in 'citizen science'. Visitors can work alongside world experts in marine and terrestrial conservation, learning more about the place and giving something back. These opportunities include turtle conservation, monitoring and working with dolphins and dugong, tree planting and weed removal.

Every contribution by visitors (whether by participation in research and monitoring or simply treating the landscape with care) helps scientists, protected area managers, tour operators and the community to understand the environment better, improve its resilience to change and pass on a healthy environment to future generations.
7. Interpretive programs linked to monitoring and research

The Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape should strive to educate, expose and inspire its customers with the best interpretation in Australia. This begins with the delivery of world-leading interpretation in action (not just in theory) with a particular focus around the Landscape’s iconic wildlife. The opportunity exists to create a suite of wildlife and landscape interpretation programs that engage the visitor in hands-on interaction and conservation.

**Excellence in interpretation and story-telling techniques** provides the opportunity to reinforce the special ongoing relationship between Aboriginal traditional owners and their country. It will also enable visitors to access and engage in the rich experiences that Ningaloo-Shark Bay has to offer.

Opportunities include:

- installing **wildlife viewing and monitoring cameras** in the marine and terrestrial environments. This would provide ready access to images of the wildlife visitors come to see through interactive screens located in Visitor Centres. The feasibility of this proposal needs to be investigated

- development of a **Ningaloo-Shark Bay Guide School as an extension of the Savannah Guides model**. This will focus on training for guides in interpretation through knowledge of connection to country and hands-on monitoring and research programs

- creating a whole-of-Landscape **Partners Program** to maximise industry engagement and support for the principles of conservation and interpretation. As part of the Partners Program, partners would participate in a monitoring and research program similar to that used on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

- addressing long driving distances and lack of mobile coverage with **clever downloadable information and interpretation**. This could include the opportunity for visitors to log and share images of wildlife spotted on their journey.

**Best Practice Example: Bilby Experience, Charleville**

Charleville is a town in Queensland, less than 750km north-west from Brisbane’s CBD. Charleville is known as the Bilby Capital of Australia and hosts the unique ‘Bilby Experience’. This experience allows visitors not only to see a live Bilby, but gives them the opportunity to contribute to saving the bilbies.

The Charleville Bilby Experience has been running for many years between April and October. This experience informs visitors on everything from the bilbies diet to their breeding cycle, followed by a short movie detailing some of the conservation methods used to protect this wonderful species. Then visitors are able to view the bilbies in their caged enclosures and ask the volunteer guides any questions they may hold.

The Up Close and Personal Encounter, which runs all year round, offers a little bit more than The Charleville Bilby Experience. Numbers are limited to ten people per tour and the education sessions also cover the anatomy of a bilby. Visitors are then given the opportunity to interact with the bilby that the guide is holding. Guests also get to see the breeding pens and some of the burrowing systems of this species.

Through this close interaction with the bilby, visitors gain a greater sense of respect for endangered animals and often appreciate the urgent need for conservation methods to save various native Australian species, such as the bilby.
8. Ningaloo-Shark Bay Guardians Program

Everyone involved in the conservation and presentation of the unique values of the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape should be clearly identified as a Ningaloo-Shark Bay Guardian. A simple brand used to create a badge given to volunteers, researchers, conservation agency staff and rangers who have been through a basic training program in the National Landscape’s values could be a powerful engagement tool (see example of Sandals Earth Guardian).

The program would be a partnership of all the research and monitoring partners. It would enable activities by Parks and Wildlife, Fisheries, commercial tour operators and volunteer programs to be integrated and promoted under one umbrella which provides for coordinated research, commercial volunteer opportunities and links to visitor information.

Ideally, visitors participating in voluntourism programs (see over page) could also receive the ‘Guardian’ badge. This could be linked to premium volunteer opportunities within existing volunteer programs and appropriate commercial packages with existing operators (such as Monkey Mia resort, coastal pastoral stations).

The primary enablers of success are establishment of:

- an agreed partnership model
- a training program (potentially online)
- a consistent brand with supporting merchandise and opportunities to make a financial contribution to this program to generate additional revenue.

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**Best Practice Example: GBRMPA Reef Guardian Program**

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’s (GBRMPA) Reef Guardian program recognises the good environmental work undertaken by communities and industries to protect the Great Barrier Reef. The program involves working closely with those who use and rely on the Reef or its catchment for their recreation or business to help build a healthier and more resilient Reef.

The program demonstrates a hands-on, community-based approach can make a real difference to the health and resilience of the Reef. Reef Guardians are taking on voluntary actions beyond what is required by law and sharing information. These actions will help to improve the economic sustainability of industries operating in the Great Barrier Reef Region and ensure the environmental sustainability of the Marine Park.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority’s Reef Guardian stewardship program began with schools in 2003 to encourage the community to take action for a healthier Reef. The Reef Guardian Schools initiative currently has more than 300 schools and 123,000 students involved in building the Reef’s resilience.

In 2007 the initiative was expanded to include local government councils along the Great Barrier Reef coast through the Reef Guardian Councils program.

The Reef Guardian Fishers and Reef Guardian Farmers and Graziers programs were launched in 2011 to engage with industries connected to the Reef.

9. Ningaloo Centre and Shark Bay Research Centre

Providing a central home or hub for the Ningaloo-Shark Bay Guardians Program and Whole of Landscape Partners Program through:

- Continuing the development of the research centre within the Ningaloo Centre with a focus on the Ningaloo WHA
- Establishing a physical research centre in Denham that focuses on the Shark Bay WHA and is a central focus for research activities
- Linking these research centres to the regional visitor centres including the Jurabi Turtle Discovery Centre in Cape Range, Carnarvon Visitor Centre, and the Shark Bay Discovery Centre and the Ocean Park Oceanarium to optimise visitor information with contemporary technology and visitor participation

Escape into the wonders of nature & evolution.
Explore the incredible history from times gone by.

The Discovery Centre captures the true essence of this virtually unspoilt and untouched environment.

First in nature... First in history.

Immerse yourself ... discover... and touch another world.

Best Practice Example: Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre Voluntourism and Education Program

The Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre is a multi-faceted facility comprising a Marine Education and Research Centre, together with a Marine Discovery Centre, on the Far South Coast of NSW. The Centre has become a hub for scientific research and excellence and attracts internationally-renowned marine experts in delivering guided experiences. It is also developing as a gateway to a variety of marine experiences, including specialist small group conservation and educational tours.
10. Voluntourism Program

‘Voluntourism’ is just the new word for holidays where you feel like you are making a difference. For many a voluntourism experience is just one part of a holiday, for a small niche it’s the entire purpose of the trip. The opportunity for Ningaloo-Shark Bay is to effectively target the larger market looking to add a voluntourism experience to their trip, including:

- Establish a relationship between the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Steering Committee and Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) to better link tourism products to existing conservation programs around wildlife encounters.

- Developing day and overnight experiences for the long-haul drive market, particularly targeting wildlife interaction and engagement from dugong tagging to bird counts starting with experiences in marine and national parks.

- Work with wholesalers such as STA Travel who have a voluntourism segment of their international youth travel business to increase the representation of Ningaloo-Shark Bay products.

- Create half day and full day voluntourism products targeting the business events market. Conference organisers and companies are growing more concerned if environmental and social issues are not taken into account when planning an event.

- Investigate the feasibility of a purpose-built research, training, education and interpretation element of the existing Shark Bay Interpretive Centre that could provide a year-round attraction and house visiting academics and provide a station for a voluntourism program.

- As demand grows look at appointing an Education and Voluntourism coordinator.

This project requires engagement of land managers, universities, community groups, Indigenous community and businesses at a Local, Regional, State and National level. The NSBNL Steering Committee should work with industry experts and wholesalers to ensure voluntourism programs are internationally ready in terms of marketing, packaging and distribution.

**Best Practice Example: Hands Up Holidays**

Hands Up Holidays is a travel company that combines a tailor-made holiday with a taste of volunteering or philanthropy. Combining the two gives tourists a chance to get under the skin of a destination and interact meaningfully with the local people and environment.

Environmental conservation holidays are offered around the globe, including Ecuador, India, Thailand, Kenya, Australia and New Zealand. Programs include conserving endangered species, helping in organic gardens, planting trees and teaching the merits of environmental conservation to locals.

Trips usually range about 14 days with only 4 dedicated to voluntourism activities. The remainder of the trip is flexible but usually involves touring around the region.

Shark Bay Research Centre – coast of colours teeming with marine life

Shark Bay World Heritage Area - the rising sun turned the beach into an artist's palette of pastels. This was the perfect start to an extraordinary day of dolphin research with the Parks and Wildlife Research team and the crew from Monkey Mia resort.

Our ‘Stewardship’ package at the resort included a behind the scenes experience with the Shark Bay World Heritage marine life including accommodation and all meals. Established in 1992, Monkey Mia is the number one behavioural research site in the world for bottlenose dolphins and tiger sharks.

Our day started with an introduction and briefing about the day ahead over a gourmet breakfast of local, organic ingredients. We learnt about the type and number of dolphins in Shark Bay, and the purpose of the research program. Chris, the head of the research team, explained the importance of the research program and how it is increasing the world’s knowledge of these creatures and many others.

With our breakfast complete, it was time to organise breakfast for our marine friends. We walked over to the research centre and measured the food for each of the breakfast ‘regulars’ who visit the resort each morning. Then we got to feed them! We recorded the number of dolphins we fed and those who just came to see what was going on – the place was teeming with them. We learnt so much over the hour or so we spent with them. These gentle creatures came so close to the shoreline that my binoculars sat forgotten in my beach bag!

We cleaned up and then jumped in Chris’s boat to check out the marine life around Shark Bay which is home to over 10,000 dugongs! We dropped into the Oceanarium and had a coffee with the marine biologists who do the tiger shark research. It was so interesting.

We then headed back after lunch and whiled away the afternoon reading in the hammock before taking a walk to the beach (with the emus!) for another showing of dolphins and spectacular sunset colours. We felt we had the whole place nearly to ourselves and plenty of quiet time to ponder our beautiful life and wonder how we got to be so lucky to catch a glimpse of Shark Bay’s ocean world and the wonderful creatures that call it home.
ENABLERS OF SUCCESS

Successful development and delivery of Ningaloo-Shark Bay’s hero experiences will be achieved with the support of several cross-cutting initiatives and actions to improve the region’s tourism capacity.

Improved governance and partnership arrangements

National Landscape Steering Committee

The Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Steering Committee has the critical role of driving implementation of this EDS – a task which involves multi-stakeholder coordination in a relatively remote region with a low population base. The effectiveness of the Steering Committee in functioning as a group and coordinating EDS initiatives would be improved by dedicated assistance through employment of a part-time coordinator/administrator and funding to support the committee and its activities.

Contributions might be sought from the Gascoyne Development Commission and the Shires of Exmouth, Carnarvon, Shark Bay and Upper Gascoyne.

It is suggested that the Steering Committee could be strengthened by the addition of members with knowledge of operation of the types of tourism experiences being developed in the Landscape and tourism industry connections, conservation sector as well as ensuring membership from each of the key tourism nodes (Shark Bay, Carnarvon, Coral Bay, Exmouth and the Blowholes/Red Bluff/Gnaraloo coast).

One Regional Tourism organisation

The Gascoyne Tourism Strategy (draft) has identified the need for an industry-led model for the Gascoyne tourism industry. The model features the formation of a Gascoyne Tourism Board (which we suggest be called the Ningaloo-Shark Bay Tourism Board to support consistent positioning of the region), a non-incorporated committee consisting of 5 to 7 members to oversee, lead and focus the efforts of a number of sub-committees and working groups that will be generated by the Board to address strategic priorities.

The Working Groups will bring in appropriate stakeholders and expertise as required to progress issues. They will also use the leveraging and influencing powers of key agencies and bodies to promote, advocate and stimulate investment and funding for initiatives.

It is recommended that the National Landscape Steering Committee be one of the Working Groups of the Tourism Board and be supported by the Tourism Officer that is also proposed.

Developing stronger partner links

Partnerships are fundamental to many of projects in this EDS, including projects under the Conservation through participation theme, which relies on interpretation and voluntourism involving industry operators, the voluntary conservation sector and research bodies. Partnerships with the region’s Aboriginal communities and groups are also important to develop further interpretation of the Landscape’s Aboriginal culture.

The Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Steering Committee needs improved mechanisms for engaging and coordinating partnerships. Better engagement and the creation of stronger links with conservation and community and Aboriginal groups can be achieved through linkages between the working groups proposed under the Gascoyne Tourism Board recommended in the Gascoyne Tourism Strategy.
ENABLERS OF SUCCESS

Industry capacity building

The hero experience projects include measures for assisting tourism operators to deliver the content of hero experiences – the Ningaloo-Shark Bay Guide School and the Whole-of-Landscape Partner’s Program. The tourism industry at Ningaloo-Shark Bay will also require assistance to develop and market quality products that align with the hero experiences and are market-ready. Building local industry awareness of, and capacity to take advantage of, international and domestic distribution systems will be vital to reach potential visitors. While direct marketing to consumers is increasing as a method of reaching international Experience Seekers, the online and traditional retail avenues are increasingly supported by consolidators or wholesalers which can be an important source of sales.

It is recommended that Ningaloo-Shark Bay operators be supported by:

- an audit of operators and their development needs to establish how they align with the directions in the EDS
- a Mentoring Program to provide businesses that represent the unique aspects of Ningaloo-Shark Bay one-on-one access to product development and distribution experts to assist them to increase their experiences offering and market representation
- encouragement of operators to embrace the hero experiences in product delivery. Incentives would be given to products that deliver on the hero experiences through giving preferential treatment on famil and in regional publications, the website and social media. Assistance in implementing these recommendations may be able to be sourced through the Tourism Council of WA.

Indigenous interpretation and business support programs

Indigenous interpretation is a key part of meeting the needs of the experience seeker. Through the tourism organisations and conservation groups it is vital that operators form alliances with Aboriginal people and begin to interpret the region’s Indigenous cultural heritage. Further Aboriginal businesses need to be encouraged to grow through dedicated programs of business support.

Improved regional services

Encouraging accommodation investment

In an increasingly positive economic climate, the time is right for seeking new investment in accommodation at Ningaloo-Shark Bay to meet the needs of the international Experience Seeker market and as an adjunct to hero experiences. One approach is for state and local partners to work together to prepare an expression of interest (EOI) document of suitable sites for private sector accommodation development – either through public-private partnerships or through private investment. An open EOI that protects intellectual property (as recently employed for investment in national parks in Queensland) has a good likelihood of drawing a strong response from investors.

Camping options

Opportunities to camp on the beachfront and close to other spectacular locations and activities is part of Ningaloo-Shark Bay’s hero experiences. The range and quality of camping options across the different tenures in the Landscape and the ability of visitors to book camping sites needs to be improved. It is recommended that:
ENABLERS OF SUCCESS

Camping options cont.

- Industry capacity building: Conduct and implement a review of camping to ascertain how to increase the yield from existing campsites (such as inclusion of ‘comfort’ options) and identify the need for and locations of additional campsites.
- An online, cross-tenure booking system [with simple conversion and easy upsell to higher yielding sites] be developed.

Transport

Retaining or potentially growing visitor access will require a considerable effort in marketing to attract new visitor markets. State and Regional Tourism Organisations will need to continue to support package deals with airlines to increase awareness and demand for the destination. This will in turn support the growth of new sectors such as new hire car companies or the expansion of existing businesses.

Food offering

While there is some local product offered across the landscape, there could be more showcasing of the local seafood and products associated with the Gascoyne food bowl. Food is not a hero experience for this National Landscape, but a good food offering adds to the overall experiences that a visitor has while on holidays and can attract new visitors (e.g. through reporting on social media).

Ensuring an improved food experience throughout the region can be achieved through three primary opportunities:

- **Reposition and refine the Gascoyne food trail.** The existence of the food trail indicates a depth of ‘farm gate’ food offering. However, this could be developed further to showcase the region’s food offering. The trail could be repositioned as a ‘meet the farmer’ experience and showcase the seasonal produce in and around Carnarvon. A seasonal approach will help manage visitors’ expectations and promote the farm gates where products are available.

- **Create a basic food offering across the landscape.** The region’s food could be further showcased if each café, restaurant, pub, club and take-away food shop had a ‘signature dish’ that used and depicted a local product.

- **Launch a distribution network to supply the region with local produce.** A distribution network is needed to supply food outlets across the landscape with local produce. Refrigerator distributions have been previously attempted, but the business model used returned little or no profit and proved unviable. It is suggested that a regional food produce cooperative model be investigated. This would provide a centralised collection point for a distribution company and cut back the cost of collecting the produce from each individual farm.
ENABLERS OF SUCCESS

Integrated destination management and marketing

Marketing hero experiences

It is recommended that a marketing plan be developed for an integrated approach to marketing the Ningaloo-Shark Bay hero experiences. This will focus on ways to maintain the hero messages within general marketing of the region and in experience packaging.

It is also recommended that the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape facilitate marketing of hero experiences through:

- employment of an expert in distribution and channel management to increase the representation of the Landscape in niche and mainstream channels (online and traditional)
- employment of a professional blogger / social network ambassador who could increase the 'word of mouth' exposure of the region.

Product bundling

Product bundling by local operators is a way to increase international market exposure and sales and to improve the hero experience offering.

It is recommended that operators be encouraged to develop a series of international adventure packages - such as including dive, snorkel, wildlife viewing and trail. The addition of Ningaloo-Shark Bay to Tourism Australia’s Great Drive locations should also be pursued.

Linking visitor centres

While visitors are increasingly using mobile technology for trip planning, word of mouth still represents the biggest influence (67%) of all destination decision-making. It is here that visitor centres have the best opportunity to influence visitors. Visitor centres across the region need to work together with a common message to have an impact.

Cross region product famils

The best way to understand the experience offered by other parts of the region is to do it. For this reason, it is recommended that the Regional Tourism Organisation, working with councils and other regions, should start a series of cross-regional famils. Ideally these would be funded through in-kind support from operators keen to showcase their experience.

Annual forum for operators

Networking makes a significant contribution to sales and marketing and is important to forming and implementing a clear common direction. It is recommended that networking among Ningaloo-Shark Bay operators on implementation of the EDS be facilitated by an annual forum. This would bring together operators, tourism organisations, Councils, conservation groups, Aboriginal groups and other stakeholders (including State and Commonwealth Government agencies) to discuss progress on hero experiences and critical actions that are needed (such as improving access and linkages). The forum could also involve a ‘mini expo’ to enable businesses to present their products to other operators and local businesses.

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3 As reported by McKinsey & Company (2010)
ENABLERS OF SUCCESS

Annual forum for operators cont.

The inaugural annual form will be critical in 2014 as the EDS is completed and integration with the Gascoyne Tourism Strategy needs to be ensured.

Monitoring and performance

As implementation of the EDS commences, ideally there will be benchmark data collated against which the benefit of the initiatives in the EDS can be measured.

Regional tourism has at its disposal a range of national data sets capable of tracking performance in visitor numbers, spend and stay.

The value of current visitor data is reduced due to the National Landscape being within more than one Statistical Area as well as a number of key tourism destinations being within the Australia’s Coral Coast tourism region.

The Steering Committee would benefit from entering into a partnership with an academic institute or other partner to start a process of monitoring across the Landscape to ascertain and monitor benchmark data for

- Tourism numbers and source markets
- Accommodation preferences and occupancies
- Product take up
- Visitor spend

While these are valuable to understanding the overall dynamics, the National Landscape would also benefit from a number of additional measures as outlined below:

- overall health of the marine and terrestrial environments (CSIRO, research institutions and natural resource managers)
- reduction in consumption, such as energy, water, waste to landfill (EarthCheck certification)
- conservation efforts, such as turtles released, trees planted, condition of ecosystems and species populations (conservation agencies, research institutions)

Ideally, the landscape could adopt a central system bringing together monitoring results and sharing them with industry and visitors. A number of options exist for achieving this, including the EarthCheck software.
ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan on the following pages provides a guide to implementation of the projects recommended in this EDS by providing priorities, timeframes and identifying the lead body and partner organisations.

The Action Plan is divided in two sections – projects for **activating the hero experiences** (organised according to the three experience themes) and **enablers of success** (cross-cutting projects that will generally contribute to improvement of the region’s capacity to deliver the proposed world-class experiences for *Experience Seeker* markets).

Priorities are allocated to projects as follows:

**High Priority** – projects that should be commenced immediately because they can make most difference to experience development
- they are the actions most easily achievable in the short term and can provide ‘runs on the board’ towards activity hero experiences, or
- they are catalyst projects that will stimulate visitation, assist in developing a higher profile for Ningaloo-Shark Bay or improve the capacity to deliver the hero experiences

**Medium Priority** – projects that should be completed within 2 to 4 years

**Low Priority** – projects that require longer lead times to develop, are less critical for developing the core hero experiences or which depend on other initiatives being in place.
## ACTION PLAN

### Activating the hero experiences

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project/Theme</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Lead Body</th>
<th>Partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1 – Unexpected Encounters</strong></td>
<td>Work with a variety of partners to develop and maintain a Ningaloo Shark Bay <strong>wildlife calendar</strong> that focuses on the full suite of experiences and the journeys of wildlife on offer across the year.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife, Tourism WA, Outback RTO, Tour Operators, VICs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Implement an experiences driven social media campaign using the <strong>anchors of the wildlife calendar and events</strong>.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast with linkages to Tourism Australia</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife, Tourism WA, Golden Outback RTO, Tour Operators, VICs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Through operator engagement and the use of <strong>social media, create a sightings program</strong> (similar to ‘Eye on the Reef’) that enables visitors to not only know what iconic species are being seen but to be involved themselves in sharing sightings as part of the research program.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Tourism WA, universities/researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Eco-accommodation with wildlife viewing</strong></td>
<td>Offer a range of opportunities for investment in eco accommodation through a <strong>well-managed process of investor engagement</strong> (as both a part of and beyond the Naturebank Program) and enabling environment in local Government.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Link future investment in eco-accommodation to a <strong>global certification standard for ecologically sustainable design</strong>.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Encourage all operators to link accommodation to experiences such as sea kayaking, wildlife viewing, night activities or voluntourism to strengthen competitive advantage.</strong></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Aerial journeys</strong></td>
<td>Support the development of aerial journeys by ensuring proposals are <strong>well packaged and enable visitors to access areas or engage</strong>.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
<td>Councils, Local Tourism Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project/Theme</td>
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<td><strong>in activities</strong> that they would otherwise be unable to achieve and packages are well promoted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work with ground based tours, accommodation and on-station experiences, to encourage them to partner with an aviation company to develop aerial journeys (eg. Dirk Hartog Island).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
<td>Councils, Local Tourism Organisations</td>
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**Theme 2 – Outback and Ocean Discovery**

| 4. Linkages across the landscape | Support the development of the **Shark Bay-Carnarvon-Mount Augustus-Karijini-Exmouth Loop** to build on the current Outback Pathways program. | High | 1 to 2 years | Councils | RTOs, Tourism WA, Gascoyne Development Commission |
| Create a series of drive, fly-drive and **land and sea journeys that connect the land and sea experiences.** | High | 1 to 2 years | Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs | RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA |
| Prepare a range of **itineraries for self-drive markets with accommodation options for camping and station stays.** | High | 1 to 2 years | Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs | Councils, Tourism WA, Gascoyne Development Commission |
| Support the **development and promotion of the Baiyungu Track as a catalyst project to attract visitors and stimulate product development** through assisting in: • accessing funding for infrastructure • attracting and supporting a commercial operator • facilitating development of transport links • brand and merchandise development. | High priority to commence facilitation and sourcing of funding. | Ongoing | Gascoyne Development Commission | RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA |

| 5. Live-aboard experiences | **Attract investment in a high quality live-aboard vessel** (10-24 cabins) for ‘mini-cruises’ between Shark Bay and Exmouth, including some remote location visits. | Low | 5+ years | Tourism WA | RTOs, Gascoyne Development Commission |

<p>| 6. Tag-along tours to new destinations | Work with the land owners and community to <strong>establish preferred 4WD touring loops and routes</strong>, ensuring appropriate permit systems and tenure agreements are in place for travel and overnight stays. | Medium | 2 to 4 years | Councils | RTOs, Tourism WA, Gascoyne Development Commission |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project/Theme</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigate the appropriate <strong>campsites and infrastructure</strong> to establish overnight camps where commercial options or existing camps are not available.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission, Councils</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assist operators in <strong>marketing</strong> to international self-drive and hire drive visitors through <strong>push via partners</strong> (e.g. Britz/Maui in-car magazines).</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage station stays to use <strong>high quality local produce</strong> to showcase the region’s natural bounty and lift visitor spend per person.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Food Council</td>
<td>Stations</td>
<td></td>
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**Theme 3 – Conservation through participation**

7. **Interpretive programs linked to monitoring and research**

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<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Lead Body</th>
<th>Partners</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Review interpretation and story-telling techniques</strong> used to ensure they meet contemporary visitor expectations for use of digital and interactive methods.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate the feasibility of installing <strong>wildlife viewing and monitoring cameras</strong> in both the marine and terrestrial environments.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a <strong>Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Guide School as an extension of the Savannah Guides model</strong> that will focus on interpretation and connection to country.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a whole of Landscape <strong>Partners Program</strong> to maximise industry engagement and support for the national landscape principles of conservation and interpretation.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop <strong>clever downloadable information and interpretation</strong> to help address long driving distances and lack of mobile coverage.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Tourism WA, Parks and Wildlife</td>
</tr>
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8. **Ningaloo-Shark Bay Guardians Program**

<table>
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<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Lead Body</th>
<th>Partners</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop an <strong>agreed partnership model</strong> for the Guardians Program.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with local providers to develop a <strong>training program for the Guardians Program</strong> (potentially online).</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>RTOs, Councils, Tourism WA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project/Theme</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
<td>Lead Body</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establish a consistent brand with supporting merchandise and opportunities to make a financial contribution to this program to generate additional revenue.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Create a hub for the conservation programs at the Ningaloo and Shark Bay Research Centres</td>
<td>Link the existing research centres to the regional visitor centres including the Jurabi Turtle Discovery Centre in Cape Range, Carnarvon Visitor Centre, and the Shark Bay Discovery Centre and the Oceanarium to optimise visitor information with contemporary technology and visitor participation.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Voluntourism Program</td>
<td>Establish a relationship with Conservation Volunteers Australia to better link tourism products to existing conservation programs.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop day and overnight voluntourism experiences for the long-haul drive market focussing on wildlife interaction and engagement.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with wholesalers with a voluntourism segment to increase representation.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create half day and full day Voluntourism products targeting the business events market and conference organisers.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investigate the feasibility of a purpose-built year-round research, training and education facility at the existing Shark Bay Interpretive Centre that could house visiting academics and a voluntourism program.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabler</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved governance and partnership arrangements</td>
<td>Source funding to improve the effectiveness of the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National landscape Steering Committee through employment of a part-time Coordinator/Administrator or support across the Gascoyne.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years and ongoing</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthen the Steering Committee by inviting new members who have relevant knowledge of the hero experiences being developed in the Landscape.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Form one regional tourism organisation (called the Ningaloo Shark Bay Tourism Board) to address strategic priorities and stimulate investment and funding for the region.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>GDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop stronger partner links with conservation and community and Aboriginal groups to further develop experiences and interpretation in the region.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry capacity building</td>
<td>Build industry capacity to assist operators in developing market quality products that align with the hero experiences through the support of:</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- an audit of operators and their development needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- a Mentoring Program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- incentives for products that deliver on the hero experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous interpretation and business support programs</td>
<td>Develop a dedicated business support program that encourages Aboriginal businesses and Indigenous interpretation alliances within the region.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>WAITOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved regional services</td>
<td>Prepare an expression of interest (EOI) document of suitable sites for private sector accommodation development.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>GDC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undertake a review of camping options across the landscape to identify opportunity areas for increased yield and develop an online booking system to increase conversion.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Councils</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enabler</td>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Priority</td>
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<td><strong>Enabler</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Priority</strong></td>
<td><strong>Timeframe</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lead Body</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Continue to support package deals with airlines</strong></td>
<td>to increase awareness and demand.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Launch a distribution network for the supply of local produce</strong></td>
<td>to the region and improve the food experience via development of a food trail and signature dishes.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Gascoyne Food Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integrated destination management and marketing</strong></td>
<td><strong>Develop a marketing plan for hero experiences</strong></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>RTOs and VICs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase industry capacity to be international market ready</strong></td>
<td>through product bundling initiatives, and investigate the feasibility of a Great Drive.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitate greater collaboration and a focus on experience messages</strong></td>
<td>by visitor centre staff and volunteers.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>RTOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organise and conduct a series of cross-regional product famil</strong></td>
<td>to showcase the experiences on offer.</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Through the establishment of the annual tourism forum,</strong></td>
<td>host a discussion on improving access and linkages including the potential for lifting freight restrictions for visitors, one-way hire, and road improvements.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast and Golden Outback RTOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monitoring and performance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Partner with an academic institute or other partner to start a process of monitoring across the Landscape</strong></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Steering Committee/GDC</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Investigate the feasibility of adopting a central performance system</strong></td>
<td>to monitor:</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>2 to 4 years</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• health of the environment</td>
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<td>• consumption reductions</td>
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<td>• conservation efforts</td>
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The Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Steering Committee was composed of representatives of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SC Position</th>
<th>Formatted Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Harvey Raven</td>
<td>Monkey Mia Wildsights</td>
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<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Cath Roberts</td>
<td>DEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>David O’Malley</td>
<td>Australia’s Coral Coast</td>
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<td>General Member</td>
<td>Chelsea Godson</td>
<td>Department of Parks and Wildlife</td>
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<td>Project Manager, EDS</td>
<td>Roge’ Kempe</td>
<td>Shire of Exmouth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous Rep</td>
<td>Darren Capewell</td>
<td>Wula Guda Nyinda, Shark Bay</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Mem Beard</td>
<td>Shire of Carnarvon</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Des Matthews</td>
<td>Shark Bay Tourism Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Jackie Brooks</td>
<td>Ningaloo Lodge</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Karen Thompson</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservation Rep</td>
<td>Jack Hine</td>
<td>Cape Conservation Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Cheryl Cowell</td>
<td>Shark Bay World Heritage and Shire of Shark Bay</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Member</td>
<td>Marcus Falconer</td>
<td>Tourism Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporary member</td>
<td>Kim Pervan</td>
<td>Gascoyne Development Commission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B -

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

A comparison of Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape against other destinations has been made to identify the region’s biggest competitors or which destinations are similarly positioned in terms of ‘experience’ offerings (see table below).

The Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is positioned as Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape’s biggest domestic competitor with many similar experience offerings. It also has cheaper air access, has more tourism infrastructure options for visitors (e.g. accommodation), is more accessible for visitors, and in some northern areas, borders with a second World Heritage Area.

In terms of international competitors, the Pacific Islands are similarly positioned to Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape, offering almost all of the ‘signature experiences’ on display. Tourism product and experiences are generally cheaper in the Pacific Islands than those of the Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape and take about as much, if not less, travel time to access. The Pacific Islands are a sought after destination for many Australians, as they provide a relatively close international getaway option where you get more ‘bang for your buck’.

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<tr>
<td>Great Barrier Reef</td>
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<td>Kangaroo Island</td>
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<td>Australian Coastal Wilderness</td>
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<td>Pacific Island (Fiji, Tonga)</td>
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<td>Maldives</td>
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<td>Philippines</td>
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The Great Barrier Reef

The World Heritage Listed Great Barrier Reef (GBR) National Landscape is the largest living organism on the planet and one of the seven natural wonders of the world – making it a popular item on many bucket lists across the globe. Home to a diverse array of marine life, its vast expanse allows for an abundance of experiences for visitors to choose from. This includes: personal natural encounters with marine life such as giant clams, large reef fish, whales, turtles and sharks; sailing; fishing; beaches; island hopping; and a variety of cultural and educational experiences.

Like Ningaloo-Shark Bay, the GBR holds a multitude of remote regions, including its dispersed islands, yet despite the remoteness of both regions, access to the GBR is extremely efficient in comparison. Both areas are prone to the deadly irukandji jellyfish during the wet season, which poses a deterrent to some tourists.

Ningaloo Shark Bay can be differentiated from the Great Barrier Reef by the easy and free access to the marine environment, small and less developed settlements, and low volume of visitors and tour group sizes.

Kangaroo Island

Kangaroo Island National Landscape is a sanctuary for wildlife and natural, rugged beauty that is minutes from the mainland (Adelaide). Be it a short flight or ferry ride, the island is seeping in history and provides the ideal place to spot birds, kangaroos and marine life such sea lions and penguins in their natural habitat. Marine-based experiences on offer include dolphin, seal and whale encounters, wreck diving and snorkelling. It is also home to the rare leafy sea-dragon, subtropical reefs and a great sailing and fishing spot.

Like Ningaloo-Shark Bay, the Island houses stromatolites and prehistoric fossil beds that tell the story of the region’s ancient beginnings.

Unlike Kangaroo Island, the visitor to Ningaloo-Shark Bay can interact with marine wildlife in small groups and limited infrastructure. It has higher volumes of tourists that access the island for day and overnight visits.

Australia’s Coastal Wilderness

Australia’s Coastal Wilderness National Landscape is where tall forests, lakes and beaches connect. Its charming coastal towns, Aboriginal history and local seafood are a draw-card for visitors. It is also a great place to spot whales, dolphins, seals and penguins. Unlike Ningaloo-Shark Bay, Australia’s Coastal Wilderness does not offer as many immersive marine experiences and encounters, nor does it have coral reefs, however its annual humpback whale migrations from October to December draw in visitors from across the globe.

The Australian Coastal Wilderness experiences cool winter months, which can deter tourists seeking beach holidays, however provides a new set of seasonal experiences to enjoy for repeat visitors.

Whilst both Australia’s Coastal Wilderness and Ningaloo Shark Bay can boast extensive coastal wilderness, the reef that fringes the latter offers exceptional opportunities for exploring the marine environment and opportunities for linking from the sea to the desert and outback.

Pacific Islands

The Pacific Islands (including Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands, Tahiti) are a popular holiday destination for Australia and New Zealand, as the easy access, affordable pricing and lack of jet lag provides ‘mainlanders’ with the ultimate destination for a relaxing international holiday. Many of the islands house a plethora of all-inclusive resorts with off-the-beach access to spectacular coral cays and reefs. Similar to Ningaloo-Shark Bay, the Pacific Islands provide an abundance of marine encounters, boundless coral reef systems and warm reasonably dry
climatic conditions during the main holiday season between April and October.

The Pacific Islands are also home to some unique marine experiences that are hard-pressed to be found anywhere else in the world. One such example, Tonga is known for its swimming with the humpback whales experience, similar to Ningaloo-Shark Bay’s whale shark swimming experience, which attracts thousands of tourists worldwide each year. Palau boasts Jellyfish Lake, the only place in the world where you can swim amongst hundreds of jelly fish and not get stung.

Similarly to Ningaloo, the Pacific Islands also contain stromatolites which are another tourist attraction.

A Pacific Island experience has similarities with Ningaloo Shark Bay in terms of warm water, an abundance of marine life and coral reefs. In terms of local culture, the experiences are quite different. The advantage of Ningaloo Shark Bay is its land-based activities which in many Pacific Island destinations are quite limited.

Philippines

The Philippines are another tropical destination rich in natural and cultural experiences. The region is rich in diversity, both terrestrial and marine, and boasts tropical rainforests, coral reefs and 18 active volcanoes.

This rich abundance of nature allows for a wealth of experiences, including climbing volcanoes, swimming with whale sharks and treks through the rainforest. It also has some stunning World Heritage Listed rice terraces, mountain tribes and exotic cuisine.

Similarly to Ningaloo, the town of Donsol in the Philippines attracts copious amounts of tourists each year for their whale shark swimming encounters. Donsol is considered to house the largest school of whale sharks in the world.

Approximately 90% of visitors swimming with the whale sharks in the Philippines are locals, mostly from Manila and nearby regions. As far as whale shark destinations go, Ningaloo Shark Bay holds more appeal with international markets.

Maldives

The Maldives are a popular honeymoon hot-spot, offering luxurious resort getaways. Consisting of thousands of coral islands grouped in a double chain of atolls, the Maldives house a tapestry of pristine and vibrant coral reef ecosystems, white sandy beaches and offer a variety of well-known marine encounters that include swimming with the whale sharks.

The region is fairly remote, however once there, marine access for visitors is quite easy and affordable, as many of the experiences on offer are included in resort fees as part of the all-inclusive experience.

The Maldives are subject to strong winds and storms during the wet season, which can be a deterrent for visitors.

The Maldives are differentiated from Ningaloo Shark Bay by being perceived as an exotic ‘fly and flop’ island destination. Although there are some similarities in terms of marine activities, Ningaloo Shark Bay is a very different proposition linked to the Outback and remote WA.

Caribbean

The Caribbean Islands are the holiday playgrounds for Canada, the United States and Western Europe. The daily chartered flights, short flying times, same time zone and year-round warm temperatures make these islands a key holiday hot-spot, especially during winter months.

Like the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean is known for its all-inclusive resorts at affordable prices that provide off-the-beach reef access and a multitude of water activities.
Similar to Ningaloo-Shark Bay, the Caribbean is also known for its whale shark migrations and swimming experiences, attracting an abundance of international tourists yearly, especially from North America and Europe as it is closer and cheaper than alternatives such as Ningaloo-Shark Bay.

Despite its consistent warm temperatures, the islands are prone to hurricanes in the wet season and these can be a seasonal deterrent for visitors.

The Caribbean is to some extent a more accessible version of the Maldives, without the perceived exotic, remote and slightly mysterious position in the market. It is quite a different proposition to the US, European and Asian markets than Ningaloo Shark Bay by virtue of being an island destination. Although with similar marine activities, there is a lack of integration of those experiences with land based activities and this is where Ningaloo Shark Bay has an edge over others.