

Submission on:

State Sustainability Strategy

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by

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Summary

This submission contends that the Cape Range – Ningaloo Reef region provides the perfect vehicle for highlighting, to the rest of the State, the benefits which can accrue from the active pursuit of sustainability. The timing of the State Sustainability Strategy is fortuitous because it presents the Government, the community and industry with unique opportunities to establish this globally important place as an icon of sustainability and a showcase of Western Australian technology and expertise.

It begins with a brief summary of the Save Ningaloo Campaign, which is driving the sustainability ‘push’ for the region, through the *Future Ningaloo* project. This work has begun and has strong support in the region and the wider community. Strong relationships have already been built with key researchers, tertiary institutions and practitioners to advance this endeavour.

This submission addresses the key questions presented in the discussion paper, invoking the Cape Range – Ningaloo Reef region as an example wherever possible.

Part 2 of the submission comprises a description of a strategy that is being developed by *Future Ningaloo* towards a sustainable future for the region. It begins with a description of the threats and opportunities facing the region.

The description of the *Future Ningaloo* project in this submission is indicative only and does not encompass the total work that the Save Ningaloo Campaign has conducted on sustainable alternatives for the region. Further opportunities to discuss the *Future Ningaloo* approach, and explore potential synergies with the State Sustainability Unit, would be welcomed.

The guiding principles of *Future Ningaloo* are the key tenets of sustainability, the elements of natural resource management and the crucial importance of intensive community involvement in decision-making, leading to empowerment and “ownership” of the issues.

The framework which is guiding the project is discussed, with particular reference to convening a steering group, setting a vision, undertaking the crucial research and planning work that has so far been lacking in the region, and investigating mechanisms to implement plans and monitor performance.

Exciting opportunities exist to infuse this planning process with the most meaningful and applicable principles of sustainability.

Opportunities to apply sustainable technologies to the existing infrastructure needs of Coral Bay are briefly described.

About the Save Ningaloo Campaign

Born out of earlier campaigns to arrest inappropriate development in the Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef region, the Save Ningaloo campaign was established in 2000. The Save Ningaloo Campaign is a coalition of state, national and international conservation groups, including the Australian Marine Conservation Society, The Wilderness Society, The Conservation Council of WA, The Australian Wildlife Conservancy, WWF and the Australian Conservation Foundation. It has tens of thousands of supporters, including businesses and other organisations within the Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef region.

The Save Ningaloo Campaign's stated aim is: "The long-term protection of the marine and terrestrial environments of the entire Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef region through the robust application of ecological sustainability principles to future development of the area."

Some of the many activities undertaken by the campaign include:

- Opposing inappropriate development in the region.
- Focussing media attention on the region and the issues it faces.
- Advocating for the development of sustainable practices in the region.
- Raising awareness about the region through stalls, materials, a popular website and events.
- Preparing detailed submissions for State and Federal Government environmental, planning and management processes.
- Meeting with and lobbying decision-makers at all levels.
- Working with locals to find ways of addressing infrastructure problems and planning and management shortfalls.
- Coordinating expressions of public support for appropriate development in the region, for delivery to politicians.

The Save Ningaloo Campaign is in the process of initiating the **"FUTURE NINGALOO"** project. The project is central to this submission and further information is provided within this document. It should be noted that the Future Ningaloo project, while still in its formative stages, is already underway. The process is not dependent upon inclusion in the State Sustainability Strategy for its progression, however synchronistic opportunities may arise by virtue of its consideration.

Note: As the affiliate members of the Save Ningaloo Campaign are also proponents of the Future Ningaloo initiative, these terms are sometimes used interchangeably for the purposes of this document.

1.0 Preface

We commend the Western Australian Government for initiating the State Sustainability Strategy. Embarking on this process, fraught as it is with the potential for conflict between the extremes of pro-development and pro-conservation forces, the Government demonstrates unprecedented leadership. At a time when many governments around the world are 'making like ostriches' over genuine sustainability, the Gallop Government has chosen to face those challenges head-on, and thereby seizes the opportunities afforded us by the resolution of those conflicts.

We have come to recognise that our long-term well-being depends as much on the promotion of a strong, vibrant society and the ongoing repair of our environment as it does on the pursuit of economic development. Indeed, it is becoming obvious that these issues cannot be separated.

Dr Geoff Gallop MLA (Premier)
Forward to FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

The consultation paper “Focus On The Future” invites comment to inform the development of a State Sustainability Strategy. It particularly canvasses opinions on ‘the priority sustainability issues in Western Australia and how these could be addressed through the State Sustainability Strategy.’

Sustainability issues in Western Australia are as they are for the rest of the world. These are well articulated by the United Nations – Sustainable Development – Agenda 21 – Issues (<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/issueslist.htm>). Consistent with these, and given the arid nature of the Australian continent, high levels of biodiversity and endemism and our relatively low population, Western Australia does have its own priority sustainability issues. Broadly, these are:

- 1.1.1 preservation of biodiversity and habitat (including remediation)
- 1.1.2 water conservation
- 1.1.3 energy conservation and renewable energy generation
- 1.1.4 waste disposal, including minimisation and reuse
- 1.1.5 conservation of non-renewable resources
- 1.1.6 greenhouse emissions/global warming

We hold these points to be self-evident and not requiring justification.

There is however, another sustainability priority in this state upon which the achievement of a sustainable future for Western Australia is likely to pivot. Given the state’s diverse social profile and its historical roots in extractive industries – mining, forestry, fishing, etc., there is a need for ‘working examples of sustainability’ to lead and inspire business and the broader community toward a belief that sustainability is both achievable and desirable. The State Sustainability Strategy recognises this.

This submission contends that the Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef region provides the perfect vehicle for highlighting, to the rest of the state, the benefits which can accrue from the active pursuit of sustainability. Further, that the region is currently at a crossroads and that current threats and conflicts drive a ‘once only’ opportunity for ‘getting it right’ in the jewel in the crown of the Western Australian coastline.

The Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef area is rich in natural values that have been acknowledged as having national and international significance. Ningaloo Reef is one of the longest fringing reefs in the world. The area is a special biogeographic zone where a unique confluence of tropical and temperate organisms exists. Many endangered and threatened species such as whale sharks, dugongs, loggerhead, green and hawksbill turtles abound. Seabirds and migratory waders listed under international conservation conventions also rely on the area. The region has great archaeological and cultural significance with evidence of Aboriginal habitation dating back 30,000 years. The area also includes the Cape Range karst system, acknowledged as having one of the most important, diverse and species rich subterranean faunas in the world.

2.0 Key Questions

2.1 Is sustainability a worthwhile pursuit?

Sustainability in its essential definition is not only a worthwhile pursuit; it is critical that it be undertaken and achieved. The alternatives are unthinkable. It is particularly worthwhile in Western Australia, with comparatively low population and levels of environmental degradation. As Western Australians, we are in custody of many of the world’s biodiversity “hotspots”. Most of these are highly fragile and will tolerate little interference. We are in a position to live up to this responsibility without first adding to the litany of environmental problems requiring remedial action.

The opportunity presents itself to avoid the mistakes of much of the world and to become a leader in sustainable practices.

2.2 What benefits could flow if sustainability was taken more seriously?

The primary benefit of sustainability being taken more seriously is simply that society moves toward enterprises which are 'sustainable'. That is, they do not compromise the environment to the extent that subsequent generations are denied the opportunities of contemporary ones.

The specific regional benefit of creating an 'icon area of sustainability' in the Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef region is an enriched local economy, providing a sustainable tourism attractor through protecting and strengthening natural assets.

Broader benefits include establishing Western Australia as a world leader in the practical application of sustainability in a whole-of-region approach, with flow-on opportunities to export technologies, and planning and management expertise.

2.3 In your experience, what opportunities exist to pursue sustainability?

No greater opportunity exists for the state to develop a convincing example of sustainability in practice, than in the Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef region.

This is a rare opportunity to develop this region in a unique way, so that it can continue to strengthen its position as a world famous nature-based tourism destination. The combination of the outback terrain and fringing coral reef is only found here, in the Gascoyne.

The wilderness values and experiences of 'raw nature' that bring the tourists to the area are currently under threat. Hosting low numbers of permanent residents, but ever growing numbers of tourists, the region currently sits between the rock and the hard place of: inaction or inappropriate development. Many local people are aware that a third option (the path of sustainability) exists, and are now appealing for support and guidance in its pursuit.

The Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef region is currently an intact wilderness, and local economies will depend upon its sound environmental protection for their long term economic prosperity. The region has the potential to become an example to the world, a place which attracts visitors long into the future because of its unique attributes.

If achieved, this initiative may hold potential for expanding meaningful Aboriginal participation in the future of the region.

2.4 What is the role of government, business and the community in facilitating change to be more sustainable?

GOVERNMENT: The role of government should be one of leadership, predicated upon clear community participation in direction setting and an unflinching resolve to deliver the outcomes determined by stakeholders in that process. At this early stage of the sustainability revolution, government should be 'kick-starting' opportunities, particularly in areas of high environmental value, and doubly so in areas where ecological integrity can translate so directly into economic benefit. This will require 'investment' by government. Investment in thorough and integrated planning, adequate land and marine management, development of appropriate infrastructure and marketing of the resultant benefits, including spin-off technologies, processes, etc.

The WA government is now reviewing specifically how best to optimise the sustainability process. They see this as helping to establish the state in the global sustainability market. The public sector is not seen as a sustainability policeman but a sustainability innovator. This does not mean it will just be trying to create new opportunities for business, there are products and services which need to be phased out and regulated into obscurity. But these are best replaced by new products and services that can be both more sustainable and be bringing new jobs to the state.

Prof. Peter Newman - SUSTAINABILITY AND PLANNING: A WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH

Government agencies have a vital role to play if sustainability is to be achieved in the Cape Range – Ningaloo reef region. To some extent they must be relieved of the (often) unrealistic expectations that society has of them and freed to participate in the process of design for a sustainable future (within their statutory bounds). Integral to the successful delivery of community expectations, agencies must have more opportunity to participate in the process with the community and less responsibility for managing the process. Government agencies, historically, have difficulty taking carriage of such processes, facilitating unbiased results, fostering real vision whilst adhering to their governing Act.

The cultural values of the public sector are inherently conservative and hence the final guideline concerns how the growing cultural sensibilities of the public can be used to guide the public sector. For nothing will happen of significance unless it is grounded in the values of civil society.

The options which need to be considered in a more sustainability-oriented public sector will undoubtedly have to involve greater involvement of the public.

Prof. Peter Newman - SUSTAINABILITY AND PLANNING: A WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH

BUSINESS: Businesses in the region are awakening to the 'real' opportunity before them; that their future prosperity will rely upon intact ecosystems and the preservation of the wilderness appeal which is such a powerful attractor to the area now. Australia is at the forefront of many 'soft' technologies designed to address sustainability issues and businesses are also ready to pick up on many of the planning, public consultation, integrated management, design, marketing and other areas of expertise which would be required in the delivery of a complete sustainability strategy for the region. Examples of this already clearly exist in the region.

The area to focus on is the newly emerging products and services that are defining sustainability over the next few decades. The rapid growth of environmental technologies (new waste technologies, renewables technologies, energy efficiency technologies, new construction technologies, land rehabilitation technologies etc) is now paralleling the growth of IT (and is often linked to it because IT control systems mean we can use resources less and produce less waste). This global process is opening up many opportunities for innovative firms.

Prof. Peter Newman - SUSTAINABILITY AND PLANNING: A WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH

COMMUNITY: The role of the community in facilitating change toward sustainability is to send clear messages to government on what their expectations are in relation to the management of their state.

Reflecting the expressed desire of the community, the Government has embraced the notion of sustainability.

Dr Geoff Gallop MLA (Premier)
Opening of the 2001 Australian Minerals and Energy Environment Foundation Conference

The Save Ningaloo Campaign has now channelled tens of thousands of comments from the community to government as part of the Save Ningaloo Campaign. Analysis of these comments reveals high levels of confluence:

- Expressions of high value and uniqueness of the Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef region and concerns that the world has few wilderness areas left

- Parallels drawn between high current levels of environmental destruction on the Great Barrier Reef and likely impacts of inappropriate development in the region
- Warnings of the fragility of the area (specific and general) and warnings that the area will lose its wilderness appeal with inappropriate development
- Disinclination to continue travelling to the area or promote the destination if inappropriate development goes ahead
- Appeals for consideration of intergenerational issues
- Concerns about equity of access to the area

The community has the capacity to drive the sustainability agenda by initiating processes which:

1. inform government of the need for change,
2. outline the desired direction of change, and
3. take carriage of consultative processes which generate detailed plans for change, with high levels of stakeholder support.

Such processes, run by the community (assuming appropriate community representation and genuine government agency support) have a number of benefits over the traditional agency led approach. They are more likely to be acceptable to stakeholders, more likely to attract funding and more likely to result in ‘unblinkered’ outcomes.

Finally, the community has the vital role of participating in the genuine consultative processes which are generated, and are fundamental to the achievement sustainability.

The importance of civil society values in framing the values and visions is that these give the moral basis to choosing the markets which need to die and those that should grow. Governments do not create these values and visions. They cannot therefore respond to the new agenda unless there are deep mechanisms for tapping these values.

Prof. Peter Newman - SUSTAINABILITY AND PLANNING: A WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH

2.5 What best practice examples exist, if any, to demonstrate how sustainability is being progressed?

There is to date no effective, whole-of-region, example of sustainability. This further highlights the opportunity the region now presents to the state. Many examples of sound sustainable technologies, designs and practices exist which can be applied to this area. In fact, in the Cape Range - Ningaloo Reef region, many of the ingredients of a sustainable future already exist. A proliferation of non-extractive nature-based tourism operations has occurred. Other good examples include low-impact eco lodges, sea kayaking tours and best practice management of the Cape Range National Park.

The region is currently experiencing some environmental degradation, economic hardship and social conflict as a result of the inadequacies of past planning, management and infrastructure provision. Coral Bay is perhaps the best example of this. The ground waters of this small community are subjected to leachate from the inadequate sewage management and the ad hoc unlined domestic refuse site. The town remains powered by diesel generators, and residents continue to live in third world conditions. The Future Ningaloo project addresses both “big-picture”, long term planning for the region and the urgent needs of the region such as those identified at Coral Bay.

The lack of adequate infrastructure, boating facilities and land tenure will be addressed with detailed sustainable solutions and presented to the public in the near future. The overall objectives behind these initiatives can however be seen under the ‘Implementation of this submission’

As evidenced by these problems, there has been a distinct lack of vision for the region, and a shared sense of stewardship for this area is now required.

2.6 What research and development is needed to ensure sustainability outcomes can be achieved?

A full assessment of the environmental degradation resulting from present infrastructure is required on a regional level to ascertain the urgency of implementing alternative facilities as well as including a financial estimate to resolve these issues (ie groundwater contamination and air emissions)

This highlights the need for an overall audit on Environmental Social and Economics of the region as it is only through this holistic approach that an adequate working plan governing this area will be off use.

Once an overall audit is achieved, benchmarks, and performance indicators would need to be implemented as a gauge of outcomes.

2.7 In a more general sense, what else should Western Australia be doing to contribute nationally, regionally and globally to progress sustainability?

Western Australia will best contribute to the progression of sustainability across all these scales by committing to, and investing in, the development of the Cape Range – Ningaloo Reef region as an icon area of sustainability.

**A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN THE
CAPE RANGE – NINGALOO REEF REGION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

The opportunity exists to initiate regional¹ sustainability, encompassing ecological, economic and social values in this region. Our approach to this opportunity is laid down in this framework according to the “Sustainable Regional Development Kit – A resource for improving the community, economy and environment of your region” (Dore, Keating, Woodhill and Ellis 2000 – copy enclosed). While only one model for developing regional sustainability, it contains a useful framework to begin action. This submission does not go into all the detail contained in a SRD model, as much of this will be conducted when the process unfolds.

Guiding Principles for this approach

Sustainability:

“The simultaneous achievement of environmental, economic and social goals” (Focus on the Future: Opportunities for Sustainability in Western Australia 2002). This can be expanded by the principles for the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992 and incorporates:

- Decision making processes integrating effectively both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations
- Where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation
- Recognising and considering the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies
- The need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection
- The need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner
- Cost effective and flexible policy instruments, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms
- Decisions and actions providing for broad community involvement on issues which affect them.

Key elements of natural resource management:

¹ **What area are we talking about?**

For an ecosystem approach, an area sufficiently large to manage significant ecological processes will need to be considered. As an interim measure, we use the suggested ACF World Heritage listing boundary which includes Exmouth Gulf, Cape Range Province, Ningaloo Reef, Lake MacLeod and the intervening coastal strip.

- A philosophy which holds that interactions between natural resources and with human activities should be viewed in an holistic framework
- A process that is flexible, adaptive, ongoing and dynamic, which coordinates the activity of many people both in the government and across the wider community
- A product by which natural resource management should ultimately be judged, being an improvement in the state of the natural resources of a region and in the communities and economies which depend upon such natural resources for sustenance and wealth creation.

(Dore *et al*, 2000).

- Citizen participation and social justice

“Decisions that have been reached through a consultative process carry greater legitimacy and credibility in the community. Engaging the community in decision-making builds trust within communities and in our democratic systems of government. It can lead to new partnerships between citizens and policy makers through a shared sense of ownership of the issues that impact on us as a community.”

DR GEOFF GALLOP MLA

PREMIER “Consulting Citizens: A Resource Guide” 2002

This would be advanced through:

- Procedural fairness, accessibility and transparency
- Empowerment of the community in the process
- Ensuring community diversity within the decision making processes
- Maximising citizen control of the process
- Regular provision of relevant information to foster informed debate
- Responsiveness to community concerns and ideas

Key sequential outcomes of the process will include:

Phase One: Setting up

- A partnership of community, Government, industry, academia and NGO's to provide the driving force towards sustainability and governance of the process
- Building support for sustainability in the Gascoyne region
- Preliminary research and data gathering

Phase Two: Planning strategically

- An articulated, shared vision for the region
- An evaluation of opportunities and options for achieving the vision
- Environmental, social and economic audits
- A Regional Area Plan, with zoning and development guidelines and controls

- A regional natural resource management plan with management objectives, sectoral responsibilities and associated action plans

Phase Three: Implementing and managing

- Priorities for immediate and long-term actions developed into action plans
- Statutory and administrative framework, including the formation of a regional organisation, to enable the delivery of the strategy

Phase Four: Learning and Adapting

- Identifying indicators and benchmarks of sustainability for a remote, regional area.
- Monitoring and timely reviews

FUTURE NINGALOO - PROCESS FRAMEWORK

SETTING UP

- 1. Establish an Interim Steering Committee** to project manage and oversee the formation of the shared vision, develop a regional strategy and planning framework, and develop the eventual management structure for a regional organisation. There are currently several working examples of natural resource management groups within Australia which may provide a model for the structure that could oversee the development of a regional plan and its implementation.

The partnership will need to identify resources for both the process, and to service the implementation of the operational phase

Potential sources of funding are:

- Regional Development Fund – for planning and implementing
- Federal subsidies for sustainable energy sources – for implementation
- Industry/corporate sponsorship – for planning and implementing
- Envirofunds – for implementing
- NHT 2 – for planning
- Research grants – for planning and implementing
- In-kind support and expertise from partners/ community – for planning and implementation

- 2. Build support for regional sustainability**

The Save Ningaloo Campaign and its affiliated groups have initiated several lines of community discussion regarding sustainability for the region.

Several academic institutions have indicated their willingness to be involved and contributed expertise to the process, including disciplines of regional development, geography, environmental technology, environmental science, environmental engineering, tourism and architecture.

Meetings and focus group workshops including Coral Bay and Exmouth community members, conservationists, and academics have been held and a process for establishing a unified vision for region identified. Sign-on forms (see Attachment 1) have had a high level of positive response from residents and businesses in Coral Bay and Exmouth and similar consultation is planned for Carnarvon.

Meetings have been held with Government agencies, shire councils, academics and Chambers of Commerce and Industry. There has been strong interest in these fora, for a regional vision and integrated plan for the future, and a desire to participate in the process.

- 3. Preliminary research and data gathering**

Many lessons can be drawn from past efforts to protect this unique region, including the foresight of establishing Ningaloo Marine Park (one of the earliest and largest of Western Australia's marine parks) and Cape Range National Park (1967). Numerous scientific studies have been conducted on the region but fall far short of an adequate understanding of the marine and terrestrial eco-systems. Additionally, there have been a number of plans written for the region over the last 10 years, all of which contain useful data and recommendations that should be built upon... Some of these recommendations are anomalous, contradictory and inconsistent with a sound sustainability strategy. A list of relevant documents is included in the appendices.

PLANNING STRATEGICALLY

- 1. Development of a Vision**

Preliminary input from local, national and international community members, businesses, academics and conservation groups has displayed a high degree of commonality regarding expectations for the

future of the region. Broadly summarised, these represent a working version of a vision at this early stage, including:

- Best practice for wilderness and nature-based experiences in a fragile environment
- Western Australian's pride and custodianship of Cape Range/Ningaloo reef is demonstrated through our actions
- Protection of the assets of the region for now and for future generations
- Assuring access to the natural wonders of the region without detriment to the environment
- Adequate integrated planning and management to guide future development
- Balancing environmental, economic and social needs
- A safe environment where visitors can learn and leave enriched by the experience
- A showcase for local and state innovation, technology and products.

- 2. Establish a process for broad community participation** leading to a shared vision for the region, and values and guiding principles for future development. This process should embrace the principles and practice of citizen involvement (as per the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Citizens and Civics Unit), and provide an example of how to integrate a formal planning process and community discussion of values and alternatives. Community consultation must be an enactment of procedural fairness, but also mindful of the distinction between decision control and process control. Research shows that even unpopular decisions are accepted if the process is perceived to be fair. This is important in an area like the Gascoyne, where the local, and external communities, are weary of non-transparent non-inclusive processes of decision-making.

Two key initiatives have been designed to gain stakeholder input to, and support for, the formulation of a vision for the Ningaloo Reef/Cape Range Region. They are:

Future Ningaloo - Vision Building

Several initiatives will be delivered in a comprehensive community involvement process designed to encourage broad participation and ownership in the process. The aim will be to understand held values for the area, local distinctiveness, aspirations and opportunities, and how prosperity in the region can be strengthened and sustained through different alternatives.

The community and stakeholders will be able to gain information on the project and become involved in the following ways:

- Future Ningaloo Workshops and Focus Groups
- Interactive Website to explore values, expectations and what the community wants protected in the region. This will be a particularly important way of engaging national and international people with an interest in the area
- Identifying community leaders/champions to promote the process
- Meetings with stakeholder groups
- Education programs

- Field trips
- Briefings to a variety of audiences
- Open Days
- Info-line
- Newsletters
- Advertisements
- Press articles

The Ningaloo Dreaming Project

The aim of this project is to engage WA school children and visitors in imagining how they would like to see Ningaloo in 50 years. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about the environmental, social and economic dimensions of the region via education tools and will be invited to write an essay on the day in the life of Ningaloo in 2052. A panel will assess entries and winners offered an experience of the region.

3. Opportunities for expert input into the process. Apart from the opportunities developed through the community participation, expert think-tanks will be conducted throughout the process on topics such as on ecotourism/wilderness tourism in remote, environmentally fragile regions (See Attachment 2), the development of an international science, research and education base, and integrated coastal and ocean management guidelines.

4. Stakeholders

The following groups and organisations, spanning local and international interests, have been identified as stakeholder groups in the Ningaloo Reef/Cape Range region. This list is not exhaustive and will require a thorough stakeholder identification process to include everyone who will need to be consulted.

- § Residents
- § Landowners and managers
- § Indigenous groups
- § Businesses/industry
- § Visitors – Intrastate, interstate and international
- § Researchers and scientists
- § Groups and associations – recreation (eg fishing), community, conservation, progress associations
- § Authorities/Departments
- § Government – Local, State and Federal Government

(see Attachment 3 for detail of these groupings).

5. Gap analysis of prior work and audits

Synthesizing past guidelines, policies and recommendations will allow this process to build on previous work, while outlining gaps that need to be addressed. The list detailed in Appendix 1 will provide the basis for this gap analysis.

Socio-economic analysis

A full socio-economic analysis is required to establish the needs of the community, and to identify economic drivers that prevent sustainability, both at a local and macro scale. This will lead to the identification of the underlying forces and circumstances driving environmental degradation, economic challenges and cultural loss as well as possible responses to address these shortcomings and entry points for action.

Environmental audit

A long-term integrated approach needs to be based on recognising that the environment is a finite resource, and then identifying the natural biophysical processes of the region and what they require to maintain them. An environmental assessment will determine what levels of resource use and access are sustainable, and what parts or processes in the landscape must be protected against any impact. Development and resource use should only be considered over and above what the environment needs to sustain essential processes. Establishing current available baseline ecological data is also vital to be able to monitor our impact in the future. A crucial part of this process is that in the absence of extensive data sets, decision-making should be based strongly on the environmental safeguards and precautionary principles.

Planning audit

Integrated planning for the future needs to incorporate what has already been done, review any inconsistencies and identify key similarities between prior planning approaches.

6. Integrated regional plan

The vision, gap analysis and various audits will be synthesized into an overarching Plan incorporating:

- § Regional Area Plan, with corresponding zoning and development guidelines;
- § Natural Resource Management Plan with management objectives and action plans; and
- § Action Plan for priority issues (land and sea management, institutional, economic, socio-cultural) that need to be addressed in order to progress the vision.

One of the main challenges for this entire process will be to establish an Information Management System that will be able to incorporate all forms of knowledge and input eg technical/scientific, traditional, informal/anecdotal. This is a challenge that is facing regional organisations across Australia, however there are information technology systems that can be investigated. New Zealand has developed excellent examples for

incorporation of anecdotal and traditional knowledge, that can be drawn upon to guide this process. Similarly, for the community to participate in the process in an informed and equitable manner, they will need access to information as it is generated, and considerable education initiatives to raise the level of understanding of the issues.

IMPLEMENTING AND MANAGING

1. Develop action plans and projects based upon the Regional Area Plan and Natural Resource Management Plan

As with any regional plan or strategy, some of the key challenges will be to improve coordination between Government agencies, and develop collaborative Government/community/industry management arrangements. These will be reflected in the action plans drawn up under the integrated Regional Area Plan. The Government is currently trialing an Investment Decisions Framework within the Avon basin, and the model that this provides may be useful to help prioritise actions within the Gascoyne region.

2. Develop a management structure and institutional arrangements to oversee the carriage of the Regional plan.

This will include investigating improved coordination/interaction between sectors, tiers of Government and organisations, and possibilities for co-management arrangements. As the process develops, the Interim Steering Committee is likely to broaden out and evolve into a Regional Organisation capable of overseeing the regional vision into the future. For this regional organisation to be successful in the long-term, any of the critical issues for success (Dore *et al.* 2000 – p22) must be examined and improved if necessary.

LEARNING AND ADAPTING

1. Develop indicators and benchmarks of sustainability.

Criteria for success of the process, and the outcomes of an integrated planning and management approach are frequently ill-defined. This project can be a test-case for the development of indicators of success for both the process of developing a regional plan, and outcomes of the eventual plan. The process, and eventual Regional Plan will then include a continual monitoring and review component.

ADDRESSING URGENT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The settlement at Coral Bay has grown in a somewhat ad hoc, laissez faire manner. It lacks much of the basic infrastructure that other remote towns enjoy and this has been reported in the work of numerous government taskforces and studies over more than a decade.

Solutions for its needs, including water supply, waste and energy, have been available for some time. However, very little action has been taken. While this may have exacerbated some of the problems and led to high levels of frustration within the region, there now exists the possibility of applying sustainable practises and technologies to these problems.

The Save Ningaloo Campaign has already begun work on this and has received great support from leading researchers, practitioners and institutions. The goal is to apply the most sustainable solutions where practicable but to maintain the focus on solving the area's problems without delay, which will probably entail using a combination of traditional and sustainable technologies.

While the future roles and functions of Coral Bay should be considered within the long-term regional context, these issues deserve urgent attention and the Save Ningaloo Campaign is progressing these matters.

Attachment 2: The case for alternatives based on ecotourism/ wilderness tourism

“Environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy, study and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features – both past and present), that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations” (Ceballos-Lascurain, H. and IUCN).

International trends

Ecotourism is accounting for 10-20% of all international tourism expenditure, and is the fastest growing sector of tourism worldwide (Ceballos-Lascurain, H. 1999).

National trends

Ecotourists/ nature-based tourists represent nearly 30% of all domestic travellers in Australia (Ecotrends 2000).

There has been an increase in international visitors to Australian National Parks between 1993 and 1996 of 33%, and in 2000 47% of all inbound visitors reported having visited a National Park.

State trends

The WA Labour Government has launched an Ecotourism Strategy in 2001, recognising the importance of this growing sector of the market. It states “subject to careful sensitive and integrated planning, ecotourism in Western Australia could be an important element for better protection and conservation ...”

Much ecotourism is in name only, therefore there exists an excellent opportunity to develop and showcase an internationally recognised example of true ecotourism.

Regional trends and realities

- Tourism continues to be the fastest growing industry in the Gascoyne region with more than 0.5million people visiting since 1999, spending more than \$150 million. This tourism industry is principally based on the nature-based experiences of Ningaloo Reef, Cape Range and Shark Bay, and the wilderness experiences along the whole Gascoyne Coast.
- Between 1997/98 and 1999/00, tourism accounted for 16.5% of the region’s economic activity, placing it second behind construction.
- The seasonality of tourism is dampening, owing to an increase in European tourists travelling in November – March.
- There is an increasing demand for nature-based tourism in the region, as well as the entire State.

(Gascoyne Economic Perspective, 2001. Department of Local Government and Regional Development and Gascoyne Development Commission).

- The activity patterns in the Gascoyne region are changing to largely water-based, observation activities, including diving, snorkelling, swimming with whale sharks (Williams and Wood, 2000). This marks a change from an historical majority of visitors mainly camping and fishing, to a sector who want a more

focussed nature-based experience. Any future development therefore has to consider very carefully what impact it will have on these natural values.

- Unregulated access and camping along the length of the coastline will still require management, as will the facilities at Coral Bay require to be improved.

Attachment 3 : Stakeholders

- § Residents – landowners and lessees
- § Landowners and land managers – Aboriginal landowners, pastoralists, State and Federal Government, home owners and businesses.
- § Businesses, progress associations, local Chambers of Commerce
- § Visitors – families, fishing groups, tours around Australia, mining employees, international tourists, campers, surfers, wind surfers, school groups, speleologists, divers.
- § Schools
- § Researchers and scientists – Western Australian, Australian and international.
- § Groups and associations - Recreational and Commercial Fishing Associations, Diving Associations, Surfing Associations, Caving Associations, local, regional, state, national and international conservation groups, Yamatji Land and Sea Council
- § Authorities/Departments – Department of Conservation, Department of Fisheries, Dept. of Planning and Infrastructure, DOLA, EPA/DEP, Conservation Commission of WA, Health Department, Water and Rivers Commission, Water Corporation, Environment Australia, Aboriginal Affairs Dept., Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, Department of Agriculture, Pastoral Lands Board, Department of Defense, Education Department.
- § Government – Local, State and Federal Government

APPENDIX 1 : **RELEVANT DOCUMENTS**

- Coral Coast Resort proponent's Public Environment Report for the EPBC public review process * Two 400 page documents on the proposed resort and its impacts.
- Save Ningaloo Campaign submission to the EPBC public review process and the State PER process conducted by the EPA.
- Submissions to the State PER process from various groups including Dept of Fisheries, Dept of Conservation and Land Management, engineers, coastal geomorphologists, scientists, conservation groups.
- Australian Conservation Foundation World Heritage nomination study * essentially a world heritage nomination for the Range and the Reef.
- Karst Management Considerations for the Cape Range Karst province WA * document comprehensively outlining the significance of the Karst system - EPA.
- Environmental Protection of Cape Range Province - position statement no. 1 by the Environmental Protection Authority * guidance document outlining values and the EPA's position.
- Ningaloo Marine Park Management Plan.
- Draft Commonwealth Marine Park Management Plan.
- Cape Range National Park Management Plan.
- Bibliography of all marine scientific research relevant to the conservation of Ningaloo Marine Park and adjacent waters * CALM.
- Human Usage in Ningaloo Marine Park * CALM report.
- Coral Bay Taskforce * Coral Bay infrastructure considerations - Office of Water Regulation.
- Coral Bay Taskforce * report on infrastructure requirements - Ministry for Planning.
- North West Cape Tourism Development Study * Jones Lang Wootton report.
- Fisheries Environmental Management Review for the Gascoyne Region * Dept of Fisheries.
- Gascoyne Coast Regional Strategy - WA Planning Commission.
- Exmouth * Learmonth Structure Plan - WA Planning Commission.
- Gascoyne Economic Perspective 2001* Department of Local Government and regional Development and the Gascoyne Development Commission.
- Environmental and Planning Guidelines for tourism development on the North West Cape * WA Planning Commission.
- State of the Environment Report * State and Commonwealth.
- Supporting documentation for inclusion on the register of the National Estate * Murdoch University.
- Legislative Council Select Committee 1995 * Investigation into values and future development of Cape Range region.
- Environmental capability study of the North West Cape 1995/6 * Ministry for Planning.
- Carnarvon Coastal Strategy 2001 * Ministry for Planning.