



Department of
Environment and Conservation



Ningaloo Coast

WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION FACT SHEET

What is World Heritage?

The World Heritage List is a list of places that have outstanding cultural and/or natural heritage value to all the people of the world from present and future generations. World Heritage listing is the highest global recognition of the importance of a site.

How are places added to the World Heritage List?

Places are added to the World Heritage List after extensive assessment and only if they represent the greatest of the world's natural and/or cultural heritage.

- Countries prepare a nomination that demonstrates that the place may have outstanding universal value. The nomination must address certain criteria and

demonstrate that the boundary is adequate to capture the heritage values of the area.

- The nomination is submitted to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee.¹
- The nomination is then assessed by an independent technical advisory body and relevant experts. The assessment process takes at least one year.
- The World Heritage Committee meets once a year to decide which nominated properties will be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The committee can defer the nomination or ask for more information.

The assessment process is rigorous and demanding and not every nominated property is entered on the World Heritage List.



Purnululu National Park World Heritage area, East Kimberley, Western Australia. Photo – Rebecca Coyle

¹ UNESCO stands for the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.



Shark Bay World Heritage area, Western Australia. Photo – John Cleary/DEC

Benefits of being placed on the World Heritage List

World Heritage listing acknowledges the significance of a place at the international level. With this comes a commitment at the local, state and national levels to manage the property for present and future generations.

Inscription of a property on the World Heritage List can produce many benefits for nations and for local communities. World Heritage places are a valuable resource and generate economic opportunities for the place and surrounding regions. In Australia, World Heritage places are strongly promoted and many have received increased tourist visitation from overseas and within Australia. This has fostered new business and employment opportunities and has led to more infrastructure development.

Is funding provided to World Heritage places?

The Western Australian Government provides funding for the management of World Heritage places through its agencies and programs. The Australian Government's *Caring for our Country* program provides grant funding to protect and manage biodiversity and natural icons including World Heritage places. The World Heritage Centre does

not directly provide funding to World Heritage places in Australia or other developed countries.

How is a World Heritage boundary determined?

World Heritage nominations must evaluate the potential outstanding World Heritage values of an area and determine where they are located. This process includes comparison to other places around the world and peer review by internationally recognised experts in relevant fields of study.

Will there be a buffer zone?

UNESCO requires that World Heritage places are properly protected, including, if necessary, the provision of a buffer zone, however in Australia most World Heritage properties do not have a buffer zone. This is because the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* provides comprehensive legal protection for World Heritage values. The EPBC Act requires a development proponent to refer their proposal to the Australian Government based on whether it will significantly impact World Heritage values. The Australian Government does not intend to create a buffer zone at Ningaloo Coast.



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Why nominate Ningaloo Coast and what does nomination mean?

Ningaloo Coast is being nominated for inscription on the World Heritage list in recognition of its outstanding natural values.

The land and waters of Ningaloo Coast are seen by many to be a globally unique place. The waters contain one of the best reefs in the world, a continuous series of more than 200 kilometres of coral reef off a rugged limestone peninsula. The reef attracts one of the largest gatherings of whale sharks in the world. Cape Range peninsula is built from skeletons of ancient reefs that gradually emerged from under the sea and the underground caves house rare fauna. Ningaloo Coast provides a window into the evolution of reefs, changing sea levels and the movement of continents over time. The unique landscape allows scientists to gain an understanding of biological and geological evolution over the past 150 million years.



Charles Knife Gorge. Photo – Tourism WA

If Ningaloo Coast is World Heritage listed, how will the area be managed?

Existing national, state and local laws, regulations and plans in place for Ningaloo Coast will remain in place and continue to guide management and decision-making in the area.

World Heritage listing would not in itself change:

- ownership of land;
- the way land and waters are managed; or
- existing land uses and activities.

World Heritage listing would:

- recognise the significance of Ningaloo Coast at an international level as one of the world's best examples of natural heritage;
- create an obligation on the Australian and Western Australian governments to ensure the World Heritage values of the area are conserved so existing and future generations can enjoy them; and
- create the requirement for development proposals that are likely to significantly affect World Heritage values to be referred to the Australian Government under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. To avoid duplication, a bilateral agreement is in place that allows the Australian Government to accredit the Western Australian Government's environmental impact assessment process undertaken by the Environmental Protection Authority.



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Recreation in World Heritage places

World Heritage listing would promote Ningaloo Coast as an iconic tourism destination for a range of recreational pursuits. It would not stop people from fishing, camping, exercising their dog, snorkeling, diving, hiking and enjoying the area. Visitors and locals would be able to continue to enjoy the range of activities available at Ningaloo Coast.

World Heritage listing would not in itself change the way land and waters are managed or existing land uses and activities. World Heritage listing does create an obligation on governments to continue to protect the values of the area. Recreation activities would continue to be managed under existing Western Australian and local government laws.

Would World Heritage mean more marine sanctuary zones?

World Heritage listing would not change marine sanctuary zones. Any change to marine sanctuary zones would only occur under the *Management Plan for the Ningaloo Marine Park and Muiron Islands Marine Management Area 2005-2015* and with associated consultation.

Would I still be able to fish in the area?

Yes. World Heritage listing would not change the way fishing is managed at Ningaloo Coast. Commercial and recreational fishing in Western Australia would continue to be managed by the Department of Fisheries under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*. Fishing is also managed in accordance with approved management arrangements



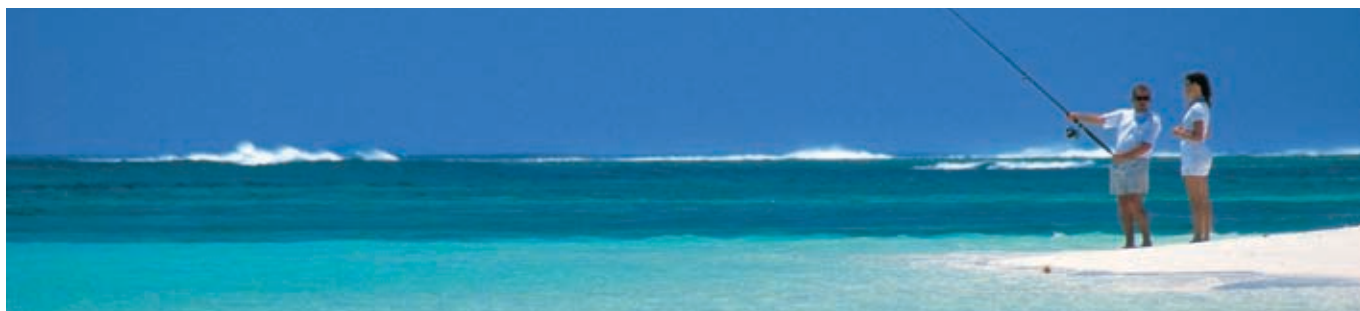
as outlined in the *Management Plan for the Ningaloo Marine Park and Muiron Islands Marine Management Area 2005-2015*.

Would I still be able to camp in the World Heritage area?

Yes. World Heritage listing would not change the existing arrangements for camping along Ningaloo Coast.

Would I still be able to walk my dog in the World Heritage area?

Yes. World Heritage listing would not prevent people from exercising their dogs in the World Heritage area where this activity is currently allowed. World Heritage would not cause a change to the existing arrangements.





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Tourism and development in World Heritage areas

World Heritage listing does not affect development as long as there are no significant impacts on World Heritage values. Australian governments must ensure that the unique values of the area are protected for future generations. Development proposals are carefully evaluated for their impact on the environment and are allowed to proceed if the development does not significantly impact the area's World Heritage values.

Are commercial tour operators restricted by World Heritage?

World Heritage listing would not change management arrangements for tourist operations in Cape Range National Park or Ningaloo Marine Park. The Department of Environment and Conservation will continue to manage commercial operations in Cape Range National Park and Ningaloo Marine Park through existing arrangements under the *Conservation and Land Management Regulations 2002* and consistent with management plans.

Is development allowed in World Heritage areas?

Yes. Development and commercial activities can and do occur in World Heritage places around the world. In Australia, there are many examples: commercial fishing in Shark Bay World Heritage area; agriculture in Willandra Lakes World Heritage area; and extensive tourism infrastructure in the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics World Heritage areas.

Tourism nodes, including Vlamingh Head and Yardie Creek Homestead, will be able to accommodate development and commercial activities to provide a range of visitor services and amenities, whilst ensuring that the values of the area are maintained.



Commercial tour operators show visitors the wonders of Ningaloo Marine Park. Photo – Tourism WA



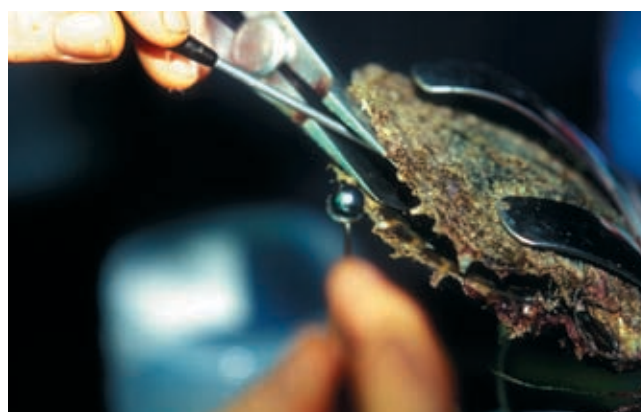
Pearling aquaculture in Shark Bay World Heritage area. Photo – Department of Fisheries

Environmental impact assessment of development proposals

Currently, environmentally significant development proposals in Western Australia are assessed by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. A development proponent is required to refer their proposal to the EPA if it is likely to have a significant impact on environmental values. This requirement will not change with World Heritage listing. Many development proposals are not environmentally significant and will continue to be considered through existing local and state government statutory processes.

With World Heritage listing, the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) applies to new developments that are likely to significantly affect World Heritage values. Under the EPBC Act the Australian Government Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts will decide whether the likely environmental impacts of a referred project are such that it should be assessed under the EPBC Act.

To avoid duplication, a bilateral agreement is in place that allows the Australian Government to accredit the Western Australian Government's environmental impact assessment process undertaken by the EPA.



Pearls are an important commodity in the Shark Bay World Heritage area. Photo – Department of Fisheries

More information on assessment processes under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* and the EPA's position statement, *Environmental Protection of Cape Range Province, Position Statement 1*, are available on the EPA's website: www.epa.wa.gov.au.

More information on the EPBC Act is available on the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts website: www.environment.gov.au/epbc.



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What do people from other World Heritage areas have to say?



Shark Bay World Heritage area, Western Australia. Photo – DEC

"I have been able to use World Heritage status to value add to my charter business."

Barry Edwards, past charter operator and President of the Shark Bay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, WA.



Lord Howe Island Group World Heritage area, New South Wales. Photo – Ian Hutton/DEWHA

"More often than not, international tourists tell me they came to Lord Howe because it is a World Heritage property."

Ian Hutton, tour operator and writer, NSW.

"In Shark Bay I would liken the arrival of World Heritage status to a seventeen year old being given a Porsche. I think it was a great thing for the town but I don't believe that we knew how to use it properly!"

Phil Thompson, Shark Bay World Heritage Area



Fraser Island World Heritage area, Queensland. Photo – Ian Hutton/DEWHA

"World Heritage status puts you on the map."

Alan Dyball, Environmental Protection Agency, QLD.



Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area, New South Wales. Photo – Josephine Flood/DEWHA

"World Heritage has been a catalyst to secure Commonwealth grant funding."

Geoff Luscombe, Department of Environment and Climate Change, NSW.



Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage area, New South Wales. Photo – Mark Mohell/DEWHA

"World Heritage has provided a wide range of benefits from economic to cultural."

Helen Healy, Mungo Project, NSW.