



# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR THE HOUTMAN ABROLHOS ISLANDS

## Progress update July 2020

**On 6 October 2017, the Premier, Hon Mark McGowan MLA, announced that the State Government's vision for the Abrolhos Islands was to create a world-class tourism experience while maintaining world's best-practice environmental management.**

Following this, a whole-of-Government planning process commenced to develop the most appropriate management framework for the marine and terrestrial areas of the Abrolhos and an Interagency Project Team (IPT) was established to ensure the effective delivery of the Government's commitment. The membership of the IPT includes agencies with legislative responsibilities or an interest in the management of the Abrolhos, including the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), Western Australian Museum, Mid West Development Commission, Tourism Western Australia and the City of Greater Geraldton.

Progress towards achieving the Government's sustainable tourism vision for the Abrolhos has included:

- Creation of the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park (national park)
- Development of an interagency *Strategic Direction 2020–24*
- Development of a draft *Visitor Master Plan* for the national park
- Commencement of a management plan for the national park
- Planning for the development of visitor facilities initially in the Wallabi group
- Licensing of commercial tour operators in the national park.

The preparation of management plans for the marine and leasehold areas of the Abrolhos will commence soon.

For more information about the IPT or the sustainable tourism project, please visit the DBCA website at: [dbca.wa.gov.au/houtman-abrolhos-islands-national-park](https://dbca.wa.gov.au/houtman-abrolhos-islands-national-park)

### Planning for the Abrolhos land and waters

#### ***The Houtman Abrolhos Islands Strategic Direction 2020–24***

The Strategic Direction outlines the State Government's vision and goals for management of the Abrolhos (lands and waters) with interagency collaboration between DBCA, DPIRD and the Western Australian Museum as a key focus. Other agencies supporting the realisation of the vision for the Abrolhos include Tourism WA, City of Greater Geraldton, Abrolhos Islands Bodies Corporate, Mid West Development Commission, Department of Transport and Department of Health.

The document is available on the DBCA website above.

## Planning for Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park

On 25 July 2019 the national park was established to include all uninhabited island areas to high-water mark with curtilages around the jetties at East Wallabi and Beacon islands. Surrounding waters and all island areas leased to rock lobster fishers and aquaculture operators are not part of the national park and continue to be management by DPIRD under the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*.

### **Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park management plan**

An interagency planning team of DBCA and DPIRD staff is developing a draft management plan for the national park with input from other key agencies and stakeholders. The draft plan will be released for public comment later in 2020, giving stakeholders and the community an opportunity to provide input and comment on the proposed management of the national park.

For more information on the national park management planning process, please visit the DBCA website.

### **Planning for visitor use and facilities in the national park**

A workshop, led by DBCA, was held in Geraldton in early 2019 to discuss visitor use, tourism use and opportunities at the Abrolhos. A draft *Visitor Master Plan* that considers existing visitor use, identifies future opportunities and incorporates participants' feedback was prepared. The plan will guide the visitor infrastructure development within the national park and inform the draft management plan. Proposals for visitor use will be tested when the draft management plan is released for public comment and the *Visitor Master Plan* will be finalised on completion of the management plan.

Following the cancellation of a proposed workshop with Body Corporate members due to COVID-19, an online survey and series of presentations was circulated to all Body Corporate members in May 2020. Responses to the survey are being analysed.



## Construction of visitor facilities

Plans for visitor and operational infrastructure proposed for East Wallabi and Beacon islands are progressing.

- A design and construct tender for new jetties at East Wallabi and Beacon islands is currently advertised, closing 25 August 2020.
- A DBCA/DPIRD operations base at East Wallabi Island is being designed.
- Visitor facilities (toilets, shade shelters, walking tracks and visitor information) on East Wallabi Island are in the planning phase.
- Improved walk trails and visitor information for Beacon Island are in the planning phase.
- A tender for the construction of visitor infrastructure and the operations base will be advertised later in 2020.

Also, in response to requests to urgently replace the Rat Island airstrip shade shelter, DBCA engaged EPS Architects to design a new shelter. Coral Coast Homes was awarded the contract to construct the shelter, which is due for completion in August 2020.

## Opportunities for commercial tour operators in the national park

If you currently conduct tours in Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park, or intend to, it's time to ensure you have a licence to operate.

Tour operators require a commercial tour operator licence from DBCA to access the national park. In response to the impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism sector, fees for licences have been waived for the 2020–21 year.

A DBCA commercial operations licence is required for operations within the national park only. The waters surrounding the national park continue to be managed by DPIRD.

To amend your current commercial operations licence or apply for a new one to operate in the national park, please apply through DBCA's Commercial Operator Licensing System at: [exploreparcs.dbca.wa.gov.au/for-business/commercial-operations-licensing](https://exploreparcs.dbca.wa.gov.au/for-business/commercial-operations-licensing).

A competitive process for any new semi-permanent or permanent tourism development proposals or restricted tourism activities will be advertised following completion of the planning processes currently underway.



**Above** Existing and proposed jetties for East Wallabi Island.

**Left** Proposed Rat Island airstrip shade shelter.



## To find out more

### Stay up-to-date

To keep up-to-date on the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park planning processes, please visit the DBCA website at: [dbca.wa.gov.au/houtman-abrolhos-islands-national-park](http://dbca.wa.gov.au/houtman-abrolhos-islands-national-park)

### Discover Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park

To learn more about visiting Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park, please visit the Explore Parks WA website at: [exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/park/houtman-abrolhos-islands](http://exploreparks.dbca.wa.gov.au/park/houtman-abrolhos-islands)

### Contacts

If you would like to discuss any matters covered in this update, please contact the relevant DBCA staff:

#### National park management and operations

Senior Operations Officer Houtman Abrolhos Islands  
Midwest Region, DBCA - 9964 0901

#### Visitor infrastructure development

Regional Operations Officer  
Midwest Region, DBCA - 9964 0901

#### Visitor master plan

Coordinator Recreation and Landscape Unit  
DBCA - 9219 8420

#### Commercial tourism

Commercial Business Coordinator  
DBCA - 9219 8499

#### National park management plan

Planning Officer  
DBCA - 9842 4556

Any questions relating to management of Body Corporate land and/or the surrounding waters can be directed to A/Regional Manager, Mid-West, DPIRD – 9920 8404



Department of **Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions**  
Department of **Primary Industries and Regional Development**  
Department of **Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation**  
**Western Australian Museum**  
**Mid West Development Commission**