



HOUTMAN ABROLHOS ISLANDS STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2020–24

The Houtman Abrolhos Islands is an archipelago of 122 islands surrounded by coral reef located about 60 kilometres west of Geraldton. There are three main island groups: Wallabi-North Island, Easter and Pelsaert. The marine and terrestrial environment of the Abrolhos is unique and supports outstanding natural, cultural heritage, fishing and tourism values.

On 25 July 2019, the Premier, Hon Mark McGowan, MLA, announced the creation of the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park (the national park). The terrestrial area not included in the national park and currently occupied by commercial rock lobster fishers and aquaculture operators is an A Class Reserve (the reserve) vested in the Minister for Fisheries for the purpose of “conservation of flora and fauna, tourism and for purposes associated with the fishing and aquaculture industries”. The state waters surrounding the Abrolhos Islands has special status as a gazetted Fish Habitat Protection Area (the FHPA).

The purpose of this document is to share the State Government’s vision and key initiatives that will inform future management direction for the Abrolhos (across the national park, reserve and FHPA) over the next five years.

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Our vision

To provide a world-class sustainable tourism experience and create new jobs and economic opportunities in the Mid West region, while protecting the unique natural, cultural heritage, fishing and community values of the Abrolhos.

Our commitment

The State Government is committed to developing a collaborative, whole-of-government approach to managing the Abrolhos and creating sustainable economic opportunities.



Our role

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) delivers services to support management of the Abrolhos in accordance with the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* and the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. DBCA has primary responsibility for managing the national park including protecting its values and facilitating land-based tourism and recreation experiences for the community.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) delivers services to support management of the Abrolhos in accordance with the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994 (FRMA)*. DPIRD has primary responsibility for management of the FHPA and the reserve, which is currently under lease agreements with Abrolhos Islands Bodies Corporate. DPIRD and the Mid West Development Commission are also responsible for facilitating regional opportunities to drive economic growth and job creation.

The Western Australian Museum (The Museum) is responsible for management of underwater cultural heritage and maritime archaeological sites under the *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018 (Commonwealth)* and *Maritime Archaeology Act 1973 (State)*. The Museum works with DBCA and DPIRD in protecting, managing and interpreting the 'Batavia shipwrecks and survivor camps 1629' National Heritage Listed site under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth)* which has its own heritage management plan.

There are a number of other entities that have important statutory responsibilities and deliver services that support management of the Abrolhos including Tourism WA, Department of Transport, Department of Health, City of Greater Geraldton and the Abrolhos Islands Bodies Corporate.



Key initiatives

Nature Conservation and Cultural Heritage Protection

Protect, promote and educate the community on the unique marine and terrestrial environment and extraordinary cultural heritage of the Abrolhos.

We will:

- Work together to protect the biodiversity values of the Abrolhos and manage biosecurity threats to minimise the impacts of pests, weeds and disease.
- Work together to protect the cultural values of the Abrolhos, including the unique maritime and fishing heritage and its sense of place.
- Implement the (Commonwealth) Batavia National Heritage List Management Plan.
- Enable the protection of coral reefs and other marine values.
- Work collaboratively with research partners to enhance understanding, management and protection of the natural and cultural heritage values.
- Implement public awareness and community participation programs.





Tourism

Create a world-class visitor destination that contributes to a vibrant regional economy with:

- Extraordinary visitor experiences that share the unique stories of the Abrolhos' maritime heritage, industries, environments, wildlife and people.
- Quality visitor facilities that reflect the unique character of the Abrolhos.
- Targeted overnight stay opportunities appropriate for a range of visitor markets.
- A suite of accredited land, marine and air-based tourism operators.

We will:

- Create a seamless approach to sustainable tourism development and visitor management across all tenures and agencies.
- Develop an integrated interpretation plan that facilitates exceptional contemporary story telling.
- Prepare visitor site plans to manage visitor access and tourism development.
- Collaborate in the product development, management, licensing and accreditation of commercial tourism.
- Investigate suitable locations for overnight stay opportunities, including low-impact camping and built visitor accommodation.
- Facilitate expedition cruise ship visitations, including land-based exploration.
- Ensure an integrated approach to developing visitor experiences with mainland sites such as the WA Museum locations and other departure points for accessing the Abrolhos.
- Support marketing initiatives and develop visitor experience packages to increase public awareness of the Abrolhos as a destination.





Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture

Support the development of sustainable wild-capture fisheries and commercially viable aquaculture industries.

We will:

- Work with industry to support the management of sustainable commercial wild-capture fisheries and take advantage of emerging market opportunities.
- Enable commercial-scale fish farming in the Mid West Aquaculture Development Zone.
- Support the development of aquaculture industries that create jobs, economic diversification and optimal utilisation of approved sites.
- Support the management of sustainable recreational and charter fishing activities at the Abrolhos and provide a framework that will complement the destination as a low-impact, ecologically sustainable, nature-based visitor experience.

Abrolhos community

Support a vibrant community with a strong sense of stewardship.

We will:

- Partner with and engage the Abrolhos community in planning and management to foster the sustainable co-existence of tourism, fishing and aquaculture.
- Work with the Abrolhos community, tour operators and visitors to adopt and promote responsible practices and behaviour.
- Facilitate sustainable economic development on the reserve for a range of new commercial uses, consistent with the purposes of the reserve.
- Ensure that appropriate infrastructure access continues to be available to support active rock lobster and aquaculture operations.
- Develop and implement building and management policies to improve the quality, aesthetics and safety of camps, buildings and jetties.
- Improve public telecommunications to support community safety, visitor experiences and effective business practices of the tourism, fishing and aquaculture industries.



Governance

Develop a robust governance framework built on collaborative partnerships across government and stakeholders.

We will:

- Work collaboratively across government to ensure that legislation and policy are fit for purpose.
- Ensure a cooperative inter-agency management approach.
- Develop contemporary management plans and governance arrangements to enable effective management of the national park, reserve and FHPA.
- Deliver effective and efficient State Government operations, including through shared knowledge and resources.



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