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**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Shire of Carnarvon**  
PO Box 459  
Carnarvon 6701

Dear Chief Executive Officer

I am writing regarding the Coral Bay Settlement Structure Plan.

I am broadly in support of consolidating all **future** residential, commercial, higher-impact tourism and industrial development in the towns of Carnarvon and Exmouth, as proposed by the Plan.

However I do not agree with new governance arrangements for the Ningaloo Coast.

**Specifically, I do not agree with the proposal that the West Australian Planning Commission exercise development control over the pastoral leaseholds along the Ningaloo coast.**

I believe that the excise of the coastal strip by the Government is unnecessary and indeed likely to tarnish this amazing pearl of a coastline that it seeks to protect.

Reasons for this are discussed below.

## **THE ENVIRONMENT**

I have been lucky enough to have spent 11 months travelling and working all the way around Australia.

With more than 20,000 kilometres under my belt, i believe that i am well-qualified to compare how incredibly well the Pastoral Leaseholders have done compared with the thousands of kilometres of coastline I have seen on the following 4 key environmental measures:

1. Protecting the **fish stocks** of the Ningaloo Reef waters
2. Protecting the **ocean** from polluted runoff
3. Keeping the **land** looking pristine and natural
4. Protecting the **native flora & fauna**

***Here is why the environment fares so much better under the pastoral leaseholders:***

### **1. Protecting the fish stocks of the Ningaloo Reef waters**

Similarly to the rest of this coastline, there are bag and size limits on recreational fishermen. There are also sanctuary zones, where no fishing of any kind is permitted.

But the most important factor of all, in my view, is ***the incredibly low density of people*** along the pastoral leasehold land.

Why are there so few people? ***Because there are no facilities of any kind.*** You have to bring in your own food, water, accommodation and toilet. There are no shops. There is no

electricity. The roads are rough and unsealed. All of this discourages many people. Only the hardy few come back year after year.

Fewer people means less fishing. Less fishing means more protection for the fish.

## **2. Protecting the ocean from polluted runoff**

The low density of people and complete absence of man-made facilities means no polluted runoff into the oceans.

## **3. Keeping the land looking pristine and natural**

No cement pads.

No toilet blocks.

No showers.

No pipes.

No wires.

No shops.

No sealed roads.

No buildings or structures.

**Nothing man-made.** Only pristine natural coastline as far as the eye can see.

This is truly unique.

The rest of Australia, particularly the East Coast, can only lie down and whimper in envy.

This pristine and natural look is what makes the coastal strip along the Ningaloo pastoral leasehold land **so very precious.**

It would be a tragic loss to the soul of our country to lose this, the very last remnant of wild untamed coral coast. Believe me on this, for I have seen just about all of the rest and it doesn't hold a candle compared to this.

## **4. Protecting the native flora and fauna**

The pastoralists already carry out regular 1080 baiting to control feral animals like foxes and cats.

The native flora and fauna seem to be in a very healthy state. A great profusion of different coloured wildflowers greets the springtime. There is a multitude of different native birds species including a great variety of shorebirds both along the sea edge and sifting through the estuaries and many kangaroos, emu's and lizards gaining sustenance from the land.

**The Government does *not* need to take over direct control over the coastal strip in order for further environmental improvements to be carried out.**

Instead, the Government can draw up appropriate guidelines in collaboration with the pastoralists and provide the funding to support these.

This is likely to be **more effective**, due to the deep knowledge and care that the pastoralists have for the land.

This will also be at a **lower cost** to the voting public. The pastoralists such as at Warroora have their knowledge of the land, their vehicles, their fuel, food, water, power, communications, maintenance facilities and housing already in place onsite - at no cost to the government.

## **TOURISM**

Exmouth and Coral Bay continue to expand as the natural tourist hubs for the Ningaloo Coast. They have all the necessary infrastructure such as airports, sealed roads, shops, caravan parks and tour operators.

Whereas formal tourism has been kept very low on the pastoral land. ***This is why the pastoral coastline remains so pristine and so natural.***

Any attempt to develop the remaining stretches of undeveloped coastline, will kill the very thing that we seek to protect.

**Even eco-tourists will demand shelter, water, power, provisions, cooking facilities, ablution facilities and toilets. They will not come unless these facilities are in place.**

Hence in order to attract the eco-tourists, man-made infrastructure will need to be built. The construction of which will disturb the environment due to the need to bring in heavy vehicles and support infrastructure plus the levelling, foundations and runoff due to the altered contours of the land.

Once construction is complete, the buildings and facilities will destroy forever the natural look of this pristine coastline. **It will forever be scarred with these permanent manmade structures. Plus the shelters, plumbing, wiring and other facilities have to be maintained in good order, which means additional space is taken up by a caretaker, consumables, tools and spares.**

### **Day Trips to the “Wild Coast” !**

Instead, may I suggest we encourage tourists to make *day trips* to the “Wild Coast” via boat. They can land on a suitable deserted beach for the day. They can swim, snorkel, enjoy a picnic lunch and take photos of the coral coast in its wild and natural state. At the end of the day, they can return to the comfort of their resort accommodation in Coral Bay.

The tour operator is held responsible for making sure no rubbish is left behind, nothing except footprints in the sand.

I understand that a 4WD operator currently operates a low-key, low-impact camping experience on one of the beaches. Again, this could be advertised as experiencing the “wild” side of the Ningaloo coast. Again, the 4WD operator would be held responsible for making sure that they left behind only footprints in the sand.

**In this way, we could capitalise on the point of difference of the undeveloped coast for visiting tourists, without destroying it through development.**

Those ordinary Australians that don't mind the lack of facilities and have been camping on a "take-in, take-out" basis for decades can continue to do so as before. Their style of primitive camping has next to no impact on the land. They demand no infrastructure at all and leave only footprints in the sand when they go.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Western Australia have something very special and to be treasured here on the Ningaloo Coast. In all my thousands of kilometres of travel around Australia, I have seen nothing as pristine and beautiful as the coastline that the Pastoralists have guarded and protected so well over the decades.

Note that I have stayed in the Cape Range National Park near Exmouth. It feels very unnatural by comparison - with sealed roads, offices, gates, shelters, picnic tables and campsites every few kilometres. Human impact on the land is visible just about everywhere.

The sense of wild nature and isolation that you get from visiting the pastoral leaseholds is incomparable. It would be a tragic loss to Western Australia, indeed the whole nation, if the pastoral lands degenerate into eco-tourist resorts.

I agree that the WA Government has a definite role to play in protecting the environment and controlling tourism along the pastoral leasehold land. **But** they should do this through the pastoral leasehold system.

It would be cheaper and more effective to work through the pastoralists, since they already have the infrastructure and knowledge of the land.

The pastoral leasehold system has been a complete deterrent to developers in the past and is the best insurance going forward against turning this coast from a pristine pearl into yet another collection of soulless caravan parks and eco-lodges, such as already dot the entire circumference of Australia in their thousands.

I urge you to reconsider the excise of the coastal strip from the pastoralists. If the Government proceeds with this shortsighted act - even with the best intentions - the Ningaloo Reef coastline will quickly degenerate into something manmade and something wild and enormously valuable will have been taken away from the Australian people.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Recsei