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## **COMMENTS ON THE YAWURU NAGULAGUN/ROEBUCK BAY MARINE PARK INDICATIVE JOINT MANAGEMENT PLAN BY AMSA WA**

The WA Branch of the Australian Marine Sciences Association (AMSA) congratulates the Yawuru people and the Department of Parks and Wildlife on the completion of the Indicative Joint Management Plan for the Yawuru Nagulagun/Roebuck Bay Marine Park and Yawuru Birragun Conservation Park. AMSA is grateful for the opportunity to have provided a submission on the Draft Management Plan and for the consideration given to points raised in that submission. We would like to comment on the finalized plan and future management of the Yawuru Nagulagun/Roebuck Bay Marine Park. Comments are not in priority order, but are in order of the final plan.

### **Overarching comments**

AMSA WA would like to preface its comments by noting its alignment with AMSA National in strongly supporting policies by both Commonwealth and State governments aimed at spatial management of the marine environment, including bioregional planning. We support the scientific foundations of the marine bioregional planning process, and within it, the National Representative System for Marine Protected Areas. In particular, we would like to refer you to AMSA's detailed position statement on MPAs (<https://www.amsa.asn.au/amsa-position-statements>) which is based on the extensive marine science supporting MPAs use as a conservation and management tool.

AMSA WA welcomes the proposed establishment of marine parks in the Kimberley region, an area of high biodiversity value. AMSA WA agrees with the plan to classify the Yawuru Nagulagun / Roebuck Bay Marine Park as a Class A reserve in order to provide the marine park with the greatest security of tenure.

AMSA WA congratulates the Government and Yawuru on the successful negotiations for joint management of the parks and for the inclusion of the important intertidal zone within the Yawuru

Nagulagun Marine Park. This represents another important step towards the vision of protecting the Kimberley Coast through the Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy.

### **Comments regarding the summary of responses to key issues and modifications to the joint management plan**

- AMSA recommended that dredging should be prohibited in the marine park, except under permit for small-scale maintenance of existing boating facilities. AMSA commends the exclusion of dredging and dredge spoil dumping within the special purpose zone (cultural heritage) (unchanged from the draft plan) and the inclusion in the final plan that “only small-scale dredging for the purpose of public access and safety will be considered” in special purpose (recreation and conservation) zones of the park. AMSA assumes that only dredge spoil dumping in association with such small-scale dredging will be allowed, although this is not explicit in the plan. AMSA continues to maintain that dredge spoil dumping should be wholly prohibited within the marine park, and emphasizes that any dredging and dumping of dredge spoil is likely to negatively impact the highly diverse benthic communities (Snelgrove 1999; Thrush and Dayton 2002; Ricardo et al. 2015).
- AMSA commends the continued prohibition of ‘ground-disturbing’ activities related to mineral, petroleum and geothermal exploration. However, as in the draft plan, it is not clear whether seismic exploration will be allowed within the marine park and AMSA assumes it is included within “non-ground disturbing mineral and petroleum exploration and development” which remains unchanged as “assess” in permitted activities within the park. AMSA would like to reiterate that noise sources from seismic, and some other geophysical sources, can negatively impact upon marine mammals (e.g. snubfin dolphins, dugong, humpback whales, bottle-nose and Indo-Pacific humpback dolphins) which occur within the park.
- The lack of any marine no-take sanctuary zones within the Yawuru Nagulagun Marine Park continues to be a fundamental and critical flaw in the plan, which is inconsistent with the best scientific, evidence-based recommendations.
  - While AMSA agrees that a key threat, namely, commercial gillnet fishing, has been removed, we continue to recommend the creation of no-take sanctuary zones to create representative areas free from all fishing pressure.
  - AMSA agrees that areas of the marine park are difficult to access for much of the year. However, sanctuary zones in such areas would protect them year-round and create a formal level of protection.
  - AMSA commends the plan’s inclusion for the Commission, and the Joint Management Body, to undertake a five-year review of the adequacy of the zoning arrangements (based upon research outputs). This will allow future consideration of sanctuary zones.
  - As outlined in section 4.3.7, research requires “access to representative sites in areas free of human impacts for reference sites”. The lack of a no-take sanctuary zone means there will be no effective reference sites to monitor ‘natural’ versus man-made changes

over the 5-year period, and will make scientific assessment of the adequacy of zoning arrangements very difficult to achieve.

AMSA WA regards the joint management plan for the proposed Yawuru Nagulagun/Roebuck Bay Marine Park as being a substantial step in the creation of a representative system of MPAs across northern Australia. In particular, we strongly endorse the removal of gill netting to reduce by-catch of threatened and endangered marine mammals and the consideration of disturbance to migratory shore birds. Nevertheless, the lack of no-take sanctuary zones in the management plan fails to follow recommendations to undertake best practice scientific guidelines, which advise representation of all habitat types within no-take sanctuary zones in order to achieve the best biodiversity conservation objectives.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Alicia Sutton

Chair, WA Branch of the Australian Marine Sciences Association

## References

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