

**Response from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions****Response to City of Greater Geraldton****5 November 2019**

The State Government recognises the tourism potential of the Houtman Abrolhos Islands (Abrolhos) and is working to ensure that the islands provide a world-class tourism experience while maintaining world's best-practice environmental management. A whole-of-government approach is being taken to plan for the islands with a focus on the opportunities for tourism and associated benefits for job creation and the regional economy.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australian Museum and Mid West Development Commission are currently involved in planning processes for the Abrolhos. The City of Greater Geraldton is a key stakeholder and will be involved in the processes. Preparation of a management plan for the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park has commenced and there will also be opportunities for the public to comment on the draft management plan. Government will also work with relevant stakeholders in respect of the Houtman Abrolhos Nature Reserve which contains the Body Corporate areas, and the Fish Habitat Protection Area to guide tourism opportunities and visitor management to ensure the significant values of the Abrolhos are maintained while allowing visitors to access and enjoy the destination.

Given that commercial development at the Abrolhos will be closely managed to protect the values, any development opportunities would need to be subject to a competitive process to achieve the best outcomes for the State. This would need to follow and be informed by the planning processes that are currently underway.

DBCA has strong framework for managing commercial activities and developments in the State's national parks and other conservation reserves using licensing and leases as primary ways to facilitate tourism in a managed way. This framework will be applied at the Abrolhos to the islands that have been created as national park and DBCA is confident that it will provide for tourism whilst ensuring that the unique values of the island are conserved.

DBCA appreciates the suggestion to facilitate a visit to the Abrolhos to consider potential tourism interests, however as planning processes are currently underway, it is suggested that such a visit be timed for a later date.

Given the interest of Council in planning for the Abrolhos and the potential tourism opportunities, DBCA would be happy to provide an update to Council on planning to date.