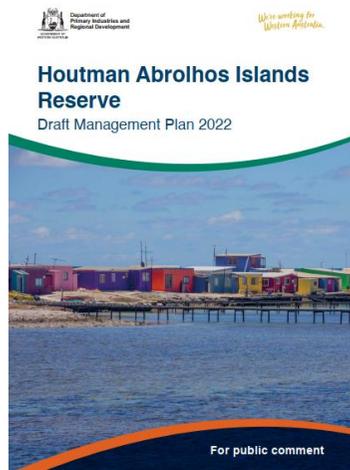


# City of Greater Geraldton Submission

## Houtman Abrolhos Islands Reserve

### Draft Management Plan 2022

NM30B - Attachment - CGG Submission - Houtman Abrolhos Islands Reserve Draft Management Plan 2022



Note: The position presented in this submission paper is based on the majority of Elected Member responses.

Documents referenced:

1. Houtman Abrolhos Islands Reserve - Draft Management Plan 2022 - For Public Comment
2. Houtman Abrolhos Islands Strategic Direction 2020-24
3. Abrolhos Reserve and Fish Habitat Protection Area - Consultation Report 2022

Survey Question	Consensus	Comments
<b>Section 1 - General Overview</b>		
Feedback on Section 1 of the Abrolhos Reserve Draft Management Plan pages 8 - 26.		
To what extent do you agree that Section 1 of the Abrolhos Reserve Draft Management Plan provided you with an informative overview of the Abrolhos Reserve planning area, management focus and management context?	Somewhat Agree	Concern that only 'overnight accommodation' is noted, as this is insufficient. Overnight accommodation generally supported by those who like existing limited tourism options. Visitors will want the option to stay for more than one day, and at more than one location, in sustainably built floating or fixed accommodation. Anything less would be a continuation of the status quo, never truly allowing tourism to flourish or the creation of greater investment and employment opportunities.
<b>Section 2 - Strategic Priorities for the Abrolhos Reserve</b>		
The following questions provide feedback in relation to the key values and proposed management of the following six strategic priorities for the Abrolhos Reserve:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature conservation and protection</li> <li>• Cultural heritage protection</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture</li> <li>• Abrolhos community</li> <li>• Governance</li> </ul>		
<b>Section 2.1 - Nature Conservation and Protection</b>		
Feedback on Section 2.1 of the Abrolhos Reserve Draft Management Plan pages 27 - 35.		
Do you agree that the natural values are accurately described in Section 2.1 of the draft management plan (refer pg. 27)? If not, why not.	Yes	Nil
Do you agree that the management issues and threats to the natural values of the Abrolhos Reserve are accurately described in Section 2.1 of the draft management plan (refer pg. 30)? If not, why not.	Yes	Nil
Do you agree that achieving the four (4) management objectives in Section 2.1 of the draft management plan will result in appropriate outcomes for the Natural values of the Abrolhos Reserve? If not, why not.	Yes	Nil

Survey Question	Consensus	Comments
There are 17 proposed management actions aimed at achieving the management objectives for Nature Conservation and Protection on the Abrolhos Reserve. To what extent do you agree with the proposed actions?	Somewhat Agree	Concerned there is no mention of increased tourism opportunities with accommodation and associated facilities allowing stays of a few days; halving the bag limit; and not permitting camping, particularly Pelsaert Group.
If you wish to do so, please provide any additional feedback in relation to Section 2.1 - Nature Conservation and Protection that is not captured above?	N/A	<p>Management of the Abrolhos Islands is essential to ensure that sustainable tourism can be delivered without compromising the ecosystem.</p> <p>Risk of bushfires on the Abrolhos is not noted. If tourism development is allowed, fire fighting equipment to protect related assets would be located in-situ.</p> <p>Per previous question, concerns with halving the bag limit and not permitting camping.</p>
<p><b><u>Section 2.2 - Cultural Heritage Protection</u></b></p> <p>Feedback on Section 2.2 of the Abrolhos Reserve Draft Management Plan pages 36 - 38.</p>		
Do you agree that the cultural heritage values are accurately described in Section 2.2 of the draft management plan (refer pg. 36)? If not, why not.	Yes	<p>Risk of cultural heritage values being overstated.</p> <p>No reason tourism on a greater scale than most of the Report seems to favour would imperil those values.</p> <p>Values don't cover recreational visitation, particularly day trippers that see access as a cultural way of life.</p>
Can you provide advice on any additional places of cultural heritage interest on the Abrolhos Reserve not identified in the draft management plan (refer pg. 37)?	N/A	Small boat recreational heritage.
Do you agree that achieving the three (3) management objectives in Section 2.2 of the draft management plan will result in appropriate outcomes for the Cultural Heritage values of the Abrolhos Reserve? If not, why not.	Yes	Noted per the summary, the European history and guano mining were there first yet seem to run a distant second and third to the fisherman. Whilst the fisherman are very important culturally and economically, concern this part of the heritage of the islands is overshadowed by the fisherman legacy.

Survey Question	Consensus	Comments
There are seven (7) proposed management actions aimed at achieving the management objectives for Cultural Heritage Protection on the Abrolhos Reserve. To what extent do you agree with the proposed actions?	Somewhat agree	Refer to previous comment - whilst guano mining is mentioned, the remaining actions centre around the body corporate. Pleased that the risks associated with existing unmanaged tourism are noted, but the overall thrust is overcautious.
If you wish to do so, please provide any additional feedback in relation to Section 2.2 - Cultural Heritage Protection that is not captured above?	N/A	Would like to see more focus on European influence including wrecks, stories and original use, prior to commercial fishing. Noted that the report states 'low visitor numbers' but does not provide explanation of how many visitors that would equate to. Given that in non-COVID times there are 100's of visitors at the Islands at certain times such as Easter and the June long weekend, and those numbers seem to be regarded as acceptable, clearly there is capacity for such numbers to be properly and carefully managed.
<p><b><u>Section 2.3 - Tourism</u></b></p> <p>Feedback on Section 2.3 of the Abrolhos Reserve Draft Management Plan pages 39 - 47.</p>		
To what extent do you agree with the proposed guiding principles for sustainable tourism development outlined in Section 2.3 of the draft management plan (refer pg. 40)?	Strongly agree	Noted that it covers that tourism must be cognisant and respectful of commercial fishing and aquaculture ventures; raised walkways; and with a recognition that licensed and therefore trained, accredited and insured operators are essential. Reiterate previous comment about 'low visitor numbers', stated but no clarification on meaning. Concern with exclusion of Pelsaert group, impacting recreational users hardest.
Do you agree with the proposed management arrangements for new built commercial tourist accommodation on the Abrolhos Reserve (refer pg. 41)? If not, why not.	Yes	Report notes the potential of tourist-built accommodation - though mentioned that this would have to be private sector driven, concern raised that

Survey Question	Consensus	Comments
		no attempt was made to informally approach tourist companies to gauge their interest.
Do you agree with the proposed management arrangements for hosted fishing camp tourist accommodation on the Abrolhos Reserve (refer pg. 42)? If not, why not.	Yes	Concern that if the body corporate can host fishing camps, why have a Fishing Tour Operators Licence (FTOL).
Do you agree with the proposal to prohibit recreational camping on the Abrolhos Reserve (refer pg. 42)? If not, why not.	Yes	Generally agree with the proposal, however: View that this can be managed once framework is established and potential for permanent rangers to be present. Needs to be policed and controlled if unsupervised recreational camping is allowed to continue, as has been for years. Makes the islands less accessible to people as a result of cost, as camping already exists better to regulate it.
Do you agree with the proposed management arrangements for guided day tours on the Abrolhos Reserve (refer pg. 42)? If not, why not.	No	Arrangements shouldn't be driven by the corporate bodies, should be by tourism operators that make deals with body corporate members. Suggest investigating other options to guided tour options, and that tourists wishing to stay for a few days should also be part of forward planning. Visitors to the Islands shouldn't have to have a guide to know their way around.
Do you agree with the proposed management arrangements for retail, food and beverage outlets on the Abrolhos Reserve (refer pg. 43)? If not, why not.	Yes	Per previous comments, shouldn't be driven by body corporate. Noted there is no mention that there would be commercial opportunities as well if tourism is permitted to properly develop.
Do you agree with the proposed management arrangements for commercial events and functions on the Abrolhos Reserve (refer pg. 43)? If not, why not.	Yes	Nil
Do you agree with the proposed management arrangements for a tourism operations base on the Abrolhos Reserve (refer pg. 44)? If not, why not.	Yes	A Tourism Operations Base would be needed if tourism is allowed to reach full potential.

Survey Question	Consensus	Comments
Do you agree that achieving the four (4) management objectives in Section 2.3 of the draft management plan will result in appropriate outcomes for Tourism on the Abrolhos Reserve? If not, why not.	Yes	Generally agree, however concern raised on the camping disallowance
There are 17 proposed management actions aimed at achieving the management objectives for Tourism on the Abrolhos Reserve. To what extent do you agree with the proposed actions?	Somewhat agree	Nil
If you wish to do so, please provide any additional feedback in relation to Section 2.3 - Tourism that is not captured above?	N/A	View that there is too much focus on the body corporate - let them fish and be separate, leaving the tourism to tourism operators. Both working hand in hand.  Concern some contact with major tourist companies to gauge their views was not made, which would have been beneficial to discover their view.
<p><b>Section 2.4 - Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture</b></p> <p>Feedback on Section 2.4 of the Abrolhos Reserve Draft Management Plan pages 48 - 49.</p>		
Do you agree that achieving the management objective in Section 2.4 of the draft management plan will support the Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture values of the Abrolhos Reserve? If not, why not.	Yes	Nil
There are six (6) proposed management actions aimed at achieving the management objective for Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture on the Abrolhos Reserve. To what extent do you agree with the proposed actions?	Somewhat agree	Involve corporate bodies but at some stage make a call on who actually can and can't use the islands instead of just collaborating as stated in the actions.
If you wish to do so, please provide any additional feedback in relation to Section 2.4 - Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture that is not captured above?	N/A	As previously mentioned, appears to be much influence on potential decisions sitting with the body corporates.
<p><b>Section 2.5 - Abrolhos Community</b></p> <p>Feedback on Section 2.5 of the Abrolhos Reserve Draft Management Plan pages 50 - 63.</p>		
Do you agree that a permitted land use table is an appropriate and effective management tool to guide future land use and development on the Abrolhos Reserve? If not, why not?	Yes	Needs to be more consideration for additional sites to house permanent tourist accommodation and associated facilities.

Survey Question	Consensus	Comments
To what extent do you agree with the proposed future land use and development opportunities for North Island outlined in Table 2?	Somewhat agree	One of only a few with purpose built accommodation?
To what extent do you agree with the proposed future land use and development opportunities for the Wallabi Group Islands outlined in Table 2?	Somewhat agree	More consideration should have been given for tourist accommodation and associated facilities.
To what extent do you agree with the proposed future land use and development opportunities for the Easter Group Islands outlined in Table 2?	Somewhat agree	More consideration should have been given for tourist accommodation and associated facilities.
To what extent do you agree with the proposed future land use and development opportunities for the Pelsaert Group Islands outlined in Table 2?	Somewhat agree	More consideration should have been given for tourist accommodation and associated facilities. Low impact camping and tourists facilities for day trippers from Geraldton should be prioritised.
To what extent do you agree with the outcomes that Government is seeking in relation to future management of fishing camps outlined in the Abrolhos Reserve draft management plan (refer pg. 59)?	Somewhat agree	Agree that the camps can't be just for lifestyle and need to benefit the state, and support that the camps can be sublet to active commercial ventures and are limited by license to location. Suggest that leases should, at end of life, come to an end and be treated equally with tourism. Some view the shacks as mostly holiday homes of the wealthy, to the exclusion of the owners of the land, the State.
Do you agree that achieving the six (6) management objectives in Section 2.5 of the draft management plan will result in appropriate outcomes for the Community values of the Abrolhos Reserve? If not, why not.	Yes	Nil
There are 12 proposed management actions aimed at achieving the management objectives for Abrolhos Community on the Abrolhos Reserve. To what extent do you agree with the proposed actions?	Somewhat agree	Suggest collaborating with the body corporate to remove unsafe and unsightly camps, and it is noted that telecommunications is essential if tourism is going to prosper.
If you wish to do so, please provide any additional feedback - in relation to Section 2.5 Abrolhos Community that is not captured above?	N/A	Respect all island users equally.

Survey Question	Consensus	Comments
<b><u>Section 2.6 - Governance</u></b>		
Feedback on Section 2.6 of the Abrolhos Reserve Draft Management Plan pages 64 - 67.		
Do you agree that achieving the five (5) proposed management objectives in Section 2.6 of the draft management plan will improve Governance of the Abrolhos Reserve? If not, why not.	Yes	Nil
There are 10 proposed management actions aimed at achieving the management objectives for Governance on the Abrolhos Reserve. To what extent do you agree with the proposed actions?	Somewhat agree	Nil
If you wish to do so, please provide any additional feedback in relation to Section 2.6 - Governance that is not captured above?	N/A	Nil
<b><u>Appendix 1 - Prioritised Summary Action Table</u></b>		
Feedback on Appendix 1 of the Abrolhos Reserve draft management plan pages 72 - 77.		
If you wish to do so, please provide feedback on the prioritisation of proposed management actions detailed in Appendix 1.	N/A	If the City of Greater Geraldton is to benefit from the Abrolhos, then tourism needs to be the highest priority and all energy and focus needs to be channelled to this accordingly. The Priority 1 rating in Tourism is good to see - immediate action, and a reasonable time frame overall.
<b><u>Additional Feedback</u></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It should be noted, that whilst the land belongs to the State Government, the “Airport” belongs to the City. There is ample room to relocate the airstrip on East Wallabi to accommodate a longer hard surface runway so larger aircraft could land thereby increasing potential visitation. This needs to be a high-priority consideration.</li> <li>• The Draft broadly supports ‘low-visitor numbers’ more than once without giving a number that equates to. The City is aware that pre-COVID, at Easter and the June long weekend for instance, hundreds of visitors would arrive at the Islands, often staying for several days or longer. Does it follow that a similar number of tourists per day who are actually managed equates to ‘low visitor numbers’?</li> </ul>		