

DESTINATION SHARK BAY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is **DESTINATION** Shark Bay?

The proposal Destination Shark Bay is a collaborative project which will rejuvenate key visitor sites and create an itinerary of new and exceptional 'world class' tourism experiences in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area, realising transformative economic growth as well as important social and environmental outcomes.

Why is the project **VITAL** to the region?

Destination Shark Bay will capitalise on private and public sector investments in Shark Bay and growing demand for authentic natural and cultural tourism experiences by:

Reinvigorating Shark Bay's key visitor sites with outstanding, sustainable and diverse experiences and amenities, encouraging visitors to extend their stay.

Realising transformative economic growth, with increased tourism revenue, more jobs, small business development and greater confidence for private sector investment.

Promoting Malgana aspirations, creating opportunities for Aboriginal employment and enterprise development.

Protecting environmental and cultural heritage values through effective management of visitor access and impacts.

Bolstering the regional economy, with business investment supported by large scale, strategic investment in public tourism infrastructure.

I What is the **SCOPE** of Destination Shark Bay?

The Destination Shark Bay project includes the following redevelopment activities, to be delivered over a four-year period:

- Rejuvenation of the Monkey Mia visitor experience
- Renewal of the Peron Homestead Precinct experience in Francois Peron National Park
- A new 'subterranean' experience at Shell Beach Conservation Park
- New ways of experiencing stromatolites at Hamelin Pool Marine Nature Reserve
- Impressive sculpture and landscape treatment to the World Heritage Area at the Overlander turn off on the North West Coastal Highway
- Improved viewing opportunities and visitor management at Eagle Bluff, South Peron including viewing decks, walk trails and interpretation.

I What are some of the **ASSUMPTIONS** underpinning Destination Shark Bay?

- Shark Bay has significant tourist appeal. The attractions include the wild dolphins at Monkey Mia and the remarkable, unique values of the World Heritage area.
- Visitors currently spend limited time at the key visitor sites. These sites are exposed to the elements and have unrealised potential to better engage visitors. With the provision of shade shelters, public facilities, 2WD access, interpretative material and walk trails and universal access where possible, visitors will have more reason to stay longer.
- Government has an obligation to protect World Heritage values. The installation of new visitor infrastructure will improve visitor management and public education, protecting these values for future generations.
- Tourism is the key economic driver for Shark Bay. By expanding the range of visitor experiences, upgrading facilities and providing exceptional visitor interpretation, the project will increase visitor expenditure, create local jobs, generate business activity and build resilience in the regional economy.
- The resilience of Shark Bay's tourism appeal needs to be enhanced. As Shark Bay relies heavily on the dolphin experience as its main attraction, the development of other world class experiences is important to expand Shark Bay's tourism reputation as more than just dolphins.
- The Malgana people of Shark Bay may wish to participate in Destination Shark Bay and pursue joint management opportunities with the State Government.

I **HOW MUCH** does Destination Shark Bay cost and how might these funds be sourced?

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) has estimated the cost of Destination Shark Bay to be \$34,950,000. This includes funding for major rejuvenation works at six key tourist sites including: the Overlander turn off, Hamelin Pool, Eagle Bluff, Shell Beach, Peron Homestead and Monkey Mia. Gascoyne Development Commission (GDC), in consultation with the Destination Shark Bay Working Group has submitted funding for \$34,950,000 spread over four years (2020/21 to 2023/24).

I **WHY** does Destination Shark Bay cost this amount of money?

Visionary, transformational projects require significant public investment. It costs money to create a 'wow' factor, to captivate and emotively engage people.

The key visitor sites within the World Heritage Area were developed in the early 1990s. They are dated, tired, at end of life cycle, and inconsistent with the outstanding natural and cultural heritage values of the area. This situation diminishes the standard of and interpretation of the area's remarkable values, impedes visitor immersion and has direct economic consequences in relation to visitor perceptions, duration of visitor stays, length of the season and visitor spend.

Destination Shark Bay will rejuvenate key visitor attractions and create an itinerary of new and exceptional 'world class' tourism experiences within the World Heritage Area. It will emotively engage visitors through various interactive mediums including sculpture, art, technology and the built form.

The scope of the proposal is extensive, involving the rejuvenation of six key tourist attractions across the World Heritage Area. New roads and carparks, walk trails, shade facilities, built structures and interpretation works are all intended.

An evaluation of Royalties for Regions Tourism Projects conducted in 2019 found that investing 'at scale' on multi-faceted projects has been an important determinant of project success.

Despite these costs, the long-term benefits will be transformational. Destination Shark Bay is an investment in the future, protecting the World Heritage Area and providing long term benefits for the Shark Bay and regional communities.

Why should Destination Shark Bay be **PRIORITISED** for funding?

Tourism is recognised as Shark Bay's only significant economic driver and is important for the local and regional communities. Shark Bay received on average 120,100 visitors per year from 2016-2018 and the average length of stay was 3.9 nights per visitor. The average visitor spend in the Shire of Shark Bay was \$73 million per year from 2015- 2018.

The tourism economy in Shark Bay is founded on the remarkable natural features of the World Heritage Area and its population of wild dolphins, which frequent Monkey Mia daily.

State investment in regional tourism infrastructure projects, like Destination Shark Bay, commonly yield more visitor numbers, increased visitor sentiment and economic impact than other tourism projects focussed on awareness and activity, accommodation and amenity development. This is particularly relevant for regions with natural assets, but limited tourist facilities, like Shark Bay.

Destination Shark Bay will capitalise on public and private sector investment in accommodation, private attractions and public amenity in Shark Bay. This investment will encourage visitors to stay longer, extending the peak season into the shoulder seasons, realising transformative economic growth as well as important social and environmental outcomes.

Destination Shark Bay will reduce the level of dependency on the popular Monkey Mia dolphins with improved alternative tourism offerings, broadening the economic base and encouraging longevity of stay.

Destination Shark Bay has been extensively planned since 2016 and is recommended within the DBCA 'Two-Year Action Plan for Nature Based Tourism (2019 and 2020)'. Additionally, Destination Shark Bay is complementary to the State Government's 'Plan for Our Parks' initiative, incorporating joint management opportunities with Malgana people.

Why is **STATE GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT** justified when the private and not for profit sectors stand to benefit?

It is important to acknowledge the private and not for profit sectors have invested heavily in attractions, tourism services and accommodation developments in Shark Bay in recent times. Combined with Destination Shark Bay, this overall level of investment will realise transformative change for Shark Bay.

It stands to reason for Government to invest in projects like Destination Shark Bay, even though the private and not for profit sectors will also benefit. Governments are responsible for the growth and welfare of regional communities and the private and not for profit sectors serve important functions in regional communities.

They provide services, create job opportunities, generate economic returns, stimulate business development and create significant flow on effects. They are critical for the local, regional and state economies.

Government investment will also give greater confidence for the private sector to further invest in the development of new visitor services and facilities in the Shark Bay area.

Government investment is justified for many other reasons, including it has an international obligation to protect the World Heritage values of Shark Bay. Government is also committed to Aboriginal economic development and Destination Shark Bay provides the means to achieve this.

Why weren't these **SITES AND FACILITIES** maintained over time reducing the need for this investment?

The key visitor sites and facilities within Shark Bay have been well maintained by DBCA since their construction in the early 1990s.

The reality is that after 30 years these sites and facilities are now dated, tired, at the end of their life cycle and inconsistent with the outstanding natural and cultural heritage values of the area.

Destination Shark Bay is about rejuvenation. Destination Shark Bay proposes new ways of telling the 'Shark Bay story' befitting of its history, World Heritage status and tourist appeal. It will emotively engage visitors through various interactive mediums including sculpture, art, technology and the built form.

How will Destination Shark Bay meet **FUTURE MAINTENANCE** costs?

Destination Shark Bay aims to be best practice, stand-alone and sustainable. All infrastructure development will be robust, designed to withstand many years of use, with minimal ongoing maintenance costs. The selected materials will be environmentally friendly and energy efficient and renewable energy-based systems will be implemented where applicable.

DBCA will meet ongoing maintenance costs on lands that they manage. Revenue derived from park entry fees, camping fees and commercial operations is used to meet ongoing maintenance requirements.

Who is going to deliver Destination Shark Bay and how will this be **ACHIEVED**?

DBCA will project manage and administer Destination Shark Bay. For sites with neighbouring business operations such as Hamelin Pool and Monkey Mia, DBCA will work closely with the Shire of Shark Bay and neighbours.

In the case of the Overlander Trail Head, at the turn off on North West Coastal Highway, DBCA will work closely with the landholders and vested authorities.

DBCA has considerable expertise in large scale tourism developments and the capacity to implement Destination Shark Bay. They are well resourced, comprising of parks and visitor services staff based in the region, and supported by landscape design and planning staff based in Perth. Private sector professionals (for example, architects, engineers) would also be engaged to support a project of this scale.

Whilst there has been significant stakeholder engagement to date, ongoing community consultation, particularly with the Malgana Aboriginal Corporation will be required to maximise the economic, social and environmental benefits of Destination Shark Bay.

Local and regional industry has the capacity to undertake the on-ground activities and deliver the high-quality outcomes required.

Project design works are well developed for various site activities. It is anticipated that on-ground work could commence at Monkey Mia and Shell Beach in 2020. The remainder of the activity will be undertaken over the course of four years.

How will Destination Shark Bay **INCREASE VISITOR LENGTH OF STAY** and increase visitor numbers during the shoulder and low season?

Increasing visitor length of stay and visitor numbers during the shoulder and low seasons can be achieved through the provision of contemporary infrastructure at key visitor sites. Visitor experience will be significantly enhanced with creative interpretation of the attractions and more comfortable amenities as proposed in Destination Shark Bay.

By rejuvenating key visitor sites, it is anticipated that visitors will stay an extra day. This is a realistic assumption. According to Tourism WA data, the average visitor stays in Shark Bay for 3.9 nights. It is projected that the visitor length of stay could increase on average by 12 hours over the four most popular sites in the World Heritage Area. This will encourage visitors to stay one extra day.

By rejuvenating the key visitor sites there will be an increase of up to 10% more visitors to the sites over the year.

Data collected by DBCA suggests there has been at least an 8% increase on average per year over the past three years. Considering this, a projected 10% increase in visitor numbers per year as a direct result of the installation of contemporary infrastructure is certainly achievable, if not a little conservative.

If more visitors come to Shark Bay in the shoulder and low season, when there is accommodation capacity, then this will realise significant economic transformation. This could be achieved through promotional campaigns directed toward the international market who experience colder conditions at home during the Northern Hemisphere winter. Targeted promotions may also attract the domestic market.

What are the **ECONOMIC BENEFITS** of Destination Shark Bay?

Destination Shark Bay will create significant economic benefits for the Shark Bay and regional communities.

Economic impact assessments suggest that spending \$34.9 million (project cost) will generate the following economic returns:

- Total construction effect – \$63.7M in the Gascoyne region and the creation of 101 new jobs during the construction phase, with 22 directly employed on the project.
- Post construction economic impact estimates:
 - \$16.9M peak (2024-25) annual increase to Gascoyne region's Gross Regional Product;
 - \$136.3M (2020-21 to 2030-31) cumulative impact to GRP.
- Post construction employment estimates:
 - 119 FTE peak (2024-25) annual job creation for Gascoyne and 93 FTE for Shark Bay;
 - 958 FTE cumulative (2020-21 to 2030-31) job creation for Gascoyne; 752 FTE for Shark Bay.
- Benefit-cost ratio: 3.06 for the Gascoyne with breakeven year in 2025-26; 2.34 for Shark Bay with breakeven year after 2025-26.

More detailed analysis will be undertaken by an independent consultant to substantiate the business case and demonstrate the benefits of Destination Shark Bay to the community, government, the not for profit and private sectors.

How will Destination Shark Bay **PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES** for Aboriginal people?

The Malgana Aboriginal Corporation is a member of the Destination Shark Bay Working Group. It is anticipated that the Malgana people of Shark Bay will wish to participate in Destination Shark Bay and pursue joint management opportunities with the State Government.

Destination Shark Bay, through the rejuvenation of key visitor sites, will provide opportunities for the Malgana Ranger Program to participate in various activities including biodiversity monitoring and research; cultural site management; cultural awareness and immersion experiences for visitors; management of visitors and tourism assets; as well as education and interpretation programs. The Rangers will receive on-the-job training increasing their capacity to perform important land and sea management works.

Destination Shark Bay closely aligns with other State Government plans to partner with the traditional owners to manage lands and waters within Shark Bay. The 'Plan for Our Parks' initiative will create conservation reserves over former pastoral lease lands enabling joint management of Shark Bay's terrestrial and marine reserves between Malgana people and DBCA. The jointly managed reserves will include those key visitor sites identified for rejuvenation under the Destination Shark Bay proposal.

These funded initiatives will ensure Malgana involvement in decision making, create employment and training opportunities and enable Aboriginal people to establish and operate tourism ventures and other enterprises on their country.

How may Destination Shark Bay impact **LOCAL SERVICES** in Shark Bay and how might this be addressed?

It is anticipated that Destination Shark Bay will increase the demand for community services in Shark Bay. The extent is difficult to qualify at this early stage. Destination Shark Bay is encouraging visitors to extend their stay from 3.9 nights to 4.9 nights. Destination Shark Bay is proposing a relatively modest increase of 10% in visitor numbers. Based on recent trends this amounts to approximately 12,000 more people spread over the year. Although these numbers are significant, it is unlikely that Shark Bay is going to be overwhelmed with tourists, creating excessive demands on community services.

It is hoped that any inconveniences experienced by the Shark Bay community are offset by the benefits that Destination Shark Bay offers, particularly in terms of economic growth, business development and job creation.

Economic returns generated by Destination Shark Bay will flow into other areas of the Shark Bay economy. It is anticipated this will help to sustain community services, like medical, emergency and shire services. It may also attract further private investment and government funding in the town, helping to strengthen the Shark Bay economy and community fabric.

How will Destination Shark Bay mitigate the impacts of **CLIMATE CHANGE**?

Visitor sites included in Destination Shark Bay will be impacted by climate change. These impacts will be assessed on a site-by-site basis and appropriate mitigation measures applied where feasible.

Most of these sites are situated in the coastal zone. Shark Bay is a low-lying coastal landscape susceptible to flooding caused by sea level rise as well as erosion caused by more extreme weather events and changes to sediment supply as a result of heating water temperatures in the bay. These impacts will be considered in the layout, design and construction of visitor sites and facilities.

Climate change will also result in a drying, hotter environment. All Destination Shark Bay infrastructure will be robust and designed to withstand many years of use in a harsh environment. Construction materials will be environmentally friendly and energy efficient and renewable energy-based systems will be implemented where applicable. The installation of shade shelters at all sites will be important for visitor amenity and protection from the hot climate. Destination Shark Bay can also serve an important education function in relation to climate change, demonstrating best practice development and adaptation measures.

Land management and restoration activities, such as feral animal control, revegetation and managing visitor access will be undertaken as part of Destination Shark

The Destination Shark Bay Working Group was first convened in 2016.

It is chaired by the CEO of the Gascoyne Development Commission and comprises members of the following organisations:

Gascoyne Development Commission
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
Tourism WA
Australia's Coral Coast
Shire of Shark Bay
Shark Bay World Heritage Advisory Committee
Shark Bay Business and Tourism Association
Malgana Aboriginal Corporation
RAC Parks and Resorts
Dirk Hartog Eco-Lodge
Ocean Park Aquarium
Bush Heritage Australia

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