

Northern Territory Coastal and Marine Management Discussion Paper

City of Darwin (CoD) welcomes the opportunity to provide a response to the Northern Territory Coastal and Marine Management Discussion Paper. The following response was prepared by officers and will be presented to the City of Darwin City Futures Committee on Tuesday 20 March 2018. This response should be taken as confidential until endorsed by the Committee.

The vision of Council is for Darwin to be a *tropical liveable city*. We value our natural environment, our history and culture, our outdoor lifestyle and close relationship with the ocean and coast. Our strategic vision and a number of Council policies directly align with the goals and objectives of the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy, as highlighted below.

City of Darwin is committed to lead and advocate for sustainability and the protection of our environment. Council values biodiversity, the natural environment and the green open spaces that all contribute to the tropical lifestyle of this capital city. Council will strive to continually improve on its environmental performance and to foster a culture of environmental awareness and sustainability among its staff and the community¹.

City of Darwin is committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of residents through the provision of community spaces, facilities, programs and healthy food choices that encourage healthy lifestyle behaviour, connect the community, and celebrate Darwin's unique tropical outdoor lifestyle².

Council will:

- work closely with government, community organisations and private enterprise in all aspects of tourist development;...
- support the preservation of significant historic sites/items and endeavour to ensure that where environmental, historic or cultural areas exist, these areas will be adequately protected in relation to development or usage;
- support the development of national parks, conservation areas and recognise items of heritage significance;
- support the development of appropriate scenic drives, walking and riding trails; ...

Comments contained below address the discussion questions posed in the paper and how these impact on the community, local government in general and CoD in particular³.

¹ City of Darwin Policy No. 006 - Environment

² City of Darwin Policy No. 045 – Recreation and Healthy Lifestyles

³ City of Darwin Policy No. 013 – Tourism

1. What do you value most about our coasts and seas?

Amenity

City of Darwin benefits from an accessible coast and harbour. The community amenity provided by the coastal lifestyle contributes significantly to the Darwin community. Despite the restrictions on swimming in our ocean, the community benefits greatly from the range of recreation opportunities that are provided by this coastal lifestyle.

Our oceans are a significant food source for much of the Darwin community. Traditional, recreational and commercial fishing and other food harvesting opportunities should continue to be made available in an equitable manner across the community.

Tourism and Trade

As a coastal city, CoD benefits from tourism that is dependent on the ocean, harbour and port. International cruise ships contribute significantly to the economy of the Darwin CBD. The harbour and port provide significant opportunity for trade, both interstate and international.

Large and complex natural environment

Being a coastal community has many environmental benefits, including the cooling breezes and seasonable weather. As new and existing suburbs develop, these benefits should be harnessed wherever possible.

The Darwin Harbour is large, more than six times larger than Sydney Harbour. This provides great opportunity for natural systems and processes to continue despite the ever increasing pressure of the active port. The biodiversity and natural functions of Darwin Harbour should be preserved as a high priority.

2. Are there any other environmental, social, cultural and economic values and benefits do we need to consider when developing the Strategy?

Wherever possible NTG should strive to record history of the harbour, particularly capturing ancient trade routes from traditional owners and other traders' perspective. Military and migration history should also be conserved wherever possible.

Economically, Darwin's port is the closest trading port to South East Asia, the third largest cruise terminal in Australia and a second home/port to the largest number of defence fleet of Australian and International ships.

We need to recognise the varied function of the Harbour, including transport. It is also important to acknowledge that recreation opportunities are not limited to fishing. A number of people live on the harbour, including in houseboats.

Mangroves function for carbon storage and coastline protection especially in sea level rise scenarios. Ensure that terrestrial flora and fauna are addressed as they are also impacted by the harbour, particularly around food, shelter and seed dispersal.

Threats to marine environments include long-term management of infrastructure, jetties, boat ramps, navigational structures, and pollution impacts

3. What are the major opportunities to protect and sustainably develop our coast and seas?

We require a better understanding of our harbour and coastal areas. Our harbour is not 'pristine' as it is a working harbour. More research is required on blue carbon and the impacts of development on coastal processes including impacts of pollutants, impacts of severe weather events especially on food sources for marine species. Improved and better enforcement of environmental conditions on industry and development in and around harbour, including what is being poured down stormwater drains. Improved and better enforcement of restrictions for commercial and recreational fishing will help to identify and reduce illegal fishing practices.

NTG should be open and responsive to innovation in clean (renewable) energy opportunities. This will have the added benefit of mitigating carbon emissions. This should be coupled with serious adaptation measures to prepare for the inevitable changes to our climate, including but not limited to sea level rise and warming sea temperatures. City of Darwin has invested in significant adaptation measures such as sea walls at the Nightcliff Foreshore.

Crucial to capturing these opportunities is the creation of partnerships. Given our proximity to Asia and the fact we share our oceans with our northern neighbours we have great opportunities for international development and a chance to become world leaders in tropical ocean management

4. Do these challenges reflect the key issues in our coasts and seas?

The challenges address some of the key issues in our coasts and seas. Council emphasises the threats to historic sites and community infrastructure (including boat ramps) as a result of climate change and sea level rise. Sea level rise is greater in Darwin than in other parts of Australia and is estimated to be around 14mm annually. Changes in rainfall may result in more intense run off through our stormwater system and direct sheet flow. This needs to be considered in the Strategy.

5. Is the goal appropriate and reflective of the NT needs?

While the goal is sufficient it would be enhanced with a reference to resilience. As a relatively undeveloped area that is rapidly changing, the ability of our coastal and marine environments to withstand and, hopefully, thrive into the future will hinge on resilience.

6. Are the management principles relevant and appropriate? Is their purpose clear?

The guiding principles are relevant and appropriate, however will benefit from a clear commitment to ecological sustainable development (ESD), including definition of the principles of ESD. City of Darwin recommends at a minimum a commitment to:

- the precautionary principle.
- the principle of intergenerational equity.
- conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity.
- improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms such as the “polluter pays” principle.

7. Are these objectives appropriate and reflective of the key issues?

The objectives reflect key issues; however as previously mentioned there should be a clear focus on resilience. This is in keeping with the principle of intergenerational equity, so that the actions of our current generation do not deteriorate the environs for future generations.

8. Do these outcomes reflect what you would expect to see in the Strategy?

The outcomes reflect what we would expect to see in the strategy. While they remain high level it is expected that the implementation plan will more specifically address the actions and responsible bodies.

9. Are there additional outcomes you think should be included in the Strategy?

Not at this time.

10. What kind of partnership arrangements do you think could support the implementation of the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy?

City of Darwin welcomes clear commitments, roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. It is important to acknowledge and value the work that is already being done to capture data and protect our coastal and marine environments. Marine industry partnerships should be investigated to ensure funding for monitoring, management and clean-up activities.

11. What is the best way for the community and industry to be involved in management and decision making of our coasts and seas?

City of Darwin supports robust community consultation processes, with a broad stakeholder base. City of Darwin also supports the development of Memos of Understanding to formalise and clarify roles and responsibilities.

In conclusion

City of Darwin welcomes the development of the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy, and looks forward to participating in the development of the Implementation Plan.

DRAFT