

Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy

A SUMMARY





Executive summary

Western Australia's vast Kimberley region is renowned for its natural beauty and enormous cultural significance. Awareness of its economic, cultural and biological values is rapidly increasing across Australia and around the world.

The Kimberley is at a critical point, with increasing recognition of its development potential, including development of rich offshore petroleum resources, the expansion of the Ord Irrigation Scheme, an expanding international profile and increasing visitor numbers as well as a growing population. A strategy that recognises this growth, and sets a path to conserve the natural and cultural values in one of the world's last great wilderness areas, is vital.

The State Government has met this challenge by developing a comprehensive Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy and committing an initial \$63 million over the five years to 2015 to implement it, with ongoing funding for key initiatives. This is a major investment in conserving the region's unique natural values and providing new opportunities for Aboriginal employment and for nature-based tourism.

This funding is also expected to create significant opportunities to leverage contributions from a wide array of sources, including the Commonwealth Government, non-government organisations and industry.

State Government agencies, Aboriginal groups, pastoralists, non-government organisations and individuals are all involved in the conservation of the Kimberley. The strategy does not replace existing legislative responsibilities or the activities of a range of stakeholders, but assists in integrating them.

This strategy will be implemented across the Kimberley region, comprised of the four local government areas of Broome, Derby-West Kimberley, Wyndham-East Kimberley and Halls Creek. The strategy is action-oriented with many initiatives commencing immediately and supported by funding into the longer term.



Col Barnett

Hon Colin Barnett MLA
Premier; Minister for State Development



Bill Marmion

Hon Bill Marmion MLA
Minister for Environment; Water





Hunter River
Photo – David Bettini



Miruwung-Gajerrong rangers
Photo – Scott Goodson/DEC



Gwion Gwion rock paintings, Oomari, east Kimberley
Photo – courtesy Ambrose Mungala Chalarimeri

Actions completed so far

- Completed upgrade of the unclassified 635,000-hectare Prince Regent Nature Reserve to a class A national park.
- Secured new funding of \$15.2 million over four years with ongoing funding of \$3.7 million/year for management and compliance activities in Camden Sound and Eighty Mile Beach marine parks.
- Progressed the indicative management plan for Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park and released the indicative management plan for Camden Sound Marine Park for public comment.
- Secured new funding of \$1.1 million over four years for a Kimberley marine education program for recreational fishers and charter operators.
- Secured new funding of \$9.6 million over four years for tourism initiatives in the Kimberley including development and promotion of new tourism corridors and assistance for Aboriginal communities to identify and develop nature- and culture-based tourism services.
- Identified the first new tourism corridor – Gibb River Road to Kalumburu – to be developed in conjunction with traditional owners and stakeholders including pastoralists and tourism operators.
- Completed site plans and let contracts for the upgrade of tourism facilities at Geikie Gorge and Tunnel Creek national parks.
- Secured new funding of \$21.5 million over five years and then ongoing funding of \$5.5 million/year for a landscape-scale program of fire, feral animal and weed control in partnership with traditional owners and key stakeholders including pastoralists and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy.
- Progressed the landscape conservation initiative. The planning for seasonal fire, feral animal and weed control projects is complete and on-ground works have commenced.
- Secured new funding of \$14.2 million for a major marine science program in the Kimberley with the Western Australian Marine Science Institution.
- Commenced development of a Kimberley knowledge portal which will improve access to existing environmental knowledge, including science and research, of the Kimberley.
- Secured new funding of \$695,000 over four years for stocking of barramundi in Lake Kununurra.
- Submitted legislation to Parliament (*Conservation Legislation Amendment Bill 2010*) that will allow for the joint management of land for conservation between the Department of Environment and Conservation and other parties, including traditional owners.
- Completed works to protect the Mermaid Boab Tree including construction of a boardwalk with Uunguu rangers.
- Committed new funding of \$300,000 over three years to The University of Western Australia's Centre for Rock Art Studies to support rock art research in the Kimberley.



Pentecost River, Gibb River Road
Photo – Tourism WA



Kimberley heath (*Calytrix exstipulata*)
Photo – Tourism WA



Shorebirds at Eighty Mile Beach
Photo – Kimberley Media

The top five strategy outcomes

1 Kimberley Wilderness Parks

The Kimberley Wilderness Parks will establish the State's largest interconnected system of marine and terrestrial parks covering more than 3.5 million hectares, including:

- *Four new marine parks* at Camden Sound, North Kimberley, Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach, which will almost treble the area of marine parks and reserves in Western Australia, from about 1.5 million hectares to 4.1 million hectares.
- *New terrestrial reserves* for Kimberley islands with the highest conservation significance, and the new Prince Regent National Park converted from a nature reserve to give it the security of tenure of a class A reserve and promote better management of nature-based tourism in the area.
- *A Conservation Reserve Corridor* linking Prince Regent and Drysdale River national parks through voluntary partnerships and joint management with traditional owners and pastoralists.

Further linkages to connect existing parks and reserves will also be progressed as the strategy is implemented.

2 A new landscape approach to conservation to manage fire, introduced animals and weeds

The internationally significant north Kimberley will be protected and maintained through collaborative action with land managers at a landscape scale to manage fire and to address the threats posed by introduced animals and weeds, which extend across property boundaries.

3 Training and employment for Aboriginal rangers

The landscape-scale conservation initiative and new marine parks will create significant opportunities to train and employ Aboriginal rangers in managing their traditional land and sea country. This will build on ranger programs currently run by the Kimberley Land Council and others.

4 Investing in knowledge and making information accessible

A new six-year marine science program will be undertaken in the Kimberley to improve management and help protect marine ecosystems and wildlife, both inside and outside the new marine parks.

An online knowledge portal will provide ready access to existing scientific and cultural information on the Kimberley and further research into Kimberley rock art will be supported.

5 A major boost to nature-based tourism

Visitor facilities at popular sites across the Kimberley will be upgraded and expanded. This will include developing and promoting tourism corridors, as well as four-wheel-drive trails using existing roads and tracks and an aerial tourism highway linking some of the region's major attractions. Assistance will also be provided to Aboriginal communities to develop nature-based and cultural tourism services.

The full Kimberley Science and Conservation Strategy can be downloaded at:

www.dec.wa.gov.au/kimberleystrategy.

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