



THE NORTH-WEST MARINE BIOREGIONAL PLAN

## BIOREGIONAL PROFILE

### CHAPTER 6

# DEVELOPING A NORTH-WEST MARINE BIOREGIONAL PLAN: NEXT STEPS



A DESCRIPTION OF THE ECOSYSTEMS, CONSERVATION VALUES AND USES  
OF THE NORTH-WEST MARINE REGION



Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

## CHAPTER 6 DEVELOPING A NORTH-WEST MARINE BIOREGIONAL PLAN: NEXT STEPS

This Bioregional Profile describes the characteristics and conservation values of the North-west Marine Region and the adjacent coastal waters and land. This information will guide development of a Marine Bioregional Plan for the Region.

The environment of the North-west Marine Region experiences relatively little pressure from human activities in comparison with many other parts of the ocean in Australia and elsewhere. Large areas of the Region are remote, with human settlement concentrated in relatively restricted stretches of the coast. However, human activities over the last 200 years have had an impact on the marine environment of the North-west Marine Region. Intensive harvesting of whales, sharks and other fish over a relatively short period is thought to have changed the relative distribution of species and is likely to have altered ecologically important relationships between prey and predators.

The Western Australian economy is predicted to experience substantial growth over the coming years. This will be driven primarily by growth in the onshore mining and offshore petroleum sectors, prompted by increasing demand from the fast-growing economies of Asia. The growth in these sectors, together with growth in supporting services and infrastructure sectors, and of the populations of coastal centres, is likely to result in increasing human interactions with the species and habitats of conservation value in the North-west Marine Region.

Concurrent with the marine bioregional planning process, the Australian and Western Australian Governments are undertaking a strategic assessment of the west Kimberley, under Section 146 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). This strategic assessment is being undertaken to ensure sustainable development while conserving the Kimberley's unique natural and cultural values. The strategic assessment will be undertaken in two parts, the first relating to the site selection and management of a common-user liquefied natural gas (LNG) hub to service exploitation of the Browse Basin gas reserves. The second part will be a wider assessment of the cultural and environmental values of the Kimberley, to formally identify its national and international heritage values to inform broader land use development in the Kimberley.

The strategic assessment will provide certainty for industry and reduce the impacts that would otherwise occur if piecemeal development of onshore LNG processing facilities were to occur along the Kimberley coastline. More information on the strategic assessments under the EPBC Act can be found in Appendix B.

This Profile provides a summary of what we know about the marine environment of the north-west and the ways in which we use it. This summary and supporting reports (see Section 1.2) provide an information-base for the next stages of marine bioregional planning in the North-west. While the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has endeavoured to ensure that the information in this Profile is comprehensive, up to date and accurate, we recognise that stakeholders may have additional information that may contribute to our understanding of the Region. The Department welcomes comments on the Profile and any additional information that may assist in developing a bioregional plan for the North-west Marine Region. Comments and additional information can be sent by email to <[NW\\_marine\\_plan@environment.gov.au](mailto:NW_marine_plan@environment.gov.au)>

or to

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All information provided will be considered by the Department in developing the Draft North-west Marine Bioregional Plan.





Trochus. Photo: Australian Institute of Marine Science.