

# Protecting Port Hedland's marine environment

Port Hedland's marine environmental quality is being monitored and protected under a marine management plan devised and overseen by Pilbara Ports and supported by Port Hedland Industries Council and its members.



Port Hedland Industries Council

Port Hedland is home to the world's largest bulk export port, but the marine environment also supports a range of sea life and habitats amid its rocky, sandy and muddy shores.

The shallow, intertidal creeks and extensive mangrove communities fed by strong tidal currents are also home to migratory shorebirds and marine turtles, among other wildlife.

Like all coastal marine environments, it is a complex interdependent ecosystem.

Protecting this ecosystem requires a thorough understanding of the introduced and natural processes and pressures, to enable monitoring and reporting on long-term trends in marine environmental quality.

PHIC is partnering with Pilbara Ports' in the ongoing management of the environment program.

## PHIC AND THE MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Port Hedland Industries Council developed a Marine Environmental Quality Management Plan (MEQMP) for the Port of Port Hedland in 2016.

It was developed because PHIC members had a desire to develop a common set of environmental quality criteria tailored to the local environment.

At the time, the need for a collaborative management plan was identified after a significant and intense period of port development.

That initial work was used as the basis for a management plan devised by Pilbara Ports in 2020 and implemented in 2021.

PHIC is now partnering with Pilbara Ports in the ongoing management of its marine environment quality program.

The program was part of Pilbara Ports' best-practice approach to environmental management and environmental stewardship for WA's ports. Similar programs cover the ports of Dampier and Ashburton.

## WHAT'S INVOLVED

The MEQMP was developed for Pilbara Ports by independent marine environmental consultants and draws on the environmental monitoring approach set out in Environmental Protection Authority guidelines as

well as the previous work by PHIC in developing the initial management plan.

A key feature of the current MEQMP involves quarterly sampling of marine waters and annual marine sediment monitoring, in combination with scientific assessment and observations at a range of monitoring sites within the port and surrounding areas.

Water and sediments collected as part of the MEQMP are sent to third-party laboratories for analysis to determine the presence of metals, hydrocarbons, nutrients, nuisance organisms and pathogenic bacteria.

Results are used as indicators of the quality of the marine environment within the port.





The program was implemented by Pilbara Ports as part of its best practice approach to environmental management.

### DATA COLLECTION

The MEQMP has been implemented over two phases.

- Phase 1 (Years 1-3) – Initial Baseline Data Collection. This started in 2021 and was completed in 2023. The data collected was used to establish an understanding of water and sediment quality within and surrounding the port and to help establish guidelines for site-specific ecological protection.
- Phase 2 (post-year 3) – Monitor & Investigate. This started in the 2024 financial year and is ongoing. It involves monitoring and investigation using the data collected to refine the guidelines and standards for marine water quality at the port.

The collaborative program involving PHIC began in July 2024.

### PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

PHIC and its members are committed to protecting Port Hedland's environment and are involved in other marine and onshore programs.

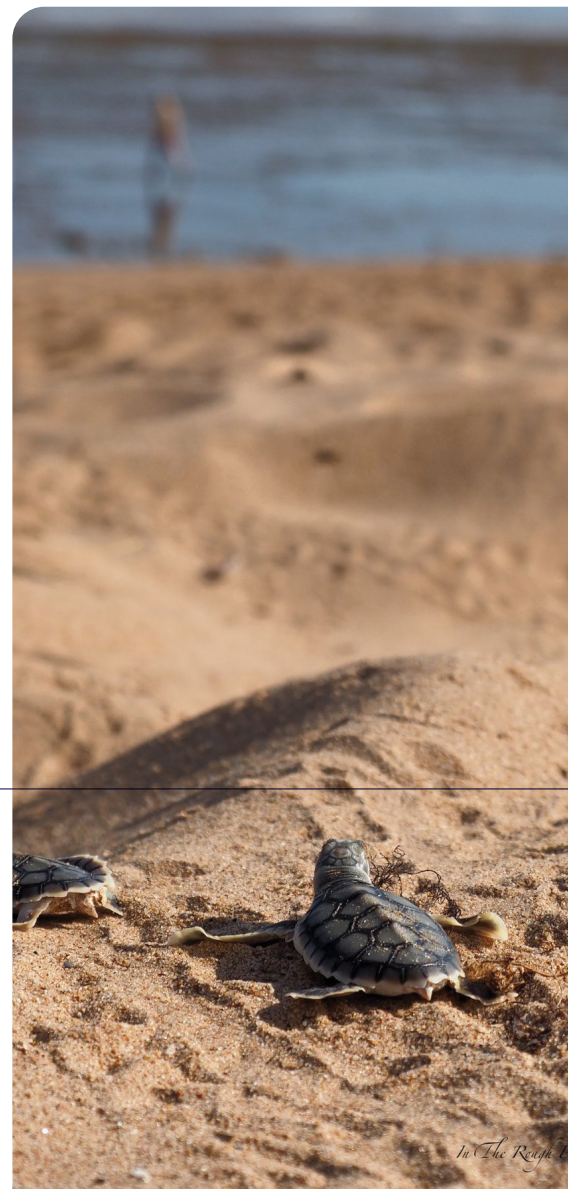
The **Greater Port Hedland Vertebrate Pest Management Plan** targets foxes and feral cats, catching and culling the animals to protect native fauna including turtles, northern quolls and bilbies. Increased native fauna activity has been detected in the management area.

The **State Wide Array Surveillance Program** is an early warning system to detect introduced marine pests which could devastate native marine species.

More information on the Greater Port Hedland Vertebrate Pest Management Plan **is available here**.

More information on the State Wide Array Surveillance Program **is available here**.

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### PHIC Members



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