Shire of
CARNARVON
catch a taste of the great life

Business Case

Blowholes Eco-Friendly Campground

April 2025

Introduction

The Carnarvon Blowholes (Point Quobba), located approximately 70–75 km north of Carnarvon in Western Australia, is a popular coastal attraction. Known for its dramatic ocean geysers and nearby coral-filled lagoon, the site attracts many visitors. However, camping at the Blowholes has been largely unregulated, leading to minimal infrastructure and environmental concerns. The Shire Administration proposes to formalise the operational management of the site by establishing a basic eco-friendly camping facility that provides essential amenities while protecting the site's natural and cultural values.

Rationale for Eco-Camping at the Blowholes

Tourism Potential:

- The Blowholes area is designated as a regional tourism node, capable of hosting up to 150 visitors overnight.
- Formalising the campground taps into growing nature-based tourism demand, making the site accessible to a wider range of visitors, thus increasing visitation and length of stay.
- Managed campgrounds allow visitors to enjoy natural attractions safely and sustainably.

Environmental Responsibility:

- Unregulated camping has led to environmental damage, such as human waste in dunes and litter.
- Establishing an eco-campground with proper waste disposal and designated camping areas will protect the fragile coastal ecosystem.
- The eco-camping approach emphasises "leave no trace" principles and low-impact infrastructure.

Compliance and Planning:

- A formal campground aligns with regulatory requirements, ensuring legal compliance and addressing public health concerns.
- The eco-camp plan will meet standards for nature-based parks, providing necessary facilities like composting toilets and a chemical waste dump point.

Expected Benefits for Tourism, Economy and Community

Boost to Tourism and Visitor Experience:

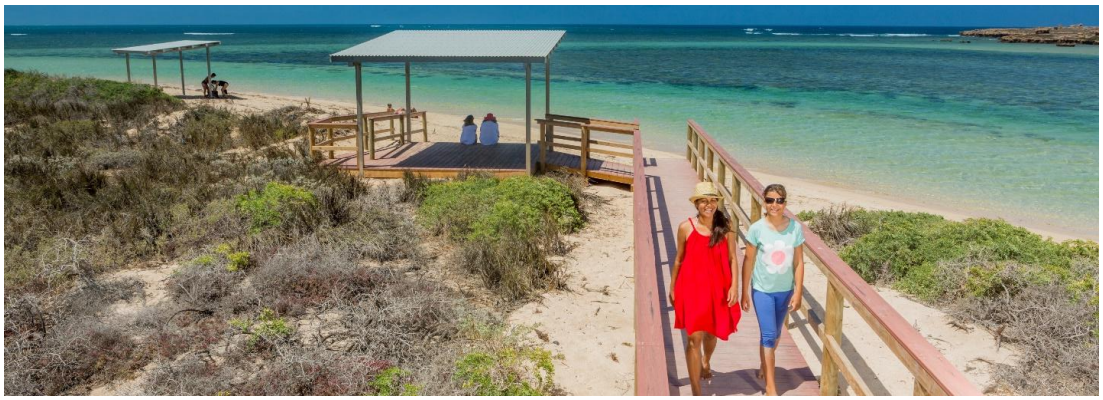
- Campground amenities will enhance the visitor experience, likely increasing tourist numbers and satisfaction.
- More overnight stays mean more spending on local businesses, benefiting Carnarvon's tourism sector.
- The campground complements Carnarvon's tourism offerings, potentially extending visitor length of stay in the region.

Local Economic Development:

- The project will create direct and indirect economic benefits, including construction jobs and ongoing maintenance roles.
- Revenue from camping fees can fund maintenance costs or other community services.
- Increased tourist traffic can spur opportunities for small businesses, such as food vendors and local tour operators.

Community and Social Benefits:

- The development fosters community engagement through volunteering and stewardship.
- Residents can take pride in an improved Blowholes reserve that is cleaner, safer, and more sustainably managed.
- The site can be used for educational and cultural activities, integrating the community with the development.



Required Infrastructure and Estimated Setup Costs

- **Designated Campsites:** 52 caravan/RV sites and 15 tent sites, marked with bollards or logs.
- **Toilets:** Composting or dry vault toilets, with proper ventilation and solar-powered exhaust fans.
- **Chemical Toilet Dump Point:** A communal dump station for caravan toilet cassettes and porta-potties.
- **Rubbish Collection Facilities:** Animal-proof rubbish bins placed in central locations.
- **Site Access & Roads:** Defined entry road and internal tracks/loops to reach camp sites.
- **Fencing and Barriers:** Low-key fencing and/or solar bollards in strategic areas.
- **Signage and Information:** Interpretive and regulatory signage throughout the site.
- **Renewable Energy and Lighting:** Solar-powered lighting for communal areas.
- **Water Supply:** Non-potable water storage for operational needs.

Cost Estimates:

- The overall setup cost for a basic facility is expected to be around $300,000.

Environmental and Cultural Heritage Considerations

Environmental Protection:

- The campground will be set back from the foredunes, and vegetation buffers will be maintained.
- Wildlife protection measures will be observed, such as enforcing a no-driving-on-beach rule to safeguard turtle nests.
- The project will incorporate eco-friendly technology to reduce pollution and resource usage.

Cultural Heritage Protection:

- The Shire will consult with Traditional Owner representatives and undertake heritage surveys to ensure no cultural heritage is disturbed.
- The campground can actively celebrate and respect cultural heritage through interpretive signage and guided experiences.

Risk Identification and Mitigation Strategies

Environmental Degradation:

- Mitigation: Provide adequate facilities, regular cleanup, camper education, and adapt management if habitat stress occurs.

Cultural Heritage Disturbance:

- Mitigation: Conduct thorough heritage assessments, consult with Traditional Owners, and protect identified heritage areas.

Safety Hazards:

- Mitigation: Maintain robust safety signage and barriers, implement fire management plans, and have emergency procedures in place.

Operational Challenges:

- Mitigation: Preventative maintenance schedule, contingency plans, and enforce capacity limits.

Financial Risk:

- Mitigation: Phased development, pursue external funding, implement reasonable user fees, and monitor finances.

Community Opposition:

- Mitigation: Engage the community, hold info sessions, and involve local groups in campground upkeep.

Potential Funding Options

- Pursue grants at state and federal levels that support regional infrastructure and sustainable communities.
- Partner with private or non-profit entities for funding and expertise.
- User Fees and Self-funding: Generate revenue through access and camping fees to cover ongoing costs.
- Community Contributions: Leverage volunteer labour and donations to reduce costs.
- Reinvest campground revenue back into the site for improvements.

Operational Plan for the Blowholes Campground

Management and Governance Options:

- Shire-Run Management: Direct operation by the Shire, ensuring full control and integration with Shire systems.

- Community or Joint Management: Partnership with a community group or committee, fostering strong community ownership.
- Private Contractor Management: Outsource operations to a private entity, bringing expertise and relieving the Shire of day-to-day burdens.

Maintenance and Servicing Schedule:

- Regular cleaning and maintenance of toilets, rubbish collection, road and track upkeep, vegetation management, and facility checks.

Visitor Management and Campground Rules:

- Clear rules for campground capacity, fees, noise, fires, pets, waste management, and respectful behaviour.
- Enforcement through campground caretaker or Shire rangers, with a focus on education and compliance.

Community Engagement and Volunteer Programs:

- Establish a Community Engagement Loop, implement a Campground Host program, organise community clean-up days, and involve local businesses and schools.

Sustainability Practices in Daily Operation:

- Renewable energy use, water conservation, waste reduction, environmental monitoring, continuous improvement, local sourcing, and education on sustainability.

Alignment with the Shire of Carnarvon's Strategic Plan and Big Ideas Framework

The proposed Blowholes eco-friendly camping facility aligns with the Shire of Carnarvon's Strategic Community Plan (2022-2032) and Big Ideas framework in several key ways:

Sustainable Tourism:

- The project promotes sustainable tourism by providing eco-friendly camping facilities that protect the environment while enhancing visitor experiences

Community Engagement:

- The development fosters community engagement through volunteer programs and stewardship opportunities, aligning with the Shire's value of community involvement

Economic Development:

- By boosting tourism and creating local jobs, the project supports the Shire's goal of economic development and thriving livelihoods

Environmental Stewardship:

- The eco-camping approach emphasizes environmental protection and sustainability, which are core values in the Shire's strategic plan

By implementing this project, the Shire can transform the Blowholes into a model of sustainable tourism and community collaboration, ensuring its enjoyment for generations to come.

APPENDIX 1

Potential Camping Fees Analysis

Sites	#	Cost	100%	75%	50%	25%	Possible Bed Nights	Probable Bed Nights	Potential Income 100%	Probable Income 100%	Probable Income 75%	Probable Income 50%	Probable Income 25%
Caravan/ Camper	52	$ 30.00	$1,560	$1,170	$780	$390	365	294	$569,400	$ 458,640	$ 343,980	$ 229,320	$ 114,660
Tent	15	$ 30.00	$450	$ 337	$225	$112	365	294	$164,250	$ 132,300	$ 99,225	$ 66,150	$ 33,075
TOTALS	**67**		**$2,010**	**$1,507**	**$1,005**	**$502**	**365**	**294**	**$733,650**	**$ 590,940**	**$ 443,205**	**$ 295,470**	**$ 147,735**

Community Membership Pass

Community Membership Pass	**Annual Cost**	100 Community Members & 40 Shack Members	250 Community Members & 40 Shack Members	500 Community Members & 40 Shack Members	750 Community Members & 40 Shack Members
Yearly Annual Pass - Camping ***Up to 2 Vehicles and 6 people***	$100.00	$10,500.00	$26,250.00	$52,500.00	$78,750.00
Yearly Annual Pass - Shacks ***Up to 2 Vehicles and 6 people***	$250.00	$10,200.00	$10,200.00	$10,200.00	$10,200.00
	$5.00 administration charge applies	$20,700.00	$36,450.00	$62,700.00	$88,950.00

APPENDIX 2

Projected Annual Expenses

Expense	Weekly/Annual	Annual Total
Water Trucking	$1,000/week	$52,000
Rubbish Collection	$892/week	$46,384
Dump Point Servicing	$2,000/month	$24,000
Host/Caretaker (April-Oct)	$250/week	$8,000
Ranger Patrols (including overheads)	Estimated	$64,100
IT Costs		$7,500
Solar Maintenance	Annual	$2,000
Administration/Management Intervention	Annual	$29,000
Asset Management and Maintenance	Annual	$50,000
Contractor Cleaning (off-peak)	$750 x 2 cleans/week x 22 weeks	$33,000
Total Expenses		$315,984

Annual Operating Surplus

Income ($316,170) - Expenses ($315,984) = $5186.00 Surplus

APPENDIX 3

Sensitivity Analysis

Scenario	Occupancy	Annual Income	Expenses	Deficit/ Surplus	Comments
Worst Case	25% occupancy and fewer memberships	$168,435	$315,984	***$149,549 Deficit***	***** costs could be reduced to mitigate losses***
Base Case Reasonably conservative	Adjusted 50% occupancy + 140 memberships	$316,170	$315,984	***Break Even***	
Optimistic	75% occupancy and 290 memberships	$479,655	$381,581	***98,075 Surplus***	***** Cleaning costs would increase by 20%***

Peak Period (April - October)

- Camp host required full-time on site. 250/week stipend for living expenses.
- Require Sat Link Service to assist with Fees and Emergency Communications
- Rangers to patrol and service campground **3 times per week**, including:
    - Supplying camp host materials;
    - Addressing issues with camp host;
    - Monitoring campsite payments (encouraging online payments);
    - Checking and reporting on all assets;
    - Responding to camper enquiries;
    - Patrolling wider reserve and beach area.
- Time per visit: minimum 2.5 hours on site plus 1.5 hours travel.

Off-Peak Period (November - March)

- No Camp Host on site.
- Ranger patrols increased to **twice per week**, carrying out:
    - Patrolling the campground and reserve;
    - Checking toilets and dump point;
    - Responding to any issues.
- Toilets cleaned twice weekly by external contractor at $750 per clean.