

COASTAL AND MARINE MANAGEMENT

NORTHERN TERRITORY - DISCUSSION PAPER

Our Coasts and Seas





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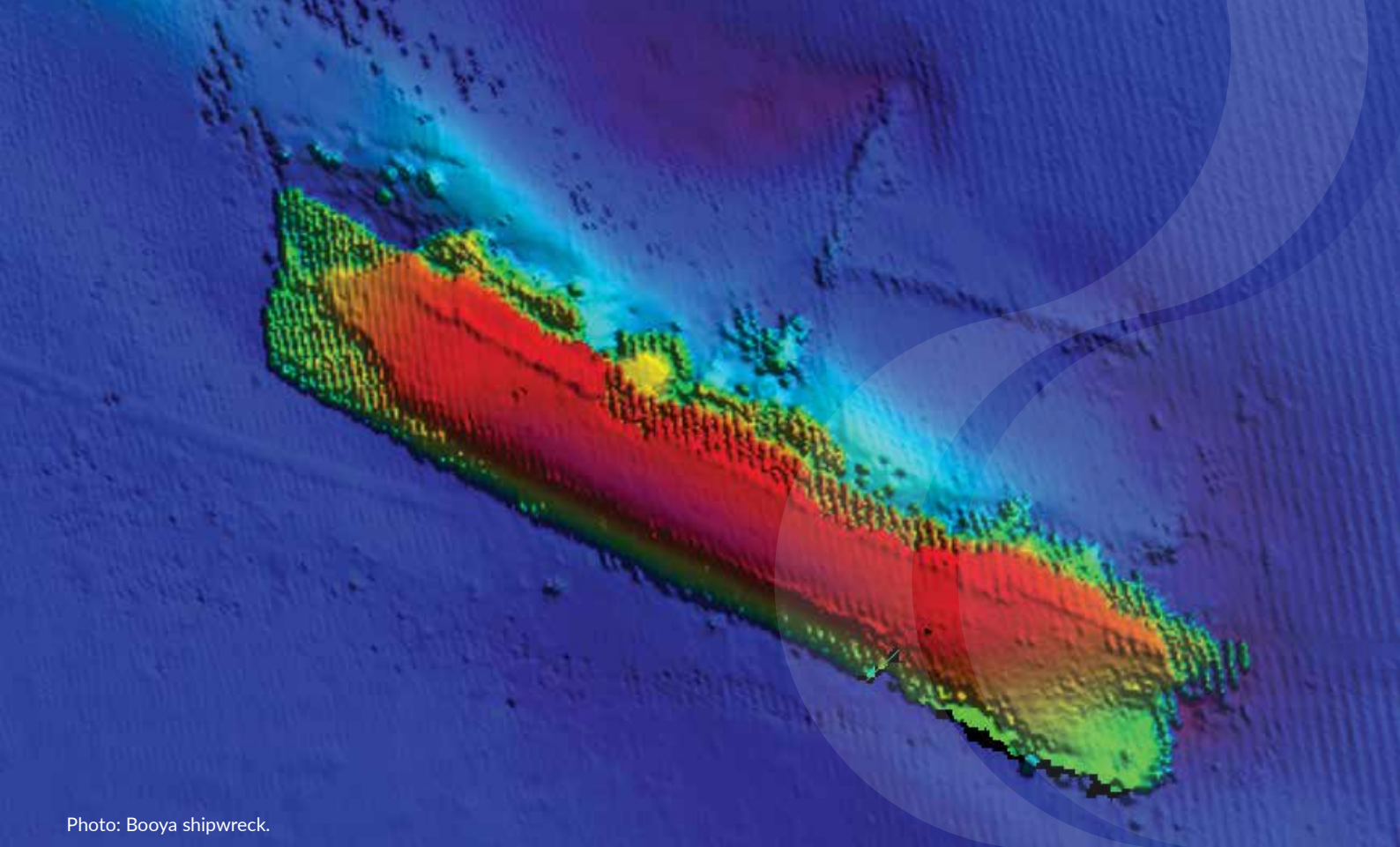


Photo: Booya shipwreck.

1. Introduction

What is the purpose and scope of the Strategy?

The Coastal and Marine Management Strategy provides guidance to all managers and decision makers, clarity to stakeholders and sets a 10-year direction for the management of the coastal and marine environments of the Northern Territory. Based on extensive consultation with the community and ongoing discussions with partners and stakeholders, it will identify a series of actions that will need to be undertaken to achieve the goal, the specific objectives and the desired outcomes.

The landward boundary for this Strategy is the extent of marine influence, including coastal processes (e.g., storm surge). It is recognised that there is difficulty in specifically defining this boundary but this should have little impact on the Strategy or its implementation.

The marine or seaward boundary for this Strategy is the outer limit of Northern Territory's Coastal Waters. This covers an area of approximately 72 000 km² or 17.5 percent of Australia's coastal waters. For some management purposes this boundary is fluid with the Australian Government jurisdictions, including Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone and Australian Exclusive Economic Zone.

Why is the Strategy a Government priority?

The coast and seas of the Northern Territory are culturally, socially and economically critical to the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory Government is committed to developing and implementing a Coastal and Marine Management Strategy that will ensure the health and viability of our coast and seas. The Strategy will support the use of coastal and marine areas by Territorians and visitors for recreational and cultural purposes, manage the growing demand for natural resources, and foster sustainable industry for the benefit of the economy and protection of the environment.





What is the purpose of this discussion paper?

The NT Government is inviting comments on the suggested goal and management principles, the specific objectives and the desired outcomes. The strategy will be based on extensive partner and public consultation and is due to be finalised in 2018.

How was this document developed?

Consulting with key partners and stakeholders is an important part of developing the Strategy. Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources invited representatives from organisations representing Traditional Owners, industry, conservation, recreation, academia and natural resource management to form a [Partnership Group](#) to assist in developing the Strategy. The Partnership Group and seven NT Government agencies held a two-day workshop in Darwin to develop a goal, management principles and a series of objectives and long-term outcomes across a spectrum of interrelated environmental, cultural, social and economic themes.

How do I provide feedback?

This document contains discussion points that you can consider when providing feedback.

Please submit responses via email marinecoastal.strategy@nt.gov.au or you can use the online feedback form containing the discussion points on our website www.marinecoastalstrategy.nt.gov.au

Public Comment Closes: 2 March 2018

Post submissions
NT Coastal and Marine
Management Strategy

PO Box 496 Palmerston NT 0832

2. Who is responsible for managing our coasts and seas?



Photo: Macassan Beach, Arnhem Land. Credit: Shaana McNaught/Tourism NT.

Shared responsibility for careful management of NT coasts and seas is critical to ensuring that we continue to benefit from these valuable environments. NT areas are large, diverse, and remote. Collectively, we have more capacity to manage them than any one of us. All Territorians must take responsibility for protecting and managing our coasts and seas, and by working together we can all make a significant contribution.

Aboriginal

Aboriginal people own and manage eighty per cent of the NT coastline through inalienable Aboriginal freehold granted under Commonwealth legislation, with much of the balance likely to be subject to exclusive or non-exclusive native title.

Importantly, the Australian High Court handed down a decision (the Blue Mud Bay decision) that confirms that Aboriginal land extends to the low water mark, and permission of the traditional owners is needed to access the waters overlying the intertidal zone of existing Aboriginal land grants.

Aboriginal sea ranger groups and Traditional Owners actively manage their sea country. This includes fisheries surveillance and compliance, ghost net removal, maintaining cultural and sacred sites, and visitor management. Some groups manage these area as Indigenous Protected Areas, which are non-legislated protected areas, recognised by all Australian Governments as part of the National Reserve System of Protected Areas.

Industry and community

Industry and community groups involved in the management through advisory committees (e.g. NT Fisheries, Darwin Harbour). Also, some industries manage port facilities and other marine-related infrastructure.

NT Government

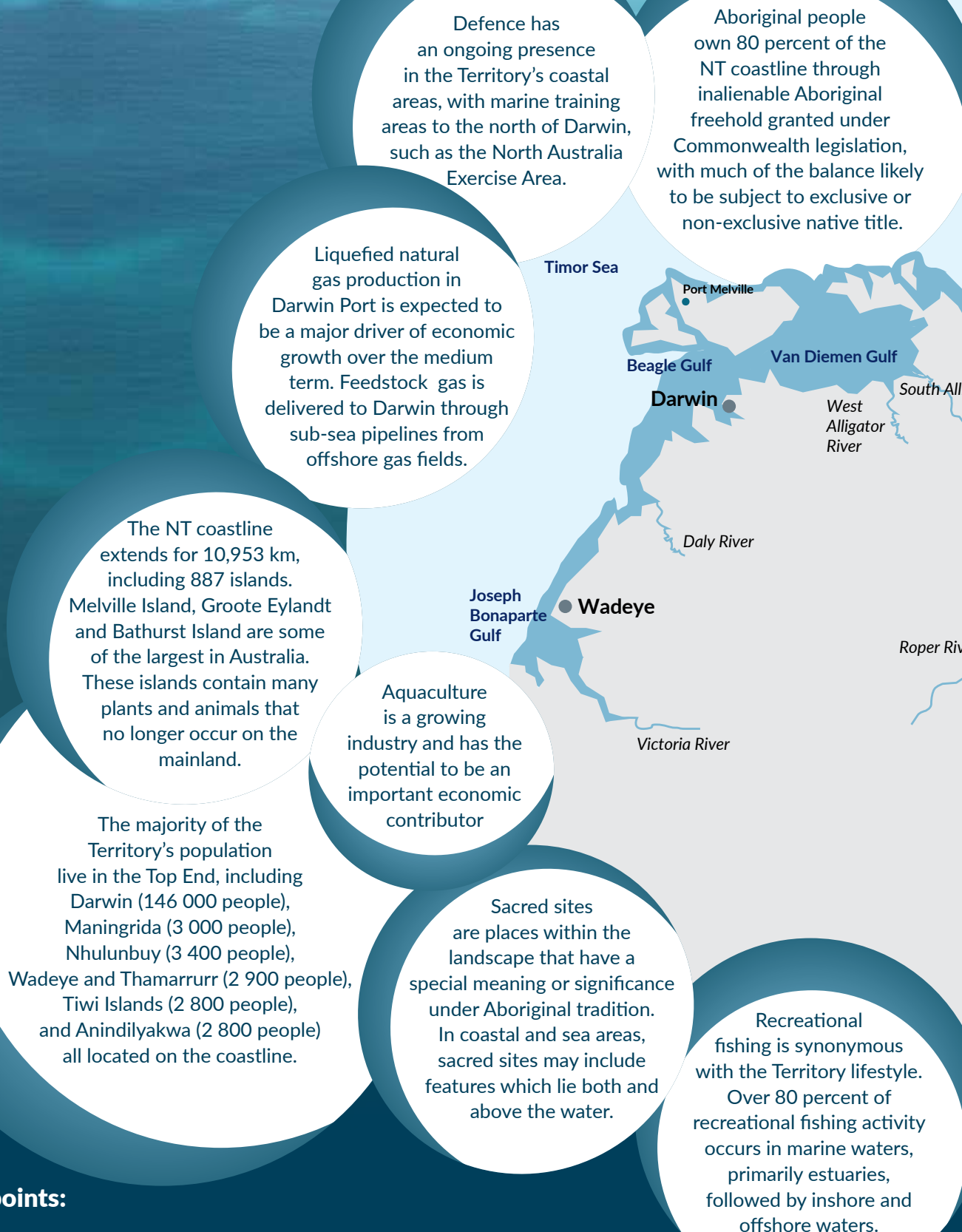
The NT Government has custodial responsibility for coastal waters including the seabed, out to three nautical miles, and generally manages activities of Australia's territorial seas out to 12 miles. But government alone cannot manage all of these competing values and needs.

The NT Government has significant tenure and management responsibility for the NT coastline through its responsibilities for managing planning, mining, fisheries, ports and shipping, parks and reserves, shipwrecks and underwater cultural heritage, marine pollution, environmental assessment, mining, pipelines and sacred sites. Under specific agreements with the Australian Government, the NT Government also provides day-to-day management of activities out to the limits of the Exclusive Economic Zone (e.g. some fisheries).

Australian Government

Australian Government legislation is relevant to the management of Territory coast and seas including threatened species and environmental protection, fisheries management, shipping, border protection and marine pollution.

3. What is special about Northern Territory coast and seas



Discussion points:

1. What do you value most about our coasts and seas?
2. Are there any other environmental, social, cultural and economic values and benefits do we need to consider when developing the Strategy?

Ports are critical to the NT. Darwin Port is an important node in export and import supply chains, while the ports at Nhulunbuy, Port Melville, Bing Bong and Alyangula are important for exporting resources.

Our coastal waterways and marine environments are highly attractive destinations for high-value niche sectors like bird watching and eco-tourism.

Important breeding, nursery and feeding areas for many species of fish, marine turtles, shorebirds, seabirds, waterbirds, dolphins, dugongs, sawfish, sea snakes, seahorses, sharks and rays as well as a myriad of other species.

Commercial fishing activity occurs across 15 different wild harvest fisheries in inshore and offshore areas.

Cruise ships visit Darwin and explore the remote regions of the Territory, including visits to Aboriginal communities.

Many remote communities rely on barge landings to import freight, especially during the wet season.

The NT is considered to have one of the world's most intact marine and coastal environments. Territorians enjoy the natural beauty and uniqueness of our coasts and seas.

Mineral resources exist on the seabed and are a potential economic asset.

Our maritime heritage is rich and diverse and includes Aboriginal occupation of the NT coastline, evidence of visits by the Macassan people who sailed from present-day Indonesia, shipwrecks, submerged aircraft and submarines, lighthouses and wharves built during European settlement.





- Our coast and seas provide many essential environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits.
- They are a key aspect of living in the Territory, providing the opportunity to live a healthy and active lifestyle which contributes to our happiness and wellbeing. Importantly, their natural beauty and uniqueness can be passed onto future generations.
- Aboriginal people have a longstanding relationship with their land and sea country. Many of the marine species are totemic for Aboriginal people and subsistence fishing and hunting continues to form an important part of their culture as well as a traditional source of protein. The living culture of Aboriginal Territorians is intrinsically linked with their sacred sites.
- A unique feature of the NT's maritime heritage are its World War Two and Cyclone Tracy shipwrecks. Many of the wreck sites are of symbolic significance as the place where people lost their lives in tragic circumstances..
- Shallow coastal areas, mangroves and rocky shores all provide shelter and protection from extreme weather events.
- The Territory's coast and seas provide us with many important environmental services such as carbon storage, nutrient cycling and habitat for our marine plants and animals.
- The agriculture, forestry and fishing industries employ around 1 960 people, many of these industries rely on coastal regions for production or exports.
- Aquaculture in the Top End is an emerging and beneficial industry. In 2015-16, around 6 000 tonnes of fish and marine life was harvested commercially, along with 3 800 tonnes of prawns.
- The estimated total contribution to the Territory economy from wild-caught fish and aquaculture products, including estuary barramundi and other fish, pearls and prawns, was about \$59.3 million in 2015-16.
- Based on the most current surveys of recreational fishing activity across the Northern Territory, over 32 000 Territorians spend more than \$51 million each year on goods and services related to recreational fishing. The guided fishing tour industry has been valued at over \$26 million and provides jobs and services in an important sector of the tourism industry.
- The cruise ship sector contributed an estimated \$87.6 million to the economy in 2016-17, from 47 ships that visited Darwin in the year, carrying over 63 000 passengers.
- The Territory's ports helped facilitate \$1.5 billion to the Territorian economy by way of international exports, including 316 000 head of cattle and 8 000 live buffalo in 2016-17 exported from Darwin Port.



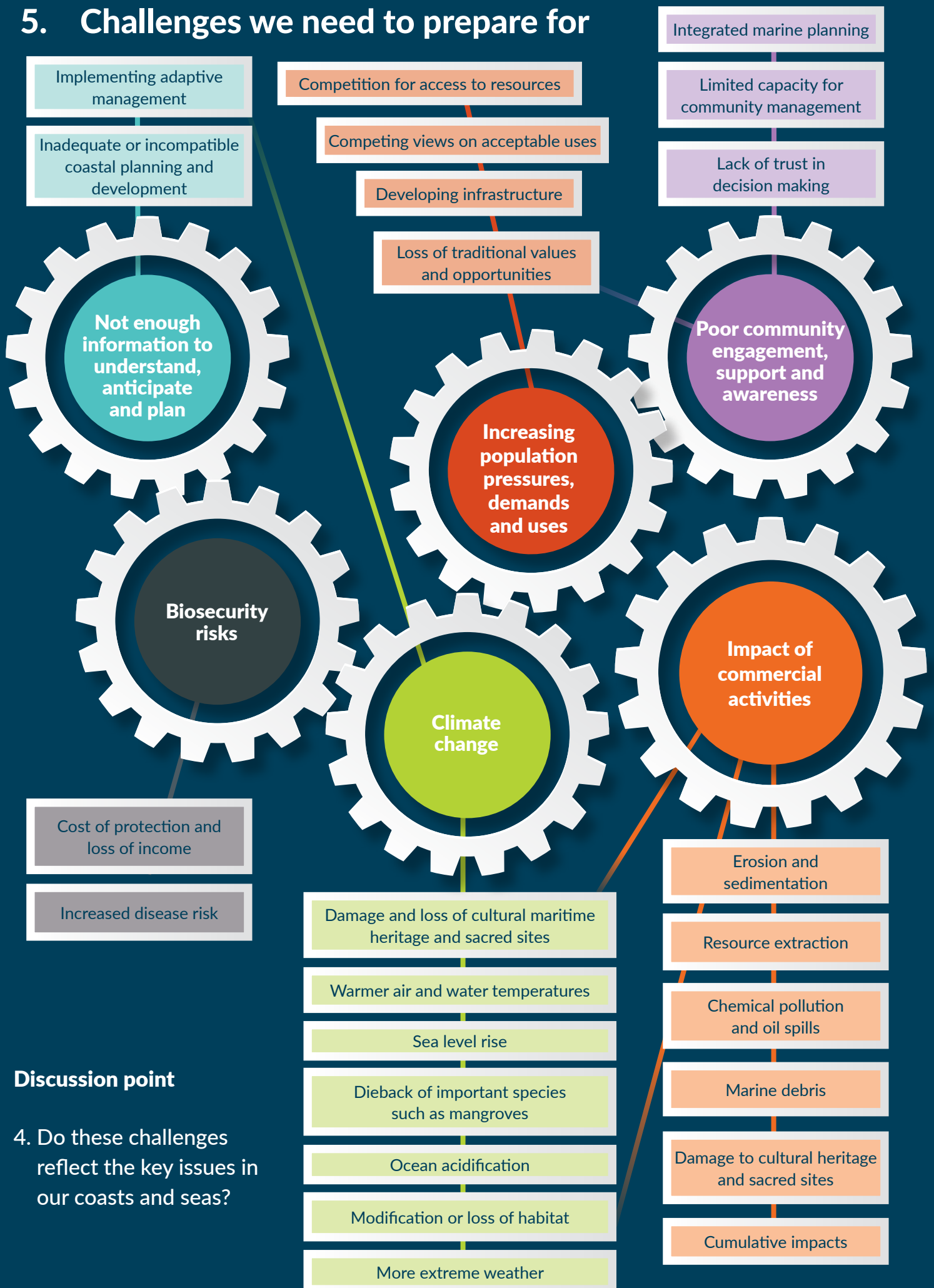
4. Opportunities to benefit even further from our coasts and seas

- Recognise and protect the unique point of difference we currently have with NT coastal areas – largely undisturbed areas that are rare in today's world.
- Developing and implementing a Coastal and Marine Management Strategy creates the opportunity to improve how we manage our coasts and seas. Some of the potential benefits include
- Improved economic livelihoods for remote communities.
- Adoption of integrated management frameworks that manage multiple uses of coastal environments.
- Allowing NT landowners, partners and stakeholders to participate in decision making and management.
- The NT is unique in that it has fish stocks that are underutilised and have scope for development and industry growth.

Discussion point

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

5. Challenges we need to prepare for



Discussion point

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



6. Goal and guiding principles

Goal

Our Coasts and Seas are healthy and productive

Their cultural significance is recognised and they continue to support our lifestyle, livelihoods and sustainable industries

Guiding Principles

All Territorians as custodians of the Northern Territory recognise their connection to the coasts and seas that make an important contribution to their lifestyle, economy, happiness and wellbeing. To protect and enhance these values for future generations of Territorians, the following principles should be applied by managers and decision makers:

- a) Our natural environment is integral to our unique lifestyle and well-being.
- b) Aboriginal ownership, obligations and cultural values must be recognised and, traditional lifestyle practices sustained.
- c) Ecologically Sustainable Development is fundamental to our economy and society. ¹
- d) Management must be adaptive and flexible now and for the future.
- e) Extent of regulation must be commensurate with the level of risk.
- f) Industries benefiting from coastal and marine resources should reinvest in positive social/environmental outcomes.
- g) Decisions must be based on the best available evidence - including Traditional knowledge, community knowledge and scientific knowledge.
- h) Continual effort must be made to further enhance our knowledge and understanding.
- i) A partnership approach to management that identifies common goals and operates in good faith for the Territory should be adopted.
- j) Local communities must be empowered to participate in decision-making processes.
- k) Intergenerational equity (i.e., fairness between the current and future generations) is important for the future.

1. Using, conserving and enhancing communities' resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life now and in the future can be increased

Discussion points:

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

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

7. The objectives of coastal and marine management

Based on the challenges we face, the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy is framed around six objectives.

Objective	Context
Safeguard our coasts and seas	With the ongoing and developing use, an ever-increasing human population coming to enjoy the Territory's lifestyle and a changing climate these environments are coming under increasing pressure. Balancing these various uses to ensure that the Territory can continue to enjoy the resources provided by these environments without damaging the asset that is our coastal and marine environments have become a major challenge for land and sea managers and decision-makers.
Celebrate our culture	The Northern Territory has a rich mix of cultural backgrounds and heritage. Aboriginal Australians are considered one of the oldest living peoples in the world where their strong connections with country continue to this day. As such, the cultural and ecological knowledge of Traditional Owners and their communities is considered essential in delivering the outcomes identified in this Strategy. By acknowledging and celebrating this cultural diversity we not only show respect to those who have gone before, but also create a sense of acceptance and inclusion for all members of our modern Territorian society.
Foster sustainable industry	Many of the Territory's key industries rely on our coastal and marine environments for its resources and transport. In conjunction with other Northern Territory Government policies such as the Northern Territory Economic Development Framework, the Strategy can foster sustainable industry in the context of the coastal and marine zone.
Maintain our unique lifestyle	The Territory's coast and marine environment is renowned for its natural wonders and abundant wildlife. Fishing is one of the Territory's best known and favourite pastimes with stunning coastal and marine environments supporting good numbers of quality sportfish.
Work together	For Territorians to embrace their role as custodians of their marine environment they must have a say and meaningful avenues for their voices to be heard regarding important issues. Any potential or likely impacts of use, development or alteration of our coastal and marine environments must be discussed openly and rigorously assessed before decisions to proceed are taken. Regional and remote communities may require specific communication methods to be developed to ensure that their aspirations and ideas are included. The Strategy offers an opportunity to integrate management of our natural resources to reduce conflict and improve outcomes.
Improve our knowledge	Evidence based science and knowledge must be at the centre of all decision making. By harnessing this knowledge greater understanding and certainty can be gained and innovative and creative solutions may evolve to better protect our environment and foster steady progress. Traditional knowledge has been developed from experience gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment.

Discussion points:

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



8. What outcomes are needed to achieve these objectives?

To be able to achieve these objectives, a series of outcomes are required

	Long term Outcomes
Safeguard our coasts and seas	<p>Our coastal and marine ecosystems remain healthy, productive, intact and functional, and species richness is maintained</p> <p>Our coastal and marine ecosystems are managed to ensure they are resilient and adapting to the changing climate</p> <p>Impacts on our coastal and marine environments from all human activity is minimised, managed according to the principles of ecologically sustainable development and effectively regulated</p>
Celebrate our culture	<p>Connection to sea country by Aboriginal people is recognised, maintained and protected</p> <p>Cultural, historical and archaeological assets are protected</p> <p>Tourism initiatives promote cultural education and experience</p> <p>Cultural values of all Territorians are identified and celebrated</p>
Foster sustainable industry	<p>Sustainable industries are profitable and have safeguarded or enhanced the values of the Northern Territory's coastal and marine environments</p> <p>Coastal Aboriginal communities derive significant economic and social benefits from sustainable business enterprises and/or industries</p> <p>Traditional Owner industries reliant on the coastal and marine environments are prosperous and sustainable</p> <p>Coastal and marine based tourism potential is being realised and the tourism economy is growing sustainably</p> <p>Fishing stocks are healthy and managed to ensure sustainability</p>
Maintain our unique lifestyle	<p>Lifestyle choices are enhanced</p> <p>Recreational opportunities (including fishing) are abundant for all Territorians</p> <p>Traditional Owners can continue to sustainably utilise coastal and marine resources to maintain their lifestyles</p>
Work together	<p>Governments, non-government organisations, industry and local communities have adopted a partnership approach to planning and managing the use of our coastal and marine environments and resources</p> <p>Local communities are actively involved in management and planning of their coastal and marine environments</p> <p>Researchers, academics, policy officers and managers work together to inform and improve NT policy and management of coastal waters and seas</p> <p>Land tenure and access rights are clarified and understood by the community</p>
Improve our knowledge	<p>Management of the coastal and marine environment is based on best available science and knowledge and is innovative</p> <p>Key knowledge gaps are identified and are prioritised for research focus</p>

Discussion points:

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

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



Photo: Cruise ship, Darwin Harbour. Credit: Tauri Minogue/Tourism NT.

9. The path to a final Strategy – actions and implementation

Implementation

To ensure the timely implementation of the Strategy and improve the likelihood of actions being completed and outcomes being achieved, an Implementation Plan will be developed within six months of final endorsement by government.

This Implementation Plan will identify, for each of the six objectives;

- all the actions
- the agency/organisation responsible for driving implementation of the action
- which other agencies/organisations/individuals will need to be involved
- how the actions are to be implemented, and by whom
- tasks, timeframes and milestones
- programs and resources that will support delivery, and;
- indicators for reporting on implementation outcomes.

Discussion points:

10. What kind of partnership arrangements do you think could support the implementation of the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy?
11. What is the best way for the community and industry to be involved in management and decision making of our coasts and seas?

Partnerships

Partnership arrangements and stewardship programs may need to be established between Traditional Owners, industry sectors, local governments, natural resource management bodies, community groups and individuals to undertake actions that will minimise impacts on the Northern Territory's coastal and marine ecosystems and ensure their ongoing health and productivity.

Adaptive management

Adaptive management is a procedure for implementing and refining management actions while learning about which management actions are most effective at achieving specified objectives and improving on-ground management decisions for ecological, social and/or economic outcomes. The final Strategy will incorporate three key inputs for facilitating an adaptive approach to management of the coastal and marine environments of the Northern Territory:

1. identification of the natural, cultural, social and economic values of the area
2. monitoring and reporting programs to provide up to date information about condition and trend of those values, and;
3. attaining a broader experience and knowledge base by engaging the community more fully in management.



Discussion points

1. What do you value most about our coasts and seas?
2. Are there any other environmental, social, cultural and economic values and benefits do we need to consider when developing the Strategy?
3. What are the major opportunities to protect and sustainably develop our coast and seas?
4. Do these challenges reflect the key issues in our coasts and seas?
5. Is the goal appropriate and reflective of the NT needs?
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