

1 JULY 2020

Outcomes of Community Engagement –

Common Themes of Submissions Received on the Draft Port Master Plan



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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of the key themes raised through the public consultation process on the *Draft Port of Geraldton Master Plan* (draft PMP). MWPA has considered each submission received through the process and this document reflects MWPA's response to matters that were raised in multiple submissions. This document does not reflect each individual respondent contribution; however it is noted that a detailed response will be provided to each individual submitter in due course.

This document further acknowledges that a number of issues are out of scope of the PMP, but to be addressed by MWPA and other stakeholders during ongoing implementation of projects associated with the PMP.

2 Consultation Overview

2.1 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

The draft PMP was released for public consultation for a period of 54 days, from 10 October 2019 to 3 December 2019.

The draft PMP was publicly launched for consultation in Geraldton by the Minister for Ports, the Hon Alannah MacTiernan MLC. Throughout the consultation period, the draft PMP, Frequently Asked Questions and Submission Form were available on a dedicated page on MWPA's website (<https://www.midwestports.com.au/geraldton-port-master-plan.aspx>) and also available in hard-copy format at MWPA's Administration Offices (Geraldton and Perth) and at the Geraldton Public Library.

Several activities were conducted to engage MWPA staff, key stakeholders and the broader public and seek feedback regarding draft PMP. These included:

- Information sessions for MWPA Staff (x5), Stakeholders (Geraldton and Perth) and the general public (Geraldton);
- Presentations to the City of Greater Geraldton and Shire of Chapman Valley Councils and to various other organisations upon request;
- Pop-up session in Rock's Laneway in Geraldton to answer community questions;
- Flyer drop and door knocks to residents in suburbs of Point Moore and Beachlands;
- Email to the Port Master Plan stakeholders' distribution list;
- Creation of a dedicated project email (masterplan@midwestports.com.au) for queries and submissions; and
- Promotion through social and print media including a State Government media release.

The project was covered by the local media including by GWN and ABC News and the Geraldton Guardian and Midwest Times newspapers.

2.2 SUBMISSION SUMMARY

A total of 26 submissions were received through the consultation period, from a variety of stakeholder groups and individuals. Categories of submitter groups included:

- Local governments;
- Western Australian government agencies;
- Port users;
- Local environmental organisations; and
- Private submitters.

The majority of submissions were received via email to the masterplan@midwestports.com.au inbox.

3 Themes of Consultation

Through review of the submissions a number of themes were identified, including:

- The importance of the population of Australian sea lions which frequent the outer breakwater ‘Seal Rocks’ and the need to preserve this habitat in future Port development;
- Concerns about the potential amenity impacts of Port development on adjacent residential areas, particularly increased dust, noise and traffic;
- Concerns about the increasing risk of coastal hazards, particularly erosion, and whether further Port development will exacerbate erosion occurring elsewhere along the coastline; and
- Support for future industrial development at Oakajee, 23km north of Geraldton.

MWPA has assessed all comments in the submissions and has made responses to relevant specific comments, which will be provided directly to submitters. Amendments to the final PMP have been informed by the overall review of the submissions and have, wherever applicable, been noted in the responses.

MWPA acknowledges the positive comments provided by submitters in support of the PMP.

The key themes of feedback received during the consultation period are responded to below and have been incorporated into the PMP, where practicable.

3.1 IMPORTANCE OF THE AUSTRALIAN SEA LIONS

3.1.1 Comments

Submitters raised the importance, ecologically and socially, of the population of Australian sea lions (*Neophoca cinerea*) which frequent the Port and surrounds, particularly the outer breakwater known locally as ‘seal rocks.’ The Australian sea lion is currently listed as ‘Vulnerable’ under the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Submitters wanted the PMP to stress the importance of protecting the sea lions and explain that they are part of a notable nature-based tourism experience. Other suggestions relating to the sea lions included installation of a live cam, limiting the speed of vessels around ‘seal rocks’ and improved stormwater management, particularly in the Fishing Boat Harbour.

3.1.2 Response

MWPA is proud of the fact that the Port co-exists with the Australian sea lions who call Champion Bay home. In recognition of the importance of this population, the PMP was amended to:

- Re-word the project titled ‘consideration of sea lion habitat’ to ‘preservation of sea lion habitat’ and include supporting text recognising the sea lions’ status as a ‘Vulnerable’ species and their important ongoing role in nature-based tourism experiences. This rewording eliminates doubt about MWPA’s commitment to the sea lion that may have resulted from the initial project title.
- Include additional text in the ‘Sustainability Focus’ section articulating the need to ensure environmental protection (including of marine habitats and ecosystem function and threatened species conservation) and manage potential impacts (including storm and wastewater) were key outcomes of the consultation process.

Some of the matters raised in the submissions (such as live cam installation) are outside the scope of the PMP, however MWPA is committed to work with stakeholders and interested community members to increase awareness of the sea lion population. We plan to initiate a formal sea lion monitoring program to understand distribution and abundance of sea lions within and around the Geraldton Port, and would like to work with local interest groups and subject matter experts to better understand the locations most frequently used as well as any seasonal and weather-related variations. Upgrades to the Port security systems will create an opportunity to explore the installation of cameras and establishment of citizen science programs.

Finally, it is important to note that all projects identified in the PMP will require consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders during the development stage, which will result in additional opportunities for interested parties to provide input.

3.2 POTENTIAL AMENITY IMPACTS OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

3.2.1 Comments

Submitters questioned what sort of amenity impacts would be generated through the PMP's vision to increase throughput at the Port from approximately 16 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) to up to 50 mtpa. Common concerns included:

- Increased fugitive dust emissions from shiploading and rail transport along the Southern Transport Corridor (STC);
- Intensified noise and vibration from increases in vehicle and rail movements along the STC;
- Increased pollutants and stormwater run-off discharging into the marine environment; and
- Potential impacts on existing pedestrian / cyclist access to beaches and the Point Moore locality.

3.2.2 Response

One of MWPA's Enterprise Objectives is to 'Operate in BALANCE' with the Environment' and organisationally MWPA has aligned its objectives to the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development. In 2020, MWPA is implementing a Sustainability Strategy which, along with dedicated environmental management plans, will focus on the day-to-day operational performance and practices which will improve social, environmental and economic outcomes.

As a high-level strategic document, the PMP does not in itself permit any new development or activity within the Port and surrounding areas. Any future development that is identified in the PMP will be required to undergo a rigorous environmental assessment and obtain all relevant statutory approvals before it can commence. This includes approvals under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, including Works Approvals from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation for any activities that have the potential to generate off-site impacts.

MWPA does not currently manage the STC as this is done by Main Roads WA (road component) and the Public Transport Authority (rail component), however we are committed to working with these key stakeholders to continually improve operations. The Environmental Approval for the STC includes limits on noise levels which were based on acoustic modelling. Any significant expansion of the rail line or road network would require a similar assessment to be undertaken by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), including relevant modelling, and community engagement would be required as part of this process.

We acknowledge the importance of community access to the beaches in proximity to the Port and the PMP does not propose alteration of the current pedestrian or cyclist infrastructure. The final PMP has been amended to highlight that the design of any new road infrastructure needs to ensure continued safe pedestrian and cyclist access is maintained.

3.3 INCREASED RISK OF COASTAL HAZARDS

3.3.1 Comments

Submitters commented that the Port had not prepared a Coastal Hazard Risk Management and Adaptation Plan (CHRMAP) as part of the PMP to determine the risk of coastal erosion and inundation. Concerns were raised that any future expansion of the Port may affect sand deposition patterns and lead to further erosion of Geraldton's Northern Beaches.

3.3.2 Response

MWPA participated in the Steering Committee for the City of Greater Geraldton CHRMAP which considered the risk of coastal inundation and erosion over the entire City, including the Port. As a result of the CHRMAP, the baseline risk of coastal hazards has been established. As the PMP is a high-level strategic document that does not directly enable any development, a separate, more detailed, CHRMAP is not considered necessary at the master planning stage.

However, any new development which seeks to significantly expand the footprint of the Port seaward would need to be accompanied by a coastal processes assessment which considers potential impacts further along the coast. This is consistent with the EPA's 'Environmental Factor Guideline' for coastal processes, which provides guidance as to the information required as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). When an EIA requires assessment of the impact on coastal process, it must demonstrate how the alteration of geophysical processes might significantly impact on natural coastal dynamics, significant coastal ecosystems and other values the coastal environment supports.

Additionally, MWPA is currently undertaking two studies to better understand coastal dynamics and potential development impacts. These include:

- A coastal processes study that will investigate current and past rates of erosion and accretion from Separation Point to Drummond Cove. The study will provide a framework to understand past impacts, both from the Port and other development, and include hindcast wave, hydrodynamic and sediment transport models that can be used to assess the potential impacts of future proposals.
- An inundation assessment, being conducted in collaboration with the City of Greater Geraldton, which refines the coastal inundation modelling used in the CHRMAP. It will integrate the existing drainage infrastructure into the modelling and incorporate an assessment of overland flooding from stormwater run-off to better understand and manage flood risk.

3.4 SUPPORT FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AT OAKAJEE

3.4.1 Comments

Submitters expressed support for future industrial development in the region to take place at Oakajee, located 23 kilometres north of Geraldton, which has been suitably zoned to accommodate a Port and Strategic Industrial Estate.

Some expressed a preference for any future Port expansion to occur at Oakajee rather than Geraldton, given the proximity of the Geraldton Port to established residential areas and potential impacts on coastal processes and amenity, as outlined above.

3.4.2 Response

MWPA has management responsibility for the waters around Oakajee, as well as for 180 hectares of coastal land which is vested in MWPA for port purposes. This land is adjacent to the land set aside for a Strategic Industrial Estate. MWPA will continue to work with government and other stakeholders to promote economic development in the region, including at Oakajee.

The projects identified in the PMP are envisaged to occur within a 15-year timeframe, where it is estimated that throughput of up to 50 mtpa could be exported through Geraldton within the footprint of the existing harbour, without any substantial expansion. This sustainable approach of 'Port Maximisation' will support the realisation of known projects of a size far smaller than the significant projects which could support the large capital investment for 'Port Expansion', which will ultimately be required at either Oakajee or Geraldton.

Section 8 of the PMP makes it clear that the PMP does not recommend a preferred expansion outcome between Geraldton and Oakajee and that there are a number of factors that will need to be considered for this decision to occur. At present, there is considerable interest in establishment of the Oakajee Industrial Estate prior to a Port, to accommodate emerging industries that require substantial buffer distances, and this could be a catalyst for future investment in Port infrastructure.