

APPENDIX 4

A Qualitative Research Report on:

**THE MARINE ESTATE COMMUNITY SURVEY –
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PHASE**

Ref No. 23744 • 8 May 2014 • FINAL

Table of Contents

1. Background	260
2. Research Objectives	261
3. This Report	262
4. Qualitative Research Methodology.....	263
5. Management Summary	268
The Detailed Findings.....	279
6. Overall Observations.....	280
7. Location and Community Interactions with the Marine Estate.....	284
8. Marine Estate Interest/User Group Perspectives	297
8. Perceptions of the Marine Estate and Changes over Time	313
9. Values Associated with the Marine Estate.....	318
10. Benefits Derived From the Marine Estate.....	329
11. Threats to the Marine Estate	337
11. Key Opportunities for the Marine Estate	350
12. In Conclusion: Suggested Management Priorities.....	359
Appendix 1: Indigenous Community Marine Estate Research Report.....	361
Introduction and Methodology.....	362
Overview of Regions and Participants.....	363
Interaction with the Marine Estate	364
Values and Benefits Associated with the Marine Estate	366
Frustrations Related to the Marine Estate	369
Threats and Potential Solutions	370
Key Opportunities for the Marine Estate	372
Suggested Priorities for the Future	373
Additional Comments.....	374
Appendix 2: The Discussion Guides	375
Appendix 3: Maps Shown to Research Participants	388

1. Background

Australians are a coastal people, with more than 85% of Australians living within 50km of the coasts (ABS). We use our waterways for both cultural and recreational entertainment, as well as commercial and industrial income. The extent of this relationship is visualised by the fact that our most iconic landmarks - the Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge for example - are both directly linked to the Sydney harbour waterway.

There are now six marine parks in NSW, incorporating almost 345,100 hectares, or almost 35 per cent of the NSW marine jurisdiction*. The correct use and conservation of these areas has brought about a wealth of public and political debate in recent years.

In February of 2012, the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks in NSW released key findings regarding the management of the Marine Estate. The audit committee made 16 recommendations for a new approach to the Management of the Marine Estate, including the establishment of a new Marine Estate Management Authority (MEMA).

The aim of MEMA is to advise the NSW Government on the strategic framework and the priorities for the management of the Marine Estate as a single continuum and to recommend ways for better agency coordination. In particular, MEMA will identify priority threats and risks affecting the Marine Estate and conduct informed studies to identify the most cost effective strategies to avoid or manage those risks.

MEMA decided to commission a research project to understand the attitudes of the NSW population and key Marine Estate interest/user groups towards the Marine Estate. The information from this study will identify and prioritise those issues that are of most importance to the NSW community and vested interest groups. The research will also help MEMA understand what strategies may be undertaken to encourage all Marine Estate interest/user groups to work towards a better future for the Estate.

Based on our strong history of conducting community engagement and stakeholder research for a range of NSW government departments, Sweeney Research was commissioned to carry out the research late in 2013, with fieldwork carried out in early 2014.

* Figures from <http://dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/habitat/protecting-habitats/mpa>

Background to this research...

The Marine Estate includes the ocean, estuaries, coastal wetlands, the coastline (beaches, dunes and headlands), coastal lakes and lagoons and extends seaward to 3nm and from the Queensland to Victorian borders.

There are six marine parks in NSW, incorporating almost 345,100 hectares, or almost 35 per cent of the NSW marine jurisdiction.

In 2012 the NSW Marine Parks Independent Scientific Audit Panel made 16 recommendations regarding the Marine Estate.

A common theme of these recommendations included the provision of greater research into the Marine Estate.

These recommendations have led to the commissioning of this research project.



2. Research Objectives

The overarching aim of the research program is to...

Conduct a representative community survey with NSW residents to understand the ecological, social and economic values of, and benefits derived from, the NSW Marine Estate



Trade & Investment

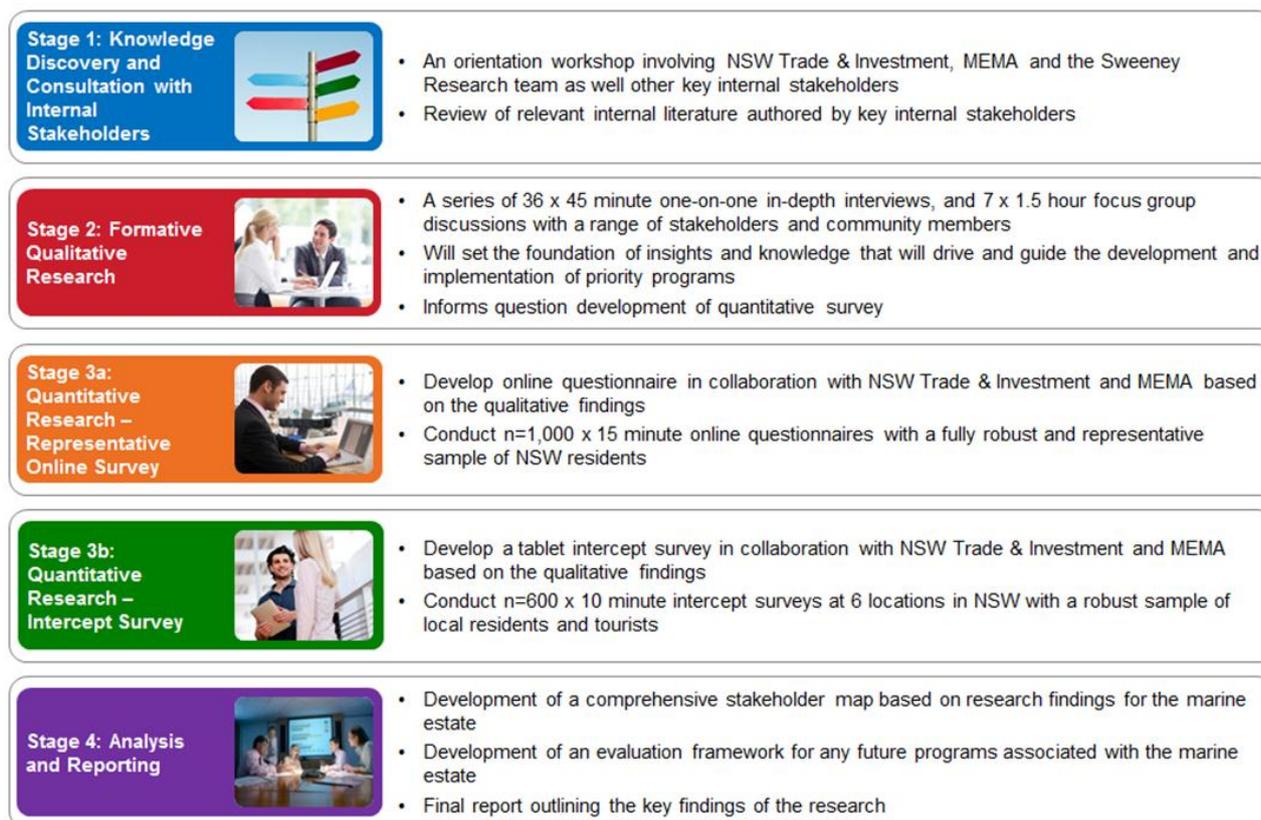
The specific objectives that need to be met have been defined as follows...

<p>Perceptions of the Marine Estate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define what Marine Estate interest/user groups and the community view the Marine Estate to be • Ascertain how Marine Estate interest/user groups and the NSW community want the marine estate to look like in 20 years (and how they envisage the marine)
<p>Value of the Marine Estate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the perceived short and long term economic, social and ecological values of the Marine Estate • Determine the benefits they derive from the Marine Estate • Record perceived changes in the Marine Estate over the short term and the long term and establish perceptions as to why these have occurred
<p>Threats to the Marine Estate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the perceived threats (both current and future) to the Marine Estate • Prioritise these threats and identify areas that the public and the Marine Estate interest/user groups consider to need the most urgent attention
<p>Opportunities for the Marine Estate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential directions for vision development for the Marine Estate as suggested by key Marine Estate interest/user groups • Understand the perceived opportunities for the Marine Estate among the public and Marine Estate interest/user groups • Prioritise values, benefits and vision according to key Marine Estate interest/user groups and the NSW community

3. This Report

In order to meet the stated research objectives, the research approach was designed to take place over a number of sequential stages.

An outline of the entire research process is shown below...



This report contains the findings from **Stage 2: Formative Qualitative Research**.

This phase of the research was designed to understand...

- Current perceptions of the NSW Marine Estate
- Key threats and opportunities
- How Marine Estate interest/user groups would like the Marine Estate to evolve in the future

To deliver the depth of insight required at the outset of the project as a whole, this formative qualitative stage was beneficial, not only in gaining an in-depth understanding of the issues at play across seven locations in NSW but also informing the development of the questionnaires to be used in subsequent quantitative stages of the study.

4. Qualitative Research Methodology

A series of 36 in-depth interviews and seven focus group discussions were conducted with Marine Estate interest/user groups and members of the general public across a number of locations in NSW...

- **Sydney...** 1 focus group discussion with community members and 15 in-depth interviews with Marine Estate interest/user groups
- **Newcastle...** 1 focus group discussion with community members and 3 in-depth interviews with Marine Estate interest/user groups
- **Coffs Harbour...** 1 focus group discussion with community members and 4 in-depth interviews with Marine Estate interest/user groups
- **Lismore...** 1 focus group discussion with community members and 4 in-depth interviews with Marine Estate interest/user groups
- **Batemans Bay...** 1 focus group discussion with community members and 8 in-depth interviews with Marine Estate interest/user groups
 - The Batemans Bay group contained eleven participants...
 - 7 members of the broader community
 - 1 commercial fisherman who had been recruited as a member of the community using the recruitment screener approved by the client (where no community members were excluded from participation based on their interactions with the Marine Estate)
 - Three additional commercial fishing representatives also attended the session unexpectedly and chose not to participate in a scheduled in-depth interview on the same day as a Marine Estate interest/user group...
 - As the commercial fishing representatives are considered a peak Marine Estate interest/user group for the purposes of the survey design, they were offered a second opportunity for a face-to-face in-depth interview on 17 March but chose not to participate in this interview
 - They were offered a final opportunity to submit their answers to the in-depth interview questions in writing by 24 March, but no submission was received. For the purposes of this report, their views have been captured in the Marine Estate interest/user group Perspectives section of this report under Commercial Fishing (in Section 8 of this report) and have not been included in the focus group summary for Batemans Bay
 - A letter was also sent to the Batemans Bay focus group participants on 4th March 2014 to explain what had happened on the day of their focus group meeting and to provide them with an opportunity to review the summary of the focus group discussions and add or amend any of the information if they felt their views had not been adequately captured during the session. No additional views or comments were received from the participants...
 - While there was some influence evident on the group of the strong feelings of the commercial fishing representatives in relation to the impact of the Marine Park on the commercial fishing industry, the remainder of the discussion around values,

threats, opportunities and priorities was uninfluenced by the presence of industry representatives.

- **Eden...** 1 focus group discussion with community members and 2 in-depth interview with a Marine Estate interest/user group
- **Orange...** 1 focus group discussion with community members

The bulk of the fieldwork was conducted between 20th January and 7th February 2014, while two Marine Estate interest/user group in-depth interviews were conducted on 12th and 24th March respectively. Each focus group discussion ran for 1.5 hours (with the exception of the Batemans Bay group, which ran for just over 2 hours) and each in-depth interview ran for 45 minutes to an hour and interviews were a mix of face to face and telephone in-depth methodologies.

The qualitative sample structure may be found overleaf.

Sample Structure: Focus Group Discussions

The structure of the focus group discussions was as follows...

LSS Region	Location	Focus Group Details
GREATER SYDNEY	Sydney (including some respondents who use Pittwater)	6pm, Monday 20 th January 2014
HUNTER	Newcastle	6pm, Tuesday 21 st January 2014
NORTH COAST	Coffs Harbour	6pm, Wednesday 23 rd January 2014
	Lismore	6pm, Tuesday 28 th January 2014
SOUTH EAST	Batemans Bay	3pm, Friday 24 th January 2014
	Eden	6pm, Tuesday 21 st January 2014
CENTRAL TABLELANDS	Orange	6pm, Tuesday 28 th January 2014
TOTAL		7 Focus Group Discussions

Additional specifications...

- Respondents for metropolitan Sydney were drawn from a range of suburbs
- There was at least some representation across this sample of CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) groups
- A range of frequency of interactions with the Marine Estate as well as different activities were covered across the focus group discussion sample

Sample Structure: In-Depth Interviews

The structure of the in-depth interview component of the formative qualitative stage was as follows...

Stakeholder Type	Location						TOTAL
	Sydney	Newcastle	Coffs Harbour	Lismore	Batemans Bay	Eden	
Peak Body Groups (peak recreational fishing groups, peak recreational boating groups, bait shops, scuba divers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underwater Skin Divers and Fishermen's Association Aust. National Sports Fishing Association Aust. Fishing Trade Association Surfing NSW Yachting NSW Boat Owners Association Keep Australia Fishing Surf Lifesaving NSW 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EcoFishers Scuba Diving Business 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narooma Port Committee 	-	11
Local Councils (local council representatives, ethnic community council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethnic Communities Council NSW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local council 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local council (Tweed Heads) 	-	-	3
Chambers of Commerce (representatives of local businesses)	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chamber of commerce 	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chamber of commerce 	-	2
Fishing/Boating Industry (commercial fishing, local fishing businesses, boating industry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sydney Fish Market Boating Industry Association 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Fisherman's Association 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Coast Fishermens United Group** Port Kembla Port Corporation 	-	5
Other Industry Bodies (coastal developers, NSW farmers, tourism industry, aqua culture industry)	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSW Farmers Oyster Committee 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lord Howe Island Tourism Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local oyster famer South Coast Regional Tourism Organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local oyster farmer 	5
Indigenous Community (members of the Indigenous community, elders, Aboriginal land council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal Land Council 	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Elder Aboriginal Community Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Elder Aboriginal Community Centre 	-	5
Conservation/Science (marine science community, conservation groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Parks Association Marine Science Association NSW Nature Conservation Council 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Coast Environmental Council (Port Macquarie) 	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marine Education Centre 	5
TOTAL	15	3	4	4	8	2	36

** Comments from participation in a focus group discussion

Session Structure

The structure of the discussions within each of the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were as follows...

- Introduction
- Background to their role and local area
- Perceptions of the Marine Estate
- Exploration of the environmental, economic and social values associated with the Marine Estate
- Understanding the environmental, economic and social benefits derived from the Marine Estate
- Insights into the perceived environmental, economic and social threats to the Marine Estate
- Opportunities and preferred priorities for future management of the Marine Estate
- Wrap up

The full discussion guides are provided in the appendix of this report.

(NOTE: For the Coffs Harbour sessions, discussions focussed on the Marine Park in the area with a secondary discussion of the Marine Estate as a whole and in the Batemans Bay session, discussion broadly focussed on the Marine Park (referred to as Marine Estate within this group))

5. Management Summary

- In order to understand how the NSW community and various Marine Estate interest/user groups perceive the Marine Estate, and what they consider to be the particular values, benefits, threats and opportunities for the Marine Estate, Sweeney Research was commissioned to undertake a study to understand more specifically...
 - Perceptions of the Marine Estate
 - Values associated with the Marine Estate
 - Perceived threats to the Marine Estate
 - Vision for the Marine Estate
- The research program contains a number of stages, including...
 - Stage 1: Knowledge Discovery and Consultation with Internal Stakeholders
 - Stage 2: Formative Qualitative Research
 - Stage 3: Quantitative Research – Representative Online Survey
- This report outlines the findings from the **Stage 2 Formative Qualitative Research** phase
- The qualitative stage of the research comprised 7 focus group discussions with members of the community and 36 in-depth interviews with Marine Estate interest/user groups. The research was conducted in the following LLS regions in NSW...
 - Greater Sydney (Sydney, drawing on a range of suburbs)
 - Hunter (Newcastle)
 - North Coast (Coffs Harbour and Lismore)
 - South East (Batemans Bay and Eden)
 - Central Tablelands (Orange)

Regional Dynamics

- From the series of focus group discussions held with community members in each of the LLS regions specified above, a number of location specific insights were uncovered
- Across the five LLS regions covered in this qualitative stage of the research program, a significant number of consistencies emerge in relation to the values associated with the Marine Estate as well as the benefits derived, threats perceived and opportunities for the future, with very few regional differences evident. However, a range of contextual points emerge from the focus group discussions held in each location that give some insight into the motivations behind highlighting specific values, benefits, threats and opportunities discussed in this report...

Greater Sydney Perceptions

- Sydney is considered synonymous with the coast and the harbour in particular, and for many Sydney community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups, the Marine Estate is most frequently associated with the beach
- Sydney community members react somewhat negatively to the term 'Marine Estate' as, for them, there is an assumption that the term refers to residential or commercial development that will be on or near the water (that the government may be selling off land to developers)
- High prices attached to waterfront properties in Sydney are perceived to provide proof for the perception that being by the water is considered a privilege
- Crowding issues, the cost of parking and transport and traffic can detract from the community's enjoyment of the Marine Estate in Greater Sydney
- Sydney residents are interested in having some involvement in the management of the Marine Estate and feel the Government should ask for their input as they develop future plans
- The need for education and information sharing is considered an important element of the management of the Marine Estate into the future – Sydney community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups believe education from an early age could not only ensure safe behaviours and minimal impact from future interactions with the Marine Estate but also could help foster an appreciation and respect for the Marine Estate and organisms within it

Hunter Perceptions

- The term 'Marine Estate' also has negative associations in the Hunter Region, mainly because the term feels elitist and exclusive
- Community members in the Hunter LLS region exhibit a strong desire to preserve and protect the character of the area and express a desire to keep tourist numbers contained, and to protect the diversity of industries within the region, including the Newcastle port
- Community members in this region can feel as though restrictions in relation to interactions with the Marine Estate, particularly in relation to recreational fishing can feel inconsistent and excessive
- Additionally, there is perceived to be little done in relation to policing camping sites and other areas for littering in particular

North Coast Perceptions

- The two locations covered in the North Coast LLC for the community focus group component of the research were Coffs Harbour and Lismore
- Community members in the North Coast LLS region exhibit a similar amount of pride in, and affection for, their part of the Marine Estate (and Marine Park) and frequently discuss its beauty and contribution to their healthy and happy way of life...
 - Members of the Indigenous community on the North coast also have a strong connection with and affection for their part of the Marine Estate – it is seen as central to their sense of self and core to their identity

- Community members in both locations feel that tourism has some positive and negative impacts on their region – on the one hand, tourists are considered to provide an important income stream for their region but on the other, tourists are associated with increased litter, less respect for the Marine Estate and also increased congestion in the region in peak times
- Also, there are some perceptions that opportunities for development are not always capitalised on because of a community concern relating to overdevelopment in their region – a middle ground is desired by many community members who want the benefits of tourism but not at the expense of their areas' infrastructure and character
- The Indigenous community in this region perceive restrictions placed on access to the Marine Estate (e.g. restrictions on fishing) as a threat to the value they currently place in it – both in terms of the enjoyment they derive as well as its value as a food and cultural resource

South East Perceptions

- The two locations covered in the South East LLC region for the community focus group component of the research were Batemans Bay and Eden
- A strong link to their part of the Marine Estate is evident, both among non-Indigenous and Indigenous community members...
 - Non-Indigenous community members love their local area and the lifestyle it affords them – laid back, simple and interacting with nature
 - Indigenous community members in this region feel no separation from their environment, rather they are a part of it, and so unrestricted access to their local environment is considered critical
- Creating and protecting opportunities for local residents was a key priority across both areas covered within the South East LLC region, particularly in relation to education and employment opportunities for young people in their area (as they feel many younger members of the community are either moving away, or falling onto hard times)
- A strong sense in both parts of the South East region covered in this stage of the research relates to the perceived distance of these locations from decision makers and there is a concern that those who are making decisions may lack the local knowledge required to make prudent decisions for local communities

Central Tablelands Perceptions

- Community members in the Central Tablelands LLS region were represented in this stage of the research by a focus group discussion conducted in Orange with local community members
- Although these community members feel removed from the Marine Estate in their day to day lives, still perceive its value and enjoy the access they have to the Marine Estate
- Orange residents feel removed from decision making in relation to the management of the Marine Estate and are not sure how they would have access to decision makers or a way to voice their opinions in relation to what they consider to be priorities for Marine Estate management in the future
- However, these community members perceive a number of benefits that can be derived from the Marine Estate and, as mainly visitors, believe they have the same rights as residents to access and interact with the Marine Estate

Indigenous Community Perceptions

- Members of the Indigenous communities in Batemans Bay and Lismore as well as a representative for an advocacy group located in Greater Sydney describe a number of varied interactions between their community and the Marine Estate...
 - Gathering food is the most commonly mentioned interaction across these communities
- The key role of the Marine Estate for these Indigenous communities relate to providing a source of food as well as fostering community links via formal and informal interactions
- While these Indigenous community representatives feel that the Marine Estate should be protected so that future generations can derive the same benefits they currently enjoy, the issue of restrictions presents a concern...
 - Government control and restrictions on how these communities interact with the Marine Estate are considered a threat to Indigenous culture and traditions (e.g. gathering of traditional foods)
- There are considered to be a number of opportunities for greater involvement of Indigenous communities in decision making and setting priorities for the Marine Estate...
 - Using the knowledge of the Indigenous community of the land and water in their local areas to help in managing the Marine Estate
 - Greater recognition of Indigenous links to the land in decision making and development of restrictions and management priorities
- See Appendix 1 for more detailed exploration

CALD Community Perceptions

- There are a number of differences in how various ethnic communities interact with and perceive the Marine Estate...
 - The more established ethnic communities (e.g. the Italian community) are more likely to perceive and interact with the Marine Estate in the same way as the broader community
 - Newer arrivals to Australia can have differing perceptions of and interactions with the Marine Estate which tend to be based on the prevailing culture of their country of origin
- For the representative of the Ethnic Communities Council that was included as a Marine Estate interest/user group in this phase of the research, targeted education is considered the key in engaging CALD communities in relation to the management of the Marine Estate...
 - Education is considered essential for some newer CALD communities in particular, to encourage a greater understanding of the Marine Estate and prioritise it's management in the present for future generations
 - However, it is considered important that any education initiatives and interactions with these communities are in their language of origin and are culturally appropriate – bilingual educators

would be considered the ideal, as their cultural awareness as well as communications skills would be believed to foster greater engagement among these CALD communities

Interactions with the Marine Estate and Perceived Changes Over Time

- The term 'Marine Estate' is largely unfamiliar to members of the community, who generally refer to the area the Marine Estate covers simply as 'the coast'...
 - Those community members who participated in this stage of the research in Lismore would not consider their part of the Richmond river system to be part of the Marine Estate
 - Most other community members would assume that the area the Marine Estate covers would only constitute the coast
- Spontaneous responses to the term 'Marine Estate' among members of the community were confused and the term was frequently misinterpreted (before the correct definition was supplied)...
 - Many presumed the term refers to residential developments (mainly because of the word 'estate') or could potentially be elitist
- Awareness of the term is far higher among Marine Estate interest/user groups (as may be expected) but, as with members of the community, its usage is not frequent in day to day conversations...
 - For most, 'the coastline' or the 'marine environment' are used more commonly
 - There is a perception among Marine Estate interest/user groups that the term could be easily misinterpreted by the community (supported by initial community responses to the term)
- Interactions with the Marine Estate among community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups have remained largely consistent over time, however, many perceive some decline in access to and the quality of the Marine Estate over time...
 - Many community members feel there is more litter now than in the past, both on land and in Marine Estate waters and that potentially, not enough is done to clean up the coastline – many believe that tourism (particularly in areas outside the Greater Sydney LLS region) is largely responsible
 - Community members, particularly those in Greater Sydney and Hunter LLS regions, feel that it can be more costly to access the Marine Estate now than in the past and rising costs associated with parking and public transport can detract from their enjoyment of the Marine Estate
 - Marine Estate interest/user groups, particularly in relation to recreational and professional fishing and boating across a number of areas feel access to the Marine Estate and particular areas within it has declined over time and they are feeling far more restricted as a result
- See Section 8 of this report for more detailed exploration

Values Attributed to the Marine Estate

- A number of important values are attributed to the Marine Estate by both members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups and central to these values is the ongoing health of the Marine Estate, without which many of the other values as well as benefits derived from the Marine Estate could decline or disappear
- The most important environmental values include...
 - **The continuing health of the Marine Estate...** The cleanliness of the Marine Estate as well as its biodiversity and the abundance of marine life it contains
 - **Safety...** Referring to the safety afforded to marine life by the regulations and restrictions in place to protect them, as well as the lack of serious pollution in the water
 - **Uniqueness...** An environment and mix of organisms that cannot be found in other locations
- The key economic values ascribed to the Marine Estate by Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members include...
 - **Support for local and state economies...** The attraction to the Marine Estate to tourists is perceived in particular to have both direct and indirect value to businesses in NSW
 - **Source of food and industry...** The reason for the existence of the state's commercial fishing industry as well as a direct source of food for recreational fishers (some of whom rely on the Marine Estate to provide food for their families).
 - **Facilities in place to help access the Marine Estate...** The presence of infrastructure such as roads, rail, marinas and boat ramps as well as facilities such as amenities blocks are perceived to have economic value to the state
 - **A gateway to Australia...** The Marine Estate provides an important link to other markets for trade
- The Marine Estate is perceived by both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups to have enormous social value for NSW...
 - **Part of our heritage and culture...** The Marine Estate is broadly considered to be part of NSW and Australian identity and many report a strong, sentimental attachment to this space. Indigenous community members also place great importance on the value of the Marine Estate as a source through which social structures and practices are maintained and reinforced.
 - **Value as an escape...** The Marine Estate affords the community an opportunity to get away from everyday lives and relax and this is considered an important value
 - **Enabling connection...** Offering a way for members of the community to spend time with loved ones and strengthens relationships as well as feeling a part of the community. Additionally, the Marine Estate is perceived to play a critical role for Indigenous communities as a food source as well as reinforcement of traditional diets that help these communities remain connected to their culture
 - **Offering choice...** Many enjoy and value the range of different activities and uses the Marine Estate offers them

- **Safety...** A significant value is attributed by the community in particular to feeling comfortable swimming there without fear of coming into contact with harmful chemicals), as well as the protection offered to members of the public from services provided by organisations such as Surf Life Saving
 - **Medicinal value...** The Marine Estate, and the organisms within it, are valued by many for their medicinal and therapeutic applications
 - **Access...** Having access to clean, unspoilt coastal areas
 - **Therapeutic value...** The Marine Estate holds value for community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups alike for its healing properties (e.g. benefits of salt water and some plants and organisms that are found in the Marine Estate)
 - **A source of scientific discovery...** Being able to use the Marine Estate to improve scientific knowledge and as a source of education for the community about marine life
- See Section 9 of this report for more detailed exploration

Benefits Derived from the Marine Estate

- Following on from the values ascribed to the Marine Estate by Marine Estate interest/user groups and members of the community, a number of important benefits are derived
- The most important environmental benefits of the Marine Estate include...
 - **That the Marine Estate may continue...** Ensuring the ongoing health of the Marine Estate means that its uniqueness and biological value may continue into the future
 - **A celebration of biodiversity...** A large variety of organisms to observe and interact with as well as to catch and eat
- The key economic benefits associated with the Marine Estate include...
 - **Deriving an income...** The Marine Estate provides both direct and indirect benefits to NSW communities
 - **Broader economic benefits...** Other economic benefits of tourist movements beyond the Marine Estate as well as its role as a trade route
- The social benefits derived from the Marine Estate are considered particularly important by members of the community in particular (but also Marine Estate interest/user groups) and include...
 - **Health benefits...** A number of physical and mental health benefits are derived from the Marine Estate by the community and interactions with the Marine Estate are considered an important part of a healthy lifestyle

- **Social interaction...** Community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular feel their interactions with the Marine Estate afford them the opportunity to strengthen relationships with family members as well as make new connections with likeminded people (e.g. by joining clubs, etc.)
 - **Enjoyment...** The fun of being able to participate in the activities and pursuits they love
 - **Peace...** The Marine Estate provides a sense of peace and tranquillity to the individual but also the community more broadly
 - **Appreciation and respect...** For both the Marine Estate itself as well as for the points of view of other Marine Estate interest/user groups
 - **Feeling a connection to nature...** A clean and healthy Marine Estate provides the benefit to the community of feeling a part of nature and enjoying its beauty
 - **Knowledge of the Marine Estate...** Scientific discovery as well as personal experience based on interactions with the Marine Estate provide the benefit of increased personal and collective knowledge
- See Section 10 of this report for more detailed exploration

Perceived Threats to the Marine Estate

- A number of threats are perceived by Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members that could undermine the current values of, and benefits derived from, interactions with the Marine Estate
- Environmental threats are considered critically important as they refer to the core value of the ongoing health of the Marine Estate and include...
 - **Pollution...** Land run off, litter and the threat of events such as oil spills are perceived to be the most imminent threat to the Marine Estate by the majority
 - **Habitat destruction...** Habitat destruction is considered an important threat to the biodiversity, ecosystems and fish populations in the Marine Estate. This mainly refers to the loss of nursery grounds for fish that are perceived to be under threat from loss of mangroves and other seagrass areas within the Marine Estate (either from development, poor management or pollution)
 - **Human extraction from the Marine Estate...** Issues such as overfishing and mining are perceived as highly visible threats to the Marine Estate (although it should be noted there is little evident understanding among the community of exactly what levels constitute overfishing)
 - **Other human activity...** Activities such as use of motored watercraft and irresponsible practices (such as littering), if unchecked, can increase threats to the health of the Marine Estate
 - **Broader, long term threats...** Larger issues such as climate change and water acidification are considered long term threats to the health and biodiversity of the Marine Estate

- The main economic threats to the Marine Estate largely revolve around loss of income and include...
 - **Restrictions on fishing...** A key area for concern in the Marine Park area of Batemans Bay in particular relates to the loss of livelihood related to restrictions being placed on commercial fishing within these areas, causing a great deal of dissatisfaction and distress within this industry in these areas. While the commercial fishing representatives in Coffs Harbour hold similar views to those in Batemans Bay, the views of the community were not as negative in relation to commercial fishing restrictions (perhaps because of the lack of presence of commercial fishing representatives in the Coffs Harbour group, or that Marine Park conditions in Coffs Harbour have been in place for three times as long)
 - **Decline in tourism...** Depleted marine life and a loss of beauty could mean tourists (and the income they provide for the state) are less attracted to NSW
 - **Imprudent development...** Placing commercial interests above all others and overdeveloping an area as well as the alternative of avoiding all development to preserve an area are each considered to be threats to the economic value of the Marine Estate
 - **Other restrictions on access...** Restrictions on recreational activities such as fishing, diving and boating, or adding a monetary cost for accessing the Marine Estate would be perceived to undermine its value for many (e.g. businesses may not make as much if costs to access the Marine Estate were to increase for them)
 - **Lack of funding to maintain the Marine Estate...** A lack of funding for the maintenance of the Marine Estate is perceived to pose a threat to its economic value by making it less attractive and potentially less safe
- A range of social threats to the Marine Estate are highlighted by members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups and include...
 - **A decline in mental and physical health...** As a result of interacting less frequently with the Marine Estate if its health in particular begins to decline, many feel that the health benefits currently associated with the Marine Estate could be lost and overall health of the community may decline
 - **Lack of enjoyment of the Marine Estate...** The satisfaction currently gained from interacting with the Marine Estate could be lost if too many restrictions or costs become associated with those interactions. For example, Indigenous community representatives discuss the costs of obtaining licenses and permits for fishing as potentially prohibitive to members of this community and could have negative impacts on their access to areas they have always traditionally associated with. Restrictions on fishing are also a concern for recreational fishers and are perceived as a threat to their enjoyment of the Marine Estate
 - **Decline in social interaction...** It is believed there would be a negative impact on relationships and a potential disconnection from the community if interactions with the Marine Estate were to significantly decline
 - **Lack of access for traditional owners of the land...** Representatives of Indigenous communities express concern that restrictions on access to parts of the Marine Estate pose a threat, not only to how these communities will be able to access a valuable food source, but also to the practice of cultural traditions

- **Lack of community knowledge and engagement...** A lack of insight among members of the broader community in relation to the impact of their actions on the local environment, as well as a lack of awareness or perceived relevance of the bigger picture can mean that actions are not as considered as they could be and that the Marine Estate may suffer as a result
- Along with the environmental, economic and social threats to the Marine Estate, a number of politically based threats emerge...
 - **Lack of engagement...** Some community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups can feel disengaged and disconnected from the management of the Marine Estate either via lack of awareness of the processes in place, or a perception they are not consulted as decisions are being made
 - **Lack of trust...** Some concern around whether management of the Marine Estate is consistent and also the perceived importance placed on political pressure compared to scientific information or the wishes of the broader community
 - **Lack of ownership...** Some members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups report feeling a lack of empowerment to have any role in decision making
- See Section 11 of this report for more detailed exploration

Opportunities for the Marine Estate

- A range of opportunities are highlighted by participants in this stage of the research that could potentially enhance the value of the Marine Estate or minimise risks
- Some overall opportunities for the management of the Marine Estate were mentioned consistently and include...
 - **Communication...** Currently a point of dissatisfaction for some Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular, it is believed that more frequent communication with the community could enhance engagement
 - **Consultation...** Engaging in consistent consultation with community and Marine Estate interest/user groups where they feel heard and that they have input into decision making could help to enhance faith in the processes in place
 - **Collaboration...** Many Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular express a desire to collaborate with other Marine Estate interest/user groups and decision makers to come to the most mutually beneficial solutions to issues in the Marine Estate
 - **Visibility and accessibility...** Being able to have access to decision makers and management of the Marine Estate having a local presence could help enhance interactions
- The main environmental opportunity for the Marine Estate relates to...
 - **Prioritisation of threats...** Building on community consultation processes and scientific evidence to understand which threats are most imminent and should be tackled as a priority

- The most important economic opportunities for the Marine Estate include...
 - **Effective marketing of the Marine Estate...** Businesses and Government working together to market the unique beauty of the NSW Marine Estate
 - **Expand income opportunities...** Ensure that the most is being made from the business opportunities for the Marine Estate without compromising its current values
- A number of social opportunities are also highlighted by community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups, including...
 - **Consistent processes in place to understand the Marine Estate...** Regular scientific research and ongoing consultation with community members, particularly those with a great deal of experience interacting with the Marine Estate over time
 - **Building on current management arrangements...** Building on the processes in place now and learning from other management models to build the best possible Marine Estate management strategy
 - **Educate the population...** There is a real opportunity for educating the NSW population about how the Marine Estate itself works and how it is managed
 - **Encourage ownership...** Define roles in management processes so that the community can understand how they can feed into decision making
 - **Engage in decision making...** Allowing the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups to feel their influence in management decisions
- See Section 12 of this report for more detailed exploration

Suggested Priorities for Marine Estate Management

- Members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups nominated the following three areas they believe should be prioritised by management of the Marine Estate...
 - **Education...** Education is considered particularly important for the community – now so that they understand the Marine Estate and how best to interact with it, and into the future so that current values are upheld by future generations
 - **Communication and collaboration...** Finding the best, mutually beneficial solutions and communicating regularly with the community, particularly in relation to decision making and the reasons behind decisions
 - **Identifying and prioritising risks...** Understanding and prioritising the most imminent dangers to the values held in relation to the Marine Estate based on scientific evidence and community consultation
- See Section 13 of this report for more detailed exploration. The detailed findings follow.

The Detailed Findings

Constraint

Qualitative research evolves creative ideas and generates hypotheses. It is not intended to be a precise and definitive index of the views and behaviours of the broader population. This report should be interpreted with that constraint in mind.

6. Overall Observations

Across all Marine Estate interest/user types and locations, a number of common themes emerge...

The Marine Estate Universally Recognised as an Essential Part of Australian Life

- Both the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups regard the Marine Estate as an important part of life in NSW, particularly from a social/cultural perspective...

- **Identity...** The Marine Estate is considered an intrinsic part of the state and national identity. Almost all participants in this stage of the research spoke at length about the role that the coast plays in their life and the importance of a clean Marine Estate to their recreational (and some professional) pursuits.

"I remember as a kid being down at the beach all day and things like camping, crabbing and mucking around in the creek and now I do that with my kids." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

"Australians are a coastal people. The coast is our heritage and way of life and I wouldn't be me without it." (Community, Lismore)

- **Culture...** Along with overall identity, interacting with the Marine Estate is also considered an essential component of the culture of NSW (and Australia). Being on the coast and different types of interactions, from diving and fishing to just being at the beach and appreciating its beauty, are often discussed as a part of the Australian way of life that must be preserved and protected.

"It used to be all about the bush, like those bush poets in the past but I think that's now been replaced by the ocean and being on the beach." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Income source...** Its value as an income source (either directly through industries such as commercial fishing or indirectly such as local businesses having more customers in peak seasons) means the Marine Estate is considered vitally important by both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups alike. Additionally, the coastline is one of the most consistently used images when marketing Australia overseas and so the preservation of its beauty is considered a priority by the majority.

"We're totally dependent on it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Every time you see those tourism ads, it's always centred on the outback or the beach. It's how we market ourselves as a country." (Community, Sydney)

A Holistic, Science Based View Considered Critical for Marine Estate Management

- Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular frequently mention that the management of the Marine Estate should factor in a range of different perspectives as well as all of the elements that have a direct or indirect influence on the health of the Marine Estate...

- **Direct influences...** Minimising the impact of the elements that have a direct negative effect on the Marine Estate are considered vital, not only to maintain the ecological features and biodiversity, but also to ensure that current interactions with the Marine Estate can continue into the future.

"You have to put some restrictions in so we won't lose it in the future." (Community, Sydney)

- **Indirect influences...** While managing the elements that have a direct impact on the Marine Estate, the majority believe it is equally important to consider and actively manage less obvious influences (e.g. pollution from land based activities).

"It's things like over development and things like agricultural run-off that we really should be watching." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Responsibility...** Almost all participants in this stage of the research feel that responsibility for the Marine Estate lies with all members of the NSW population and each person who interacts with the Marine Estate should take responsibility for ensuring their impact is positive (or at the very least, not negative).

"I think I remember it from an ad but they said the only thing you should leave at the beach are your footprints." (Community, Lismore)

- Marine Estate interest/user groups frequently express concerns around the influence of political pressures on the management of the Marine Estate. Some community members (particularly those in Marine Park areas) share this concern...

- **Politics over science...** Some report serious concern on how decisions relating to the management of the Marine Estate are reached. They feel that political agendas and trying to maximise votes may have more influence on management decisions and that the scientific evidence, which should hold the most influence, is given less weight.

"It is really frustrating because you see closures and restrictions in certain areas but no scientific evidence to back up their decisions. It was worse in the past with the Labor and Greens but it's still a huge issue now. They don't explain enough." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Concerns around the influence of the 'squeaky wheels'...** Many feel concern about the perceived influence of those more vocal organisations and individuals and that these views hold greater influence than the interests of the broader community. All participants feel that community consultation and consideration of all points of view is essential to the effective management of the Marine Estate.

Engagement with the Management of the Marine Estate is a Critical but Often Unmet Need

- Feeling involved and having engagement with the process of managing the Marine Estate is considered critical for both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups alike...

- **Not part of the process...** Many community members and some dissatisfied Marine Estate interest/user groups do not feel a part of the process, particularly because they feel decisions are being made without their views and concerns being taken into account.

"They just decide what they want to do and then we have to wear it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Lack of meaningful consultation...** Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular feel that they do not have any opportunities to provide input into decisions as they are being made but are only consulted once plans are already in place (and so their feedback has minimal influence and perceived meaning).

A number of elements related to engagement are considered key in influencing overall satisfaction with input into the management of the Marine Estate...

- **Clarity...** Clear communication about regulations and how decisions are reached is critical in engendering a trusting, open relationship with Marine Estate interest/user groups and the community. While some Marine Estate interest/user groups feel they have a good rapport with those who manage the Marine Estate and Marine Park managers, others feel frustrated when responses appear to be ambiguous or do not go into enough detail.

"If they told us why things are happening and why we can't fish in certain spots then at least we would understand it. We might not like it but at least we would understand it."
(Community, Lismore)

- **Access/Responsiveness...** Being able to talk to the people they need to speak to, when they need to speak to them is also considered vital for Marine Estate interest/user groups and members of the community would like to know how they can also provide their feedback. There are marked differences in satisfaction between those Marine Estate interest/user groups who have direct access to contacts who are making decisions and those who do not.
- **Collaboration...** Open communication that is directed towards achieving a mutually beneficial result is considered the ideal. Frequently, Marine Estate interest/user groups who are least satisfied feel as though their point of view and concerns are not being considered and conditions are 'imposed' on them. A non-adversarial relationship and open, clear communication is considered key to building trust with Marine Estate interest/user groups as well as the community.

"We just want to be able to play a part in it. It's our livelihood and we know the water better than most so why don't they talk to us?" (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Education should be a Priority

- Both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups frequently discuss the role and benefits of a broader education process for the NSW population on the importance of preserving and managing the Marine Estate but also how to interact safely with the Marine Estate...
- **Understanding the importance...** Most consider communication with the general public on the value of the Marine Estate as a pristine and ecologically diverse environment as well as a source of income and food for NSW as an important way to engage the community and to encourage them to feel some ownership and responsibility for the management of the Marine Estate. Additionally, broader discussion with the community on the value of the Marine Estate could provide new information to recent immigrants to Australia who may not hold the same values.

"(Recent immigrants) may have come from places where keeping the waterways clean and to fish sustainably wasn't a priority and so don't see it in the same way as the broader population." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Understanding laws and regulations...** There is an opportunity to educate the community on regulations that are in place (particularly in Marine Park areas) and what they can and can't do, but also on why particular regulations are in place – the reasoning behind decision making. Providing this information could help better engage the NSW community with management of the Marine Estate.

"I can't take the kids where I used to take them to fish and I don't want them to fish at the beach where you can fish because it's so crowded now. I'm not sure why they closed some and left some areas open." (Community, Batemans Bay)

- **Maximising enjoyment...** Broader education on how to keep safe while interacting with the Marine Estate could also help maximise the community's enjoyment of the Marine Estate. Additionally, providing information on the importance of using the Marine Estate sustainably and with a long term view, could help the community to monitor their own behaviour (e.g. not keeping more fish or smaller fish than they are allowed).

A Desire for Collaborative Relationships Tempered by Some Mistrust

- For some Marine Estate interest/user groups, a lack of trust in decision makers and other Marine Estate interest/user group that represent different interests is evident...

- **Decision makers...** As mentioned, a perceived lack of involvement and influence on decision making means that there can be a lack of trust in those who manage the Marine Estate.
- **Other Marine Estate interest/user groups...** There is a general perception among Marine Estate interest/user groups that they could have some difficulty interacting with other Marine Estate interest/user groups who represent interests that may be in opposition to the interests they themselves represent.

"There's no point in trying to interact with them (fishing groups), they'll never listen to what the science says, that we need to have sanctuary zones." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- However, most recognise that a collaborative approach would be most productive and indicate they would be interested in engaging with other groups as well as decision makers...

- **Part of a productive process...** Most feel as though the ideal approach to managing the Marine Estate would be to set up a collaborative process whereby Marine Estate interest/user groups would have productive dialogue with decision makers and other Marine Estate interest/user groups so that the outcome is best for all parties.

- Following on from communication, openness is also considered key in engendering positive relationships between Marine Estate interest/user groups and decision makers...

- **Information...** Sharing ideas and insights is also a key element for Marine Estate interest/user groups to feel supported and building trust into relationships.

7. Location and Community Interactions with the Marine Estate

Perspectives on the Marine Estate and its management are influenced by location as well as the number and types of interactions community members have with the Marine Estate. The community members (focus group participants) from the different LLS regions can have distinctly different perceptions and experiences which influence their priorities in terms of values, benefits and threats, as well as areas for improvement with their role in the management of the Marine Estate.

Greater Sydney Perceptions

- Sydney is considered synonymous with the coast and the harbour in particular...
 - **The harbour is frequently showcased...** Most assume that those who have never visited Sydney would mention the harbour as a key identifying feature of the city, as it is depicted in advertising, films and television so frequently.
 - **The Marine Estate = the beach for most...** When asked to consider the Marine Estate and describe their interactions with it, most mention their experiences at the beach and the types of activities they most frequently pursue there including swimming, sunbathing, surfing, body boarding, fishing, boating and picnicking.
- Some confusion and concern around the term Marine Estate was found in all locations, however, this was more pronounced in Sydney...
 - **Assumed to relate to a residential development...** The use of the word 'estate' leads many to assume that this term is referring to some kind of residential or commercial building development that is near or on the water.

"To me it sounds like a residential area that's near the coast." (Community, Sydney)

"Sounds like a house you can buy in Sydney where you can park your own boat." (Community, Sydney)
 - **Some suspicion of Government selling the land...** In Sydney, there were concerns (before the actual definition was provided in the session) that the Marine Estate could potentially be privatised or sold off to investors and this may affect access to the Marine Estate for the general public.
- Being by the water is considered a privilege among these members of the community...
 - **Property prices confirm this...** The high price of real estate that is close to the water confirms for these community members the value that residents in Sydney place on being near the water.
 - **Those who live near the water have no desire to leave...** Those members of the community who currently live near the water feel very happy to live there and do not want to live in any other areas of the city.

"I can hear the waves at night and we can walk down the stairs and be at Queenscliff pool. It's an extension of our home." (Community, Sydney)

- **Those in the western suburbs view the coast as an escape...** Those who live further away from the coast still regularly interact with the Marine Estate and, given the distance they travel, it is often viewed as an all day trip and somewhat of a mini break.
- Some elements threaten the enjoyment of interactions with the Marine Estate in the Sydney area...
 - **Crowding issues...** Many report that crowds at beaches in particular can detract from enjoyment, as people can find it difficult to find a place to sit and to avoid crowds in the water.

"I never swim between the flags because they put them so close together, you can't get any space and it really annoys me." (Community, Sydney)
 - **Associated costs can limit the time spent at the beach...** Costs related to being at the beach (e.g. transport, parking, food and drinks) can detract from enjoyment and can actually be prohibitive for some, who don't visit as often as they would like.
 - **Traffic can present a major frustration...** Trying to get to the beach (particularly city beaches) can be frustrating when stuck in traffic for too long.
- Sydney residents are interested in having some involvement in the management of the Marine Estate and feel the Government should ask for their input as they develop future plans...
 - **Sense of shared responsibility...** All feel some responsibility for ensuring their own interactions with the Marine Estate (particularly in relation to ensuring they do not leave any rubbish at the beach) and feel that because of this, the community should contribute to the running of the Marine Estate.
 - **A genuine interest shown...** Those who live nearest to the coast in particular express an interest in playing an active role in managing the Marine Estate and contributing to decision making.
 - **Proactive management should be the focus...** Most feel that monitoring and preventative measures are preferable to reactionary policy.

"I don't want a knee jerk response, I want a pro-active response... from the government and the community." (Community, Sydney)
- The need for education and information sharing is considered an important element of the management of the Marine Estate into the future...
 - **Education on safe practices should be a priority...** These community members feel it is vitally important that all who use the Marine Estate understand how they can keep themselves safe, and this education should start with children.
 - **Also an opportunity to use education to improve connection...** To ensure that the Marine Estate is appreciated and cared for, there is believed to be an opportunity to use education (starting with children) to engender respect and admiration for the Marine Estate and the wildlife within it.
 - **Information on new regulations needs to be provided at a broad level...** In order to ensure that all community members and visitors know what is expected of them and how they can safely enjoy the Marine Estate.

Hunter Perceptions

- The term 'Marine Estate' has negative associations in the Hunter Region group, held in Newcastle...
 - **Assumed to convey exclusivity and lack of access...** Many feel that estate refers to the ownership but in an exclusive way, not that the Marine Estate is for everyone. The perceived sense of exclusion makes the residents of the Hunter region think that the term is misleading.

"(The term marine estate) It's misleading; it should read NSW Marine Estate."
(Community, Newcastle)

"Going to the beach has no exclusions, it doesn't matter where you come from or how many kids you have." *(Community, Newcastle)*
- A strong sense of wanting to protect and preserve Newcastle's character...
 - **There is a real reluctance to encourage too many tourists...** Residents of Newcastle feel that there are so many places that are 'hidden gems' in the Hunter region that they grew up with and that they don't want to share with visitors to the area.
 - **Income sources should be diversified...** Tourists are considered a healthy addition in moderation but there is consensus that there are better ways of providing an income for the region (e.g. heavy industry).
- The importance and role of Newcastle's port should not be underplayed...
 - **Important source of regional income...** Residents of Newcastle agree that economic development of the port is crucial for the city, they see the economic value it brings. The only concern is that it should be a slow, organic growth so that the area is not being overdeveloped.

"Building new ports or casinos on the shoreline would be detrimental because it would kill off the coral." *(Community, Newcastle)*

"First priority is to keep the Marine Estate intact, and then you can worry about development." *(Community, Newcastle)*
 - **Part of the city's heritage...** The port is considered a part of Newcastle's identity and represents past and current industry (steel and coal).
- Restrictions in relation to interactions with the Marine Estate feel inconsistent...
 - **Recreational fishing restrictions feel excessive...** Residents of the Hunter region feel they are being punished with excess legislation on fishing, particularly because there is a perception that recreational fishing's impact was only considered once the damage from commercial fishing had been done. Recreational fishers feel they were unfairly impacted in this case.

"It's important to continue to interact with the marine estate in the same way we always have been." *(Community, Newcastle)*

- **Little policing of public beaches/camping spots are causing frustration...** These local residents have seen increases in the amount of litter left and travellers staying overnight in areas that are off limits. Fundamentally it's agreed that this lack of care is probably caused by a lack of awareness/education that should come both from home and from school, however, additional policing is felt to be needed to ensure compliance.

"Everyone should just pick up their rubbish and put it in the bin." (Community, Newcastle)

"There is a problem with free camping because some people take liberties: some just leave the tent and the rubbish behind if they can't pack it up properly." (Community, Newcastle)

North Coast Perceptions

- The two locations covered in the North Coast LLC for the community focus group component of the research were Coffs Harbour and Lismore...
 - **Marine Estate and Marine Park Perceptions covered...** The North Coast fieldwork covered the Solitary Islands Marine Park area (focus group held in Coffs Harbour with members of the community and in-depth interviews in and around Coffs Harbour) and the Cape Byron Marine Park as well as the broader Marine Estate (via a community focus group in Lismore and interviews in and around this area).
- Community members in the North Coast LLS region exhibit a similar amount of pride in, and affection for, their part of the Marine Estate (and Marine Park)...
 - **A place of beauty...** The beauty of their local environment is considered particularly valuable to community members in the North Coast region and is perceived to offer a number of benefits, particularly in relation to mental health, enjoyment and offering a pleasant environment for social interaction.
 - **Appealing way of life enabled by the Marine Estate/Marine Park...** All community members in the North Coast LLS region talk positively about the lifestyle they enjoy, which they attribute directly to their interactions with the Marine Estate/Marine Park. This most commonly relates to being outside and having access to clean coastline areas, e.g. lack of too much visible pollution, largely unrestricted access (except in relation to commercial fishing for some community members).
 - **Sentimental attachment...** These community members frequently discuss a sentimental and emotional attachment they have to their local coastline, often equating their interactions with memories of their own childhood or creating memories with their own children.
- Community members in both locations discuss the positive and negative impacts of tourism in their part of the North Coast LLS region...
 - **Concern around the impact of tourists...** Community members in both locations frequently discuss the impact of tourists on their part of the Marine Estate in terms of increased congestion in peak times and the amount of litter and waste tourists are presumed to leave in the area (i.e. that they do not have the same respect for this part of the Marine Estate as residents may).

- **Question on whether opportunities for tourism are being maximised...** Residents in Coffs Harbour in particular are concerned that their local community may be missing out on tourist opportunities to enhance the local economy because of a reluctance to develop the area too much (borne out of a fear that the local area will become too urbanised and exist solely to cater for visitors). This view is less pronounced in Lismore, where local infrastructure such as roads and bus link can prevent them accessing the coastline easily.

Coffs Harbour Perceptions

- Lack of strong feeling about the Marine Park conditions in Coffs Harbour, members of this community generally feel happy that their local area is being protected...
 - **Little discussion of the Marine Park specifically, although the term is familiar...** Almost all in the session show an awareness of the restrictions in place in their local area, but did not frequently use the term 'Marine Park' spontaneously when discussing their local area.
 - **General community support...** These Coffs Harbour residents generally perceive the introduction of the Marine Park and the protections in place in their local area as a positive step for the community so that current conditions will continue into the future. This is in contrast to the views of local fishing industry representatives, who report that their livelihoods have been seriously compromised by the Marine Park introduction and many are now leaving the industry altogether.
 - **Perceptions not as negative as in Batemans Bay Marine Park area...** While the Batemans Bay community discussed the restrictions they have experienced in relation to recreational fishing since the introduction of the Marine Park in their area, Coffs Harbour residents were not as negative about the impact of the Marine Park introduction (perhaps because the introduction of these conditions in Coffs Harbour happened further into the past).
- Local residents feel very protective over their local environment and feel it is the most valuable feature of their area...
 - **Sense of local pride...** A genuine love for their local area is evident among these community members, who discussed and shared stories of local spots they love and hidden gems (such as creeks and camping sites) they have discovered over time. This group believes that the beauty of Coffs Harbour lies in its natural environment and they feel lucky to be able to access both salt and fresh water areas.
 - **Important source of leisure...** Almost all participants in this focus group discussion spend a great deal of time interacting with the Marine Estate in their free time and consider it an essential part of their lives. Additionally, the Marine Estate offers an opportunity for some low cost or free leisure pursuits such as swimming, camping, walking/running, surfing, snorkelling and fishing.

"I can take the kids to the beach or take a picnic to the creek and everyone has a great time and it's free which with four kids is great!" (Community, Coffs Harbour)
 - **Critical to maintain their environment...** Wanting to preserve their local environment is considered an important priority so that their children and grandchildren can have the same opportunities to have the lifestyle that they currently enjoy.

- **Everyone's responsibility...** Members of this community largely believe that every person who interacts with the Marine Estate is responsible for minimising their impact on the environment. However, there is some concern that visitors to the area do not hold the same views as locals.

"We go to a local camping site and you can camp there for free and it's up to you to take you rubbish and everything with you. We've never had an issue with finding loads of rubbish around and I love taking the kids there." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

- There is some feeling that the local area is not living up to its potential...
 - **Tourists may be lacking an incentive to visit...** Some feel that Coffs Harbour needs to modernise (e.g. update local resorts that currently feel 'tired') and offer greater incentives to visit such as more attractions, nicer shops and restaurants and a bustling and vibrant water front area.
 - **Local businesses are not flourishing...** Local small businesses are finding it difficult to stay afloat, even in peak tourist season.

"So often you hear of people setting up businesses and they always fail." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

- **Lack of opportunities for young people...** The population of young people in Coffs Harbour who have moved to the area to attend the university or the North Coast TAFE often do not stay in the area once they graduate as they cannot find work or find it too difficult to set up their own businesses.
- A tension is evident between wanting to keep Coffs Harbour the same and wanting to develop to maximise local opportunities...
 - **A perception that development should be undertaken to refresh the town...** Some feel that redevelopment in Coffs Harbour could attract more people to the area and encourage them to spend more money locally. They believe that this would enhance and complement the natural features of the area.

"There's a way to do it well and sensibly. We don't have to become Surfers Paradise." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

- **Others express concerns that development will detract from the area...** Others in the session talked passionately about their love of the area as it is and their fears that development and additional buildings in the area would change the face and personality of the area, and could ultimately have a negative impact on the local environment.

Lismore Perceptions

- Lismore is not considered part of the Marine Estate by the local community...
 - **Only coastal areas considered as 'marine'...** For the majority of the participants in the Lismore focus group discussion, there was surprise that the Marine Estate would extend inland at all.
 - **Impact of rivers on the coastal areas of the Marine Estate well understood...** While they would not have included their town in the Marine Estate, most demonstrate a strong understanding of the impact of river conditions on other parts of the Marine Estate.

- Community members have a strong emotional attachment to the Marine Estate...
 - **Sentimental view of the local Marine Estate area...** All members of the group spoke of the memories they fondly recall when interacting with the Marine Estate, often recalling childhood and the fun and social gatherings that took place at the beach, and the exploring of creeks and rivers they did as children, commonly associating the Marine Estate with memories of their childhood and parents.
 - **Continuing strong relationship...** Residents in Lismore spend a great deal of time interacting with the Marine Estate and participate in a range of activities in their local coastal areas including swimming, walking, four wheel driving in sand dune areas, boating, surfing, snorkelling and fishing.
 - **Appeal of the simplicity of local life...** This group discussed the simplicity of local life and their happiness that life in Lismore is laid back and relaxed, with a number of different cultures living happily in the town, using the river together.

*"We're lucky – we're close to the beach with none of the Byron Bay stress and busyness."
(Community, Lismore)*

- The community in Lismore expresses concern over the quality of the infrastructure in their area...
 - **Road quality is lacking...** Most feel that one of the main issues affecting their town is the condition of the roads (particularly the highway to Ballina). While there are works being completed, they are considered to be progressing too slowly, with very few updates from council or RMS.
 - **Public transport is sporadic...** Public transport within Lismore is considered adequate, however, inter town public transport links are problematic and ensure that a car is essential for accessing the coastal areas in the region. This is considered a particularly significant issue for local teenagers who are unable to drive yet. Also, trains to Brisbane are perceived to arrive and leave at inconvenient times of the day and night.
 - **Council commonly viewed negatively by residents...** Some recent council actions (e.g. fining a local gym for using the street in the very early morning to train members, a lack of maintenance of the local heritage park) have left residents feeling concerned that the council is not representing their interests and could be stifling local enterprise.

- There are concerns at the lack of opportunities for young people in Lismore...
 - **Difficult to find work...** It is feared that local employment opportunities are minimal for younger people in the town and it is becoming harder to access full time work.

*"It's not what you know, it's who you know. That's their only chance to find work."
(Community, Lismore)*
 - **Impact of the university on employment patterns...** The presence of students from the local Southern Cross University campus in the local employment market has led to an increase in casual and part time work at the perceived expense of full time work for locals.
 - **Crime considered to be increasing and local safety is compromised...** Lismore feels far less safe now than in the past, and it is supposed that lack of employment and opportunity are contributing to this.

"I remember as a kid going down to Main Street in my pyjamas on a Thursday night to get an ice cream but I would never do that now." (Community, Lismore)

- Lismore community members recognise the need for management of the Marine Estate directly, they are equally aware of indirect impacts on the Marine Estate...
 - **Still feeling the impacts of the fish kill in Ballina...** These community members remember the fish kill that occurred in the area around four years ago and report that they are still catching far less fish than they used to in the local area. There is a concern that something like this may happen again when the area floods.

"It was about four years ago, they closed the river off when the lack of oxygen in the area killed all of the fish. You can still see the change in the water – there's much more silt and sludge and you never catch what you used to catch." (Community, Lismore)
 - **Would like to know more about the management of indirect threats to the Marine Estate...** The impact of actions that are occurring further upstream such as run off from farms or mining pollution is as much of a concern as over fishing for these residents.
- There is also a concern around the impact of tourism on the local environment...
 - **Overdevelopment is a concern...** Most express some worry that the entire area of local coastline will become as busy and built up as Byron Bay has become, thereby restricting their own enjoyment and access to their local coastline.
 - **Tourist behaviour also presents an issue...** Particularly in relation to littering and the general lack of care of some tourists as they travel through the area. It is believed that education and enforcement is required to ensure the local environment remains pristine.

South East Perceptions

- The two locations covered in the South East LLC region for the community focus group component of the research were Batemans Bay and Eden...
 - **Marine Estate and Marine Park Perceptions covered...** As with the North Coast LLC region, community focus groups covered the broader Marine Estate (via a focus group discussion with community members in Eden) as well as an exploration of the Marine estate in the context of the Batemans Bay Marine Park (via a focus group in Batemans Bay).
 - **Batemans Bay group discussion...** The Batemans Bay focus group with community members was unexpectedly attended by three representatives from a local commercial fishing group (along with one other commercial fisherman who was recruited as a community member). This meant, that although a clear understanding of community members' perceptions of the Marine Estate (as well as the values, benefits, threats and opportunities they perceive) was gained, discussion was skewed towards the interests of commercial fishing in the area. The comments of those participants who were not initially invited to the session have been taken out of the context of the group and treated as a Marine Estate interest/user group interview.
- Creating and protecting opportunities for local residents was a key priority across both areas covered within the South East LLC region...

- **Education opportunities...** A concern in both locations that local education opportunities (tertiary education specifically) means that talented youngsters are leaving the community and only rarely return.
- **Employment opportunities...** A lack of employment opportunities is perceived as a particular problem for younger locals (especially those without qualifications) and could be contributing to a perceived increase in delinquent behaviours.
- A common concern in these South East LLC region locations also relates to the perceived distance of these locations from decision makers...
 - **Concern about local knowledge...** Community members in this region express some concern that those in power who are making decisions that affect the day to day life of the local community (e.g. in relation to development, access to recreational fishing sites, etc.) do not have the level of local knowledge that these members of the community consider essential in making prudent decisions for locals.
 - **Worries that decision makers are not active in their area...** There is a concern that management decisions in relation to the Marine Estate and Marine Park (as well as more broadly in relation to government) are being made without consulting the local community, or without the local community being able to provide feedback that would be listened to and acted on by decision makers.

Batemans Bay Perceptions

- Many are concerned about diminishing opportunities in the area and the heavy reliance on tourism...
 - **Lack of facilities for young people seen to cause delinquency...** As a retiree area, there are perceived to not be enough recreational activities for younger people, potentially increasing delinquent behaviour in local areas.

"There isn't anywhere to go for young people, it leads to delinquent behaviour, or drug use, or vandalism. They need jobs, something to do." (Community, Batemans Bay)

"We need more things for the young adults to do... you know, they will just go down the beach and drink, start a fire, leave broken glass..." (Community, Batemans Bay)
 - **Loss of tourism is a concern for the future...** The area relies heavily on tourism and the community is hoping for a strategy to ensure tourism is maintained/increased (suggestions for a Marina are well received and discussed with enthusiasm amongst these members of the community).

"To develop tourism would be to develop a huge marina in Batemans Bay. It would cater for people from Canberra who have a lot of money... if we could create this, it would create a lot of money and a lot of jobs..." (Community, Batemans Bay)
 - **Lack of educational facilities and opportunities for professionals means residents have had to move away...** There is a perceived lack of tertiary educational facilities that cater for professionals, such as health care professionals. People that are moving away to study typically

don't come back and there is also seen to be a general lack of professionals in the area (especially a shortage of doctors and access to health care facilities).

- Along with this, infrastructure in the area is considered a key area of opportunity for the region...
 - **Public transportation is an issue, especially in low season...** There is no night bus on the weekend in low season, only in high season and there is no direct train line from Sydney to Batemans Bay.
 - **There are concerns about housing in terms of over-development and shortage of rentals...** Batemans is thought to be at a threshold in terms of development. There are suggestions for building up rather than out. There are also mentions of a perceived shortage of rental properties in the area.
- The health benefits associated with the Marine Estate (and the Marine Park) are considered significant for this ageing community...
 - **Keeping young...** The large retiree community in the Batemans Bay area report they use their interactions with the Marine Estate to keep healthy (both physically and mentally) and this allows them to continue to feel vital and youthful.
 - **Promoting healthy lifestyles...** The local coastline and the community's interactions with it are believed to be an important way for the community to develop healthy habits and see real health benefits over time.
- While there is support for the Marine Park in theory (as a way of ensuring their local coastal area is protected for the future), there are frustrations evident...
 - **There is frustration about lack of consultation with the Marine Park authority...** There is frustration about lack of communication and consultation amongst those most affected by Marine Park conditions (i.e. the commercial fishing representative recruited as a member of the Batemans Bay community), but also a feeling among the other community members in this group of a lack of involvement and consultation – the community would like to be educated and empowered to care for their own land/area (e.g. direct involvement in decision making, giving members of the community an active management role such as being responsible for keeping an area clean and free of litter, etc.).
 - **Over-policing of the waters is causing some frustration amongst the community...** The theme of over-policing the waters is frequently mentioned – not only with the related businesses but also from the community. Lack of clear signage and too many arrests on the water is causing some frustration.
 - **Residents want to retain its cleanliness...** When the tourists arrive in high season, rubbish levels rise. One suggestion is extra bins, e.g. on the beach, where there is seen to be a shortage.

"A lot of places you go, you really struggle to find a rubbish bin... a lot of beaches don't have bins... you've got to make it easy for people." (Community, Batemans Bay)

Eden Perceptions

- Positive associations with their home and the local environment among community members in Eden...
 - **Feel fortunate...** To live in a place that is relatively untouched and is still a pristine environment.
 - **Range of activities available...** The local area is considered to be a great place to raise kids with plenty of activities to pursue for children of all ages.

"So relaxed, the kids always have something to do. Hanging out at the beach, fishing, camping... It's not like the city, here you naturally explore the waterways so it's a great environment for kids." (Community, Eden)
 - **Strong sense of community...** These members of the public feel very engaged and connected to their local community – they feel a sense of ownership and responsibility to ensure their area continues to thrive (in terms of getting the community involved in the running of the town).

"People really look after you here, especially moving here from Sydney. 'Why don't you come round for a BBQ?'" (Community, Eden)
 - **The number and quality of services in the area is well regarded...** Most report that the quality of community services such as medical centres, etc. is considered a strong positive for the local region.
- While the preservation of the qualities they love in relation to the Marine Estate is a priority in the community generally, there are other issues that require attention from the community...
 - **Pragmatic attitude...** Although there is a keen awareness of the need to protect the environment and should be the first consideration in any development project, this is tempered by a desire to see the creation of employment opportunities within the town.

"There isn't much for people, employment-wise. There is a trade-off between keeping a pristine environment and jobs – we're here for the lifestyle, not the big bucks!" (Community, Eden)
 - **Funding issues...** There is a perception that Government cutbacks to job posts involved in the management of Eden's water assets (e.g. within the CMA – Catchment Management Authority) may have a detrimental effect on education, management and policing of the coastline assets.
 - **Concern about the influences of Sydney and Canberra...** Although there is a general belief that politicians are listening more than they have in the past to the community, there is also a suspicion and some cynicism around how well their own views are listened to and taken into account, compared to politicians own views, which could have a detrimental impact on the local community's ability to make a living from the land and its resources.
 - **Some concern over current developments...** Some express concern around whether the wave attenuator (a wave dissipater or wave energy reducer) that has recently been installed in the area is really necessary or beneficial, and similar concerns are raised around port development to cater for cruise ships.

Central Tablelands Perceptions

- Community members in the Central Tablelands LLS region were represented in this stage of the research by a focus group discussion conducted in Orange with local community members. Although these community members feel somewhat removed from the Marine Estate in their day to day lives, still perceive its value...

- **The Marine Estate is not taken for granted in Orange...** Residents appreciate visiting coastal areas because there is a novelty in fishing, boating and camping, and because usually there is a limited amount of time they spend there, compared to residents on the coast. They are very aware of the particular lifestyle change and escape that the Marine Estate offers them when they visit.

"The values of the marine estate are important because we don't live there but still enjoy it." (Community, Orange)

"All the best memories comes from the ocean, they were simpler times." (Community, Orange)

- However, while Orange residents feel removed from decision making, they are cognisant of the key benefits the Marine Estate affords the whole state of NSW...

- **They feel removed from the decisions regarding the marine estate...** As they are rarely involved in any particular coastal interests, they are more cautious than in other areas in voicing their opinions on Marine Estate management. Additionally, residents in Orange can feel somewhat removed from decision making and somewhat helpless in having any influence over what is decided. Ultimately they think that the priority should be to maintain accessibility to all of those who spend time on the coast.

"There should be a more open policy but because we're not in their electorate (the Marine Estate as such), they don't care about our opinions." (Community, Orange)

- **Important social benefits associated with the Marine Estate...** The majority of residents in Orange feel the social benefits of the Marine Estate outweigh the environmental or economic benefits, mainly because they are less able to observe changes to the physical environment and do not feel any economic impact from the Marine Estate.

- There are perceptions in Orange in relation to the different types of people that interact with the Marine Estate in NSW and, as mainly visitors, these community members still believe they have the same rights as residents to access and interact with the Marine Estate...

- **Residents, visitors and tourists...** There are different perceptions of residents, visitors and tourists. Residents are considered wealthy because they can afford to live on the coast, visitors are Australians who travel intrastate or interstate (like themselves). Tourists are considered to be international tourists and are perceived to generally take less care of their environment when travelling.

"People will always want to live on the coast but it puts pressure on the environment." (Community, Orange)

-
- **Costs can become prohibitive, but access should be protected...** Rising prices of food, parking and accommodation on the coast are barriers to visiting and interacting with the Marine Estate more often and contributes to the concern that only wealthier people (or residents) are able to access the Marine Estate. Residents in Orange feel that accessibility should be the number one priority and that it shouldn't be made an exclusive environment.

"The marine estate should cater for all people: regulars, surfers etc. on the same beaches." (Community, Orange)

"There must come a time when we cannot sustain the economic surge. Only a small proportion of people will have money." (Community, Orange)

"Shops closing down when prices go up too much and this have a knock on effect on communities and families." (Community, Orange)

8. Marine Estate Interest/User Group Perspectives

Marine Estate interest/user group type can have a significant influence on perceptions of the management of the Marine Estate as well as their own role in, and contribution to, the process. At an overall level, the vast majority of Marine Estate interest/user groups seek a collaborative relationship with other Marine Estate interest/user groups and decision makers to ensure that all interests are considered and the best solution for all is achieved. Information sharing and discussion is considered a key component of this.

The key themes among each of the Marine Estate interest/user group types are discussed below.

Peak Body Groups

- Peak body groups include a number of different interests including recreational fishing groups, surfing and surf lifesaving organisations, boat owners and diving interests. Many of these groups represent state wide interests, while others are concentrated on issues in specific areas.
- The peak body groups that are happy with their role in the management of the Marine Estate and their interactions with decision makers are those groups that have strong relationships in place with Government departments...
 - **A shared responsibility to deliver services or educational programs...** Involvement with Government for these Marine Estate interest/user groups is collaborative in nature, that is, they are working together to deliver particular outcomes (mainly around education). This means that, as the nature of their interaction is set up as collaborative rather than adversarial, they tend to feel more positive about bringing up issues they encounter more broadly and feeling confident they will be heard.
 - **Regular contact with decision makers...** Predictable, ongoing contact with Government is considered to be important in developing positive working relationships and a feeling that, although perspectives may differ, the ultimate goal (ensuring the continuing value and enjoyment of the Marine Estate) is shared.

"We're running a program called Surfers Rescue 24/7 so that surfers help with CPR and board rescues, especially when beaches are unpatrolled and we've had great success and a lot of help with it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)
- Conversely, those peak bodies that are least satisfied feel removed from the process and do not feel their interests are well represented as decisions are being made...
 - **Recreational fishing groups report the lowest satisfaction levels...** These groups are most likely to feel as though the interests of recreational fishermen they represent are not being considered at management level and decisions are made based on other interests (e.g. conservation or commercial interests) as a priority.
 - **All types of fishing interests feel unfairly 'lumped' together...** Representatives of different types of fishing feel their impact on the Marine Estate can vary so much, that it is unfair to put them in the same group. For example, spear fishers feel that, as they can, and do, target specific types of fish (as they are in the water and can see what they are catching), they have a less damaging effect than line fishers who cannot see the fish they are trying to catch and could accidentally hook a rare or endangered fish. Line fishers, in turn, state their impact on the Marine Estate is far less than commercial fishing trawlers who sweep through the water with nets that could catch any number of organisms that could perish needlessly.

- **Impact on the Marine Estate feels overstated...** Most representatives of recreational fishing feel their impact on the Marine Estate is unfairly overstated and that other factors that impact on the health of the Marine Estate are not restricted as much.

"The science says that habitat destruction is the number 1 cause of fish population declines, then why not manage that as a priority? It's important for some areas to have restrictions and most responsible anglers understand this, as long as the science is clear on what the restriction is achieving." (Marine Estate interest/user group)
- **Blanket bans feel confusing and upsetting...** These sorts of restrictions feel heavy handed to fishing groups, and if not explained by those managing the Marine Estate, they set up an adversarial tone to any other interactions.
- Many of the peak bodies included in this phase of the research feel some lack of involvement in the decision making process, and this can lead to the gap between their current and ideal role in the process widening...
 - **Concern around the influence of political interests in decision making...** Some feel that no matter what their input, decisions are generally made based on political pressures rather than scientific evidence or the wishes of the community (including special interest groups).
 - **'Demonisation' of their interactions...** Fishing groups in particular feel as though they have been set up as an easy target for those that represent opposing interests.

"It's easy to see someone walking along the beach with a spear gun and paint them as the villain." (Marine Estate interest/user group)
 - **Perceived lack of consultation...** Some feeling that their knowledge is not recognised by decision makers and that, if they are consulted in relation to a particular decision, the consultation process happens after the bulk of decisions have already been made.

"You talk to an angler or a diver that has been at this spot their whole lives, they know everything there is to know about that patch but their views aren't taken into account and decisions are being made by people who might not have even been there." (Marine Estate interest/user group)
 - **The nautical area the Marine Estate extends to is a point of confusion...** Few general boaters are believed to be aware of the rule changes that occur after the 3 nautical mile limit
- While these groups represent particular interests, they do indicate a willingness to collaborate and interact with other special interest groups and decision makers in order to make mutually beneficial decisions...
 - **All hold the shared goal of monitoring and protecting the Marine Estate...** All indicate they are willing and interested in collaborating with other groups to decide how to best manage the Marine Estate.
 - **Willingness to make some concessions...** Almost all peak body representatives indicate they are willing to make some concessions for the greater good and to protect the interests and priorities of other groups, provided the same courtesy is extended back to them.

Local Councils

- Representatives from two local councils (in Newcastle and Tweed Heads) were included in this stage of the research.
- Members of the local councils involvement with government bodies and other Marine Estate interest/user groups can vary...
 - **Varied involvement in Marine Estate issues...** Involvement ranges from almost none in places where the council is not immediately adjacent to the Marine Estate to grassroots level where interactions with a variety of Marine Estate interest/user groups are high.
- While local environments are a priority for council, the Marine Estate is not necessarily considered in isolation within local areas...
 - **Marine Estate definition a reminder...** The definition presented in these interviews served as a reminder of all of the areas that comprise the Marine Estate (these representatives previously only associated the immediate coast with the Marine Estate).
 - **Protection a strong council priority...** Protection of the environment and marine resources are major drivers for work undertaken by the councils as it is seen as imperative for tourism as well as for social benefits for locals, including safeguarding the Marine Estate for future generations.

"We need to put in restrictions for sustainable use so that future generations can enjoy it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"The key value is to protect the key values now and for the future by sustainable use." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **There are some concerns involving local pollution levels...** Pollution inputs, such as sediment and litter, in river systems are believed to be affecting the waterways leading to the ocean and so should be further regulated. Fisheries are also seen to be contributing to the pollution and this is perceived to be mismanaged at the moment. Sustainable fisheries are encouraged.
- **Climate change is seen as a real issue...** Broader issues such as climate change are underpinning the drive to maintain biodiversity and protect natural resources. There is a need to capture carbon levels and establish a benchmark (such as recording different marine habitats), to be able to compare the effects against something concrete. Protecting the Marine Estate now is also seen as a way to stay resilient if climate changes do happen.

"The biggest concern is climate change, which could come with an unknown impact to temperature change, rising sea levels and population pressures." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Really prioritise climate change because this can change the ecosystem in itself." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- There is also a perception that economic gains could be possible based on sustainable use of resources...
 - **Concerns over the economic vs. environmental trade-off in the Marine Estate...** Some perception that the management of the Marine Estate in the past has been focussed on political and economic gains at the expense of the ecological implications. A potential solution discussed by these councils could be ensuring all activities involving tourism are based around sustainability of the local environment. Also, the impact caused by visitors should be closely managed and reduced where possible.

"The ideal marine estate is healthy and resilient, used on a sustainable level by the community." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **The economic value of the Marine Estate...** These Marine Estate interest/user groups have an understanding of the monetary value of resources and its importance as they try to procure funding for projects – it is perceived to be crucial to assign a dollar value to different assets within the Marine Estate. Although they are unsure of how these values could be attributed, the benefits of doing so would be two-fold; more funding, as well as understandable measures that could help influence the opinions and behaviours of local communities.

"Funding won't be allocated unless a dollar value is placed against it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Ethnic Communities Council

- One representative from the Ethnic Communities Council NSW was included as a Marine Estate interest/user group in this stage of the research. The Ethnic Communities Council NSW represents a range of ethnic communities in NSW, from the more established communities that arrived in NSW earlier in the 20th century (e.g. Greek and Italian communities) to those communities that have arrived more recently (e.g. some African and South East Asian groups).
- There are marked differences in how different ethnic communities are perceived to relate to the Marine Estate...
 - **More established communities hold a more 'mainstream' view...** For those more established communities, perceptions of, and interactions with the Marine Estate are seen as similar to those of the mainstream NSW population. For those communities who began to arrive in NSW following the Second World War, the most common interactions include swimming, recreational fishing, diving, boating, spending time on the coastline (walking, picnicking, etc.) and surfing. The members of these communities represented in focus group discussions (in Sydney, Batemans Bay and Coffs Harbour in particular) exhibited very similar attitudes and perceptions to others in the sessions.
 - **Newer arrivals can perceive and interact with the Marine Estate differently...** While there were few members of newest migrants in the focus group discussions, the Ethnic Communities Council representative indicates that perceptions of the Marine Estate among newer arrivals to the state may differ from mainstream community views. For some communities, the Marine Estate is primarily perceived as a source of food, and so community members may not see the long term value of throwing back smaller fish or not catching more than they are allowed (or may not be aware of restrictions and the need for a licence). Others may place less importance in maintaining the cleanliness of the Marine Estate because of practices (e.g. dumping rubbish in waterways) in

their former homes. However, this can vary as some ethnic groups can be more focussed on protecting and respecting the natural environment (based on religion or other cultural beliefs).

“For example, the Taiwanese community in the southern areas of Sydney I know are involved in a monthly or so clean up of the Cooks River area. It’s fundamental to the Buddhist tradition.” (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- For this Marine Estate interest/user group, it is believed that education is critical in engendering greater respect for the Marine Estate and also to ensure individuals’ interactions have minimal negative impact on the health of the Marine Estate...
 - **To reflect the views of mainstream NSW...** As mentioned, a number of ethnic groups (particularly more recent arrivals) may not place the same priority on ensuring the future health of the Marine Estate and so education may be required to not only inform these community members of regulations, but also to encourage greater understanding of restrictions and regulations in place by explaining why they are there.
 - **To foster a greater engagement with the Marine Estate and the broader community...** It is believed that this education could also go some way to helping foster the same respect and sentimental affection for the Marine Estate that is currently evident among the broader community.

“They need to know why restrictions are in place.” (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- However, it is considered critical by this Marine Estate interest/user group that any education is effectively targeted to ethnic minorities...
 - **In their own language...** It is considered essential that any literature on interacting with the Marine Estate, respecting the Marine Estate and the regulations and restrictions in place be communicated to communities that have recently arrived in particular in their own language to maximise engagement and understanding.
 - **Bilingual educators are also considered important...** To further ensure that minority ethnic communities engage with the management of the Marine Estate and understand what is expected of them in relation to its management, the use of bilingual educators would be considered ideal for ensuring any written communications are received and interpreted correctly. It is believed that direct translations of materials do not always allow for subtle cultural nuances that can be taken into account by these educators.

“We’ve worked with local councils before to engage these communities, a recent examples was around electricity pricing and avoiding confusion that is caused among these residents by door to door sales people (where these community members are confused and feel as though they have to sign up).” (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Chambers of Commerce

- Representatives from Chambers of Commerce in Newcastle and Batemans Bay were included in this Marine Estate interest/user group.
- There is a perception that the Marine Park introduction in Batemans Bay caused some initial pain for the community, but will ultimately be beneficial...

- **Positive impact on tourism...** It is hoped that the increased monitoring and preservation of the environment in Batemans Bay will have a positive impact on the experiences of visitors to the region and encourage repeat business.

*"It will keep the fish stock in abundance and as we know that people come here to fish, so it's a good thing for the community when people know they can come here and find fish."
(Marine Estate interest/user group)*

- **Long term benefits are yet to be seen...** There is a hope that there will be significant long term benefits to the local environment because of the Marine Park conditions.
- **Loss of the commercial fishing industry locally has presented some issues...** There have been issues with the decline of the commercial fishing industry in Batemans Bay and the increased reliance on tourism as the main source of income for the area. However, this Marine Estate interest/user group believes the area will prosper in the long run.

*"A lot of people weren't happy initially as commercial fishing practically stopped in the area but in time, that will be replaced by tourism. Some of the commercial fishermen are now using their boats for river cruises."
(Marine Estate interest/user group)*

- Tourism in the Marine Estate has an impact on other regional areas (such as the Hunter Valley Region)...
 - **Considered to be of equal importance as preservation of the natural environment...** Too many restrictions or changes to legislation and taxation rules are seen to have a negative impact on regional tourism.
 - **Balance needed...** A balance is needed between growth and preservation so that businesses can still operate in the marine estate areas with minimal impact. This is seen as beneficial to the economy of regional areas.
- Key concerns for local businesses in both areas relate to service provision and the ambience of the local community to help drive tourism for the area...
 - **Customer service standards a priority...** To help improve experiences of visitors without significantly adding to business costs, customer service training programs are considered a key priority for local businesses.

*"Customer service has been a concern but we are working with businesses on that."
(Marine Estate interest/user group)*

- **Bringing life back into small coastal towns...** Another area of focus is trying to stimulate local economies and encouraging businesses to come to smaller towns to minimise the number of empty shops on main streets to help improve the atmosphere.
- Better Marine Estate management and Marine Park introductions represent positive opportunities for local businesses and the local community...
 - **Marketing opportunities for local businesses...** Marketing the natural beauty of the local area is considered an important opportunity to drive tourism and help local businesses.
 - **Collaboration with Marine Park and Marine Estate managers critical for this...** A strong opportunity is perceived to exist in Batemans Bay in particular to help local businesses market the natural beauty of the area as a point of difference. Greater interaction with the Marine Park Manager is desired by the Chamber of Commerce to help drive this.

"We don't have any contact with the Marine Park Manager at the moment but it would be great if we had a point of contact and some regular interaction, not just when there are issues that we need to lobby them about." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Avoiding misinformation is also an important opportunity...** By getting community buy in to the Marine Park conditions in Batemans Bay, local residents and businesses should be armed with as much information as possible from the Marine Park authority and particularly any scientific information that shows how the local environment has benefited since the Marine Park came into effect.

"If they could give us some stats on the impact of the Marine Park so we can have the tools to sell the benefits of it to local businesses, the community and tourists." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Fishing / Boating Industry

- Representatives of the commercial fishing industry and seafood industries, as well as a boating industry representative, oyster farmers and a representative from a port corporation were included in this Marine Estate interest/user group...
 - A number of commercial fishing representatives were invited to participate in an in-depth interview but preferred to share their perspectives at the community focus group discussion in Batemans Bay. Their views are therefore included in this section of the report and not in the summary from the Batemans Bay focus group discussion (see Section 7 of this report).
- Access and infrastructure are considered key priorities for these industry bodies and the businesses they represent...
 - **Helping businesses to run effectively and maximise profits...** It is critical for these organisations that they are able to ensure the businesses they represent are afforded adequate access to the Marine Estate to conduct their business. For commercial fishing in Marine Park areas (along with other areas), access to fishing grounds is a serious concern and lack of access is posing a significant problem for these businesses (with many shutting down).

"So many fishermen have just thrown in the towel. They just can't continue." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Access to marinas and boat ramps...** Access to the water is considered essential for boating industry (and fishing) and there is a perception that access has been made more difficult over time for boats in the Marine Estate.
- **Infrastructure to ensure that ports can be used most efficiently...** The port corporation representative spoke of the need to ensure that infrastructure at the port is critical but also, infrastructure required to transport goods into and out of the port on land are equally important.

The impact of heavy industry sharing roads and rail lines with the general population is not presumed to be workable in the long term.

"They have had a rail link planned from this port up to the large warehouse zones in South West Sydney but it hasn't been built. We receive all of the cars imported to NSW and have to get them to the dealers and there's enough traffic without clogging it up more." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- Commercial fishing is fighting a seemingly uphill battle...

- **There is a need to overcome public perception...** Commercial fishing can be considered the 'bad guys' in relation to the Marine Estate by members of the public who are concerned that the environment is being depleted, based on effective messaging they may have heard from conservation groups (which are not agreed with by industry).

"A parliamentary enquiry in NSW didn't address the threat from pollution from the land going into the sea, the Greens just wanted to blame us." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Of all of the protein producers in Australia, we have to justify our position most often. You don't get people discussing the impact of the beef industry on the environment when they have probably decimated the natural ecosystems on that farm. Fishing will impact on the biodiversity but we have always had very good fisheries management practices in the industry." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Introduction of Marine Parks has had a negative impact...** Some consider the introduction of Marine Parks to be imprudent and feel the blanket bans and restrictions on commercial fishing in these areas make it impossible to run businesses (particularly because of increased business costs of having to fish further afield and having to learn new areas).

"Marine Parks are a blunt tool that are not needed." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"They can be spending double on fuel to get a catch and then learning how to fish a new area - these things add significantly to the costs for our guys." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- Need for information sharing and collaboration between industry, special interest groups and the Government...

- **Current perception that consultation is either non-existent or not meaningful...** Most feel they do not have an adequate opportunity to provide their feedback to decision makers and when

they are consulted, it is generally after key decisions have already been made and therefore that their input has minimal (if any) real influence on decision making.

"I wasn't here personally, but I heard the consultation with the Federal Government was much better. The guys had some input and they could see how some of the maps changed to take their needs into account. Nothing like that happened with this Marine Park." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"It's good they're conducting this review and indicate they are going to be basing decisions on science. In the past, the Government didn't take things on board and gave no reasons." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Collaboration is the main goal for industry bodies...** There is a strong desire for collaboration and information sharing between all parties that have an interest in the Marine Estate.

"If you work together, you'll get a better result. There will be compromises along the way but the ultimate result will be better." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Communication and information sharing is critical...** In engendering trust and building understanding on how decisions are being made.

"They need to deliver consistency in regulation and give information to us and the general public to avoid the confusion that comes with a lack of information." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Other Industry Bodies

- Industries such as tourism and aquaculture were represented in this Marine Estate interest/user group.
- The Lord Howe Island Tourism Association indicates they are broadly satisfied with the management of the Marine Park...

- **Preservation of the pristine local environment considered a shared priority...** Island residents and tourism businesses are passionate about maintaining the natural beauty and biodiversity of the island. The increases in numbers of sanctuary zones in recent years are welcomed.

- **Consultation was productive...** The community felt part of the process and changes were negotiated as a result.

"The local fishermen negotiated well and people worked together. Bans on fishing were a point of contention but that's quietened down so I think people have accepted it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Critical that the Marine Park manager has a local presence...** It is considered critical that Marine Park management continue to be integrated with the local community so that they understand the community and can be accessible when members of the island's community want to share concerns or ask questions.

Indigenous Community

- Five in-depth interviews were conducted with Aboriginal community members and advocacy groups were conducted across Greater Sydney, North Coast and South East LLS regions in NSW
- Indigenous Marine Estate interest/user groups and their community members engage with Marine Estate in a variety of ways and interactions are multiple...
 - **Interrelated interactions...** Experiences are often comprised of multiple activities rather than just one. For example, family gatherings would often include catching a feed, whilst using the opportunity to engage young ones in cultural practices.
 - **Most frequent interactions relate to gathering food...** Fishing, gathering traditional foods, i.e. pipi gathering in the North Coast and abalone and lobster catching in the South East.
 - **Fostering community links also considered an important role for the Marine Estate...** Camping, walking and family and community gatherings (gatherings for occasions/celebrations such as NAIDOC) – Participation frequency for these activities varied dependent on the type of activity, for example, NAIDOC is an annual event, Native Title Council meetings can meet as frequently as monthly or 3 times over 2 months, family gatherings are as frequent as birthdays and reunions arise.
 - **Formal and informal interactions...** For these Marine Estate interest/user groups, interaction with the Marine Estate is both formal and informal. Participants engage with the Marine Estate as part of their own personal lives, and through their current or past roles as CEO, committee member or community engagement role. The North Coast Elder for example, does not engage in a formal capacity as such, and has significantly less interaction with, and knowledge of the Marine Estate than the other participants.
- Interaction with the Marine Estate can and does afford a range of benefits for Indigenous Australians...
 - **Cultural fishing offers a number of benefits...** Fishing is perceived to offer several cultural benefits including revitalisation of the culture and greater understanding of marine life, and physical and mental health benefits.
 - **Employment opportunities...** If decision makers are proactive in involving Indigenous people in the management of the Marine Estate (if they engage in a culturally appropriate fashion), these are envisaged to have a number of resultant employment opportunities, which could have positive knock on effects...

"The employment of Aboriginal people should be considered because they carry a specific understanding of marine life and species. Also, it brings the benefit of self-esteem and a better family life." (Marine Estate interest/user group)
- There is a strong understanding among these Marine Estate interest/user groups of the Marine Estate and Marine Parks as a means to protect and conserve marine ecosystems in NSW, with Marine Parks having stronger protection mechanisms and controls in place...

- **Mixed feelings...** These protection mechanisms are seen positively as a means to conserve and protect, yet the limitations on access to the Marine Estate as a result of government control is an immediate point of contention.

"I've got mixed feelings about Marine Parks because I'm very much for it... they will revive what's left of the environment. So in an environmental sense, I'm pretty much for it. But it denies us access to our culture, our very being....I'm a saltwater man and it (Marine Park) doesn't suit out culture, which is pretty bloody sad." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"To me, when I think about the word 'estate', and think 'Government' and what was ours is now the governments....'Lock Out'. It's all the things you could do but can't do anymore due to management." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- Fundamental issue among some Marine Estate interest/user groups around how Aboriginal people are perceived in terms of decision making and the meaning of 'sustainability'...

- **Considered to be 'additional'...** Some perception that there are flaws in how Government can perceive Indigenous communities as additional Marine Estate interest/user groups (similarly to Marine Estate interest/user group organisations such as Fisheries) rather than members of the broader community. This can lead to the perception that special interest groups are given the same amount of consideration in decision making as Aboriginal communities but the general public has the most weight.

"There should be a priority of Aboriginal people above Marine Estate interest/user groups such as fisheries... and it's not enough to put one person in to represent a whole community, it's not possible." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Specific marine knowledge...** As the Aboriginal community has a specific perception of the connection between land, water and culture, as well as a specific marine knowledge that pre-dates Western colonisation, they may have a different definition of 'sustainable'.

"We have a situation in contemporary management that only looks at pieces of the environment, not the whole thing." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"A conversation should take place about the definition." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- Call for greater Indigenous representation in Marine Estate decision making...

- **Recognition of Indigenous links...** A perception that Aboriginal people's connection to the land (over many thousands of years) should be recognised in decision making but currently is not.

"It's a complex issue, Aboriginal culture and heritage should have ownership and should be part of managing the Marine Estate." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"There was a move recently to include Aboriginal decision making on part of an advisory committee, but it didn't happen." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- See Appendix 1 for more detailed exploration

Conservation / Science and Education

- Members of the marine science community as well as some state wide and locally focussed conservation groups, as well as educators formed this Marine Estate interest/user group.
- Concern about the perceived lack of consideration of scientific evidence...

- **Some perception that political interests can usurp the scientific evidence...** For some there is a perception that scientific evidence is not referred to and used consistently. While political interests and perceptions of the community should be considered, there is a concern among these Marine Estate interest/user groups that it is at the expense of what the scientific evidence says.

"It can be really frustrating when the evidence that we collect can be disregarded or not interpreted in its entirety, and therefore incorrectly, to suit a political or social agenda." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Examination of all interests and information should be the standard...** For this Marine Estate interest/user group, there is a concession that political, economic and social issues should all be considered alongside the scientific evidence, as the Marine Estate belongs to the population of NSW.

"The community's interests need to be considered and ultimately, the job of the scientist is to understand the priorities of the owners of the Marine Estate, the population, and work out the best way to enact their plans to minimise the impact." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- Scientists and conservation group representatives discuss the need to set a number of guidelines in place so that issues are considered consistently...
 - **Consistent management of the Marine Estate is key...** These marine estate interest/user group members feel that of the relevant information needs to be considered consistently so that decision making is logical and consistent across the Marine Estate
 - **Need to know how to proceed when there is a lack of scientific information available...** Some scientists express concern around how situations where there is a lack of scientific information available are handled in the management of the Marine Estate.

"It's essential we set out some guidelines so that these situations are handled consistently. We need to have an agreement on how to proceed because a lack of information does not mean 'go ahead' and that no detrimental effects will occur." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- Real collaboration and consultation are needed, but the managers of the Marine Estate must follow through with solutions...
 - **Burned in the past...** Some marine estate interest/user group members report they or their organisation has been burned in the past when they have been involved in consultation and negotiation with other marine estate interest/user group members and the results and recommendations based on those consultations were not considered by the Government.

"You sort it out with the other Marine Estate interest/user groups and then the Government doesn't follow through. It feels like a waste." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Agreement with and support of the precautionary principle approach...** All of these marine estate interest/user group members agree that this approach should guide the management of the Marine Estate, along with ecologically sustainable development.
- **Essential to ensure the diverse interests of the NSW population are represented in decision making...** To provide reassurance and to engender faith in the process, it is considered important that those inputting into decision making represent the gamut of points of view and interests held in NSW, and not to skewed towards particular political and economic interests.
- Education is considered critical for the ongoing health of the Marine Estate...
 - **Need help from the community...** It is considered by these marine estate interest/user group members that the broader community recognises the impact they have on the Marine Estate and

that individuals manage their behaviour to ensure its protection. Enforcement or engagement are considered the most effective tools to ensure this happens – with engagement believed to yield the most significant long term benefits to the Marine Estate as a whole.

"It can't just be managed by the Government because the people will always do more damage than they can fix. Our centre lets people have a hands on look at the local marine environment and that helps us to engage kids especially to think about their own impact." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Community needs to buy in...** Education is considered to be intrinsic in ensuring the community generally both know and feel they are responsible for the prudent management of the Marine Estate. Informing them about the impact their actions really have on the Marine Estate is considered the most effective way to encourage members of the community, as well as other Marine Estate interest/user groups, to ensure they minimise their detrimental impact on the Marine Estate.

"I'm not sure what impact we're having but I feel like the kids that come to the centre are engaged and hopefully that will carry through to adulthood so we get a generation of people who feel the Marine Estate is their responsibility." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

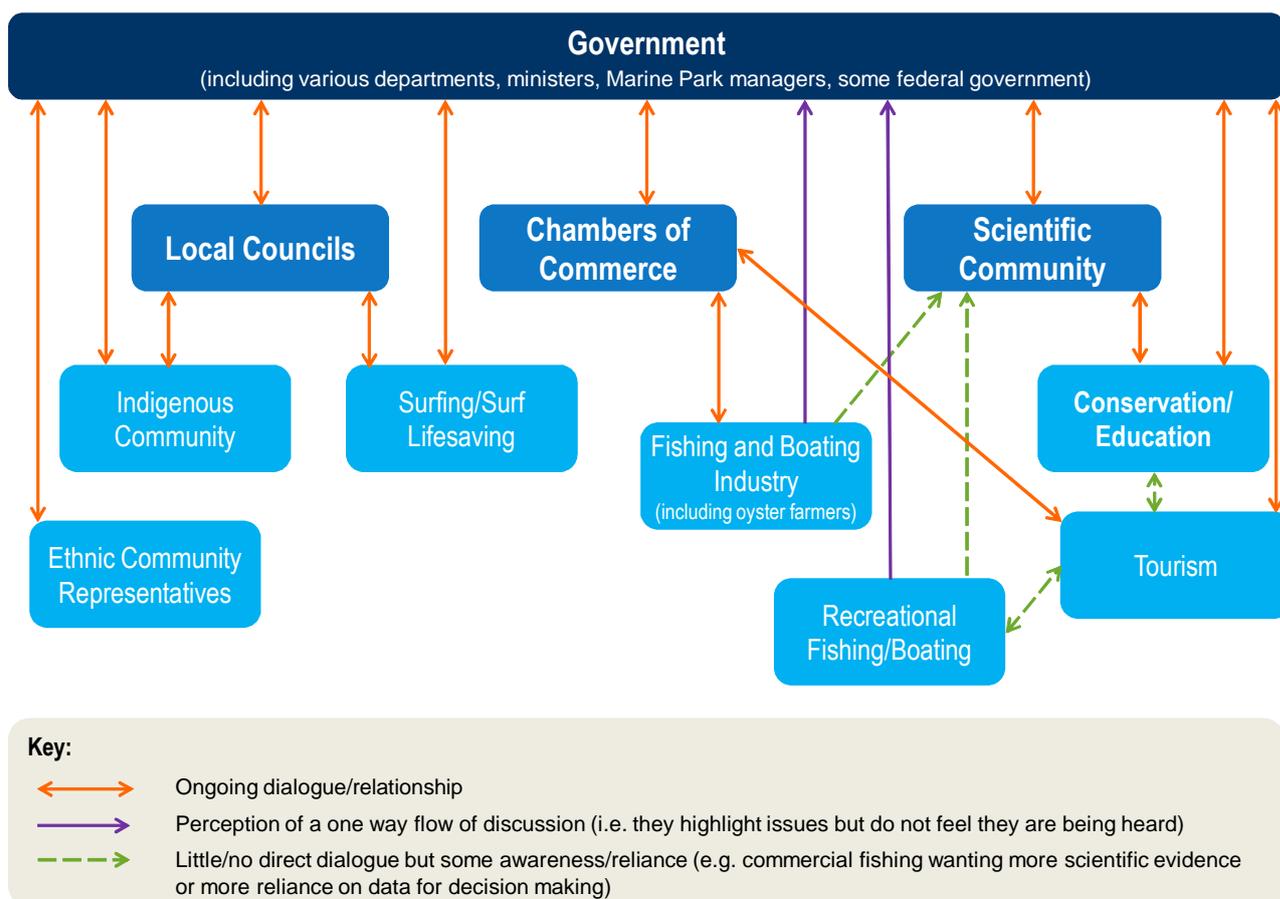
Interactions between Marine Estate Interest/User Groups

- While the various Marine Estate interest/user groups outlined above are aware of each other's presence and have some perception of other Marine Estate interest/user group views and priorities, there appears to be little regular direct interaction between different Marine Estate interest/user groups...
 - **Direct interactions often limited to authorities...** For the most part, marine estate interest/user groups tend to interact most frequently with decision makers, either in Government or local councils

- **Awareness of other marine estate interest/user groups...** Perceptions of these marine estate interest/user groups are not often based on direct interaction with these marine estate interest/user groups (particularly those who are perceived to take an opposing view) and so there is some degree of scepticism or wariness of those representing seemingly opposing interests
- Most Marine Estate interest/user groups indicate either some reliance on other marine estate interest/user groups (e.g. the information or economic benefits they provide), or some frustration with marine estate interest/user groups who appear to hold differing points of view. The main interactions are summarised below...
 - **Peak body groups...** There is some variance within this group in relation to how they interact with other marine estate interest/user groups. Surfing and surf lifesaving representatives are far more likely to have regular dialogue and support from the Government and local councils in particular in relation to implementing programs and airing concerns. Additionally, although they don't have regular interaction, these groups feel their values are more closely aligned with conservation and education marine estate interest/user groups' views. Recreational fishing and boating groups, as well as the businesses (e.g. bait shops) that support them feel that they are not consulted by decision makers and, while they present their points of view to decision makers, particularly in relation to bans and restrictions on their activities, their views are not considered. These marine estate interest/user groups have contact with Government decision makers, however they feel decision makers do not communicate in the same way with them
 - **Local Councils...** Because of their role as decision makers and managers of a number of services provided within their local jurisdiction, local councils are more likely than other marine estate interest/user groups to have interactions with Government as well as different community groups. These interactions are mostly considered fruitful and productive. However these marine estate interest/user groups call for greater interaction with Government as well as the scientific community, which is considered particularly when they are required to explain decision making to members of the community (e.g. recreational anglers who may not be part of a particular club or representative group)
 - **Ethnic Communities Council...** Interactions for this Marine Estate interest/user group are mainly limited to a range of Government departments, particularly in relation to education and engagement with various ethnic groups in NSW on various issues (including and beyond the Marine Estate)
 - **Chambers of Commerce...** The Chamber of Commerce representatives that were covered in this phase of the research indicate they interact most frequently (as expected) with local businesses. However, there is little evidence from these representatives that their interaction with local businesses extends to the fishing and boating industry and so, while there is awareness of the grievances of these groups, Chambers of Commerce representatives are more likely to discuss the long term benefits of protecting the Marine Estate from potential overfishing practices and the positive expected effect on local tourism. There is little evidence from the commercial fishing and boating industry that the Chamber of Commerce plays a strong role for them
 - **Fishing and boating industry (including oyster farmers)...** These marine estate interest/user groups are most likely to report they interact directly with Government and have a number of contacts with whom they can air concerns and grievances. Representatives of these industries that operate at a higher level, that is, having a role in representing the industry as a whole rather than local interest groups are more likely to have regular interaction with other marine estate interest/user groups (e.g. science community, conservationist groups and the Government) while others are frustrated, as they feel they communicate with Government bodies about their concerns

but do not feel they receive regular communication back. There is awareness among these marine estate interest/user groups of other groups, such as conservationists they suppose have opposing points of view but little, if any, direct contact

- **Tourism...** The tourism representative included in this research most frequently interacts with Government in developing strategies to drive tourism in their area. There is also contact between this tourism representatives and local fishing groups as part of a process of consultation in developing guidelines and strategies to balance various Marine Estate interest/user group interests. However, in conversations with recreational and commercial fishing marine estate interest/user groups, there is little evidence that these interactions are commonplace throughout the Marine Estate
 - **Indigenous community...** Indigenous community representatives indicate they interact most frequently with local councils and Government in representing their community's concerns and issues and to develop initiatives to engage the Indigenous community in their local area
 - **Conservation and education...** These marine estate interest/user groups report they most frequently interact with Government and the science community to represent their perspective and lobby for action where they see an issue or a set of conditions that threaten the local fauna and/or flora. There is little direct contact with those they consider to hold different viewpoints – commercial and recreational fishing interests for example are presumed to have very little in common with conservation and education groups and some belief that these opposing points of view could never achieve a consensus or a compromise
 - **Science...** The scientific community engages most frequently with Government, or other agencies that commission them to undertake research. Additionally, the scientific community also interacts with engaged members of the public (who may or may not be involved in another Marine Estate interest/user group group) via a range of seminars, published materials and talks/presentations
- The following diagram summarises how different Marine Estate interest/user groups interact with each other...



- While interactions between Marine Estate interest/user groups do not appear to be regular or meaningful, there is a desire for many Marine Estate interest/user groups for greater, more productive interaction with other marine estate interest/user groups, particularly those who they consider to have the most diametrically opposed points of view...
 - **Science should be at the centre of interactions and decision making...** This is a commonly held belief among marine estate interest/user groups, who believe the scientific evidence should be considered before other interests such as political concerns. However, the science community can feel sceptical that scientific information may not be considered by various marine estate interest/user groups consistently
 - **Greater dialogue can only benefit...** While there is not a great deal of interaction between various Marine Estate interest/user groups, particularly those that are perceived to represent seemingly opposing interests (e.g. conservation and development), the majority of marine estate interest/user groups indicate a willingness to engage with other marine estate interest/user groups which they believe would enhance mutual understanding and potentially more beneficial solutions
 - **However interaction only considered useful if actioned...** In order for greater interaction to be considered effective, it is considered essential by these Marine Estate interest/user groups that decision makers consistently and demonstrably take these interactions and their results into account when developing policy and regulations

8. Perceptions of the Marine Estate and Changes over Time

Members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups were asked their spontaneous responses and understanding of the term the 'Marine Estate' and then were shown a map showing the Marine Estate, and provided with a written definition (See Appendix 2 of this report for the map shown in the sessions)...

"The NSW Marine Estate includes the ocean, estuaries, coastal wetlands (saltmarsh, mangroves, seagrass), coastline including beaches, dunes and headlands, coastal lakes and lagoons connected to the ocean and islands including Lord Howe Island.

It extends seaward out to 3 nautical miles from the coast and offshore islands and from the Queensland border to the Victorian border."

The Term 'Marine Estate' is Not Widely Used or Understood

- While many Marine Estate interest/user groups have heard and are familiar with the term 'Marine Estate', there is little understanding of the term among the broader community, most of whom had never heard the term.

"Marine Estate? I've never heard of it. I've lived here all of my life, 21 years, so yeah I do (think it is something I should have heard of)." (Community, Sydney)

"I've never thought about it like that before. We would break it up into bio-zones based on the climate." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- Before hearing the definition of the term, 'Marine Estate' was received ambivalently by some community member groups and disliked by others...

- **Presumed to refer to development...** For the majority of community members across the five LLS regions covered in this stage, the use of the word 'estate' immediately leads them to think of residential developments (where they most commonly encounter the term) rather than the natural environment. For some, particularly those who are concerned that coastal areas are being over developed, this leads to a negative reaction to the term at the outset.

- **Appears to be elitist...** Some members of the community, particularly those in Newcastle and Coffs Harbour, spontaneously assumed the term was elitist or exclusive, and represented coastal areas that were not going to be accessible to the general population. This results in some negative reactions to the term and a perception that it goes against the reasons they love the coastal environment and their local area – that everyone can access the coast and enjoy it without significant cost or prejudice.

"It should be for everyone." (Community, Newcastle)

- **Confused with marinas...** Some community members assumed the term 'Marine Estate' related to boats and where they are moored, and therefore, not immediately relevant to those who do not keep a boat in the water (in Greater Sydney in particular).

- While Marine Estate interest/user groups, particularly those with recent dealings with Government, there is general awareness of the term 'Marine Estate'...

- **Most are aware of how the Marine Estate is defined...** They feel clear on what the term is referring to and understand the elements of the environment that are included in the Marine Estate.

- **However, not the term of choice for many...** Although many Marine Estate interest/user groups understand the definition, they do not always use the expression in their own roles, instead preferring to use terms such as 'the coastal area', 'the marine environment' or 'the coastline'.
- **Presumption that the community would misinterpret the term...** Most (correctly) assume that members of the community would not understand the term without having it explained to them.

"I don't think it would be something the man in the street would have heard." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Our members would call it the coastline." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Perceptions of the Marine Estate Definition

- Viewing the Marine Estate as one area intrinsically makes sense to the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups...

- **Flow on effects of incidents in one area having an effect on others...** For community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups alike, there is a general recognition that it is prudent to view the Marine Estate as one area. This is mainly because most believe that parts of the Marine Estate cannot be viewed in isolation because the actions in one area can so often affect adjoining areas.

"We know if something happens further up the river, it can mean there is an effect on the coastal area as the water hits the sea." (Community, Lismore)

- **Confusion with Marine Parks introduction...** For some Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular who are not supportive of the introduction of Marine Parks within the Marine Estate, there appears to be a disconnect between the view of the Marine Estate as one area, and the heavier restrictions placed on particular sections. For those who are more supportive of the Marine Parks, there is a desire for far more (if not all) of the Marine Estate to be considered in the same way as Marine Parks.

"It doesn't make any sense, fish don't know what these maps look like so they're not going to gravitate towards Marine Parks." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"We'd like to see them continue to fill in the gaps in the Marine Park network across the coast to ensure all of the different types of habitats are protected." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Essential that management is consistent...** In order to ensure that the whole Marine Estate is managed consistently, it is considered important among both Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members that there is one central unit with responsibility for the entire Marine Estate. This is presumed to mean that there will be consistency in how information is considered, the consultation process with Marine Estate interest/user groups and the local community and communication.
- However, the majority focuses on their local area as a priority...

- **In real terms, the areas they interact with constitute the Marine Estate...** For community members in particular, the values, benefits and threats they associate with the Marine Estate are based on their local areas rather than the Marine Estate in its entirety.

"The best thing about living here is the uniqueness of it. We have fresh water areas and salt water areas so we are different from other areas." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

- **Community and Marine Estate interest/user group influence is primarily local...** For the majority of those included in this stage of the research, there is a belief that their opportunities to enact any sort of change or influence or interact with those responsible for the Marine Estate are limited to their local area. Community members in the Central Tablelands LLS region for example, feel that even though they are interested in participating, their views would not be considered as the Marine Estate would not be an area of interest for their MPs. Some Marine Estate interest/user groups who represent members from across the state often interact with local decision makers in areas where an issue has arisen, while only a small number of Marine Estate interest/user groups feel they have influence at the upper levels of management of the Marine Estate.

"It starts with the individual." (Community, Sydney)

- **Importance of local concerns in decision making...** Across community and Marine Estate interest/user groups, it is considered imperative that consultation take place within a local community before any decisions are made about their local area. It can be a real source of frustration and dissatisfaction if a rule, re-zoning or restriction appears to be imposed on the local community without taking their views, priorities and concerns into account.

Perceived Changes Over Time

- The type and nature of interactions with the Marine Estate among both Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members is not believed to have changed significantly over time...
 - **For some, slightly less frequent interaction...** A number of community members report they do not access the Marine Estate as much as in the past, mainly due to lack of time.
- While types of interactions are not perceived to have changed significantly over time, community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups perceive a slight deterioration in the Marine Estate over time...
 - **Perceived increases in litter and pollution...** Both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups report seeing an increase in rubbish in the Marine Estate and increased pollution of the water (especially compared to their own childhoods), in Greater Sydney particularly.
 - **Increasing costs...** In Greater Sydney in particular, community members report an increase in the cost of accessing the Marine Estate, namely parking charges at Sydney beaches and this is having a negative impact on enjoyment of the Marine Estate as well as the frequency at which they visit the beach.
 - **Increased restrictions on access to the Marine Estate...** Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members, particularly those involved in fishing and boating (commercial and recreational) feel that access to the parts of the Marine Estate they used to have is not possible, particularly in (but not restricted to) Marine Park areas.

- **Lower yields...** Recreational anglers in particular feel they are not catching the numbers and types of fish they can catch now as they did in the past.

"We used to go collecting pipis. We'd cook them up or eat them raw, but they're not there like they used to be anymore because the pipi rakers take them all." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- While community members exhibit some awareness of broader environmental trends such as climate change, they are not perceived to currently be having a significant impact on the current health of the Marine Estate...
 - **A future concern...** These broader trends are assumed to be a distant rather than an imminent threat to the health of the Marine Estate.
- For Marine Estate interest/user groups, changes in government can have an impact on their role in decision making and the overall management of the Marine Estate...
 - **Changes in processes...** Marine Estate interest/user groups report a change in government can often mean a new set of processes for consultation and management in relation to the Marine Estate, which can mean that momentum can be lost and scientific evidence can be interpreted differently.
 - **Changes in priorities...** Different political parties are perceived to have different priorities in relation to the management of the Marine Estate and are under different influences in relation to smaller parties (e.g. the Greens) and special interest groups.
 - **New structures to adjust to...** Marine Estate interest/user groups with direct involvement in the management of the Marine Estate report that the period of adjustment following the implementation of a new set of processes at state and federal level can halt momentum and progress.

"It can be frustrating because as soon as a new government comes in, they have to spend time making their mark and either throw out what has been done in the past, or stop things progressing in the short term." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

SECTION SUMMARY

- The term Marine Estate is recognised by many Marine Estate interest/user groups, but has not been heard by the broader community, who frequently misinterpret the term as referring to an exclusive residential estate
- Those Marine Estate interest/user groups who have heard the term are able to articulate its definition clearly
- There is general support among both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups for a holistic approach for managing the Marine Estate rather than having a number of different authorities manage small portions
- However, as most members of the community and some Marine Estate interest/user groups have a largely local focus, it is important to them that the local view is not lost as policies and regulations are being established – productive community and Marine Estate interest/user group consultation is considered vital
- While types of interactions with the Marine Estate are not perceived to have significantly altered over time, the majority of community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups feel that the condition of the Marine Estate has deteriorated slightly over the recent past – increased litter and pollution as well as increasing restrictions on access are perceived to be the main causes

9. Values Associated with the Marine Estate

Community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups were asked to consider the most important values they place in the Marine Estate across three different areas – environmental, economic and social.

To ensure understanding was consistent across all participant types, the following definition of 'value' was provided...

For the purpose of this survey a value is the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something.

The value of the marine estate can include:

- *The intrinsic value that marine biodiversity has to my confidence in a healthy ocean*
- *The opportunity to access and use a local beach when I want to for recreation*
- *The security of knowing that my grandchildren will have the same opportunity for quality fishing experiences in our local fishing port that I had as a child*
- *The impetus that the marine environment provides for people to buy my swimwear/sports goods/fishing gear/tourist products*

While the majority of values are found to be consistent across community and Marine Estate interest/user groups and are discussed here in broad order of importance (based on frequency of mentions and how participants themselves ranked them), the relative importance of the values discussed below can vary between individuals. For the majority, this further supports the view that consultation needs to happen with a range of members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups representing specific interests at a local level so that these differences can be recognised and taken into account.

Environmental Values

For the purposes of this study, the following definition of 'environmental' was provided to all participants (and used throughout discussions)...

The relationship between organisms and their environment. Environmental values are those values brought about by the preservation of natural habitats or wildlife species in the Marine Estate. These values are not necessarily monetary, instead they refer to the values we as citizens of NSW gain from maintaining a healthy marine estate ecology. Environmental values can include things such as improved public health as a result of clean water, improved outcomes for local wildlife including the preservation of endangered species, etc.

The environmental value of the NSW Marine Estate is considered by the vast majority of participants in this phase of the research to be central to all values associated with the Marine Estate, and other values are associated with the Marine Estate because the most important environmental values...

"If the environmental value is not maintained, it will mean that all of the values and benefits to the community will be lost as well." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

The most important environmental values associated with the Marine Estate include...

Ongoing Health of the Marine Estate

- The ongoing health of the Marine Estate is considered most valuable to all participants in this stage of the research...

- **A clean environment...** A Marine Estate that is pristine and pure, and feels minimal effects from human activity (e.g. sewage, run off).

"Its value is in and of itself, as a part of the world that we all need to survive - if we kill it, we will kill off the human race." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Biodiversity...** Australian waters are perceived to have the greatest biodiversity on the planet and there is a strong perception from scientists and conservation groups in particular that this biodiversity should be maintained and protected. Additionally, biodiversity is considered one of the most valuable elements in coping with the effects of climate change. Community members also highlight their excitement at having access to a range of marine animals (to look at and catch).

"I personally value a healthy, natural and diverse marine system as I think it's a very unique point of difference for Australia." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"You won't find many people in Coffs Harbour who don't support conservation... we're mad snorkelers and love seeing the different fish." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

"We're unique because we're a meeting of two coastal tides so that there is

- **An abundant Marine Estate...** Having enough marine life to sustain a diverse commercial fishing and seafood industry as well as a range of recreational pursuits (especially among industry representatives and peak body Marine Estate interest/user groups).

Safe Environment

- Community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups alike value the confidence they feel that they will be able to interact with the Marine Estate safely. In this context, the word 'safe' has two meanings among the community, one social and the following environmental value...

- **Restrictions on usage and pollution at high levels...** The importance of being able to access clean water that is not likely to produce any adverse health effects because of chemicals etc. in the water. That is, that the water is safe for them have on their skin and they will not be exposed to harmful materials in the water.

The Uniqueness of the NSW Marine Estate

- Science and conservation Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular (and a number of community members) place value in the uniqueness of the NSW Marine Estate (and therefore should be protected)...

- **The climate means the environment is unique...** Warmer waters attracting tropical species and colder waters in the south attracting temperate species means that the NSW Marine Estate is unlike many other areas in the world.

"NSW is a pretty special place because we have the cold waters in the south and the warm waters in the north and there is a mixed area where those two waters meet which moves up and down the coast depending on the time of year." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Because of the unique climate here, we get a lot of humpback whales that like to feed here so it's a unique place biologically speaking but also it has a great follow on effect for things like tourism in the area." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Economic Values

For the purposes of this study, the following definition of 'economic' was provided to all participants (and used throughout discussions)...

Relating to the production, distribution, and use of income, wealth, and commodities. In relation to the marine estate, this means the values that are derived from use of the marine estate for commercial purposes, e.g. income, employment. These values can include things such as employment from fishing or tourism, the selling of natural resources in the marine estate, etc.

Along with (and in many ways linked to) the important environmental values associated with the Marine Estate, a number of economic values were uncovered and include...

Support for the Local and State Economies

- The Marine Estate is considered particularly valuable from an economic perspective because of the support its existence offers the community...
 - **Marine Estate provides a strong attraction to tourists...** The health and beauty of the Marine Estate is considered of critical value to local communities that rely on income from tourism.

"Many businesses exist because of the coastline." (Community, Batemans Bay)

- **Broader, indirect economic value for other communities and businesses...** Alongside those for whom this value offers the benefit of directly deriving an income from the Marine Estate, the broader community and Marine Estate interest/user groups also derive value as a result of the prosperity of these businesses, as these benefits are perceived to add value to the whole state economy.

Source of Food and Industry

- The Marine Estate is considered valuable as the main source of fishing and food from waterways in NSW (along with inland river systems that do not form part of the Marine Estate)...

- **Commercial and recreational fishing exist because of the Marine Estate...** Therefore its value to these groups is critical, as is being able to have adequate access to the Marine Estate to support these activities.

"We're a fishing town so it's the reason the town exists at all." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **The seafood industry also considers the Marine Estate as particularly valuable and vital...** While there are imports that can help support the industry, the seafood industry places vital importance on the Marine Estate as a part of the NSW food industry, particularly in relation to the diversity of fish the Marine Estate offers.

"We don't produce huge numbers of fish compared to other countries but what we do well is the number of different species. There are up to 600 species of fish that are caught and sold in NSW. I've seen people come from Asia to marvel at all of the different kinds of fish we have here." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **For the Indigenous community and newer Australians, the Marine Estate can hold important value as a direct food source...** A number of Marine Estate interest/user groups report an increase in newer immigrants to NSW (and for whom money is tight and they cannot afford to rely on supermarkets) turning to recreational fishing to help feed their families, and so for these members of the community, the Marine Estate is highly valuable as a food source.

"I've seen more people relying on their catch to feed their families and that can lead to some irresponsible practices like keeping small fish because they can't afford not to." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"The land is my cupboard." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Facilities in Place to Encourage or Enable Interaction

- Members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups perceive the facilities provided by Government or private enterprise that enables them to interact with the Marine Estate enhances its overall economic value to NSW...
 - **Infrastructure...** Marinas, roads, driveways, boat ramps, amenities, seating and other similar infrastructure is considered to add economic value to the Marine Estate by supporting access for the local population and visitors (for commercial and recreational use).
 - **Services...** Services such as surf lifesaving, fisheries licensing, and regulations are perceived to help maintain the overall economic and environmental values of the Marine Estate among members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups. However, this perceived value is tempered by those who believe that excessive regulation can lower the value of the Marine Estate (explored in more detail in Section 11 of this report).

Value as a Gateway to Australia

- Another economic value that is associated with the Marine Estate, particularly by Marine Estate interest/user groups, but also the community, relates to its role as a way for goods and people to enter and leave the state...

- **Movement of people...** Relating to tourism, the Marine Estate in Greater Sydney particularly and its beauty, is considered to be of value as a way of creating the best possible first impression of the state among visitors who arrive by ship or boat (most expect a range of economic and social benefits from this introduction).
- **Movement of goods...** Ports in Greater Sydney, Hunter and South East LLS regions are considered critical for movements of imports and exports into and out of the state.

"A huge amount of trade goes through the port and we have the steel works and the coal terminals right by each other. We are one of the only ports that has full loads coming into and out of the harbour so it's incredibly valuable from an import and export perspective." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Social Values

For the purposes of this study, the following definition of 'social' was provided to all participants (and used throughout discussions)...

Of or relating to the life and relation of human beings in a community. Social values refer to the social or cultural activities made possible by the marine estate. For example, recreational fishing, surfing, jet skiing, general beach-going activities, etc.

The vast majority consider the social value derived from the Marine Estate as of immeasurable worth to the population of NSW. While the social values of the Marine Estate are mainly drawn because of the environmental and economic values (i.e. it is believed the social value cannot be derived unless the Marine Estate continues to be healthy and accessible), they are often mentioned as the most important values among the community in particular.

The most important social values among Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members alike relate to...

Intrinsic Part of NSW (and Australian) Heritage and Culture

- The Marine Estate holds a great deal of value across all participant types for its importance as a central part of Australia's heritage and culture...
 - **A question of state/national identity...** Interaction and connection with the Marine Estate (most commonly referred to as 'the coast' by community members and a large number of Marine Estate interest/user groups) is frequently expressed as a vital part of Australia's identity.

"We're blessed to have a great coastline and it has a huge amount of recreational value." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"We're a coastal people... if we don't live on the coast, most of us holiday there." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"It's a constant way of life for us." (Community, Eden)

- **Sentimental attachment...** When asked to express the value they place in the Marine Estate, the majority of respondents discuss the memories they have of interacting with the Marine Estate from childhood, and the memories they are creating (or have created) with their own families as they move through their lives.

"I know how the old fishers feel about it, but I want my great grand kids to come here, I want them to have something to see." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

"I think we're spoiled for choice with rivers, camping and beach areas and we have such a unique environment here. You can go out for the day and have a full day of activities and only have to spend \$6 on some hot chips. You can't get that in many places so we're really fortunate." (Community, Eden)

- **The Marine Estate considered a 'rite of passage'...** For many Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members, different interactions with the Marine Estate, occur throughout childhood and many remember engaging in different interactions with the Marine Estate as they grew up that feel like different milestones (e.g. first swim, first fishing, first board, first time at the beach without parents, etc.). These milestones are also considered an important way of being educated on how to be safe while using the Marine Estate.

"I remember seeing things on the news about how they were bringing inland kids out to the coast so they could see the beach and go swimming. I remember thinking I felt sorry for them not being able to be close to the sea." (Community, Lismore)

"It's (safety) ingrained in us." (Community, Sydney)

- For the Indigenous community, the Marine Estate is considered a key source through which social structures and practices are maintained and reinforced. These values are intrinsic to Aboriginal culture and ways of being. There is no separation between themselves and their environment. Whereas non-Indigenous people view the environment and the ecosystems within it from an outside position (flora and fauna is its own entity), Aboriginal people see themselves as part of the ecosystem... Being unable to interact within their own ecosystem results in an imbalance, and this has significant impacts on their culture, identity and sense of self...

- **Caring and sharing...** Food and resources are shared amongst the community.
- **Source of Dreaming stories...** Sacred and culturally significant sites bring community members together and connected to their culture via their own culturally historical narrative.
- **Connection to country...** Keeps communities connected to their land and the methods through which their natural resources are managed.

"We see the environment differently to non-Aboriginal people – we are actually part of the ecosystem." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Social gathering place...** These communities and families meet together, source tucker, celebrate special occasions. This not only means being amongst themselves, but also being close to their Ancestors who inhabited those places before them.

"Just utilising the rivers and creeks and things like that for fishing and gathering. We have 'back to Country' where we bring the family back and have a swim and a greet and a yarn and things like that." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

An Escape (Opportunity to Switch Off)

- Another important social value attributed to the Marine Estate relates to the way in which it can facilitate an escape of sorts from day to day life...
 - **A way to get away from it all...** The vast majority of community members across LLS regions describe the value of the Marine Estate as a place they can go to truly get away from it all, and this is equally true for those who live close to the coastline or riverbanks and those that live further afield (although frequency of interaction is lower among the latter group).

"It's very therapeutic being by the sea. You really feel the difference and it costs much less than seeing a therapist!" (Community, Lismore)

- **An opportunity to de-stress...** Many community members in particular mention the calming value of interacting with the Marine Estate and the effect it has on their mood which, considering all of the pressures and stresses faced and the current pace of life, is felt to be of critical value to the community, but also to recreational groups.

"The Marine Estate is critical for these fishermen to sustain the lifestyle that makes them happy and relaxed; it has value as a location to participate in sports, so it's critical for their health and way of life." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

A Resource that Enables Connection

- The opportunities afforded members of the community by the Marine Estate facilitating or providing a venue for them to interact with others...
 - **Enabling time with loved ones...** The Marine Estate is consistently mentioned as a location where families and friends spend time together and catch up with each other's lives as they participate in activities there.

"It's often how I interact with my family, especially my kids. We spend a lot of time outside at the beach together." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

- **A social venue...** Some report that, because (they suppose) people are more relaxed when spending leisure time within the Marine Estate, there is a lot more interaction with strangers. This is considered valuable as a way of bringing the community closer together in an informal way.

"People are just in a better mood at the beach. I take my dog and you chat to other people with dogs and say hello to people. Everyone's a lot happier." (Community, Lismore)

- **Becoming part of a community...** Recreational clubs (Marine Estate interest/user groups) in particular believe the Marine Estate should be highly valued as a means of bringing likeminded people together via a shared interest.

"Mateship is a huge part of the sport and I have made lifelong friends from it, that I would never have met otherwise." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Choice and Versatility

- Most Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members recognise and value the choice they enjoy in terms of ways they can interact with the Marine Estate...
 - **Range of different activities possible...** Another key social value of the Marine Estate is its potential to mean what individuals would like it to mean (e.g. it could have value as an extreme or high impact sports location, somewhere to sit and contemplate, somewhere to get fit, somewhere to enjoy a meal, to find food, somewhere to take pets, etc.).
 - **Multiple uses...** The Marine Estate can mean multiple things to the same person, thereby increasing its overall value to the community.

Safe Environment

- As we have seen, community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups value the safety of the Marine Estate as an environment that is not highly polluted. In addition to this, community members in particular value the safety of their interactions with the Marine Estate...
 - **Lack of threat (beyond animals) because areas are protected...** Restrictions set in place to ensure that those community members accessing the Marine Estate do so in areas deemed by experts (such as Surf Life Saving) to be safe (e.g. being able to go to the beach, swim between the flags and feel confident that lifesavers will protect them and that they are in the safest part of the beach in relation to rips, etc.).

"It's important that you can go swimming in the water and know it's not going to hurt you." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

Access to Coastal Areas

- A significant amount of value (among both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups) is placed in being able to have access to clean, unspoiled coastal areas...
 - **Few restrictions to visiting coastal areas...** Unlike other parts of the world, NSW beaches and waterways are generally accessible to all (i.e. few/no private or exclusive beaches).
 - **However restrictions can undermine this value...** However, as discussed previously, restrictions on certain interactions (particularly in relation to fishing and boating among Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members with these interests) have worked to decrease this particular value for those who are interested in these pursuits (particularly in Marine Park areas).

Medicinal Value

- For community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups alike, there is value attributed to the Marine Estate as a therapeutic source...

- **The medicinal value of organisms...** Some discussion among Marine Estate interest/user groups of the current (and potential value) of the Marine Estate and various organisms that live in it as potential medical treatments.

"There has been a lot of research done into looking at the medicinal value of certain organisms and there have been all sorts of drugs that have been derived from marine life. So for that to continue, we need to maintain the biodiversity." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **An important source of oxygen...** The Marine Estate is considered critical by science and conservation Marine Estate interest/user groups in providing oxygen to NSW (and beyond).

Therapeutic Value

- For a significant number of community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups covered in this stage of the research, the Marine Estate is perceived to have enormous value for its healing properties...
 - **Interaction with the natural environment can be therapeutic...** Community members in particular talk about the benefits this natural environment provides them, including the opportunity to be in the sun and the benefits of salt water for the skin.

A Source of Education and Scientific Discovery

- Science and conservation Marine Estate interest/user groups regularly discuss the important value of the Marine Estate as a tool for understanding more about the world around us...
 - **The value of scientific discovery...** The value of being able to use science to understand the Marine Estate to help drive the goals of the whole community.

"From a scientist's point of view, we have to start with value and the value society has from the Marine Estate. Our job should be to understand that and then our role comes in, not to inject our personal opinion but to think about the values of society as a whole and to use the science to meet the criteria that the people have laid out." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Educational opportunities...** The Marine Estate and the organisms within it are considered an important education tool and an important way for the NSW population to understand how the planet works.

"The community has an opportunity to touch and interact with the environment at our centre." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **A tool for education on Indigenous culture...** The Marine Estate is considered valuable by the Indigenous population for teaching the ways of the culture, and the science of the environment such as reading tides, seasonal fishing and identifying natural traps.

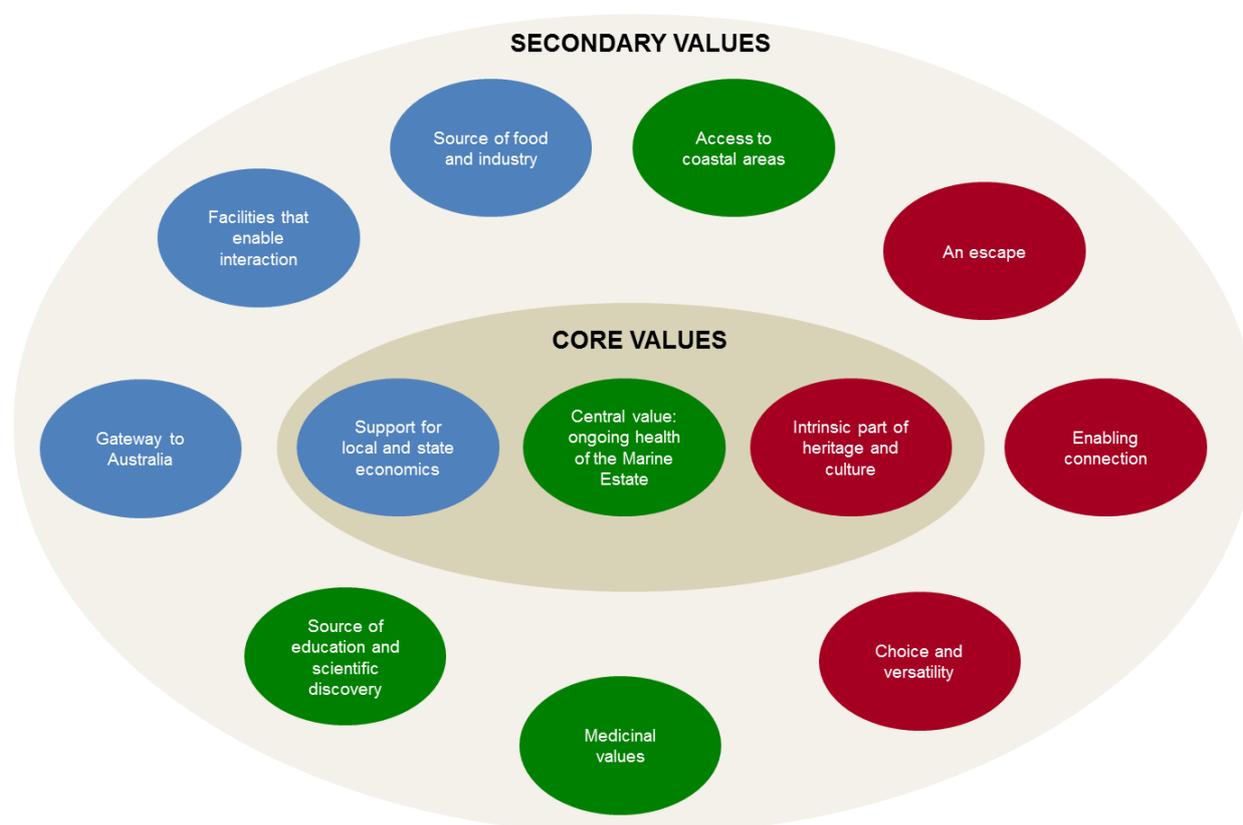
The Interrelatedness of Values Associated with the Marine Estate

When considering the values attributed to the Marine Estate by community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups, there is a great deal of interrelatedness between the emergent environmental, economic and social values nominated in this stage of the research.

However, one value is considered to be the core value of the Marine Estate, without which, the other values could disappear or decline significantly, either in the short or long term. This is the **ongoing health of the Marine Estate** – the cleanliness, abundance and biodiversity that is currently associated with the Marine Estate throughout NSW. It is believed that, if the Marine Estate was to become less healthy, then its value as a part of our cultural identity and as a source of income for the state to name two, would be seriously compromised and could disappear entirely over time.

Most Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members feel cognisant of the need to maintain the health of the Marine Estate as a priority and indicate a willingness to have their own impacts on the Marine Estate managed and restricted if scientific evidence suggests those restrictions would be likely to help eliminate threats and ensure their interactions would be possible in the long term (hence, the calls for greater information sharing and collaboration with other groups and decision makers).

The chart overleaf provides a more visual representation of the most important values associated with the Marine Estate from this stage of the research. Subsequent quantitative stages will provide a more definitive ranking.



SECTION SUMMARY

- A range of environmental, economic and social values are attributed to the Marine Estate by community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups and there is little/no variance across LLS regions
- At the centre, the ongoing health of the Marine Estate is considered the most important value, as the majority of the other values derived from the Marine Estate are depended on this ongoing health
- The value of the Marine Estate to the NSW and Australian culture and identity as well as the economic support the Marine Estate provides for communities are also considered critical values that can be attributed to a diverse and healthy Marine Estate

10. Benefits Derived From the Marine Estate

Following the exploration of the values of the Marine Estate among the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups, they were asked to consider the most important benefits they derive from the Marine Estate.

To ensure understanding was consistent across all participant types, the following definition of 'benefit' was provided...

A benefit is anything that is for the good of a person, community or thing.

The benefit of the marine estate could be:

- *Peace of mind knowing it is there*
- *Swimming at the beach on a hot summer day*
- *Exercising while enjoying the coastal views*
- *Family time at the beach or while boating in an estuary*
- *Undertaking a hobby (e.g. fishing, kayaking, surfing, bird watching, etc.)*
- *Deriving income (e.g. whale watching business, charter fishing, commercial fishing, etc.)*

The main benefits derived from the Marine Estate are broadly consistent across community and Marine Estate interest/user groups (although, as with values, their relative importance may differ slightly between different groups and locations). The main benefits derived from the Marine Estate are discussed below, grouped by whether the benefits are environmental, economic or social (the same definitions of these terms that were used in the discussion on values were repeated here).

Environmental Benefits

A number of environmental benefits are derived by Marine Estate interest/user groups and members of the community in relation to the Marine Estate. Central to these benefits are those associated with biodiversity and preserving the health of the Marine Estate.

The most important environmental benefits include...

That the Marine Estate will Survive Long into the Future (via careful management)

- Ensuring that their children will have access to the (broadly) same Marine Estate that they have grown up with...
 - **A sense of tradition, keeping some things sacred...** Many community members discuss the concerns they feel that the Australian way of life is changing a great deal and there is a desire to preserve and maintain the same contact with the parts of the Marine Estate they have always used and allowing future generations to have the same access.

"I want my kids to have a better appreciation of the environment." (Community, Eden)

"I still want to see all of the animals I saw as a child." (Community, Lismore)

- **Consistent monitoring and prioritisation of the Marine Estates Health...** As discussed in the previous section, the value of a healthy Marine Estate is at the core and can determine the relative worth of all other values. The benefit, especially among science and conservation Marine Estate interest/user groups but also the community more broadly, of consistent monitoring and prioritisation of the Marine Estate means that the community will benefit from a Marine Estate that survives long into the future (and has the best chance at helping to minimise the impact of global warming).

"Benefits exist on all three levels but it comes back to the ecological side - having a marine estate that is healthy enough to provide the 'services' that may not be immediately recognised but are critical in ensuring society can use the marine estate in the way they would like." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Celebration of Biodiversity

- One of the most important environmental benefits associated with the continuing health of the Marine Estate relates to biodiversity...
 - **Variety of organisms to observe...** The Marine Estate affords community members, local businesses and visitors the opportunity to view and be excited by the sheer number of different organisms that exist within the Marine Estate. This is why, for the vast majority of Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members, it is considered important to monitor the Marine Estate to ensure that this biodiversity is protected (while considering other interests).

"It's a source of local and national pride, that unique biological diversity." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"We need to have sanctuary areas as they have been proven to offer the benefit of generate and protect the local biodiversity and the right level of protection for inhabitants." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Variety of organisms to catch and eat...** For recreational and commercial fishing groups, as well as the seafood industry, the range of species available to catch and eat within the NSW Marine Estate can increase not only the value of the industry but also the enjoyment of participants while fishing. There is recognition that this needs to be done sustainably, while protecting nursery areas.

"I love leaving Sydney to fish as there is much more diversity in the types of fish you can catch. It makes it far more interesting." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Economic Benefits

The economic benefits derived from the Marine Estate mainly relate to deriving an income, either directly or indirectly, but also the perceived positive influence of the Marine Estate on the broader state economy. The most dissatisfied professional and recreational groups (mainly related to commercial and recreational fishing, as well as boating) believe these economic benefits are diminishing.

The most important economic benefits associated with the Marine Estate include...

Deriving an income from the Marine Estate

- For the vast majority, particularly those outside the Greater Sydney and Central Tablelands LLS regions, the opportunities the Marine Estate affords individuals and businesses to derive an income via interactions with it provide the most important economic benefit...

- **Direct income...** A range of businesses derive income based on their interactions with the Marine Estate or how they enable the community to interact. Most commonly mentioned examples include commercial fishing businesses, surf schools, boat hire or charter boat businesses, fishing or whale watching tours.

"It's (fishing) been the main industry in this town for years – since the town was established." (Community (Marine Estate interest/user group), Batemans Bay)

"We wouldn't exist without it – as a tourist destination, it's why the tourists come... because we showcase the marine environment." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Indirect income...** The income that is derived indirectly from the Marine Estate is also perceived as an important benefit (particularly those businesses in towns outside of Greater Sydney and the Hunter, to a lesser extent). The most commonly mentioned examples of indirect incomes derived from the Marine Estate include bait and tackle shops, local restaurants and shops, tour operators, accommodation providers, transport providers, port corporations, recreational fishing clubs (membership fees used to maintain clubhouses, facilities, information provision, etc.).

"We rely on tourism here and so it's important that we have a great local environment with lots of fish and nice places to stay and eat so people will want to come to Batemans Bay." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Broader Economic Benefits

- Some recognition of the impact of the Marine Estate on the broader economy among Marine Estate interest/user groups and some community members...

- **The Marine Estate as a trade route...** For the Port Corporation Marine Estate interest/user group in particular, the importance of the Marine Estate as a way of bringing trade to NSW cannot be underestimated.

"If this port ceased to be operational, there would be a huge impact on the NSW economy. A huge amount of trade comes through here, both imports and exports." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Tourism beyond the Marine Estate...** The benefit to the state and national economy of tourists coming from abroad to interact with the Marine Estate as a priority and then also visiting other areas such as cities and inland locations while they are here is also recognised as an economic benefit the Marine Estate provides more broadly.

Social Benefits

The range of benefits derived from the Marine Estate from a social viewpoint are varied but can be grouped under a number of common themes.

The most important social benefits include...

Health

- The health benefits associated most frequently mentioned by both Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members as some of the key drivers to interacting as regularly as possible with the Marine Estate...

- **Physical health benefits...** For many, the Marine Estate is considered to offer a range of health benefits to those members of the community who interact with it. The range of interactions with the Marine Estate means that people of all ages and fitness levels can gain the right physical benefits for their needs – from feeling the benefits of lighter exertions such as exposure to vitamin D by just being in the sun walking along the coastline, to more moderate exercise such as swimming, fishing and snorkelling, to those activities that are considered higher impact, e.g. diving, spear fishing, surfing, etc.

‘It’s a fun way to exercise.’ (Community, Sydney)

“With obesity on the rise, it’s really important that people get outdoors and doing things. It (surfing) teaches kids good habits.” (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Mental health benefits...** The mental health benefits derived from interacting with the Marine Estate are considered equally important to the physical benefits derived by the NSW population. The Marine Estate is believed to be an important place for the whole community to take time out from their day to day lives, to escape and relax. This escape provides mental and emotional health benefits (e.g. mood lift, unwinding and being able to concentrate on themselves and loved ones without many distractions) that are considered vital in the context of modern life in NSW.

“There is also something in the aesthetic quality, just having it there that brings happiness.” (Marine Estate interest/user group)

“You can feel it, when you get to the beach, the stress just melts away.” (Community, Lismore)

“It gives you a feeling like you’re on holiday, even if it’s just for the afternoon.” (Community, Sydney)

“There is a critically important emotional benefit of being able to go to sea and do what they love, which is fish.” (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Social Interaction

- The role the Marine Estate plays as a facilitative environment for social interaction is considered a critical benefit for both individual community members and coastal communities (smaller towns in particular)...
 - **Healthier relationships...** Again relating to the Marine Estate providing an escape of sorts for those who interact with it, this escape can afford the benefit of enhancing relationships and re-connecting with friends and relatives.

*"It's a way for me to spend real time with my kids and create those memories."
(Community, Coffs Harbour)*

- **Feeling part of a community...** The sense of belonging that the Marine Estate can help to provide is also considered an important benefit to the community as a whole, as well as the individuals within it.

"It can bring the community together, we're sharing space." (Community, Sydney)

"(Clubs) Help people to connect. Especially those who are newer to the community, it's a great way to make friends with people with the same interests." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Enjoyment

- In addition to, or as a result of, the mental and physical health benefits derived from the Marine Estate is the sheer fun people enjoy when interacting with the Marine Estate...
 - **Fun associated with favourite interactions...** The Marine Estate affords the important benefit to community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups alike of being able to do what they love.

"I feel when I get in the water... just happy! I love diving and fishing, it's been my favourite way to spend my free time for many years. I don't do it as much as I used to when I was younger but I still love being around it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **A sense of discovery...** Many community members in particular feel some happiness that interaction with the Marine Estate in their local area and further afield offers them the opportunity to make discoveries in a number of ways – the discoveries of new spots (local secrets), being able to see new or different species of plant and animal as they encounter different areas of the Estate as well as being able to discover new people.

"When I take my dog to the beach, you always chat to other people with dogs that you would never do in town. I don't really chat with random people in town but on the beach everyone's in a really good mood!" (Community, Lismore)

"We have lots of hidden gems around here that you don't want to let the tourists know about." (Community, Newcastle)

Peace

- The lack of pace related to the Marine Estate (particularly in the North Coast and South East LLS regions) is considered an important benefit for these locations...
 - **A sense of peace...** As the Marine Estate offers an escape and an opportunity to re-charge, another key benefit associated with a natural, diverse and pristine environment is peace that it offers the individual and community. Local communities in smaller towns in particular are very concerned with ensuring this peaceful feeling continues.

"You can go there and not worry about the kids getting into any trouble and you want it to stay that way." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

Appreciation and Respect

- Through interacting with the Marine Estate itself, and with other community members and groups who are using the same space, some report they have achieved greater understanding...
 - **Greater appreciation for the Marine Estate...** For some community members, their interaction with the Marine Estate over time has benefitted their understanding and appreciation of that environment and has helped them to feel some ownership of the Marine Estate.

"Seeing more litter around makes me think that we all have to look after what we do and everyone will benefit." (Community, Newcastle)

- **Greater respect for other points of view...** Some Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular feel that, based on interactions with the Marine Estate and other community members or Marine Estate interest/user groups, they have a greater understanding of other points of view.

"We need to ask what all sides want and then decide together. We understand that nursery areas protection is critical if we want to keep enjoying fishing so we are on the same page, we just need to collaborate more." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Feeling Connected to the Natural Environment

- Feeling a sense of connectedness with the natural environment is perceived to be a benefit directly related to the health and safety of, and access to, the Marine Estate...
 - **Feeling a part of nature...** Feeling a part of the Marine Estate and nature more generally is considered most often by the community but also by recreational fishers and divers as an important benefit they derive from the Marine Estate.

"It feels good to be part of it, to be a part of nature, away from the noise of the city. You're connecting to something bigger than yourself." (Community, Sydney)

- **Enjoying the beauty of the Marine Estate...** The continuing beauty of the Marine Estate also increases the enjoyment of interacting with it in a professional or personal capacity, thereby maximising the derived benefits.

"I just love to walk along the beach and look at it, nothing else, and that makes me happy." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

Knowledge of the Marine Estate

- Interacting with the Marine Estate over a long period of time is perceived to offer enormous benefits in relation to the collective knowledge about the Marine Estate and how it works...
 - **Scientific research...** Studies over time have offered the benefit of a large bank of information available in relation to the Marine Estate which can inform future direction, however, there is always the need to learn more.

"Surveillance of the environment is critical so we can identify and act against any threats." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Experiences of the community and, particularly, Marine Estate interest/user groups...** Given the numerous and diverse interactions they have with the Marine Estate over time, those who use the Marine Estate can offer another perspective based on their observations over time (e.g. ease of catching a fish, the amount of rubbish surfers see in the water over time, changes divers have noticed below the surface).

"The experiences we have mean we have a huge amount of knowledge - experienced divers are hugely knowledgeable about the marine estate." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Broader vs. Individual Benefits

Across the discussions on all of the benefits derived from the Marine Estate, some broad differences emerge when considering the perspectives of community members compared to Marine Estate interest/user groups.

Along with their response to the definition of Marine Estate and their references to the Marine Estate constituting their own local area (or areas they visit), members of the community are far more likely than Marine Estate interest/user groups to discuss benefits in terms of the benefits they personally derive from the Marine Estate, and so are somewhat more likely than Marine Estate interest/user groups to focus on the social benefits they derive. While most recognise broader economic and environmental benefits to the community, these are generally considered related, but secondary.

Marine Estate interest/user groups on the other hand, which may be expected given their roles in many cases as managers or advocates for a larger group, tend to take a broader view and concentrate more on the environmental and economic benefits of the Marine Estate for larger communities. However, these Marine Estate interest/user groups also place great importance on the social benefits the Marine Estate offers to those they represent.

The benefits discussed in this section are frequently linked back to the core value of a healthy, diverse and abundant Marine Estate. For the vast majority, the benefits they derive would decline or cease if the environmental health of the Marine Estate began to suffer. Therefore the environmental threats are also considered the most important to monitor and manage across Marine Estate interest/user groups and members of the community (discussed in the next section of this report) to ensure the most important benefits continue to be derived.

SECTION SUMMARY

- A range of environmental, economic and social benefits are derived from the Marine Estate by the NSW population
- While the core value of the Marine Estate is considered to be its health (in terms of biodiversity, abundance and cleanliness), the critical perceived benefits of this healthy environment relate to the social enjoyment that comes from interacting with the Marine Estate, particularly in relation to health and social interaction
- Additionally, the direct and indirect economic benefits of the Marine Estate are also considered critically important to the state (and contribute indirectly to the health and happiness of the population)

11. Threats to the Marine Estate

A range of different perceived environmental, economic and social threats to the Marine Estate were identified across community and Marine Estate interest/user groups in this stage of the research.

To ensure understanding was consistent across all participant types, the following definition of 'threat' was provided...

A threat to the marine estate is any activity or process which prevents environmental, social and economic values and benefits that people derive from the estate from being realised. Some threats are likely to vary in complexity and scale across the estate. This can impact on the ability to manage the threat or to adapt to it over time.

A threat to the marine estate could be:

- *Poor water quality entering an estuary affecting a local fishing or swimming spot*
- *Closing areas to particular uses*
- *A new pest species emerging affecting a local fishing, boating or aquaculture industry*

Based on the most important values of the Marine Estate, and the subsequent benefits derived from interacting with it, all participants in this stage of the research discussed what they consider to be the most important elements that could threaten the value and benefits they currently derive from the Marine Estate, both now and into the future. The most important perceived threats are discussed below and (as with benefits and values), are grouped by environmental, economic and social threats (the same definitions of these terms that were used in the discussion on values were repeated here). Additionally, a further set of political threats are identified by the majority of Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members that participated in this phase of the research.

Environmental Threats

A number of environmental threats were highlighted by community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups as the most significant threats to the Marine Estate. As the perceived value of the Marine Estate is largely centred around its environmental health, the environmental threats outlined below are considered particularly critical (and, like the values, economic and social threats often follow on from the environmental threats but are also considered in some cases to exacerbate them).

Before discussing individual threats in detail, many Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members made distinctions between the direct and indirect environmental threats to the health of the Marine Estate. Indirect threats, particularly related to those threats that impact river systems that may not be specifically part of the Marine Estate but could have an impact on it, are considered less visible but equally important to both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups.

There is some concern evident (particularly among Marine Estate interest/user groups) that direct environmental threats are being managed (or 'over managed' in some cases) at the expense of management of some of the indirect threats.

"The whole system is one organism, so if one part is affected, then the rest will suffer, no matter how far downstream it is." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

The most important environmental threats to the ongoing health of the Marine Estate include...

Pollution

- For the majority of Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members, pollution is cited as one of the most important threats overall to the health of the Marine Estate...

- **Land run off...** Many participants in this stage of the research express concern relating to the threat posed by run off from the land directly into the Marine Estate. This run off includes sewage, stormwater (including the related debris), industrial waste, run off of pesticides and other chemicals used in farming and other waste that finds its way into waterways.

"Overdevelopment will just make that worse, we're dumping more and more into the ocean." (Community, Coffs harbour)

"The problems mostly come from the land." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"It's so expensive for farmers to switch to eco-friendly pesticides – there's no incentive for them to do it so why would they?" (Community, Lismore)

- **The issue of litter...** Many community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups who use the Marine Estate regularly, and have done over a large period of time, report an increase in the amount of litter they encounter, both in the water and on land and this is perceived to be a significant pollution issue for the Marine Estate.

"There are still people who see the ocean as a garbage dump and dispose of rubbish in it illegally." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Our surfers are seeing more and more trash in the water when they are surfing, much more than they used to." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Materials dumped into the water directly...** The threat of oil spills and other materials from ships who use the waters in the Marine Estate being dumped are a pollution concern for the community. This is mainly because although there have been few incidences of major spills in NSW waters in the recent past, many remember the oil spill in the Great Barrier Reef in 2010.

"Oil spills are a real threat with shipping." (Community, Sydney)

Habitat Destruction

- Habitat destruction is described by many Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular as one of the most important threats to the health of the Marine Estate in the future...

- **Threats to the ecosystems and biodiversity...** A number of Marine Estate interest/user groups perceive the threats to the biodiversity related to habitat destruction as critical issues that need to be addressed. The impacts of elements such as coastal developments, dredging and trawling are perceived to have significant effects on marine life habitats that, if not checked, could ultimately threaten some species' existence.

"There are local pressures from things like development that are having an impact on habitats and that are a concern." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Threat to fish populations...** Destruction of habitats, particularly nursery grounds are perceived by Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular to have a negative impact on the populations of fish that are available to be caught within the Marine Estate.

"The habitat degradation feels out of control. The expansion of Port Botany wrecked the local habitats as it was much cheaper to get a concrete block to put in the bay rather than put the extension on pylons that would have provided shade and nursery grounds. We spoke to them about it but money will win over a rec fishing club in the end." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Clearing the wetlands, mangroves and seagrasses means nursery grounds are becoming depleted." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"The biodiversity gives a strong indication of the health of the local marine environment. Taking too much of one species out means that all ecosystems are messed with and that can have an impact on the reasons for the Sapphire coast being a nice place to visit." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Human Extraction from the Marine Estate

- The effect of the population taking marine life and other elements from the Marine Estate is frequently considered an important threat to the Marine Estate. This may be (in part) because these extractions are highly visible and can be controversial...

- **Fishing...** While most community members who express a concern around the depletion of fishing populations are mainly referring to the impact of commercial fishing, others include the threat from unmanaged recreational fishing (e.g. the marine science educator in the Eden area discussed illegal abalone harvests by recreational anglers as a growing problem). Many community members report they do not catch the number of fish they used to expect to (especially in Greater Sydney) and this is blamed in part on elements such as pollution but also to a perception of overfishing.

"The depletion of fishing populations will mean that those practices won't be able to take place in the future." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"It doesn't take much to drastically alter an ecosystem, overfishing is a threat." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Mining...** The impact of mining oil and gas from the ocean generally is presumed to also impact the NSW Marine Estate and is considered to be potentially damaging. While it is recognised by Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members alike that there is a need for fossil fuels, some feel these practices (and potential accidents) are perceived to pose a threat to the NSW Marine Estate.

"It's always going to disturb ecosystems around it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Erosion

- The threat of erosion to the Marine Estate is identified by community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups as an issue they would like to be addressed...
 - **Erosion caused by removing vegetation...** Some feel the removal of vegetation from sand dunes in some areas has led to significant erosion. Additionally, the parts of the Marine Estate lost to development are perceived to have caused some unnecessary erosion.

*"Where we used to go four wheel driving, all the grasses are now gone – I think they were taken out – and now most of the dunes I remember aren't there anymore."
(Community, Lismore)*

- **Erosion from human or animal use...** Some believe erosion is caused by human interaction with the Marine Estate (particularly around river banks and estuaries) as well as animals (e.g. cattle congregating around river banks to drink) has cause more sediment to be noticed by community members in the North Coast LLS region in particular in the water and erosion on the banks.

Other Human Activity

- Some members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups cite other types of human interaction with the Marine Estate as a threat to its ongoing health...
 - **Irresponsible practices...** Many community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups cite individuals' interactions with the Marine Estate as a potentially increasing threat. The effects on the Marine Estate of individuals littering and catching more fish (recreationally and commercially) than they are allowed are two examples of their detrimental impact on the beauty and health of the Marine Estate.

*"You find people don't know what the rules are so they just catch whatever they want."
(Marine Estate interest/user group)*

"A number of ethnic communities within NSW arrive without the same level of respect for the natural environment as they come from countries where the environment is completely exploited. This means that they feel the same way once they arrive and it just needs some education to help them to understand." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Use of motored watercraft...** Some Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members believe that there can be too many motor boats and jet skis in some river areas, which could pose a threat to the Marine Estate (e.g. disturbing the vegetation and animals, pollution from petrol, etc.).

Long Term Threats: Climate Change and Acidification

- Along with the more immediate or shorter term environmental threats described above, the overarching concerns around broader trends are also considered important threats by some Marine Estate interest/user groups and members of the community...

- **Threat of climate change...** The broader threats to the planet relating to climate change are frequently mentioned as posing significant threats to the NSW Marine Estate (including, but not limited to, rising sea levels and water warming).

"Climate change will ultimately increase all of the threats to the environment and cause things like increases in inclement weather and water warming over time." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Water acidification also presents a threat...** Marine Estate interest/user groups from conservation and science fields and also some industry and peak body representatives consider acidification as a medium to long term threat to the Marine Estate and the types of marine life that can be found there.

"Increased temperatures can mean more acidic water that in turn can lead to extinctions ultimately." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Economic Threats

As the Marine Estate is perceived to offer a range of direct and indirect economic benefits to local and state (and national) economies, the threats discussed below are considered critical to the overall health of the NSW economy. For some Marine Estate interest/user groups, severely negative economic (and resultant social) effects have been reported.

The most important economic threats from an economic perspective include...

Restrictions on Fishing

- Commercial fishing representatives (and some recreational fishing to a lesser extent) are often the most passionate and vocal about the negative economic effects of restrictions on commercial fishing, particularly in Marine Park areas...
 - **Loss of livelihood...** Commercial fishing businesses in Marine Park areas in particular (within the North Coast and South East LLS regions, although not limited to these locations) have seen a loss of livelihood as the result of the restrictions introduced in these areas. Fishermen are reporting smaller catches that have depleted their business incomes. While commercial fishing representatives in Coffs harbour hold similar views to those in Batemans Bay, the views of the community were not as negative in relation to commercial fishing restrictions (perhaps because of the lack of presence of commercial fishing representatives in the Coffs harbour community focus group, or that Solitary Islands Marine Park conditions have been in place for around three times as long, and so the community may be more accepting).

"There are no way these businesses can survive. They catch nothing near what they used to catch so the industry here will be lost, it's only at about 20% of what it was in this area." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Increased business costs...** Commercial fishermen are reporting increased business costs associated with having to travel further afield to be able to fish legally. The increase in fuel costs in addition to the time costs required to become familiar with a new fishing area have made the business prohibitive to some smaller operators in Marine Park areas.

"Once a thriving industry, the commercial fishing industry is slowly fading due the costs, including being forced further away. It was a non-consultative style of implementation, and the advice given back (to the Government) from industry had no impact." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Traditional family businesses are declining...** Marine Estate interest/user groups report that commercial fishermen are increasingly deciding to leave the industry where their family has made a living over generations because of a lack of opportunity.

"I've got guys whose fathers and grandfathers were fishermen who are telling me they are actively trying to encourage their kids away from the industry... it's sad." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"With commercial fishing we see the impact, if the Marine Park has zoning that doesn't allow for that the community gets angry, because people get thrown into new areas and have to adjust. This has an effect because communities have to adjust to new commercial fishermen in their area. We have seen quite a negative impact of the Marine Park; because local families are being forced further away to work." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Decline in Tourism

- A broader economic threat, discussed by both Marine Estate interest/user groups and members of the community across all seven regions is that of declining tourism...

- **Lack of cleanliness and beauty could lower interest...** For the vast majority, the presumed appeal of the NSW Marine Estate to visitors relates to the natural beauty and pristine quality of the area. If the core value of a clean, abundant and diverse Marine Estate is diminished, it is presumed that tourism would decline as a result.

"Tourism is what the town relies on to provide an income for the area so it's critical that Batemans Bay is as beautiful and clean as it always has been." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Depleted marine life...** Similarly, if tourists can't participate in the activities they would like to within the Marine Estate, there is a danger they may go elsewhere eventually, particularly in relation to activities such as recreational fishing and scuba diving or snorkelling.

"If people come here to go fishing and they can't catch any fish, they'll go somewhere else next year." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"People come to the island because of the different fish they can see there and all of the wildlife on the island so we rely heavily on it staying the way it is." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Imprudent Development

- Concern is held among both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups regarding the impact of development on enjoyment of, and interaction with, the Marine Estate...
 - **Skew to commercial interests...** It is considered critical that commercial and environmental priorities are balanced so that development does not negatively impact and compromise the health of the Marine Estate.

"There is a threat of urban encroachment we've seen at other ports. There has to be a separation of heavy industry and residential development so you can't just build up all of the land near the water." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"It's too much – it's become a concrete jungle." (Community, Sydney)

- **Avoiding development...** In some areas, particularly Hunter and North Coast LLS regions, there is a real reluctance evident in embracing any sort of development, for fear that it may change the area into one they do not like, or that loses its traditional identity.

"I think people are too concerned with keeping it the same so much that they don't see the potential and how it could be great if it was done right." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

Other Restrictions on Access

- Beyond commercial fishing interests, there are potential economic threats to other businesses as a result of restricting access to the Marine Estate...
 - **Recreational activities...** Restrictions on community and Marine Estate interest/user group activities such as recreational fishing, diving, surfing, picnicking, etc. can potentially pose an economic threat to local businesses, particularly bait and tackle shops and other equipment hire/sell businesses, food retailers, restaurants or boat hire businesses.

"If there is a threat to the system, it needs to be managed rather than just blanket bans because people will stop fishing altogether and everyone else suffers too." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Cost of access...** Costs associated with transport and parking can also work to negatively impact on the social benefits derived from interaction with the Marine Estate, especially escapism and relaxation, especially in Greater Sydney and some areas of the North Coast region (i.e. Byron Bay). Additionally, businesses may not make as much income if costs for accessing the Marine Estate were to increase.

"It costs a fortune to park at the beach and you're constantly thinking about how much time the meter has left, so it's not relaxing and if you factor that into your costs, you can't go as often." (Community, Sydney)

Lack of Funding to Maintain the Marine Estate

- A lack of funding from government and business could pose a threat to the enjoyment of the Marine Estate among members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups...
 - **A potential decline in the atmosphere and quality of an area...** Lack of funding to maintain the coastline (e.g. signage, facilities, enough fisheries staff to ensure compliance) can pose a threat to a number of areas within the NSW Marine Estate.

"It could make the area look really tacky or run down if the signs are falling down or there aren't enough facilities or they are always dirty." (Community, Newcastle)

Social Threats

Following on from the environmental and economic threats outlined above, community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups perceive a number of resultant social threats that could further deplete the overall value placed in the Marine Estate.

The most critical social threats include...

Decline in Physical and Mental Health

- The health benefits of interacting with the Marine Estate are frequently mentioned as some of the most important reasons for spending time there among the community and it is believed that the decline in the health of the Marine Environment or a large number of restrictions being placed on its use could pose a significant threat to these benefits...
 - **Threats to physical health...** For many community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups (particularly those who live and/or work on or near the coast), interaction with the Marine Estate constitutes the bulk of their physical activity. Therefore, if they are unable (because of restrictions) or unwilling (because the environmental value has declined) to spend leisure time interacting with the Marine Estate, these physical health benefits would be lost, potentially in favour of a more sedentary lifestyle or movement of leisure activities further inland.

"If it was always polluted, I wouldn't take my kids camping there." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

"You wouldn't have the fresh air or wellness that you feel now." (Community, Lismore)

- **Threats to mental health...** As with physical health, the mental health benefits currently derived from the Marine Estate are also expected to decline if the health of the Marine Estate was compromised.

"I can't think where I'd go to relax if I couldn't go for a walk along the beach or a swim after work." (Community, Sydney)

"You couldn't really relax at a beach that you have to fight through traffic to get to and then pay loads for parking. That's what they have in Sydney." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

Lack of Enjoyment of the Marine Estate

- If access is restricted, many community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups report their enjoyment of and satisfaction with their interactions with the Marine Estate would decline...
 - **Too much regulation...** There is a fear among many Marine Estate interest/user groups that is shared by some members of the community that too much regulation will stifle enjoyment. While most concede that some restrictions should be in place to preserve the overall health of the Marine Estate, this should not go too far as to make it difficult for the population to enjoy the activities they always have.

"There are just too many rules in place now. It affects families, particularly those who fish." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"If you restrict access to things like four wheel driving, it would mean my enjoyment of it would go down because they're taking away something I used to love." (Community, Lismore)

"If there are too many restrictions then those who want to go fishing won't enjoy it as much." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Feeling disassociated or distant from an area they love...** Recreational fishers in particular (but also boating enthusiasts and jet ski riders) frequently discuss a sad feeling of distance from an area they previously felt very connected to because of restrictions that have been put in place.

"I feel a distance with the Marine Estate now because of this closing down of my favourite spots which I feel is unjustified. It makes it less valuable to me." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"I remember someone saying this to me... 'what would you do if someone removed you to protect the thing you love the most?' That's what our guys feel, it is more than just a business to them." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Decline in Social Interaction

- As many community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups (especially peak bodies) report they associate improved or enhanced social interactions as a direct effect of their interactions with the Marine Estate, its compromised health could have a detrimental social impact on communities...
 - **Potential splintering of the community...** While the Marine Estate is currently an area where different members of the community can come together to interact with people who have similar interests, this benefit could be lost if threats such as pollution came to pass, as the environment would become unpleasant.

"You'd start being suspicious of who is leaving all of that litter around or who has been illegally fishing...we assume it's the tourists at the moment so it sort of brings us together." (Community, Newcastle)

- **Loss of family time / tradition...** The Marine Estate is currently perceived to offer families in these communities a way to start and maintain traditions and create memories. A decline in the core values associated with the Marine Estate would be assumed to mean the associated benefits would also diminish.

Lack of Access for Traditional Land Owners

- Indigenous Marine Estate interest/user groups frequently discuss their concerns in relation to restrictions to the parts of the Marine Estate of cultural significance to their communities...
 - **The requirement of permits to access their own country, even as Native Title holders...** As well as the associated costs of acquiring permits, and moreover, in obtaining commercial fishing / gathering licenses (gaining access to economic benefits).
 - **Perceived lack of recognition of Native Title land rights...** The ability for the Fisheries Act to supersede Native Title land rights, as well as the inconsistency of access rights between Native Title country managed by the Office of Environment and Heritage, and Native Title country managed by Marine Parks Estate (that is, access rights being supported versus access rights unsupported).
 - **Limitations on practice of cultural traditions...** The limitations placed on how, when and where they practice their cultural traditions. This is illustrated by the closure of walking and driving access points to marine estates, the placement of quotas on what they take from the estate – including their traditional foods. The regulation of culturally significant and socially embedded practices as well as the mechanisms used to influence compliance, catch sizes and quotas as discussed above, thus the inability to meet social obligations to share with their community. Compliance from some community members is achieved through the degree of surveillance practiced by regulators.
 - **Inequitable access issues...** The inequitable access to marine resources (i.e. Aboriginal communities versus commercial enterprises), further compounded by the perceived placement of blame on the local Aboriginal community for the decreases in marine species rather than acknowledging the impact of commercial fisheries on marine estate health. Abalone featured strongly here for south coast Marine Estate interest/user groups.

"There's a 67 year old fella down here who's dived all his life. But now he's too scared to do it, because they're there waiting to search his car." (Marine Estate interest/user group)
 - **Significant implications...** The issues raise here were felt to have significant implications for the continued practice of culture, and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities. The inability to engage with marine estates in the manner in which they have so done for generations significant detrimental impacts on the psychological, emotional, economical, physiological and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal communities.

Lower Knowledge and Engagement

- A lack of community and visitor awareness of how to safely and prudently interact with the Marine Estate can pose a threat...
 - **Lack of insight into the consequences of their own actions...** A lack of awareness and understanding of the knock on effects of the actions of community members (e.g. littering, keeping smaller fish they have caught) can mean that those interacting with the Marine Estate can have a negative impact on the environment.

"It's a danger when people come to the coast and don't see what they're doing can affect the area. If everyone comes and leaves rubbish, soon it'll be a tip." (Community, Lismore)

- **Lack of understanding of the bigger picture...** Misinformation or misinterpretation by the community of different interactions with the Marine Estate and how the Marine Estate is managed could mean that their perceptions (or the organisations they support) may not reflect their real feelings.

"There is a lack of understanding of how the Marine Estate is managed in the community, for example, there was a large fishing trawler to be used locally that was well regulated and was set to fish an area and species deemed by science to be sustainable but then Greenpeace ran a very effective social media campaign and political pressure then stopped what would have been a sustainable practice." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Political Threats

Throughout the focus group discussions with community members and in-depth interviews with Marine Estate interest/user groups, political threats emerged alongside the environmental, economic and social threats that community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups believe could threaten (and, in some cases, are threatening) the overall value of the Marine Estate, and many of the currently derived benefits.

These perceived threats may be summarised as...

Lack of Engagement

- Community members and some Marine Estate interest/user groups can feel disengaged with the management of the Marine Estate...
 - **Lack of awareness...** As may be expected, community members are far more likely to be unaware of the management structures in place for the management of the Marine Estate and how they can provide input.

"I don't know how we would feed into that...how would our opinion be heard? Our MP won't be concerned about the coast." (Community, Orange)

- **A perceived lack of consultation...** Some Marine Estate interest/user groups feel as though they are not able to access the decision makers they would like to engage with as management decisions are being made (rather than afterwards). This leads these Marine Estate interest/user groups to become very frustrated with how the Marine Estate is managed and their role in the process.

"I pray that they capture our concerns - we want to protect the Marine Park but we want it done right so all concerns are taken into account. Our industry is vilified too much. We have a connection with the sea - it's our future and livelihood too so we want it to last." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"I used to have a good working relationship with the minister but I haven't had a chance to speak to this minister once." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Lack of Trust

- Many report a lack of faith in Government and decision makers and whether community needs and desires are really taken into account in decision making and policy development...
 - **Political pressures usurping community interests or evidence...** Concern among Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular that opinions, expertise and scientific evidence will be disregarded by decision makers, particularly when political pressures have appeared to influence decision making in the past.

"(There has been a) lack of consultation with all Marine Estate interest/user groups... the closing of fisheries lab and the moratorium on rec fishing in sanctuary zones was implemented for politics without any kind of study on what the implications might be, no benchmarks were set at all. The scientific community's faith in politicians has been seriously shaken, ecological threats are real." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"The results of any risk assessment need to be taken in their entirety, not cherry picked based on political or economically feasible outcomes." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Lack of certainty...** Some Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular feel as though the management of the Marine Estate has seen many changes and upheavals, although many view the MEMA establishment and this period of community consultation to be a positive step forward.

"Government shifts can be destructive and disruptive... it's difficult when a new government (being elected) means that everything in terms of management changes again." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Lack of Ownership

- Although almost all interact with the Marine Estate on a regular basis for commercial or recreational use, many do not feel they have any influence over how the Marine Estate is managed...
 - **Lack of empowerment...** Members of the community and some of the most dissatisfied Marine Estate interest/user groups feel as though they do not have an opportunity to air their views or contribute to decision making.

"It is frustrating because they come to you for input into decisions but discussion papers have already been written and you know the decision has pretty much been made already." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

SECTION SUMMARY

- Alongside the environmental, economic and social threats to the core value of the Marine Estate, a number of political threats are also identified
- Many of the economic and social threats to the enjoyment or benefits of the Marine Estate are directly linked to, or follow on from, the environmental threats
- The most critical economic and social threats as a result of a decline in the health of the Marine Estate mainly relate to loss of income and livelihood, physical and emotional health, as well as human interaction
- Additionally, a perceived lack of information sharing from Marine Estate management or consultation and collaboration can mean that the community disengages from the process and does not feel a strong sense of ownership over the Marine Estate

11. Key Opportunities for the Marine Estate

Throughout the research, a number of opportunities for the management of the Marine Estate and better engagement of both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups with management and decision making processes were discussed, and from this, a number of important opportunities emerged.

To ensure understanding was consistent across all participant types, the following definition of 'opportunities' was provided...

An opportunity for the purposes of this survey is a time or set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something, or achieve an outcome, in the marine estate.

An opportunity for the marine estate could be:

- *Seeking additional boating infrastructure to improve boating access to an estuary*
- *Conserving a special area of social or ecological importance*
- *Starting a new commercial venture*
- *Promoting a new marine-based water sport*

While members of the community and Marine Estate interest/user groups provided a number of examples of opportunities for the Marine Estate that could potentially enhance its value (and the subsequent benefits derived) or eliminate threats, four overarching opportunities are highlighted for the future management of the Marine Estate.

These overall management opportunities, as well as those opportunities specifically related to the environment, the economy and social interactions are discussed below.

Overall Management Opportunities

Four key opportunities for the management of the Marine Estate are highlighted by Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members.

Communication

- An increase in communication (both throughout the decision making process and once management decisions have been made) is considered to be a key opportunity area for the future management of the Marine Estate to encourage community and Marine Estate interest/user group engagement as well as faith in the management process...
 - **Information about regulations and restrictions...** Those community members who interact with the Marine Estate less frequently (or participate rarely in certain activities) do not always know what regulations are in place or where they should look for information. Promoting a central information source could help the community engage with, support and comply with regulations and restrictions.

"I'm not sure if there is a place you could search online or a pamphlet you could pick up at the bait shop that tells you about fishing restrictions? I only take the kids every so often so I'm not sure where I'd go." (Community, Coffs Harbour)

"Ethnic communities can be isolated from the rest of the community so I would say it's important to engage with newer arrivals about how they should behave on the coast, in their own language." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **The reasoning behind decisions...** Some Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular feel that decisions are being made and imposed on them without any explanations offered. This can make it difficult for them to explain the decisions to those they represent, or support these decisions. Inclusive communications that clearly state the inputs into decision making could help these Marine Estate interest/user groups understand why decisions have been reached and could improve acceptance.

"Zoning in the Marine Parks feels like they're pandering to the Greens rather than consulting the science. They don't tell us any different. There appears to be no rhyme or reason to it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"They need to communicate more. There's not enough investment in that now." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Consultation

- Engaging in meaningful consultation with Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members...
 - **When specific decisions are required...** Marine Estate interest/user groups and members of the community would like to have an opportunity to engage with decision makers as the process is taking place and to have some access to the data that is informing decisions, as well as the opportunity to add their opinions, considerations and concerns.

"We would like to be consulted before things are decided and to really be listened too. This is our livelihood and our home so we need to understand and be part of it." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Fishers are willing to compromise and enter into a dialogue but State Government does not allow this and so commercial fishers are feeling very bitter about it now." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **On an ongoing basis...** Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular view regular, ongoing communication with decision makers as a positive opportunity to ensure Marine Estate management is informed and aware of all of the potential issues that could impact on management decisions from a range of perspectives.

"This process is significant, putting an effort into understanding the community point of view." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"There needs to be proper consultation with Aboriginal peoples at a local level including local Aboriginal Land Councils." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Collaboration

- Another opportunity in relation to the overall management of the Marine Estate relates to engendering a sense of collaboration between different Marine Estate interest/user group and community perspectives...
 - **Facilitation of discussions...** Marine Estate managers engaging with different Marine Estate interest/user groups and members of the community and providing them a forum for them to negotiate with each other as well as decision makers to come to the most mutually beneficial decision that does least to compromise the overall health of the Marine Estate.

*"They need to include ordinary people like us as well. We're the ones that use it."
(Community, Lismore)*

"People can be territorial when it comes to management. We're all in the same boat so we need to be rowing in the same way." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Giving Marine Estate interest/user groups a role...** For some Marine Estate interest/user groups, particularly in education as well as Indigenous groups, there is a perception that they do not have a role in relation to management of the Marine Estate. These Marine Estate interest/user groups see their role as very much on the periphery of the decision making process and, rather than inputting directly into decisions, their role is perceived to be on of disseminating information about the regulations in place. A more active role could help these groups feel less alienated.

"We don't really have a role – our job is to educate on the impacts of human actions on the marine environment. We have a lot of knowledge though so it would be good if they asked our opinion." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Visibility and Accessibility

- Access and openness are considered important in encouraging community and Marine Estate interest/user group buy in to Marine Estate management decisions...
 - **Access to decision makers...** Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular would like to engage more with decision makers to understand their thinking (clear communication of the thinking behind decisions at the outset could lessen this desire for some).
 - **A local presence...** Either a physical presence or a demonstrated understanding of the local area is highlighted by community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups alike as a positive opportunity for management of the Marine Estate (and potentially greater community buy in to decision making).

"It's vital for us that the Marine Park management has a presence on the island and that they understand the community. That regular dialogue is important and we're trying to set that up now." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Environmental Opportunities

One key opportunity for potentially maximising the value of the Marine Estate from an environmental perspective is highlighted by Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members.

Prioritisation of Threats

- Another opportunity for optimising the environmental values associated with the Marine Estate relates to the prioritisation of the most imminent threats...
 - **A holistic approach...** Many Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular believe that the prioritisation of threats is critical to the continuing environmental value of the Marine Estate. However it is considered critical that both direct and indirect threats are prioritised, as are land and water based threats.

"Understanding what all of the threats are and then working out which ones are most imminent that we need to tackle as a priority." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Balancing interests...** It is considered critical across Marine Estate interest/user and community groups that the full range of interests are taken into account as environmental threats are prioritised (not just political or scientific interests).

"I'm optimistic about the knowledge panel and MEMA, putting effort into understanding the community and commercial as well as scientific interests." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Direct impacts on the Marine Estate are already being managed so the indirect impacts need more attention. Research is needed to understand the state of play now and to understand the impact of different changes over time rather than making decisions without real evidence. Find the real risks and threats and work out the best way to manage them should always be the central guiding principle." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Economic Opportunities

From an economic perspective, the most important opportunities relate to the marketing of the benefits of the Marine Estate and maximise the (sustainable) income that can be derived from it.

To Market the Marine Estate

- Among both the community generally as well as local business owners (in focus groups) as well as Chambers of Commerce, the key economic opportunity uncovered in this stage of the research is to market the benefits of the Marine Estate to the broader community and tourists alike...
 - **Highlight the natural beauty...** Most believe the natural beauty of the Marine Estate is one of its most marketable features and the managers of the Marine Estate could take an active role in helping communicate its uniqueness.

"A joint marketing effort would be really beneficial for us." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Talk about biodiversity...** As the biodiversity of the Marine Estate is considered a key point of difference for the NSW Marine Estate, and one of its most valuable attributes, business owners in particular discuss using examples of the unique biodiversity within NSW to encourage greater interest in interaction with the Marine Estate.
- **Benefits of protected areas...** Highlighting the benefits of protected areas to encourage tourism is perceived to provide another opportunity for the Marine Estate. However, it will be important to effectively communicate what the Marine Park conditions mean for visitors (especially reassure that the activities they loved the area for are still able to be undertaken).

"Some visitors assumed because of the Marine Park that they wouldn't be able to fish at all." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Expand Income Opportunities

- An opportunity for increased support for local businesses to derive an income from the Marine Estate...
 - **Working with local businesses / chambers of commerce...** Working together to uncover opportunities for local businesses, particularly in relation to capitalising on interactions with the Marine Estate (e.g. information needed and considerations for opening up a new diving business, how to engage with other local businesses, opportunities for interactions in the winter months, etc.).

"The Chamber of Commerce should work with the Marine Park management to communicate the key benefits to the community and visitors - a more collaborative marketing effort." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"So, if you have ice-cream in your corner shop, you could get it from a local company so it's unique to the area and you have businesses supporting each other." (Community, Sydney)

- **Provision of information...** Provision of information on the Marine Estate to local businesses and/via Chambers of Commerce is considered an important opportunity by business owners as well as the community more generally so that they can plan and target their businesses most effectively to maximise this benefit from the Marine Estate (e.g. information on different types of visitors to the area so that local businesses can target their offer accordingly).

Social Opportunities

For many, the social opportunities outlined below represent some of the most frequently mentioned and important opportunities for the future management of the Marine Estate.

Consistent Processes in Place to Understand the Marine Estate

- An important opportunity for continuous monitoring and discovery...
 - **Scientific research...** Regular monitoring of the Marine Estate and the conditions within it, so that any threats can be understood as close as possible to their identification. Additionally, Marine Estate interest/user groups from the scientific community are interested in setting up guidelines that dictate how scientific information is used in decision making (and what happens when there is not enough scientific information available).

"There needs to be consistent monitoring of the whole Marine Estate so that we can understand it better and to mitigate threats as soon as possible." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"All of these processes start with biology, and ultimately it gets pushed to its end point by politics and economics. So when there is a lack of information, those other avenues are going to take over and they tend not to lead to the conservation or protection of any habitat. There needs to be very specific policies as to how to deal with lack of information. History has proven in some cases (not all) that the latter outweighs the former." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Ongoing community consultation...** Community and Marine Estate interest/user group consultation on an ongoing basis is perceived to be a potentially valuable opportunity to monitor the health of the Marine Estate (and opportunities for regular unprompted feedback are also desired by Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members).

"Our guys are in the water all the time and have been for years. They understand it and can also see how it's changing. They know these waters better than anyone and they should be consulted as a really valuable resource." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Building on Current Management Arrangements

- While, as discussed previously, a number of Marine Estate interest/user groups (in particular) feel unsure of how environmental threats are identified and how policies and plans for their elimination are developed (i.e. whether there are a consistent set of guidelines in place), there is a sense from some Marine Estate interest/user groups that current processes need to be built on rather than replaced...
 - **Using what we know...** While current processes in place don't always appear to Marine Estate interest/user groups to be clear, most believe any changes should be built on or extrapolated from past policy rather than a complete change (e.g. not completely re-zoning Marine Park sanctuary zones but modifying them slightly on the basis of scientific evidence and the wishes of the community).

"Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. Realistically look at the arrangements we have now to preserve the marine environment and build from there." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Consistent re-evaluation...** A number of Marine Estate interest/user groups however, suggest that there is an opportunity for re-evaluation of processes so that the management of the Marine Estate can be as agile as possible to meet community needs and minimise emergent threats. Additionally, some suggest an opportunity to learn from other states or levels of Government.

"There the processes that were undertaken as a result of the Federal Marine Park consultation process. I heard that it was a much better and more useful process where they were consulted and saw real evidence of how their concerns and needs were taken into account." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

To Educate the Broader Population

- Education opportunities are frequently the first mentioned opportunities for the future environmental, economic and social health of the Marine Estate...

- **Educating the public...** The opportunity to educate the broader community in relation to how the Marine Estate works, as well as how it is managed, is considered one of, if not the, most important opportunity to engage the community (among Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members themselves).

"Get better at communicating with the public on what the real threats are (and why) and the potential solutions." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"Education needs to start from a young age. You should have things in primary schools so kids know how it works and what people can do to preserve it." (Community, Sydney)

"You could give tourists some information like a brochure telling them what to expect in Australia." (Community, Lismore)

"A further opportunity for education and community engagement so that the political decision makers are then driven by the broader human desire for effectively managed marine estates." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Opportunity for Marine Estate interest/user group education...** Marine Estate interest/user groups state that there is an opportunity for education among special interest groups, both in terms of how decision making processes work, as well as the other groups like theirs who use their local part of the Marine Estate and what their priorities are.
- It is considered critical for ethnic minority communities, particularly where English is not the main language spoken at home that any education offered is accessible to a range of languages and culturally appropriate...
 - **Beyond direct translation...** While direct translations of materials are welcomed so that those who speak the main languages other than English in NSW are able to access information about the Marine Estate and its management, these translations are not perceived to always take into account the cultural nuances and references that may be required for these groups to completely understand the information offered.
 - **Local media can play a part...** There is also potentially perceived a role for local ethnic media (i.e. newspapers and radio) to help communicate any changes to restrictions or the reasons for restrictions that are in place.

- **Bilingual educators would be considered most effective...** Any opportunity for including bilingual educators to engage directly with community members to help guide them through any information provided to them in relation to the Marine Estate and the restrictions in place would be considered ideal according to the Ethnic Communities Council Marine Estate interest/user group included in this stage of the research, as these types of interactions have proven effective in the past.

Encourage Ownership

- Opportunities are highlighted by community members in particular in relation to encouraging a sense of ownership (and subsequently pride and responsibility) of the Marine Estate...
 - **Define roles in the process...** Communicating with the broader community (from early ages), in relation to their ownership of the Marine Estate and, following on from this, their responsibility for it and their right to input into its management.

"To create consciousness and a conscience about looking after it because we all value it but sometimes you forget." (Community, Sydney)

- **Marine Estate interest/user group and community buy in to the process...** It is believed that providing information and education about the processes that are in place and all of the inputs considered in planning and decision making (particularly the role of Marine Estate interest/user groups and the community in this process) could present an opportunity to engender greater support.

"There is an opportunity to communicate better and let people know what they are trying to achieve. The average person doesn't have a clue about how our ecosystem works. This has to be look at and communicated to people from a holistic view, otherwise they won't grasp the concept and care." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"(There is an) opportunity to engage by education and engendering greater ownership across all of the community means the community might understand decision making and adjust their own behaviours to protect the marine estate." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

To Engage the General Population in Decision Making

- Currently, members of the community do not feel as though they have a role in decision making about the areas they interact with and love...
 - **A further sense of ownership...** As a result of capitalising on the opportunities to educate and inform the community on their role in the decision making process.

"Engendering greater ownership across all of the community means the community might understand decision making and adjust their own behaviours to protect the marine estate." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **The opportunity to make a difference...** For members of the community, there is a sense that individuals are motivated to make a difference but are currently unsure of how to go about this.

"They should have one coastal group that has a cross section of people to make the decision in the end. It should be normal everyday people with some experts to guide them." (Community, Lismore)

To Engage the Indigenous Community

- For Indigenous Marine Estate interest/user groups, the Marine Estate is perceived as offering significant potential to bring great opportunities to Aboriginal communities and local communities more generally...
 - **Support for cultural practices...** Strengthen and reinforce the practice of traditional cultures, resulting in a thriving, engaged and invested Aboriginal community.
 - **Inclusion in economic opportunities...** Currently, economic benefits associated with the Marine Estate are considered to be solely for the non-Indigenous community. There is perceived to be an opportunity to boost economic development and success of regions by supporting the entry of Aboriginal owned and managed businesses into the market-place. Develop self-sustaining economic independence. Additionally, there is also believed to be potential to reduce Aboriginal unemployment rates by hiring community members in roles that harness their already established skills and knowledge around water, e.g. diving skills for buoy maintenance, fishing and Ancestral knowledge (e.g. to be tour leaders, or use knowledge of Natural Resource Management in government roles).
 - **Better relationships with decision makers...** While the ideal scenario is considered to be full access for Indigenous Australians to their land and marine systems without restriction, the pragmatic view is to have better relationships with decision makers and co-management agreements with other Marine Estate interest/user groups.

"There are lots of solutions out there, but where are Fisheries?" (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"We need to have all the people involved working together and working through things together. It won't work if that doesn't happen." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

SECTION SUMMARY

- There are a number of opportunities related to the management of the Marine Estate that community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups encourage and relate to communication, consultation, collaboration and accessibility
- Following on from these overall opportunities (especially around communication and consultation), community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups believe important opportunities for the management of the Marine Estate lie in engaging and educating the community in relation to how the Marine Estate works, as well as the decision making processes to encourage buy in and ownership
- Putting consistent evaluation processes in place to identify and track the threats to the health of the Marine Estate is also considered critical among Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular and, when threats are considered consistently and communicated effectively, this could help to ease some negative perceptions (relating to not feeling informed or engaged)
- Other opportunities are perceived in relation to making more from the Marine Estate economically by collaboration with local businesses to help them target their activities more and market the Marine Estate and its benefits as part of their business

12. In Conclusion: Suggested Management Priorities

A number of areas were nominated by Marine Estate interest/user groups and community members as what they consider should be the key priorities of those responsible for the management of the Marine Estate...

Education

- Both community members and Marine Estate interest/user groups believe education should be considered a top priority...
 - **A central component...** Providing information about the Marine Estate itself and what MEMA is trying to achieve would be well received by Marine Estate interest/user groups and the community, particularly if they feel they understand the reasoning behind and inputs into decision making.
 - **Encourages engagement and ownership...** If the benefits of the Marine Estate are effectively communicated to the NSW population (including Marine Park areas), this could engender greater ownership at an individual level. The general community perception is that positive messaging feels more motivating (e.g. 'the positive effect you can have on your Marine Estate').

"Tell us the plans and use campaigns like the 'Slip, Slop, Slap' ones to let people know what to do... that makes it part of what we do and people might naturally take their rubbish with them." (Community, Sydney)

"If people are better educated, we might not have the need for so many regulations." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **For the future...** A strong perception among community members in particular that those responsible for the Marine Estate should consult with the community and develop a point of view on what future generations should know, and then target children from a young age.

Communication and Collaboration

- Communication and collaboration are also suggested as priority areas for those responsible for management of the Marine Estate...
 - **Find and understand the happy medium...** The vast majority expresses a desire for real collaboration with decision makers and other Marine Estate interest/user groups to ensure that all needs are taken into consideration and the best possible outcomes are then decided.

"More attention paid to development and environment balance. Both are important, as well as what the community wants." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **To deliver consistency...** Marine Estate interest/user groups in particular feel that demonstration of consistency in the factors considered in decision making and how information is processed as part of that decision making could engender greater faith in the process overall.

"A lack of information in the past about rule changes also caused issues for visitors to the area in the past." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Identify the Risks and Prioritise Them

- A threat or risk based approach feels prudent for the majority of Marine Estate interest/user groups, who believe that this is the most cost and scientifically effective approach, provided...

- **Inclusive collaboration in understanding the most important risks...** Following on from communication and collaboration, working together to understand the risks and adopting the precautionary principle approach is considered critical, provided this is done consistently.

"Decision making regarding cultural and social values of Marine Parks should be inclusive of Aboriginal peoples including Aboriginal Land Councils." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"We need to work together rather than having an 'us vs. them' approach." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"My only concern with a risk based approach is how will the precautionary principle approach be considered in the Government's response to MEMAs recommendations?" (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Prioritise threats on this basis...** Currently, there is some perception that some interests are considered as a higher priority than others (e.g. political pressures), however, most would like to see prioritisation demonstrably based on scientific evidence as well as community and Marine Estate interest/user group needs and priorities.

"We need to take the big picture view, look more closely at the impacts on the system as a whole and immediately start to manage the input factors, habitat restorations and addressing the big issues like pollution and water quality. Then we can start looking at the smaller factors. But you have to start with water quality and habitat because if you don't address the core problem, whatever happens downstream is doomed." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

- **Understand and address the most imminent dangers...** Explore the real vs. perceived threats and prioritise in terms of most immediate danger to the NSW population and the values they place and then develop solutions that speak to these.

"Are they real or supposed threats? People might die as a result of climate change but we could adapt before it comes to that." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

"They need to go back to basics to identify the threats and risks then prioritise them, taking the community interest into account." (Marine Estate interest/user group)

Appendix 1: Indigenous Community Marine Estate Research Report

Introduction and Methodology

- This portion of the research was conducted by Winangali Indigenous Communications and Research in conjunction with Sweeney Research...
 - **Part of the broader findings...** The findings from this part of the research were incorporated into the broader qualitative findings as a Marine Estate interest/user group
- Four in-depth interviews were conducted with engaged community members and Elders of the North Coast and South East LLS regions – Lismore and Batemans Bay...
 - **Recruitment...** Interview participants were sourced and recruited by Winangali’s list of Indigenous contacts in these areas
 - **Fieldwork...** Interviews were conducted over the phone by an experienced, specialist Indigenous researcher (with maps of the regions sent to the participants in advance of their interviews to act as stimulus/clarity for the discussion)
 - **Fieldwork materials...** Sweeney provided Winangali with the discussion guide (which was also used with all other Marine Estate interest/user group interviews in this phase of the research)

Overview of Regions and Participants

South East (Batemans Bay)

- Located on the South East LLS Region of NSW, the Yuin people are considered to be the traditional owners of the Land and water in this region. There is a strong connection with the Coast for these Saltwater people. Water is core to their identity, with the act of fishing, diving, hunting and gathering once being (and for some, still being) their means of subsistence. There is also high unemployment among Aboriginal people in the area, though there have been attempts to engage in aqua-culture
- The two participants who were included in this phase of the research are...
 - **A saltwater Walbunga man from the south coast of NSW...** A major part of his education was learning how to fish, dive and gather food from the sea and estuaries. He has also been actively involved in building recognition of Aboriginal people's right to fish at local, state, national and international levels, via his involvement in the NSW DPI Aboriginal Advisory Fishing Council
 - **A community representative from the south coast...** Born and lives in the South Coast region but also has strong connections and ties to North Coast country. He is an engaged community member in the fishing rights of Aboriginal peoples and comes from three generations of fishermen. He has played key roles in engaging Aboriginal community members in marine estate issue and can speak on their concerns and hopes

North Coast (Lismore and Byron Bay areas)

- This part of the NSW Marine Estate contains the Bundjalung Nation (Arakwal and Widjabul tribes)...
 - Lismore is home to the Widjabul tribe, and neighbours the Arakwal tribe. Both groups, along with eleven others are part of the Bundjalung Nation. The people of this region access the Marine Estate at different locations, from Byron Bay (further north) to Evans Head (south)
 - There is high unemployment among Aboriginal people in this area, however, Lismore in particular is perceived as a town with good community / government services, and family leisure areas
- The two participants who were included in this phase of the research are...
 - **A board member of a local Aboriginal Corporation...** This participant is a Native Title holder and an Arakwal National Park co-management board member. They are highly engaged with the local Indigenous community, beyond their own tribe, including regular interactions with others in the Bundjalung Nation
 - **Community Elder...** From the Widjabul Tribe in Lismore

Interaction with the Marine Estate

- These participants and their fellow community members engage with the Marine Estate in a variety of important ways. Experiences are often comprised of multiple activities, for example, family gatherings would often include catching a feed, whilst also using the opportunity to engage young ones in cultural practices
- The types of cultural practices undertaken by these Indigenous communities include...
 - **Fishing...** These individuals report they participate in this practice as often as daily or weekly, or as little as monthly (participation rates vary within each area)
 - **Pipi gathering...** Pipsis are considered a traditional food source for the North Coast communities and those who gather pipsis tend to do so on a weekly basis
 - **Diving...** Catching/harvesting lobsters and abalone (traditional food sources for Indigenous communities on the South East) up to several times per week on average
 - **Camping...** A common activity in both regions and community members can camp for a few days or for months at a time
 - **Swimming...** Frequently mentioned interaction with the Marine Estate
 - **Walking...** Daily or several times a week
 - **Family and community gatherings (gatherings for occasions/celebrations, i.e. NAIDOC)...** Participation frequency for these activities varies depending on the type of activity, e.g. NAIDOC is an annual event, Native Title Council meetings can meet as frequently as monthly or 3 times over 2 months, family gatherings are as frequent as birthdays and reunions arise
 - **Youth surfing events...** Can be held around once a season (every three months on average)
 - **Bush-tucker gathering...** Which is considered important as a community/family event and can take place either seasonally or sporadically
- These individuals' interaction with the Marine Estate is in both a formal and informal capacity...
 - **Formal interactions...** Three of these individuals engage with the Marine Estate and various management arms as part of their own personal lives, as well as through their current or past roles as CEO, committee member or community engagement
 - **Interactions mainly informal...** One Elder included as part of this phase of the research does not engage in a formal capacity as such, but continues to engage (along with their community) with their local part of the Marine Estate regularly, and does not feel as knowledgeable as other individuals of the management structures in relation to the Marine Estate
- There is a good perceived understanding of the Marine Estate (although these individuals' views and experiences of the Marine Estate are largely restricted to their local areas) as well as Marine Park conditions as a means to protect and conserve marine ecosystems in NSW, with parks having stronger protection mechanisms and controls...
 - **Marine Parks considered a positive in theory, but can be limiting...** They are seen positively as a means to conserve and protect, yet their limitation on access for the Indigenous community to those resources because of Marine Park restrictions is a point of contention

"I've got mixed feelings about Marine Parks because I'm very much for it... they will revive what's left of the environment. So in an environmental sense, I'm pretty much for it. But it denies us access to our culture, our very being....I'm a saltwater man and it (Marine Park conditions) doesn't suit out culture, which is pretty bloody sad." (Marine Estate interest/user group, South East)

"To me, when I think about the word 'estate', and think 'Government' and what was ours is now the governments.....'Lock Out'. It's all the things you could do but can't do anymore due to management." (Marine Estate interest/user group, North Coast)

Values and Benefits Associated with the Marine Estate

Value of the Marine Estate

Among these individuals, there is a high overall value placed in the Marine Estate. The Marine Estate is considered central to Aboriginal people's sense of self and core to their identity.

"I am a saltwater man', 'my home', 'where I survived', 'where I go'..." (Marine Estate interest/user group, South East)

These values are intrinsic to Aboriginal culture and ways of being. There is not considered to be any separation between this community and their environment. While non-Indigenous people are perceived to view the environment and the ecosystems within it from an outside position (flora and fauna is its own entity), Aboriginal people see themselves as part of the ecosystem. Being unable to interact within their own ecosystem results in an imbalance, and this has significant impacts on their culture, identity and sense of self.

"We see the environment differently to non-Aboriginal people. We are actually part of the ecosystem." (Marine Estate interest/user group, South East)

A common theme in these Marine Estate interest/user group interviews was the general preference to avoid ranking the values, benefits and priorities they had nominated. The interrelated nature of experiences (i.e., culture, environment, self) makes it difficult to view elements separately.

The most important values associated with the Marine Estate include...

Importance for Health and Wellbeing of Indigenous Communities

- The Marine Estate is perceived to contribute to the wellbeing of Indigenous communities in a number of important ways...
 - **Source of education...** Teaching the ways of the culture to younger generations as well as how best to understand and interact with the environment, e.g. reading tides, seasonal fishing, identifying natural traps, etc.
 - **A food source...** The Marine Estate is considered a key source of the community's diet. Providing health and nutrition (and education around this), which is a key factor in the health and wellbeing of the community such as ability to concentrate at school

"The land is my cupboard." (Marine Estate interest/user group, North Coast)

- **Free access...** Does not require any money for food to feed themselves and helps to remove a barrier to accessing fresh, healthy food
- **Reinforces traditional diet...** North Coast places great importance on pipis and communities in the South East base their traditional diet around abalone and lobsters

Maintaining and Reinforcing Social Structures and Practices

- The Marine Estate is considered a key source through which social structures and practices are maintained and reinforced...

- **Caring and sharing – a sense of community...** Food and resources are shared equally amongst the community
- **Source of Dreaming stories...** Sacred and culturally significant sites help community members stay connected to their culture and their own culturally historical narrative
- **Connection to the land...** Keeps communities connected to their land and the methods through which their natural resources are managed
- **Social gathering place...** A place for communities and families meet together, source tucker and celebrate special occasions. This not only means being amongst themselves in the present, but also being close to their Ancestors who inhabited those places before them

"Just utilising the rivers and creeks and things like that for fishing and gathering. We have 'back to Country' where we bring the family back and have a swim and a greet and a yarn and things like that." (Marine Estate interest/user group, North Coast)

Benefits of the Marine Estate

- The main environmental benefit of the Marine Estate among these individuals is assumed to be...
 - **Biodiversity...** There is an overall understanding and appreciation of the Marine Estate's potential to protect, and to facilitate healthy biodiversity, which is considered one of its key benefits. There was strong support for the conservation and protection of all natural resources and for sustainable use of the ecosystem by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities

However, there is strong concern that the current management of the Marine Estate (through policy and legislation) may be counter-intuitive to such conservation objectives. The approved practices and catch numbers of the abalone industry in the South East, for example, is seen to be unsustainable and damaging. This sentiment is shared about commercial fishing more generally. Further, whilst there is a strong ethos of conservation and protection, these individuals want to ensure that this does not come at the expense of Aboriginal communities and their access to the Marine Estate

- Currently, there is little perceived economic benefit associated with the Marine Estate for Indigenous communities...
 - **Benefits restricted to non-Aboriginal community...** Currently, the Marine Estate is perceived to benefit non-Aboriginal members of the community rather than the Aboriginal community. This is predominantly because the Aboriginal community does not have a presence in the business community. There is agreement that there are opportunities for the Marine Estate to economically benefit Indigenous communities, however they are yet to be properly harnessed. The act of sourcing their own food from the Marine Estate is acknowledged as a means of saving money that would otherwise be spent on food
- The main benefits to the Indigenous communities on the North Coast and in the South East are considered to be primarily social...
 - **Providing a meeting place...** The Marine Estate can provide meeting places for Aboriginal communities

- **Health benefits...** Participating in recreation as well as gathering or catching food can help to facilitate better health for Indigenous communities
- **Reinforcing and facilitating social structures and traditions...** The cultural significance of some areas can serve to shape social structures and interactions (e.g. a swimming hole that was a sacred women's site) and bind communities together through adherence to traditional social practices (e.g. sharing their catch with family and the community)

"Access to water gives us our quality of life – for the Aboriginal man, the community and the culture." (Marine Estate interest/user group, South East)

Perceived Changes over Time

There have been some noticeable changes for these individuals in their respective parts of the Marine Estate over time, most notably...

- **Some improvements...** Some perception that the health of mangroves in the Byron Bay Marine Park has visibly improved in recent years
- **Overall however, a depleting marine environment...** Individuals in both the North Coast and South East report some anecdotal evidence of a depleting marine ecosystem. This was notably the case for the traditional foods of each region (abalone and lobster in the South East and pipis on the North Coast)

"We used to go collecting pipi's. We'd cook them up or eat them raw, but they're not there like they used to be anymore because the pipi rakers take them all." (Marine Estate interest/user group, North Coast)

- **Increased restrictions and regulations...** Changes in rules and regulations pertaining to fishing from beach zones (now an approved activity) is perceived to mean a decline in accessibility to the Marine Estate in these areas

Frustrations Related to the Marine Estate

Core to these Aboriginal Marine Estate interest/user group discussions was the sense of frustration felt in these communities. Frustration, anger and concern with how the Marine Estate is managed is evident throughout these Marine Estate interest/user group interviews, particularly in relation to how government priorities are determined and the ultimate far-reaching impact these decisions have the potential to have on Aboriginal communities – at both an individual and community level.

- The most commonly mentioned frustrations include...
 - **Having to have permits...** The requirement of permits to access their own country, even as Native Title holders
 - **Costs of permits...** The associated costs of acquiring permits, and moreover, in obtaining commercial fishing / gathering licenses (gaining access to economic benefits)
 - **Native Title land rights...** The ability for the Fisheries Act to supersede Native Title land rights, as well as the inconsistency of access rights between Native Title country managed by the Office of Environment and Heritage, and Native Title country managed by Marine Parks Estate (that is, access rights being supported versus access rights unsupported)
 - **Limitations on cultural practices...** The limitations placed on how, when and where communities practice their cultural traditions. This is illustrated by the closure of walking and driving access points to their part of the Marine Estate, the placement of quotas on what they take from the local environment – including their traditional foods
 - **Restrictions on fishing and policing of these restrictions...** The regulation of culturally significant and socially embedded practices as well as the mechanisms used to influence compliance – catch sizes and quotas can mean that community members are unable to meet social obligations to share catches with their community. Compliance from some community members is achieved through the degree of surveillance practiced by regulators
 - **Access issues...** Perceived inequitable access to marine resources (i.e., Aboriginal communities versus commercial enterprises), further compounded by the perception that Indigenous communities are blamed for decreases in some marine species rather than acknowledging the impact of commercial fisheries on Marine Estate health – abalone featured strongly here for South East individuals
 - **A perceived rejection of international standards...** The perception of a rejection of internationally mandated standards of practice around biological diversity (see 8J and 10C of the UN convention of biological diversity) <http://www.cbd.int/convention/>

"There's a 67 year old fella down here who's dived all his life. But now he's too scared to do it, because they're there waiting to search his car." (Marine Estate interest/user group, South East)

These issues are felt to have significant implications for the continued practice of culture, and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities. The inability to engage with the Marine Estate is considered a particular threat to these Indigenous communities, and the manner in which they have so done for generations. For these individuals, this represents potentially significant detrimental impacts on the psychological, emotional, economical, physiological and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal communities.

Threats and Potential Solutions

Throughout these interviews, a number of direct threats to the Marine Estate were highlighted by Indigenous individuals.

Perceived Threats on North Coast

- The most important perceived threats to the Marine Estate among these North Coast individuals include...
 - **Pollution...** Including water-flow blockage caused by debris which can potentially lead to algae blooms. This could potentially be managed by digging out wider channels as needed for improved water-flow
 - **Erosion...** Particularly in relation to sand dunes, which, for the Indigenous community can represent a serious issue as it can result in the exposure of Ancestral remains due to their use as burial sites. This could potentially managed through ceasing / slowing down development activity by the shore
 - **Marine life depletion...** Of particular concern for the North Coast Indigenous communities covered in this research is the fish and pipi population depletion, which is considered to be the result of excessive activity from professional rakers and fishers. These individuals feel this issue could be potentially managed by re-assessing and reducing commercial fishing quotas
 - **Over population...** Particularly in relation to visitors to the area in peak holiday times. These individuals feel there could be greater visitor behaviour management to overcome this threat

Perceived Threats in the South East

- Threats to the South East part of the Marine Estate for these individuals feature...
 - **Commercial fishing practices...** Seemingly excessive and unsustainable activity of the commercial fishing sector (including the Abalone industry). This threat could potentially managed by re-assessing and reducing commercial quotas
 - **Current fisheries and Marine Park legislation and policy...** This is perceived to threaten the ongoing health of the Marin Park and Marine Estate in two key ways...
 1. **Lack of focus on the environment in favour of commercial enterprise...** The environmental and conservation focus is perceived to have been minimised in favour of a commodity-centric and economics-driven policy development agenda. This is believed to be demonstrated through the granting of revenue-raising commercial fishing and abalone licenses for the mass-extraction of marine resources in regions zoned for protection and conservation
 2. **Lack of access for communities...** The zoning of areas within the Marine Park for the conservation and protection of marine-based ecosystems is also considered to be posing a threat to the economic and social sustainability of the Batemans Bay Indigenous community. Being unable to source their own waters for local produce is believed to be having an adverse effect on tourism, impacting the business sector, and ultimately the community as a whole.

Both of the above issues in relation to legislation and policy among South East Indigenous individuals could potentially be managed by re-assessing and re-prioritising the key values that inform legislation and policy throughout the Marine Estates so that greater balance between various interests can be achieved. Ideally, planning and decision-making would result in restrictions being placed as required for large scale commercial activity, whilst allowing the local communities (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to continue utilising the marine park in a sustainable manner.

Key Opportunities for the Marine Estate

The Marine Estate for these individuals, represents potentially significant opportunities for the local Aboriginal communities, but also to local communities more generally, and the government agencies managing them.

- The most important opportunities for the Marine Estate highlighted by these individuals include...
 - **Strengthen and reinforce...** The practice of traditional cultures, resulting in a thriving, engaged and invested Aboriginal community
 - **Education...** Ensure both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the community understand both the environment of the Marine Estate but also Aboriginal cultural practices
 - **Support for Indigenous business ventures...** Help to boost economic development and success of the local regions by supporting the entry of Aboriginal owned and managed businesses into the market-place so that this community may develop self-sustaining economic independence
 - **Capitalise on skills...** Reduce Aboriginal unemployment rates by hiring community members in roles that harness their already established skills and knowledge around water. For example, those with diving skills could be employed in buoy maintenance, those with fishing skills and ancestral knowledge could be tour leaders, or those with knowledge of natural resource management could be employed as resource-focused government officers. Additionally, Aboriginal communities provide the managing government agencies with the opportunity to gain knowledge in the practice of sustainable management practices around marine eco-systems
- It is believed that the above opportunities can only be capitalised on if...
 - The local Aboriginal community are able to better access and engage with their local environment
 - The managing agency/agencies engage in a genuine, ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal community members

"There are lots of solutions out there, but where are Fisheries?" (Marine Estate interest/user group, South East)

Suggested Priorities for the Future

Among these individuals, the ideal scenario in the future would entail Aboriginal communities regaining full access to their land / marine systems without restrictions placed on them through government policy. Pragmatically however, these individuals believe their communities would like to enter into co-management agreements with associated cultural access agreements in relation to access and use of the Marine Estate.

In the future they would be managing the marine estates have had their rights restored to play a determining role in the management of their country, and it is their desire that, in the future, the Marine Estate will function under a balanced management structure and an abundant environment.

It is also hoped that relationships between the Indigenous community and Marine Estate decision makers be more fruitful in the future, particularly an improved relationship with Fisheries. This is believed to be paramount to the achievement of good outcomes for all individuals.

"Well hopefully, there will be a good balance between man and the environment."
(Marine Estate interest/user group, North Coast)

"We need to have all the people involved working together and working through things together. It won't work if that doesn't happen." (Marine Estate interest/user group, North Coast)

A summary of the key suggested priorities among these individuals includes...

- Begin an ongoing and inclusive dialogue with Aboriginal communities
- Return access to Aboriginal communities...
 - Negotiate cultural access agreements
 - Allow Aboriginal communities to self-regulate their resource usage, as there is considered to be far greater respect cultural ways than there is for 'white-fella' laws
- Increase employment of Aboriginal people in the Marine Estate...
 - It is believed that if relations are to improve, there should be conduit roles / liaison roles put in place to facilitate communication and shared outcomes between the two Marine Estate interest/user groups. Further, embrace their knowledge about resource management techniques
- Engage Aboriginal people in the development of enterprises...
 - Facilitate economic self-sufficiency through the development of accessible commercial opportunities

"The first thing that needs to happen is for us all to sit down at the table and start talking." (Marine Estate interest/user group, South East)

Additional Comments

- These individuals feel they are not currently being heard by NSW Fisheries...
 - Interaction with the previous managing agency, DEC, was perceived as more collaborative and more positive, respectful and driven by a desire for mutual benefit
 - There has been a noticeable silence from the new government agencies managing marine estates since the shift in portfolios under the O'Farrell government
- Additionally, there is a strong desire for recognition of Indigenous community rights to access the Marine Estate under the International Convention of Biodiversity (8J / 10C), which 'recognizes the dependency of Indigenous and local communities on biological diversity and the unique role of Indigenous and local communities in conserving life on Earth.' <http://www.cbd.int/traditional/>

"They need to let Aboriginal people practice traditional food hunting. Those licences need to be lifted and that will improve our wellbeing greatly because people and teach their kids about those days." (Marine Estate interest/user group, North Coast)

- There was a shared sentiment that the Aboriginal community is not represented within NSW Fisheries...
 - There is believed to be only a few, if any, Aboriginal staff to represent cultural imperatives to non-Aboriginal staff (front-line up to decision-makers), or to serve to improve relations between Fisheries and Aboriginal communities
- As Native Title holders, these communities have been encouraged by the legal case in South Australia where a Traditional Owner fought charges against him for collecting abalone – arguing his right as a Native Title holder to access and use resources in the tradition of his people...
 - His success with this in the High Court is believed to have set a precedent for other Native Title holders advocating their rights to practice their traditional ways

Appendix 2: The Discussion Guides

Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Introduction

(10 mins)

OBJ: To introduce the participants to the research process, give an outline of how the group will flow and reassure on confidentiality

- Introduction to the session, welcome
- Explanation of the research process
- No right or wrong answers
- No consensus is required, it's ok to disagree
- Explanation of recording and (where appropriate) viewers
 - Reassurance on confidentiality and data protection
- Each respondent to introduce themselves – where live, household structure, occupation, what they like to do in their spare time

2. The Marine Estate

(20 mins)

OBJ: To understand how participants define the marine estate, how they interact with it and their current perceptions of the marine estate

Location Information:

- I'd like to start by asking you to tell me a bit about life here in [LOCATION] – how would you describe it in a couple of words?
 - What do people do here for work or leisure?
 - What are the best and worst things about this area and why?
- [NOTE: In the Orange group, this section will be kept short and subsequent discussion will focus only on their activities in the parts of the marine estate they visit. In the Sydney group, this discussion will be limited to discussion of the ocean, estuaries, beaches and coastline in the Sydney region, rather than Sydney generally]

Marine Estate Definition:

- What are your first thoughts/associations when I say the words 'marine estate'?
 - PROBE: For all initial definitions and associations
 - What do those words mean to you and why?
 - Have you heard this term before? In what context?

[READ DEFINITION OF MARINE ESTATE AND SHOW MAP/PHOTOS – The marine estate includes the...

- ocean
 - estuaries
 - coastal wetlands (saltmarsh, mangroves, seagrass)
 - coastline including beaches, dunes and headlands
 - coastal lakes and lagoons connected to the ocean
 - islands including Lord Howe Island
- It extends seaward out to 3 nautical miles and from the Victorian border to the Queensland border.]

- What is your reaction to this definition?
- How well does this definition reflect how you see this area and why?
- How would you describe the part of marine estate you interact with most often based on this definition? Why?
- What are the best and worst things about this part of the marine estate and why? How could frustrations be overcome and what effect would this have?
- What is it about the marine estate that makes it special to you and why?

Interaction with the Marine Estate:

- Tell me about all of the different ways in which you interact with the marine estate...
 - PROBE for all interactions (recreational and occupational as well as intrinsic values such as scenery knowing it is there but not visiting often, observing wildlife, etc.)
- For each type of activity...
 - How often?
 - Why? What benefits does it provide?
 - Frustrations?
 - Effect on other activities? How do you think the effect of other activities is managed at the moment? How could it be improved?
 - Potential improvements?

Changes Over Time:

- How do you think the marine estate has changed over time? What changes have you seen?
 - Why do you think these changes have occurred? Over what period of time? What/who do you think has caused them?
 - How do you feel about the changes you have seen?
 - How positive or negative are these changes and why?
 - What changes would you like to see and why?

How do you think the marine estate will change in the short vs. the long term future and why? How do you feel about this and why?

NOTE: For Batemans Bay and Coffs Harbour groups, the following sections should discuss values, benefits, threats and opportunities for the marine park as well as the broader marine estate (prioritise Marine Park but gain feedback on both, time permitting)

3. Values of the Marine Estate

(30 mins)

OBJ: To gain detailed insight into the value of the marine estate to the community, the benefits derived from the marine estate as well as drawbacks and to identify the key areas of priority for the community (environmental, economic and social)

Values:

- What do you value about the marine estate? PROBE: Think in terms of environmental, economic and social values.

[DEFINITION OF VALUE: For the purpose of this survey a value is the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something.

The value of the marine estate can include:

- *intrinsic value that marine biodiversity has to my confidence in a healthy ocean*
- *the opportunity to access and use a local beach when I want to for recreation*
- *the security of knowing that my grandchildren will have the same opportunity for quality fishing experiences in our local fishing port that I had as a child*
- *the impetus that the marine environment provides for people to buy my swimwear/sports goods/fishing gear/tourist products]*

- Why these values?
- Which values do you consider most important and why? Can we create a list from most to least important?

Benefits:

- Thinking about all of the activities you've just described, what would you say are the most important benefits the marine estate provides you and why?

[DEFINITION OF BENEFIT: A benefit is anything that is for the good of a person, community or thing.

The benefit of the marine estate could be:

- *peace of mind knowing it is there*
- *swimming at the beach on a hot summer day*
- *exercising while enjoying the coastal views*
- *family time at the beach or while boating in an estuary*
- *undertaking a hobby (e.g. fishing, kayaking, surfing, bird watching, etc.)*
- *deriving income (e.g. whale watching business, charter fishing, commercial fishing, etc.)]*

- For each benefit, understand...
 - How is this a benefit?
 - What effect does it have on individuals, the local community and visitors and why?
- (If not discussed spontaneously) I'd like us to think of the benefits in relation to three different areas...

DEFINITIONS:

Environmental – The relationship between organisms and their environment. Environmental benefits are those benefits brought about by the preservation of natural habitats or wildlife species in the Marine Estate. These benefits are not necessarily monetary, instead they refer to the benefits we as citizens of NSW gain from maintaining a healthy marine estate ecology. Environmental benefits can include things such as improved public health as a result of clean water, improved outcomes for local wildlife including the preservation of endangered species, etc.

ECONOMIC – Relating to the production, distribution, and use of income, wealth, and commodities. In relation to the marine estate, values and benefits that are derived from use of the marine estate for commercial purposes, e.g. income, employment. . These benefits can include things such as employment from fishing or tourism, the selling of natural resources in the marine estate, etc.

SOCIAL – Of or relating to the life and relation of human beings in a community. Social benefits refer to the social or cultural activities made possible by the marine estate. For example, recreational fishing, surfing, jet skiing, general beach-going activities, etc.

- What do you consider to be the environmental benefits provided by the marine estate? Why are these important? What effect do they have on you, your community (regional and estate-wide) and why?
- What about the economic benefits the marine estate provides? Why are these important and what effect do they have on you and your community (regional and estate wide) and why?
- And the social benefits? Which are the most important social benefits and what effect do they have on you and your community (regional and estate wide) and why?

Priorities:

- From your perspectives, what are the most important things that the marine estate has to offer to you and the marine estate more broadly?
 - What do you think the broad priorities should be and why? What needs the most urgent attention and why (how does this differ when thinking of you vs. the marine estate more broadly)?
 - Thinking about all of the different ways in which you interact with the marine estate, what would you consider to be the top priorities and why?
 - What are the most important things from an environmental perspective and why?
 - What are the most important things from an economic perspective and why?
 - What about from a social perspective and why?
- Can we develop a list of priorities from most to least relative importance? Why have you ranked them in this order?
 - How do you imagine these priorities will change over time? Why?
 - What would influence these changes?

4. Understanding the Threats and Opportunities

(20 mins)

OBJ: Exploration of the perceived threats to the marine estate, both currently as well as in attempting to reach the ideal, and how these threats could be overcome

Key Threats:

- *[DEFINITION OF THREAT: A threat to the marine estate is any activity or process which prevents environmental, social and economic values and benefits that people derive from the estate from being realised. Some threats are likely to vary in complexity and scale across the estate. This can impact on the ability to manage the threat or to adapt to it over time.*

A threat to the marine estate could be:

- *poor water quality entering an estuary affecting a local fishing or swimming spot*
 - *closing areas to particular uses*
 - *a new pest species emerging affecting a local fishing, boating or aquaculture industry.]*
- What would you consider to be the biggest threats or concerns related to the marine estate we have been discussing? What do you view as the most important issues that can have/are having a negative effect for you and why? What about the threats to the broader marine estate? How do these differ and why?
 - What do you consider to be the largest threats from an environmental perspective? How do you think they could/should be overcome and why?
 - What about economic threats? What are the most serious economic threats and how do you feel they could be overcome?
 - And what do you consider to be the main social threats to the marine estate and how could they be overcome?
 - Are there any threats that you perceive aren't necessarily a threat now but might become more of a threat in the future?
 - What are they and how do you think they could be avoided?

Responsibility for the Marine Estate:

- Who or what do you consider to be responsible for the marine estate? Why?
 - How well do you think those with responsibility for the marine estate represent the best interests of those that use these areas and why?
 - What would you consider your role to be?
 - How closely does that fit with what you would like your role to be in helping to manage the marine estate?
 - What could be done to improve this?

Future Focus:

- What does the ideal marine estate look like for you? If you were to imagine what the marine estate should be in 20 years' time, what would it be like?
 - Based on the priorities and activities we've discussed, what would you consider to be the features of the ideal marine estate?

- Key What would need to change to get the marine estate to this ideal?
- How would your priorities change from those we discussed earlier (if at all)?
- What do you think are the potential threats to achieving the ideal marine estate and why? How serious are these and how could they potentially be overcome?

5. Prioritisation

(10 mins)

OBJ: To determine which of the values, benefits and threats highlighted earlier in the discussion are most important to these community members and why

Opportunities for the Marine Estate:

- *[DEFINITION OF OPPORTUNITY: An opportunity for the purposes of this survey is a time or set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something, or achieve an outcome, in the marine estate.*

An opportunity for the marine estate could be:
 - seeking additional boating infrastructure to improve boating access to an estuary
 - conserving a special area of social or environmental importance
 - starting a new commercial venture
 - promoting a new marine-based water sport]
- Imagine that you were in charge of the marine estate, what would you say were the most important opportunities for the marine estate?
 - How would you define these opportunities in relation to their potential effect on our three broad areas (environmental, economic, social)?
 - Which are the most important opportunities from your perspective and why?
- Looking to the future, and considering the threats and opportunities to the marine estate we've been talking about, what would you say are the most important factors that need to be taken into consideration?
 - How do you think this will differ in the short term future vs. the long term and why?

Summary of Priorities:

- To sum up our discussion, I would like to finish by pulling together of a list of the most important priorities for you in relation to the marine estate...
 - Develop a list of overall priorities, taking into account our discussions on what we want and need from the marine estate, the most important benefits, potential threats and opportunities – what are the key things that need to be addressed/considered going forward?
 - I'd like to now develop sub-lists of priorities divided up by our three areas...
 - o Environmental
 - o Economic
 - o Social
- Any final comments?

THANK AND CLOSE

In-Depth Interview Discussion Guide

1. Introduction

(5 mins)

OBJ: To introduce the participants to the research process, give an outline of how the group will flow and reassure on confidentiality

- Introduction to the session, welcome
- Explanation of the research process
- No right or wrong answers
- Explanation of recording...
 - Reassurance on confidentiality and data protection
- Respondent to introduce themselves – description of their role and responsibilities (particularly in relation to management/interaction with the marine estate)

2. The Marine Estate

(10 mins)

OBJ: To understand how participants define the marine estate, how they interact with it and their current perceptions of the marine estate

Location Information:

- I'd like to start by asking you to tell me a bit about the ocean, estuaries, beaches and coastline here in [LOCATION] – how would you describe it in a couple of words?
 - What do people do here for work or leisure?
 - What are the best and worst things about this area and why?
 - How would you describe your role in this community and why?

Marine Estate Definition:

- What are your first thoughts/associations when I say the words 'marine estate'?
 - PROBE: For all initial definitions and associations
 - Have you heard this term before? In what context?
- *[READ DEFINITION OF MARINE ESTATE AND SHOW MAP/PHOTOS – The marine estate includes the...*
 - *ocean*
 - *estuaries*
 - *coastal wetlands (saltmarsh, mangroves, seagrass)*
 - *coastline including beaches, dunes and headlands*
 - *coastal lakes and lagoons connected to the ocean*
 - *islands including Lord Howe Island*
- It extends seaward out to 3 nautical miles and from the Victorian border to the Queensland border.]
 - What is your reaction to this definition?
 - How well does this definition reflect your role and interactions with the marine estate and why?
 - To what extent do you think this would be a term that is meaningful to the local community/the

people you represent (e.g. recreational fishermen)? How have you heard them describe the marine estate?

- What are the best and worst things about this part of the marine estate and why?
- What are your most significant frustrations and how could they be overcome? What effect would this have on your role? What about the community?

Interaction with the Marine Estate:

- Tell me about all of the different ways in which you interact with the marine estate within your role...
 - PROBE for all interactions the respondent has with the marine estate within their role, including interactions with members of the local community (as customers, residents or people they represent). Also, probe for all occupational and recreational uses as well as intrinsic values.
- For each type of activity...
 - How often?
 - What is your role in relation to the marine estate in the context of this activity?
 - Why? What benefits does it provide?
 - Frustrations?
 - Effect of other activities/interests? How is this managed now? How could this be improved?
 - Potential improvements?
- How would you describe the role you play in relation to the management of the marine estate?
 - How do you feel about the role you play?
 - How does it compare to the role you would like to play?
 - What other stakeholders do you interact with in this capacity and how would you describe these interactions?

Changes Over Time:

- How do you think the marine estate has changed over time? What changes have you seen in the context of your role?
 - Why do you think these changes have occurred? Over what sort of time period? What/who do you think has caused them?
 - How do you feel about the changes you have seen?
 - How positive or negative do you feel these changes have been and why?
 - What changes would you like to see and why?
- How do you think the marine estate will change in the short vs. the long term future and why? How do you feel about this and why?

3. Values of the Marine Estate

(15 mins)

OBJ: To gain detailed insight into the values and benefits derived from the marine estate as well as drawbacks and to identify the key areas of priority for the community (environmental, economic and social)

Values:

- What do you value about the marine estate? PROBE: Think in terms of environmental, economic and social values.
- *[DEFINITION OF VALUE: For the purpose of this survey a value is the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something.*
The value of the marine estate can include:
 - *intrinsic value that marine biodiversity has to my confidence in a healthy ocean*
 - *the opportunity to access and use a local beach when I want to for recreation*
 - *the security of knowing that my grandchildren will have the same opportunity for quality fishing experiences in our local fishing port that I had as a child*
 - *the impetus that the marine environment provides for people to buy my swimwear/sports goods/fishing gear/tourist products]*
- Why these values?
- Which values do you consider most important and why? Can we create a list from most to least important?

Benefits:

- *[DEFINITION OF BENEFIT: A benefit is anything that is for the good of a person, community or thing.*
The benefit of the marine estate could be:
 - *peace of mind knowing it is there*
 - *swimming at the beach on a hot summer day*
 - *exercising while enjoying the coastal views*
 - *family time at the beach or while boating in an estuary*
 - *undertaking a hobby (e.g. Fishing, kayaking, surfing, bird watching, etc.)*
 - *deriving income (e.g. Whale watching business, charter fishing, commercial fishing, etc.)]*
- Thinking about all of the activities and your role that you have just detailed, what would you say are the most important benefits the marine estate provides and why?
- For each benefit, understand...
 - How is this a benefit?
 - What effect does it have on individuals, the local community and visitors and why?
- (If not discussed spontaneously) I'd like you to think of the benefits in relation to three different areas...

DEFINITIONS:

ENVIRONMENTAL – *The relationship between organisms and their environment. Environmental benefits are those benefits brought about by the preservation of natural habitats or wildlife species in the Marine Estate. These benefits are not necessarily monetary, instead they refer to the benefits we as citizens of NSW gain from maintaining a healthy marine estate ecology. Environmental benefits can include things such as improved public health as a result of clean water, improved outcomes for local wildlife including the preservation of endangered species, etc.*

ECONOMIC – *Relating to the production, distribution, and use of income, wealth, and commodities. In relation to the marine estate, values and benefits that are derived from use of the marine estate for commercial purposes, e.g. income, employment. . These benefits can include things such as employment from fishing or tourism, the selling of natural resources in the marine estate, etc.*

SOCIAL – *Of or relating to the life and relation of human beings in a community. Social benefits refer to the social or cultural activities made possible by the marine estate. For example, recreational fishing, surfing, jet skiing, general beach-going activities, etc.*

- *What do you consider to be the environmental benefits provided by the marine estate? Why are these important? What effect do they have on you, the stakeholders you represent (regional and estate-wide) and why?*
- *What about the economic benefits the marine estate provides? Why are these important and what effect do they have on you, the stakeholders you represent (regional and estate-wide) and why?*
- *And the social benefits? Which are the most important social benefits and what effect do they have on you, the stakeholders you represent (regional and estate-wide) and why?*

Priorities:

- From your perspective, what are the most important things that the marine estate has to offer?
 - What do you think the broad priorities should be and why? What needs the most urgent attention and why?
 - Thinking about all of the different ways in which you interact with the marine estate within your role, what would you consider to be the top priorities and why?
 - What are the most important things from an environmental perspective and why?
 - What are the most important things from an economic perspective and why?
 - What about from a social perspective and why?
- Can we develop a list of priorities from most to least relative importance? Why have you ranked them in this order?
 - How do you imagine these priorities will change over time? Why?
 - What would influence these changes?
- How similar or different do you consider the benefits and priorities you have highlighted compared to others who interact with the marine estate (e.g. other stakeholder/special interest groups, the general public, local councils, etc.)?
 - Who would hold the most different views and what do you think they would prioritise?
- Who would hold the most similar views and how similar would they be?

4. Understanding the Threats and Opportunities

(10 mins)

OBJ: Exploration of the perceived threats to the marine estate, both currently as well as in attempting to reach the ideal, and how these threats could be overcome

Key Threats:

- *[DEFINITION OF THREAT: A threat to the marine estate is any activity or process which prevents environmental, social and economic values and benefits that people derive from the estate from being realised. Some threats are likely to vary in complexity and scale across the estate. This can impact on the ability to manage the threat or to adapt to it over time.*

A threat to the marine estate could be:

- *poor water quality entering an estuary affecting a local fishing or swimming spot*
 - *closing areas to particular uses*
 - *a new pest species emerging affecting a local fishing, boating or aquaculture industry.]*
- What would you consider to be the biggest threats or concerns related to the marine estate we have been discussing? What do you view as the most important issues that can have/are having a negative effect for you in your role and why? What about the threats to the broader marine estate? How do these differ and why?
 - What do you consider to be the largest threats from an environmental perspective? How do you think they could/should be overcome and why?
 - What about economic threats? What are the most serious economic threats and how do you feel they could be overcome?
 - And what do you consider to be the main social threats to the marine estate and how could they be overcome?
 - Are there any threats that you perceive aren't necessarily a threat now but might become more of a threat in the future?
 - What are they and how do you think they could be avoided?

Responsibility for the Marine Estate:

- Who or what do you consider to be responsible for the marine estate? Why?
 - How well do you think those with responsibility for the marine estate represent the best interests of those that use and work in these areas and why?
 - We've talked a little about what you perceive your role to be at the moment, how closely does that fit with what you would like your role to be in helping to manage the marine estate?
 - How do you see your role in this regard changing in the future? How do you feel about this?
 - What could be done to improve this?

Future Focus:

- What does the ideal marine estate look like for you? If you were to imagine what the marine estate should be in 20 years' time, what would it be like?
 - What do you imagine your role to be 20 years from now?

- Based on the priorities and activities we've discussed, what would you consider to be the features of the ideal marine estate for you/your organisation's needs?
- How would your priorities change from those we discussed earlier (if at all)?
- What would need to change to get the marine estate to this ideal?
- What do you think are the potential threats to achieving the ideal marine estate and why? How serious are these and how could they potentially be overcome?

5. Prioritisation

(5 mins)

OBJ: To determine which of the values, benefits and threats highlighted earlier in the discussion are most important to these community members and why

Opportunities for the Marine Estate:

- *[DEFINITION OF OPPORTUNITY: An opportunity for the purposes of this survey is a time or set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something, or achieve an outcome, in the marine estate.*
An opportunity for the marine estate could be:
 - seeking additional boating infrastructure to improve boating access to an estuary
 - conserving a special area of social or environmental importance
 - starting a new commercial venture
 - promoting a new marine-based water sport]
- Imagine that you were in charge of the marine estate, what would you say were the most important opportunities for the marine estate?
 - How would you define these opportunities in relation to their potential effect on our three broad areas (environmental, economic, social)?
 - Which are the most important opportunities from your perspective and why?
- Looking to the future, and considering the threats and opportunities to the marine estate we've been talking about, what would you say are the most important factors that need to be taken into consideration?
 - How do you think this will differ in the short term future vs. the long term and why?

Summary of Priorities:

- To sum up our discussion, I would like to finish by pulling together of a list of the most important priorities for you in relation to the marine estate in your role...
 - Develop a list of overall priorities, taking into account our discussions on what we want and need from the marine estate, the most important benefits, potential threats and opportunities – what are the key things that need to be addressed/considered going forward?
 - I'd like to now develop sub-lists of priorities divided up by our three areas...
 - Environmental
 - Economic
 - Social
- Any final comments?

THANK AND CLOSE

Appendix 3: Maps Shown to Research Participants

