

Ningaloo

Collaboration Cluster

Assessing the impacts and preferences of campers along the Ningaloo Coast

Scientists are providing baseline data to assist planning and management of remote campsites within the Ningaloo Marine Park.

The research focused on four Clusters* of camp sites:

- Cluster 1 comprises Bruboodjoo, Learmonth Bombing Range and Warroora (excluding 14 mile)
- Cluster 2 comprises Warroora (14 mile only) and Blowholes
- Cluster 3 comprises Quobba Homestead, Red Bluff and Gnaraloo
- Cluster 4 comprises Cape Range National Park.

The Clusters were compared to assess differences between environmental impacts of campsites, environmental load (water; waste and energy) of campers, and camper preferences with regard to campsite attributes.

This research will aid understanding of the relationship between regulation, facilities, and campsite environmental impacts, as well as what is important to campers regarding their campsite choice and overall experience. Neither campsite preferences nor initial impact assessments have previously been examined and compared across the Ningaloo Marine Park.



What we found

Environmental impacts

The level of camping impact did not differ between the Clusters. However, the types of impacts varied. Results revealed that the presence of goats in Clusters 1, 2 and 3 often produced greater vegetation impacts in camping areas than the campers. The presence of caretakers greatly reduced campsite impacts such as litter abundance.

Campsite preferences

With regard to preferences, the 'average' Ningaloo remote camper wants easy access to the beach, but doesn't like litter; high fees or crowding.

The four most important attributes of a campsite, on average between all campers were: 1) location of the campsite close to the beach 2) minimal litter 3) price 4) distance to neighbouring campsites.

Popular comments from all campers about campsite attributes also included: the importance of self-sufficiency, desire for a 'wilderness experience', and dislike of commercialisation.

Despite these similarities, significant differences were also found between Clusters for both campsite attributes and activities. These differences include importance of toilets, sewerage dump points, generators and whether campfires and dogs are allowed.

These findings indicate that there are two levels of campsite attribute preferences. The first are preferences common to all Clusters, which reflect the remote regions' wilderness-experience camping style. The second represent differences between Clusters, which in turn identify different groups of campers with different needs and expectations.

What the findings mean

It is recommended that, as different Clusters have different environmental impacts, site rehabilitation of remote camping areas be undertaken on a case-by case basis. The removal of goats from the coastal zone would reduce the impact of campsites on the environment, while the presence of year-round site caretakers should be encouraged.

Using camper preferences for management purposes would require consideration of:

1. The region as a whole in terms of its remote, wilderness-experience camping style preferred by all Clusters
2. Area-specific considerations based on the Cluster type categories identified within this study.

A uniform management approach for remote campsites across the entire Ningaloo region is therefore not recommended.

Contact

Anna Lewis – PhD candidate
Curtin University Sustainability Policy Institute, 3 Pakenham St, Fremantle 6160
Email: annarlewis@hotmail.com
Phone: +61 8 9266 9030

Co-supervisors:

Prof. Roy Jones
Prof. David Wood

Associate supervisors:

Dr Michael Hughes
Dr Tod Jones

* Campsites were grouped into one of four Clusters determined by the level of regulation, access, cost, facilities, camper demographics and activities.