Call for
REGISTRATIONS OF INTEREST

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

ROI Closing Date 2:30pm (WST) Wednesday 27 September 2017
ROI 1 243 2017

For more information or a site visit please contact Jacinta Overman on (08) 9219 9169 or Jacinta.Overman@dbca.wa.gov.au
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1. OPPORTUNITY

An exciting opportunity exists to develop a new ecotourism venture in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia. The State Government is calling for Registrations of Interest from investors interested in establishing an ecotourism accommodation facility within the Millstream Chichester National Park, approximately 120km south east of Karratha.

A Registration of Interest was previously released for two sites in the Python Pool area of the park. Registrations of Interest are now being accepted for a third site which has subsequently been identified at Palm Pool in the Millstream Homestead area of the park. Interested parties that qualified from the first Registration of Interest will be considered for the Palm Pool site.

Naturebank is a State Government initiative that prepares and releases land within the State’s conservation estates for the development of ecotourism experiences that maintain the area’s high environmental and cultural values. Naturebank is a partnership between Tourism Western Australia (Tourism WA) and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). By undertaking planning and pre-release clearances, the program takes much of the risk out of investor decisions on land uptake.

Western Australia offers extraordinary ecotourism product opportunities with high value natural and cultural experiences across its protected areas (national parks, marine parks and other reserves) including interaction with the unique wildlife and the world’s oldest continuous culture.

The Traditional Owners of this area, the Yindjibarndi and Ngarluma Aboriginal people, maintain strong cultural connections to their land and are highly supportive of sharing their culture through tourism. They are also involved in the management and future tourism planning of the park.

The park is a popular destination for campers and adventure travellers and located on a frequented travel route between the coast and the world-famous Karijini National Park. It presents a range of environmental features and assets unique to the Pilbara with both Aboriginal and European heritage.

This Registration of Interest process offers investors with the opportunity to develop an ecotourism accommodation facility at Palm Pool. The opportunity is being released by open competitive process.Registrations of Interest are invited from private sector developers who are interested in progressing this exciting opportunity and can demonstrate a business model that embraces responsible ecotourism practices and demonstrates a commitment to the environment and Aboriginal culture.
1.1. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

DBCA was created on 1 July 2017, following the State Government's decision to bring together the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, Rottnest Island Authority, Zoological Parks Authority and the former Department of Parks and Wildlife.

DBCA's Parks and Wildlife Service is the State Government agency that has the lead responsibility for conserving the State's unique plants and animals, and world-class network of terrestrial and marine parks and reserves on behalf of the people of Western Australia. For information please visit www.dbca.wa.gov.au.

Millstream Chichester National Park is vested in the Conservation and Parks Commission and managed on its behalf by the Parks and Wildlife Service of DBCA. Should a suitable applicant be found, authority to operate the venture will be by way of a commercial operations licence or lease pursuant to the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 and regulations.

1.2. The Pilbara Region

The Pilbara is an arid tropical landscape offering red mountain ranges dotted with white-trunked gums, sheer cliffs and deep gorges, vast spinifex laden plains and stunning blue seas speckled with islands.

It is an area where Aboriginal people have lived for more than 30,000 years, providing a rich cultural legacy. The region also makes a significant contribution to Western Australia's economy by delivering the majority of the State's four largest exports - petroleum, natural gas, iron ore and gold.
The presence of these large resource and energy projects ensures the region is well serviced with daily flights from Perth to/from Karratha, Port Hedland and Paraburdoo, also offering good flight connections to eastern Australian capital cities.

In addition, Port Hedland offers regular flights to/from Denpasar (Indonesia) which, while targeted to the local outbound market, offers an international connection option.

The State Government is committed expanding jobs and tourism through the diversification of industry in the regional Western Australia, to ensure sustainability of the State’s economy. A number of tourism product development priorities for the region have been identified to support growth of the tourism sector. These include diversification of short-stay accommodation in the region and opportunities for the development of quality, low impact nature-based accommodation experiences.

The Pilbara has traditionally been a self-drive destination for short holidays or extended trips, mostly for families/couples/elderly (aged 45 plus) interested in nature and the outdoors, and often travelling low key using camping and other low cost accommodation and largely self-catering. This is unlikely to change in the medium term. In the late 1990s and into the early 2000s the Pilbara offered a relatively buoyant tourism industry on the back of a strong self-drive visitor market and was actively packaged as part of longer bus/4WD tours (i.e. Perth to Broome or Darwin itineraries).
According to Tourism WA, for years ending December 2014/15/16, the Pilbara region attracted an average of 855,000 domestic and 51,7100 international visitors annually, accounting for approximately 8.5 million visitor nights. The average length of stay for visitors was approximately 9.4 days, which reveals a strong potential latent demand for accommodation. However these figures have been inflated by business/mining travel rather than leisure over this period.

The growth of a residential population in Karratha, Port Hedland, Dampier, Newman and Tom Price, and the current lack of holiday activities, presents an untapped opportunity to attract overnight visitors to the park. However incentives or customised packages (e.g. room configurations, activity programs or loyalty rewards) may be required to entice them, particularly outside of peak periods and/or to build repeat visitation.

The State Government encourages linking experiential products to support seamless, exciting and interesting holiday itineraries for visitors. For the Pilbara and its surrounding regions, the Warlu Way is a self-drive route extending to Broome which explores culture, landscape, heritage and nature on major roads. The route links the park to popular destinations including Karijini and Cape Range national parks.

Ecotourism accommodation has been developed along this drive route in Cape Range and Karijini national parks, which receive on average more than 242,000 visits per year and 207,000 visits per year respectively. Connecting these parks with others based in the Gascoyne and Kimberley will help to provide visiting adventure seekers with accommodation options and exciting activities that are sympathetic to the natural surroundings. The opportunity to develop ecotourism accommodation at in the park would diversify the accommodation options available and contribute to extending visitors’ length of stay and opportunities to package iconic Australian outback self-drive expeditions.

1.3. Park Management

2. MILLSTREAM CHICHESTER NATIONAL PARK

2.1. Tourism Overview

The park is a comfortable (less than two-hours) drive from Karratha and offers some of the best nature-based camping opportunities in the region. Covering an area of approximately 200,000 hectares around the Fortescue River – the heartland of the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal people – this lush oasis of deep gorges and palm-fringed rock pools provides a stark contrast to the surrounding landscape of rocky escarpments and rolling spinifex-covered hills.

The park has highly diverse flora and fauna due to the presence of permanent water and associated wetlands. More than 120 species of birds, 30 species of mammals, 150 species of reptiles and 500 species of plants can be found in the park. The current accommodation offered at the park consists of camping at the Millstream Homestead precinct. Additional accommodation options will attract other markets to the park, including those who travel through the Pilbara with minimal stops due to the lack of alternative short-stay accommodation options.

The existing environment, camp grounds and associated facilities in the park have been under growing pressure from visitation and the recreational demands of the increasing resident population of the surrounding Pilbara towns. Day visits to the park currently almost 40,000 visits per year and are expected to increase as Karratha’s population grows, and the sealing of the Karratha to Tom Price Road via Millstream will greatly improve access.

The benefits of this growing demand on any ecotourism accommodation facility in the park will be determined by pricing and the experiences offered, along with how it operates in association with other similar product providers in neighbouring destinations. The Millstream Chichester National Park and Mungarooona Range Nature Reserve Management Plan 2011 highlights the importance of the park for the Yindjibarndi and Ngarluma people.

The Jirndawurrunga Park Council has a strong focus on the involvement of local Aboriginal people in park management. The park’s management plan aims to “develop more opportunities for Aboriginal people to be involved in providing visitor services, facilities and contribute towards enhancing visitor experiences, therefore increasing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.” As a result, interested developers will be required to consult with representative Aboriginal groups and demonstrate how their proposal will provide opportunities for their involvement.
2.2. The Development Site

Palm Pool

Palm Pool is located on the north side of the Fortescue River a short distance from the historic Millstream homestead. It has gently-elevated terraced areas above the flood level line. These terraces sit with moderate-sized hills behind which have the form of the classic Millstream Chichester shape. This backdrop gives a sheltered and enclosed landscape feel.

The terraced area is generally broad, up to 150 metres in some locations and down to 50 metres in others. Mostly, this terraced area is flat or gently sloping to grades appropriate for development. The terrace elevation provides the height above the pool that affords views and seasonal flood protection. It will require defined and formed access points to allow safe and sustainable river access.

A seasonal drainage gully running from the hills behind splits the terrace into an east and west zone. This drainage gully is broad and wide and while seasonally dry would provide a physical and spatial separation between the two zones which could aid in separation of two different accommodation opportunities.

The location is typified by a consistent coverage of spinifex interspersed with white trunk eucalyptus on the terraces and melaleuca on the river’s edge. Closer to the river’s edge, taller trees provide ample shade and coverage for potential recreation use.
The pool is permanent with year-round usable water that appears unaffected by alluvial sand movement that shapes the nearby Crossing Pool. The pool allows for swimming, canoeing and kayaking due to it being calm and flat. Defined walk trails around the banks would provide an additional recreation activity.

The two zones could be utilised in the same development style or in different and varying opportunities, one providing for commercial accommodation, the other for independent campers.

**Proposed site envelope at Palm Pool**
2.3. Location

Climate

The Pilbara is classified as the arid tropics. Between October and April, temperatures rise above 40º Celsius and cyclones and local thunderstorms can flood roads and watercourses. The cool season, between May and August, experiences little rain, with daytime temperatures around 26º Celsius.

Visitation

Visitation to the Pilbara’s national parks peaks during June to August with shoulder periods April to May and September to October. Low season is the warmer months of November to March. During May to October, the park averages 3,740 visits per month and 872 visits per month during the low periods.
3. PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

It is a standard DBCA licence/lease condition that commercial operators are covered with a minimum AU$10 million public liability insurance. It will be a requirement of the successful applicant to obtain a minimum coverage of $10 million public liability insurance for the operations before a licence/lease is issued. This will need to include cover for all activities allowed by the licence/lease.

4. REGISTRATIONS OF INTEREST SUBMISSIONS

4.1. Point of Contact

All communications, requests for information or clarification of matters associated with the process should be addressed to the Tourism and Property Branch Coordinator, Jacinta Overman, using the contact details listed below.

Jacinta Overman
Tourism and Property Branch
Parks and Visitor Services Division
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
17 Dick Perry Avenue
KENSINGTON WA  6151

Telephone (08) 9219 9169

Email:  Jacinta.Overman@dbca.wa.gov.au

4.2. Site Visits

Site visits are welcome and may be requested through the Point of Contact.

4.3. Respondent Information

Organisations or individuals are invited to register their interest in pursuing discussions with DBCA for this Naturebank opportunity.

This process will be undertaken in 2 stages.

Stage 1 – Registration of Interest

This will allow applicants to demonstrate their background, experience and capacity to progress an ecotourism development, and will lead to more detailed discussions between the Department and qualified applicants, with the aim of developing a more detailed concept proposal.

Those who are suitably qualified will be selected to move to Stage 2, which will be fully explained during discussions with suitable applicants.

If you wish to register your interest at Stage 1, please provide your contact details and a brief outline of your business background; describing the skills, qualifications
and experience of key personnel in nature based tourism delivery. Your application should address the criteria below, which will be used to assess applicants to this Registration of Interest.

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<th>Organisation Name.</th>
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<td>Suitable qualifications and experience to deliver a quality ecotourism product.</td>
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<td>A business structure and philosophy that will meet triple bottom line sustainability (environmental, social and economic).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact Person.</td>
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<td>Postal Address.</td>
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Closing date for Stage 1: 2.30pm WST on Wednesday 27 September 2017.

**Stage 2 – Concept Development Proposal**

Applicants deemed suitable during Stage 1 will then be invited to discuss their concept with the aim of developing a concept development plan for consideration by the State Government.

More detailed site information will be provided to successful Stage 2 applicants to allow them to be fully informed of the site prior to developing a concept development proposal.
4.4. Response Date

RESPONSES CLOSE AND MUST BE RECEIVED BY
2:30 pm WST, Wednesday 27 September 2017

Late responses will not be accepted. For clarification get in touch with the Point of Contact if you are concerned your application will not be received in time.

Please forward your registration of interest for Stage 1 to:

Attn: Jacinta Overman
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

E-mail: Jacinta.Overman@dbca.wa.gov.au

Address: 17 Dick Perry Avenue
KENSINGTON WA 6151

Important Note: Late Submissions
The Department may, at its discretion, elect to accept a late submission where the department considers it appropriate in the circumstances and is satisfied that no applicant has been materially advantaged or disadvantaged.

No legal promise or contract
This document contains information about the Registration of Interest evaluation process. None of the information in this document, nor the result of the Registration of Interest process, shall give rise to any promise or contract, and no legal relationship shall be created between the State and an applicant at any stage prior to the grant of a licence.
5. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Disclaimer

Applicants must make and rely upon their own investigations and satisfy themselves in relation to all aspects of the project. The Department will not be liable for any incorrect or misleading information or omission to disclose information in relation to any part of this document and reference documents thereto.

Costs borne by applicant

All costs and expenses incurred by applicants in any way associated with the project, preparation and submission of applications, including but not limited to attendance at meetings, discussions etc., and through provision of any additional information required by the department, will be borne entirely and exclusively by the applicants.

Addendum/General Advice

Addendums and notices of General Advice may be issued during the process. These will be advertised via the Department’s website or email broadcast system.

Rights to amend process

The Department reserves the right to amend the process set out in this document by notice in writing to applicants who have not withdrawn or been excluded from the process. Such amendments may include cancellation, variation or supplementation of the process.

Absence of obligation

No legal or other obligation other than those associated with this section shall rise between the applicant and the Department unless and until formal project documentation has been signed and all necessary Ministerial approvals and consents have been obtained. The Department is not obliged to proceed with any application or applicant.

Cultural/heritage/environmental issues (if appropriate)

The Department takes no responsibility with respect to any site impediments including but not restricted to encumbrances on title, heritage status, native title claims and environmental, planning and other approvals. Applicants must satisfy themselves in regard to heritage status or native title claims with respect to the project area. Applicants will be obliged to comply with the requirements of the Environmental Protection Authority as these affect the project area.
Confidentiality

All information submitted by applicants will be examined and assessed by a panel appointed by the Department, its specialist consultant advisers and any other party from whom the Department may seek advice.

The confidentiality of any information submitted by applicants, which is not available to the public, will be respected except where disclosure is permitted or required by law.

All applicants will be required to maintain confidentiality with respect to their own bids and should not seek details of competing bids.