Department of Parks and Wildlife
and
Great Southern Development Commission

Call for
REGISTRATIONS OF INTEREST
FROM HELICOPTER OPERATORS TO ESTABLISH
TOURS TO THE HERITAGE LISTED BREAKSEA ISLAND
LIGHTHOUSE AND KEEPER’S COTTAGES AT HISTORIC
ALBANY ON THE SOUTH COAST OF WESTERN
AUSTRALIA

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

ROI Closing Date 3:00pm (WST) Tuesday 16 September 2014
ROI 1 243 2014

For more information please contact Matthew King on (08) 9334 0499 or Matthew.King@dpaw.wa.gov.au
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1. BACKGROUND

This document outlines an opportunity for a Helicopter Operator to establish and operate a tourism business offering scenic tours of the historic Albany harbour and coastal area including landing at the heritage listed Breaksea Island lighthouse and lighthouse keepers’ cottages. As a longer-term option, overnight stays in the lighthouse keepers’ cottages on Breaksea Island may be considered, however a proposal to operate overnight visits is not requested at this time.

The Department of Parks and Wildlife (the department) and the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) have identified a potential opportunity to develop a commercial tourism business offering helicopter scenic flights from one of Albany’s premier tourism attractions, Discovery Bay (formerly Whale World) including landing at the Breaksea Island lighthouse off the south coast of Western Australia. This Registrations of Interest offers a Helicopter Operator an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of a new tourism venture in the Great Southern. The opportunity to offer flights and day tours, including access to the newly restored lighthouse keepers’ cottages on Breaksea Island, is the first time this has been available for tourism visits.

In late 2010, the department and GSDC commissioned a Nature Based Tourism Feasibility Study for Breaksea Island. The recommendation from that Study was that the department seeks expressions of interest to operate a day visit tourism operation, and later test the viability of the market for overnight stays based on the experience and knowledge gained from the day visit program.

Parks and Wildlife and GSDC are now keen to progress the basic feasibility study to the next stage, where Helicopter Operators are requested to register their interest in the potential tourism venture. Within the last ten years, the Government has invested significant funding in repairing, restoring and maintaining the assets on Breaksea Island, as well as establishing appropriate management structures. Subject to a review of the operations and the resources to fit out the cottages to meet the requirements for commercial accommodation, there may be an opportunity to incrementally increase visitation to the island and incorporate overnight stays in the future.

Discovery Bay, one of Albany’s top tourist attractions with approximately 50,000 visitors per year, has also indicated its willingness for the successful applicant to base itself within its grounds. This would allow exclusive access to the many tourists who visit as well as cooperative marketing and booking arrangements. More information on Whale World and Discovery Bay can be found on the website: www.whaleworld.org
1.1. Department of Parks and Wildlife

The Department of Parks and Wildlife 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. Breaksea Island is vested in the Conservation Commission of Western Australia and managed on its behalf by the department. Should a suitable applicant be found, authority to undertake commercial tours to the island will be by way of a commercial operations licence pursuant to the Conservation and Land Management Regulations 2002 (CALM Regulations).

1.2. Great Southern Development Commission

The GSDC is the State Government’s regional development arm in the Great Southern region of WA. Its role is to build partnerships for regional prosperity by planning, coordinating and promoting sustainable development.

In the context of Breaksea Island, the GSDC will provide a selected Helicopter Operator with preliminary work that identifies potential target markets and cultural tourism expansion opportunities. The GSDC will also provide assistance with developing networks with local tourism operators. In this area, the GSDC’s capacity to be involved in direct commercial negotiations is limited and the assistance will therefore be one of provision of background advice and facilitating initial contacts.

1.3. Objectives

The objective of this Registrations of Interest process is to identify a suitable Helicopter Operator to provide scenic tours of the Albany coastal area including landing at the historic Breaksea Island lighthouse. The ideal attributes of a Helicopter Operator are:

a) A financially secure individual or organisation with appropriate levels of governance.

b) A demonstrated track record in operating a helicopter business, with experience offering scenic flights or tours to tourists.

c) Demonstrated excellence in the safe movement of people.

d) A commitment to cultural and environmental best practice and a willingness to work with key stakeholders to ensure a sustainable approach to the use of the natural environment.

e) Established networks in the tourism industry.

f) Willingness to involve local labour and businesses in the supply chain through the employment of a buy-local policy, including employment services, wherever possible.

g) Commitment to the provision of employment and training opportunities to local Aboriginal people.
2. THE GREAT SOUTHERN’S TOURISM OFFERING

2.1. Tourism Overview

Tourism is an important contributor to the Great Southern region’s economy. The region is located within the internationally recognised South West Biodiversity Hotspot, which helps stimulate investment in nature-based tourism. The area is also included in Tourism Australia’s National Landscapes program as part of the Great South West Edge. The National Landscapes program aims to achieve environmental, social and economic outcomes for Australia’s 16 most significant natural areas.

The Albany area features rugged and spectacular coastlines, abundant wildlife, rich Aboriginal and European cultural history and is a primary south coast tourism destination in Western Australia. Albany also holds a special place in the ANZAC story. 1 November 2014 will mark 100 years since the first convoy set sail from Albany carrying Australian and New Zealand troops to the First World War. Now, generations later, the ANZAC legend lives on and will be commemorated in the new National ANZAC Centre which will open in Albany in November 2014.

According to data released by Tourism Council of Western Australia (TCWA)\(^1\), the total value of tourism visitor expenditure in the Great Southern region of WA was valued at $295 million in the year ending September 2013.

The total number of visitors to the Great Southern region was more than 1 million in the year ending September 2013 with 1.92 million visitor nights recorded. The increasing demand for cultural, adventure and eco-tourism products, in recent years, places this type of tourism product in a good position to access some of these visitors.

Albany is the main visitor destination in the Great Southern region with 268,800 visitors in 2012. Albany has a strong tourism industry which is represented locally by the Albany Visitor Centre and is part of the Regional Tourism Organisation Australia’s South West. More information about tourism attractions in the area can be found on the following website: www.amazingalbany.com.au and www.australiassouthwest.com

2.2. Target Market

The target market for visitors to Breaksea Island can be categorised by Tourism Australia’s (TA) definition of Experience Seekers. These travellers are looking for unique, involving and personal experiences from their holidays, and are less affected by the traditional barriers to travel of distance, time and cost. They are more informed, interested and curious about potential travel destinations. Experience Seekers can be found among all age groups, income levels and geographic locations. More information on Experience Seekers can be found on TA’s website: http://www.tourism.australia.com/en-au/marketing/experience-seekers.aspx

\(^1\) Tourism Western Australia and Department of Regional Development 2012
2.3. Potential Breaksea Island Tourism Experiences

Breaksea Island would appeal to visitors seeking a unique experience of a visit to a former lighthouse complex on an isolated island that boasts a fascinating history. Experiences available on Breaksea Island include engaging with the history and heritage of the island and its former inhabitants, bird-watching, enjoying the views and taking in the sense of being on an isolated island.

These experiences would be combined with a scenic flight to/from the island with the possibility of extending flights to include other scenic coastal flights. For example, links with the adjacent islands in and outside of the King George Sound such as Michaelmas Island and Eclipse Island. Most of these islands have restricted visitor access. However, inclusion in a scenic flight, as a fly over or circumnavigation, will give visitors the opportunity to appreciate the greater ecosystem and biodiversity of the immediate region.

The potential tourism experiences available on Breaksea Island provide an opportunity for a Helicopter Operator to combine with, and expand upon, other tourism product in the region. There are natural synergies and potential with accommodation providers, whale watching operators and Discovery Bay Tourism Experience. The Discovery Bay Tourism Experience, which incorporates Albany’s Historic Whaling Station, Australian Wildlife and Botanic Garden, currently provides well presented, interpretive and realistic historical and heritage experiences to visitors. The Discovery Bay Tourism Experience provides an avenue for a potential Helicopter Operator to add value to the existing tourism product for the region.

There is potential to base (i.e. house and operate) a helicopter service to Breaksea Island from Discovery Bay, which is significantly closer to Breaksea than the Albany Airport. The advantage of this arrangement would be ready access to Discovery Bay’s extensive client group, which by definition, is attracted to marine- and eco-tourism. Discovery Bay is Albany’s tourism icon and attracts approximately 50,000 visitors per annum in its own right.

Moreover, subject to negotiation, the management of Discovery Bay has indicated a willingness to consider arranging “hangar” space (i.e. a suitable undercover area) and a landing area for the helicopter on infrastructure it controls or is negotiating to secure adjacent to the Historic Whaling Station. Also subject to negotiation, Discovery Bay may be prepared to sell Breaksea and other flights at its main ticketing counter in the museum itself, thereby freeing up a helicopter operator to focus on the flight experience.

In order to develop a range of tourism packages for Breaksea Island, potential Helicopter Operators may want to consider secondary value adding experiences such as environmental research and guided tours, local food and wine hampers, incorporation of additional coastal scenic flights and developing partnerships with existing local tourism operators such as accommodation, attractions and special interest tours.

The following section provides more detail on the tourism product available on the island itself.
3. CHARACTERISTICS OF BREAKSEA ISLAND

The following information on Breaksea Island is provided to help potential Helicopter Operators gauge their level of interest in starting a business to offer tours to Breaksea Island.

3.1. Geography

Breaksea Island is located approximately 12 kilometres south-east of Albany within King George Sound (8 km north-east from Whale World at Frenchman Bay) on the South Coast of Western Australia. The island, which is a ‘Class A’ Nature Reserve managed by Parks and Wildlife, is a granite outcrop, approximately three kilometres long and 500 metres wide, with an area of 103 hectares.

The island is recognised as a place of cultural heritage significance. The island has a well-documented history with significant roles played in the region, including maritime, whaling and military history. In 2010, a cultural heritage project was undertaken which saw the restoration, reinstatement and rehabilitation of the 1889 extension to the 1858 lighthouse, the two lighthouse keepers’ cottages and the repair of the 1958 jetty.

3.2. Breaksea Island Tourism Product

Breaksea Island’s lighthouse and two keepers’ cottages are set on top of the island, which is largely covered with low scrub. The cottages, which were restored in 2010, are rustic in character and include basic bathroom facilities. Further restoration works is required before the cottages can be used by overnight visitors. This project is currently not funded. The original 1858 lighthouse, which was extended in 1889, is now in ruins and was replaced as an operating lighthouse in 1902. The 1902 lighthouse is still used as an automated navigational aid to ships that use the naturally deep harbour of Albany.

The remains of the 1858 lighthouse are one of only two existing convict built lighthouses in Western Australia. Together the 1902 lighthouse, lighthouse keepers’ cottages, jetty, ancillary structures and rugged access track create a lighthouse station complex unique in Western Australia and possibly Australia. Due to its history, rarity and isolated seamark setting in King George Sound, Breaksea Island is highly valued by the local community.

3.2.1. Cottages

The two lighthouse keepers’ cottages are restored, as far as practicable, to their original condition however they are not yet up to standard for visitor use. As part of the restoration work completed to date, an allowance has been made to accommodate modern kitchen and bathroom facilities, and heating in the future. While the cottages are not luxurious, they could be described as comfortably rustic. Once complete, each cottage will have four main rooms: one room will be committed as a kitchen/dining room, leaving each with potentially three bedrooms or, preferably, two plus a lounge/sitting room.
The cottages can be made available for tours and use by day visitors through negotiation with Parks and Wildlife.

3.2.2. Lighthouses

The 1889 extension to the 1858 lighthouse has been stabilised, however due to the sensitive nature of the site, the area is currently only available for limited viewing. The 1902 lighthouse is still in commission as an automatically functioning facility, therefore restricting its availability for tours.

3.3. Access

The only access to Breaksea Island from the sea is by way of the existing boat jetty. Due to the large swell and safety risks, access by boat is restricted and is unsuitable for tourism purposes. Therefore, helicopter access is the only suitable method of transporting visitors to and from the island.

The departure points are likely to be either from Discovery Bay in Frenchman Bay or from Albany Airport. The trip to Breaksea Island takes approximately 10 minutes, depending on the departure point. However longer scenic flights are possible taking in the rugged coastline with spectacular cliffs, beautiful beaches, deep natural harbour and the historic forts precinct. Inland tours capturing fertile farming country, sprawling national parks and boutique wineries provide additional touring options.

3.4. Regulatory Considerations

Breaksea Island, as with the majority of islands managed by the department is classified as a ‘Class A’ Nature Reserve (No. 27614). As a ‘Class A’ Nature Reserve, certain restrictions are placed on land use and access to the island. Under the government regulations covering ‘Class A’ Nature Reserves, activities on the island must be fundamentally restricted to those that have occurred historically: that is, operating a lighthouse and, in more recent times, managing the island’s biodiversity.

Parks and Wildlife will work with a potential Helicopter Operator to enable appropriate access for day visitors to the island by way of a commercial operations licence. The department is required to consult with the Conservation Commission of Western Australia and gain the approval of the Minister for Environment to grant a licence. As previously noted, there may be an opportunity to incrementally increase visitation to the island and incorporate overnight stays in the lighthouse keepers’ cottages in the future.

Due to its heritage importance, Breaksea Island is listed on the WA State Register of Heritage. Therefore, all developments must be referred to the Heritage Council of WA for consideration and advice. The Heritage Council has, in partnership with the Albany Historical Society, worked closely with Parks and Wildlife in developing the protocols, guidelines and program for the restoration works which have been carried out on the former lighthouse keepers’ cottages and the extension to the 1858 lighthouse. A Heritage Conservation Plan exists for Breaksea Island and can be provided by the department to potential Helicopter Operators on request.
4. ACCREDITATION

Accreditation programs, such as the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP) and the Eco Certification Program, can assist commercial operators in meeting their responsibilities within protected areas, by ensuring visitors receive a quality experience through the provision of quality services, facilities and interpretation and by conducting the operations using industry accepted sustainable practices.

To encourage commercial tour operators to meet their responsibilities while operating within the conservation estate of Western Australia, accreditation programs will be an assessable part of the selection criteria. Applicants will need to demonstrate their commitment to becoming accredited with either ATAP or the Eco Certification Program (or their equivalents), within three months of a licence being allocated.

ATAP is administered by the Tourism Council Western Australia [telephone (08) 9416 0700, fax (08) 9472 0111, email accreditation@tourismcouncilwa.com.au or visit www.tourismcouncilwa.org.au]. Eco Certification is administered by Ecotourism Australia [telephone (07) 3229 5550, fax (07) 3229 5255, email info@ecotourism.org.au or visit www.ecotourism.org.au].

5. PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

It is a standard Parks and Wildlife licence condition that operators are covered with a minimum AU$10 million public liability insurance. It will be a requirement of the successful applicant that they obtain a minimum coverage of $10 million public liability insurance for the operations before a licence is issued. This will need to include cover for all activities allowed by the licence.
6. REGISTRATIONS OF INTEREST SUBMISSIONS

Applicants to this Registrations of Interest are required to address the objectives set out in section 1.3 of these guidelines. Applicants should respond to each objective in the order they are listed.

A Registration of Interest submitted by a Helicopter Operator will not constitute an offer of a licence, but will form part of the basis upon which Parks and Wildlife may select a Helicopter Operator to be invited to enter into negotiations for a commercial operations licence, at which time applicants will be required to submit a more detailed proposal.

6.1. Point of Contact

All communications, requests for information or clarification of matters associated with the process should be addressed to Mr Matthew King using the contact details listed below.

Matthew King
Policy and Tourism Branch
Parks and Visitor Services Division
Department of Parks and Wildlife
17 Dick Perry Avenue
KENSINGTON WA 6151

Telephone (08) 9334 0499

Email: Matthew.King@dpaw.wa.gov.au

6.2. Site Visits

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

RESPONSES CLOSE AND MUST BE RECEIVED BY
3:00 pm WST, Tuesday 16 September 2014

Faxed responses will not be accepted. Late responses will not be accepted. Do not assume that because it has been posted that it will get to the Tender Box on time. Faxed or electronic responses will not be accepted. Arriving at Parks and Wildlife Post Box on the closing day does not mean it will make it to the Tender Box on time. If posting, address the package as per the instructions in the guidelines. The words TENDER BOX should be highlighted. Do not assume that Express Post services from regional areas will be next day delivery. For clarification get in touch with the Point of Contact person if you are concerned your application will not be received in time.

All applicants must submit three copies of their response.

The response (as well as the outside of the envelope) should be marked:

Helicopter Operators to Breaksea Island
Registrations of Interest No. ROI 1 243 2014
TENDER BOX

and posted to:

Tender Box
Director General
Department of Parks and Wildlife
Locked Bag 104
Bentley Delivery Centre WA 6983

Hand delivered submissions must be delivered to the Tender Box, Main Reception Desk at:

Department of Parks and Wildlife
State Operations Headquarters
17 Dick Perry Avenue
Technology Park – Western Precinct
KENSINGTON WA 6983

Important Note: Late Submissions
Parks and Wildlife 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.
Although this document contains information about the ROI evaluation process, none of the information 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.
6.4. Respondent Information

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7. 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 distributed to all registered applicants and notification will be advertised via the Parks and Wildlife website or email broadcast system. If a proposed applicant is not registered, they risk not receiving addendums or notices of General Advice.

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.