

## Planning for the protection of Roebuck Bay

Community groups, government and industry have initiated a community based planning process for Roebuck Bay. A group called the Roebuck Bay Working Group (RBWG) aims to progress management planning for Roebuck Bay.

Located on the coast adjacent to Broome, Roebuck Bay holds a great diversity of cultural and natural heritage values for all peoples. Covering an area of approximately 66,000ha, much of it is comprised of intertidal mudflats that support a rich diversity of marine life. The mudflats, together with big tides, mangroves, red cliffs and aqua blue water, make Roebuck Bay a natural and visual wonder.

Interconnected with the rich biodiversity of Roebuck Bay is the powerful spiritual attachment to this coastal country by Aboriginal people for millenia. The Bay plays a significant part in the daily life of local Aboriginal people, not only by providing food but also in maintaining customary practices and linkages and in the maintenance of their culture.

The invertebrate-rich tidal mudflats make the Bay an outstanding and internationally renowned shorebird location. Roebuck Bay is the first place many migratory birds land during their annual migration from breeding grounds as far away as Arctic Siberia. The sheer numbers of birds qualified the Bay for listing in 1990 under the international Ramsar treaty for the protection and wise use of wetlands.

Through activities such as tourism, commercial fishing, aquaculture and the port, the Bay also contributes significantly to the commercial viability of Broome. Together with important recreational values, these uses have a strong reliance on the health (and biodiversity) of Roebuck Bay. However, with a rapidly growing and mobile population and the increase in tourism activity, pressures on the area are rapidly increasing.

With these increasing and often competing pressures comes a need for well-planned and coordinated management of the whole area – the Bay both land and sea, and its surrounding ecosystem. It is because of this need that people from different interests and backgrounds, have come together to form the Roebuck Bay Working Group (RBWG). Group members have a common goal:

**the protection of Roebuck Bay's values through community based management planning.**

Want to know more? Want to receive updates, or provide comments to the group? Contact the RBWG Secretariat Tanya Vernes [tvernes@wwf.org.au](mailto:tvernes@wwf.org.au) or ph: 08 9169 3903.

Groups represented on the RBWG currently include: Rubibi Traditional Owners, Broome Shire Council, Broome Visitor Centre/Australia's North-West Tourism, Broome Bird Observatory, Department of Conservation & Land Management, Department of Planning & Infrastructure, Environs Kimberley, Fisheries Department, Kimberley Land Council, Thangoo Station, World Wide Fund for Nature.