

New plan for island reserves

Courtney Fowler

March 7, 2015, 9:00 am



The new management plan has been established to protect the Barrow group nature reserves off the Pilbara coast.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob released a new environmental management plan last week that promises the ongoing protection of the Barrow group nature reserves off the Pilbara coast for the next decade.

The plan covers about 24,000ha to the low water-mark on Barrow Island and the nearby Boodie, Double and Middle Islands Nature Reserve.

Mr Jacob said the Pilbara islands were one of WA's most important conservation areas.

"The islands are world- renowned for their environmental values and distinct biodiversity, with 23 threatened species on Barrow Island alone," he said.

"Together with extensive cave ecosystems and important nesting beaches for marine turtles and migratory shorebirds, the diversity of habitat and fauna is unparalleled.

"The island's relative isolation and the application of a rigorous quarantine system have resulted in Barrow Island being the largest land mass in Australia that does not contain any introduced vertebrates and we are keen to protect this in the future."

Chevron has more than 300 existing environmental procedures on Barrow Island alone.

A Chevron spokesman said since 2010 the oil and gas giant had engaged with Department of Parks and Wildlife to have input into the development of this plan.

He said non-indigenous species represented the greatest threat to Barrow Island's native species.

"Chevron Australia has implemented a comprehensive quarantine management system to protect Barrow Island and its surrounding waters," he said.

"This is complemented by on- island inspection and surveillance activities as well as a control and eradication capability.

"We are pleased to see the management plan has been finalised and approved as it provides clear direction to Department of Parks and Wildlife on Barrow Island."

However, Greens MLC for the Mining and Pastoral Region Robin Chapple has slammed the Government's land management plan.

Mr Chapple described Barrow Island as a "poorly managed environmental disaster".

"Invasive species at critical levels, injured and threatened native species, loss of natural habitats due to concrete infrastructure, poorly managed quarantine - the list goes on," he said.

"There has been a large expansion of the project - it is now two or three times the size it was intended to be - and this management plan fails to address any of the subsequent issues caused by this expansion.

"As the Gorgon project continues to expand, so too will the threats to this pristine environment, in particularly the 24 species of endemic native flora and fauna."

The minister said the plan had been through an extensive consultation process.