



23 January 2020

## STATEMENT FOR THE ABC (PODCAST SERIES)

## PROPOSED LEARMONTH PIPELINE FABRICATION FACILITY

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## **KEY POINTS**

- Subsea 7 understands that Exmouth Gulf is environmentally important.
- We are committed to delivering the project in a safe and environmentally responsible way.
- The proposal is the culmination of more than three years' work and research by scientists and environmental and other experts into the social, economic and environmental aspects of the proposal.
- The results of this work have enabled us to make improvements to reduce the social and environmental impact.
- There will be a 12-week, no-launch period from August each year to protect migrating humpback whales and calves.
- Extensive safeguards will be taken during tow operations to safeguard marine life.
- The project will provide economic benefits for the local community and WA.
- This is **not** a "gas pipeline" project.
- Pipeline bundles will **not** be laid in Exmouth Gulf or the World Heritage Area.
- Pipeline bundles will **not** be dragged along the seabed.

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Subsea 7 has proposed the Learmonth Pipeline Fabrication Facility for a site 35km south of Exmouth in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia to build pipeline bundles for the offshore oil and gas industry.

Pipeline bundles contain electrical cables, communications, optic fibre cables, hydraulic systems, and in some cases heating or cooling systems, encased in an outer steel carrier pipe.

They will be built onshore and transported 40km to 100km offshore.

For three years leading up to the impact assessment document being submitted to the Environmental Protection Authority, Subsea 7 undertook and commissioned more than 20 independent studies into the social, environmental and economic impacts of the proposal and examined all available literature to understand the marine environment and the behaviour and migration patterns of its inhabitants, including whale sharks and humpback whales.

We have used the results of the published research, studies and surveys to make improvements to the project to reduce the environmental impacts and develop extensive environmental management plans.





Our aerial humpback whale survey was the first such survey conducted since 2004 and led us to committing to a 12-week, no-launch period from August every year to protect migrating humpback whales and their calves.

In addition, spotter planes will be used for all launches from March until the end of July each year.

The spotter planes will survey the tow route to record and report any whale sharks. There will be observers on the support vessels for all transport operations as an added safety measure.

If whale sharks are seen, the tow route or tow schedule will be adjusted accordingly.

The pipeline bundles are not dragged on the seabed through Exmouth Gulf and do not remain in Exmouth Gulf or any part of the World Heritage Area.

When bundles are transported through the Ningaloo World Heritage Area, they will be towed on the surface.

A transport route has been chosen that avoids reefs and shoals in Exmouth Gulf.

Subsea 7's proposal is for two, to a maximum of three, pipeline bundle launches each year. Based on two launches, vessels would be in Exmouth Gulf for a maximum of six days a year.

Pipeline bundles will be transported through Exmouth Gulf at very low speeds, from less than 2 knots (3.7km/h) to about 6 knots (11km/h) and not exceeding 8knots (15km/h). Average walking speed is 5-6km/hr.

Most of the work will be done onshore at a site that was formerly pastoral land. The area surrounding the site remains pastoral land.

Subsea 7 operates the only other pipeline bundle facility in the world, in Wick, Scotland. The site has operated for 40 years and has launched more than 80 bundles without incident.

The operation in Wick has become a valued member of the community and contributes to many social and environmental programs.

Subsea 7 wants to operate in the same way in Exmouth. An Economic Impact Assessment of the proposal found it would provide sustainable, long-term employment, economic growth and the chance to upskill the local community.

During pipeline bundle construction and launch, an average of 70 to 80 workers will be needed, with up to 120 during the peak period.

At Wick, Subsea 7 has provided local school leavers opportunities to undertake apprenticeship and graduate training programs and is committed to developing similar opportunities at the Learmonth site in collaboration with the Central Regional TAFE in Exmouth.