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For immediate release

## **Cable Beach turtle hatchlings to receive additional protection with two-month vehicle ban**

The Shire of Broome Council has resolved to prohibit vehicles from driving north of the rocks on Cable Beach from December 1 to January 31 to protect flatback turtle hatchlings.

Turtle nesting season is from October until March each year, with the Shire already having imposed restrictions to vehicle access to the beach at certain times during these months.

The unanimous decision to close the northern section of Cable Beach in December and January to vehicles altogether was influenced by consultation between the Shire and the Broome community.

In August, the Council considered research presented to the Yawuru Park Council (YPC) by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) – made up of representatives from the Shire, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and Nyamba Buru Yawuru – which showed that tyre ruts were having a harmful impact on the survival chances of turtle hatchlings.

The YPC called for the full closure of the beach to vehicles from December 1 to January 31 annually to further safeguard turtle hatchlings, but the Council decided to allow the local community to have its say on whether this should go ahead. The Shire received more than 700 written submissions with the majority in favour of banning vehicles throughout December and January.

Flatback turtles are native to Broome and special to the Yawuru people. They are also a threatened and vulnerable species and are therefore legally protected.

Dean Mathews, Vice Chairperson Yawuru Parks Council and Senior Project Officer in the Environmental Services Unit at Nyamba Buru Yawuru said protecting the threatened turtles nesting on the beach is “vital to their survival.”

“Protecting this area and reducing the vehicle impact through the hatching period will help create an optimum environment for the hatchlings to make their way across the beach to the sea.”

“Broome is one of the only places in Western Australia that this species breeds and where breeding is easily disturbed by human visitation. It is essential to do what we can, as early as we can to protect the area and increase the chances of this species survival.”

Shire President Harold Tracey said the turtles are also important to the wider community and a significant part of what makes Broome such a desirable tourist destination.

“But with the ability to drive on the beach also cherished by many locals and tourists alike, the decision to close it to vehicles wasn’t made lightly,” he added.

“There was plenty of anecdotal evidence about the damage that tyre ruts were doing to the turtle migration but to decide simply based on that would have been irresponsible. So it was important for DBCA to provide detailed, locally specific data that we could use to consult with the public.

“We can now say hand on heart that the evidence is there that we should be doing something to protect these beautiful little turtles at their most challenging time and the community agrees with that,” Cr Tracey said.

Emergency vehicles and those used for essential Council and Ranger services, and relevant licenced businesses will be permitted to operate on the beach when necessary.

Members of the public wishing to drive on to Cable Beach during December and January will still be able to do so at the southern end, near Gantheaume Point.

Cr Tracey said vehicle numbers at Gantheaume will be monitored to ensure there are no adverse effects on that area.

**ENDS**

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