

3.1 Economic sustainability - sustainable livelihoods are created, generating employment and financial benefits, to provide a clear demonstration of the economic value of protecting cetaceans. This can be achieved directly (through whale-watching, tour guiding, research and conservation, etc.) and indirectly (through employment in cetacean tourism related services, such as arts festivals, exhibitions and other cultural events) but should include a balance of jobs (i.e., should ideally not be overly dominated by low paid, informal work)

The area proposed for the Whitsundays Whale Heritage Site includes a group of 75 islands with fringing reefs and a vibrant tourism industry. The area provides jobs and recreational opportunities for the Whitsundays community. Cetaceans are a part of the marine ecosystem of the area and a highlight if spotted on any visit into the proposed Whale Heritage Site. Activities currently occurring in the area include boating, fishing, snorkelling, jet skiing, hiking and camping. Please note that these activities are controlled in the area and some are restricted to zones as per the marine park zoning maps and WPOM.

The Whitsunday Plan of Management clearly states (pg. 49) that whale watching as part of a tourist program is prohibited inside the Whale Protection Area. During whale season, many tour operators have chance encounters while on their regularly scheduled tours and in these circumstances, they behave accordingly under the rule and regulations of approach distances outlined in the Plan of Management until the whale(s) move on and they can resume their regular schedules.

Two operators in the Whitsundays that advertise Whale Watching tours: *Paradise Explorer* and *Whale Watching Whitsundays* conduct their product outside of the Whale Protection Area.