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Industrialisation Plans for Exmouth Gulf Back at Square One Multinational Terminates Pipeline Towing Proposal

Subsea 7's proposal to drag giant pipelines and chains through Exmouth Gulf and the Ningaloo World Heritage Area has been tossed back to square one, Subsea 7 admitted yesterday.

Its referral of the proposal to the EPA, begun in 2017, has been terminated and an entirely new referral must now be made.

"Apparently, the multinational's claim that major changes to its proposal were minor has failed," said Protect Ningaloo campaigner Jeremy Tager. "Those proposed changes would have resulted in significantly greater damage to the area than admitted by Subsea 7 and it appears clear that the EPA has refused to accept the company's claims."

"We are pleased and gratified that the EPA appears to have not accepted the absurd assertion made by Subsea 7 that the revised proposal would have had environmental benefits," Tager said.

This is a major blow to Subsea 7, which will now have to prepare and submit a new referral to go out for public comment.

"We expect the EPA will demand that the thousands of hectares of sea bottom likely to be impacted by pipelines and chains scouring the sea floor will now be fully and properly assessed. We also expect that the enormous areas from which the public will be excluded during launches and towing will be properly considered, particularly the idea that a single company has the right to exclude the public from a World Heritage area."

"Subsea 7's proposal seriously understated the likely extent of the damage its pipeline towing proposal would cause. That has now been exposed and Subsea7 need to answer the question of why they failed to properly identify potential impacts from the beginning."

Exmouth Gulf is an ecological wonder supporting hundreds of species of fish, many marine mammals and many threatened and endangered species such as sea turtles, sawfish, whales and sea snakes. It has globally significant mangrove forests as well as corals and sponges.

"It may be the most important resting place along the WA coast for humpback whales and calves to rest in preparation for the arduous journey to the Antarctic," Tager said, "with a significant portion of the WA whale population relying on its shallow and safe waters."

"This proposal would be a disaster for the natural and aesthetic values of the Gulf and would see the rapid industrialisation of the area if it is permitted. This is a win for the thousands and thousands of people all around the world who value the area for its beauty, wilderness and amazing marine life."