



Stakeholder perceptions of geopark establishment on Rottneest Island, Western Australia

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Rottnest Island: potential geopark



Western Australia's State Government has recognised the potential for geotourism to be developed as a valuable tourism opportunity, with Rottnest Island the only location named as a potential geopark location in *WA's State Planning Strategy 2050*.

Rottnest Island

- A site of significant local value and international interest
- Unique natural features including geological formations, flora, and fauna
- Protection as a Class A reserve
- History of Indigenous significance.



Stakeholder groups



Tourism Industry

- Business Owners
- Commercial Operators

Governing Bodies

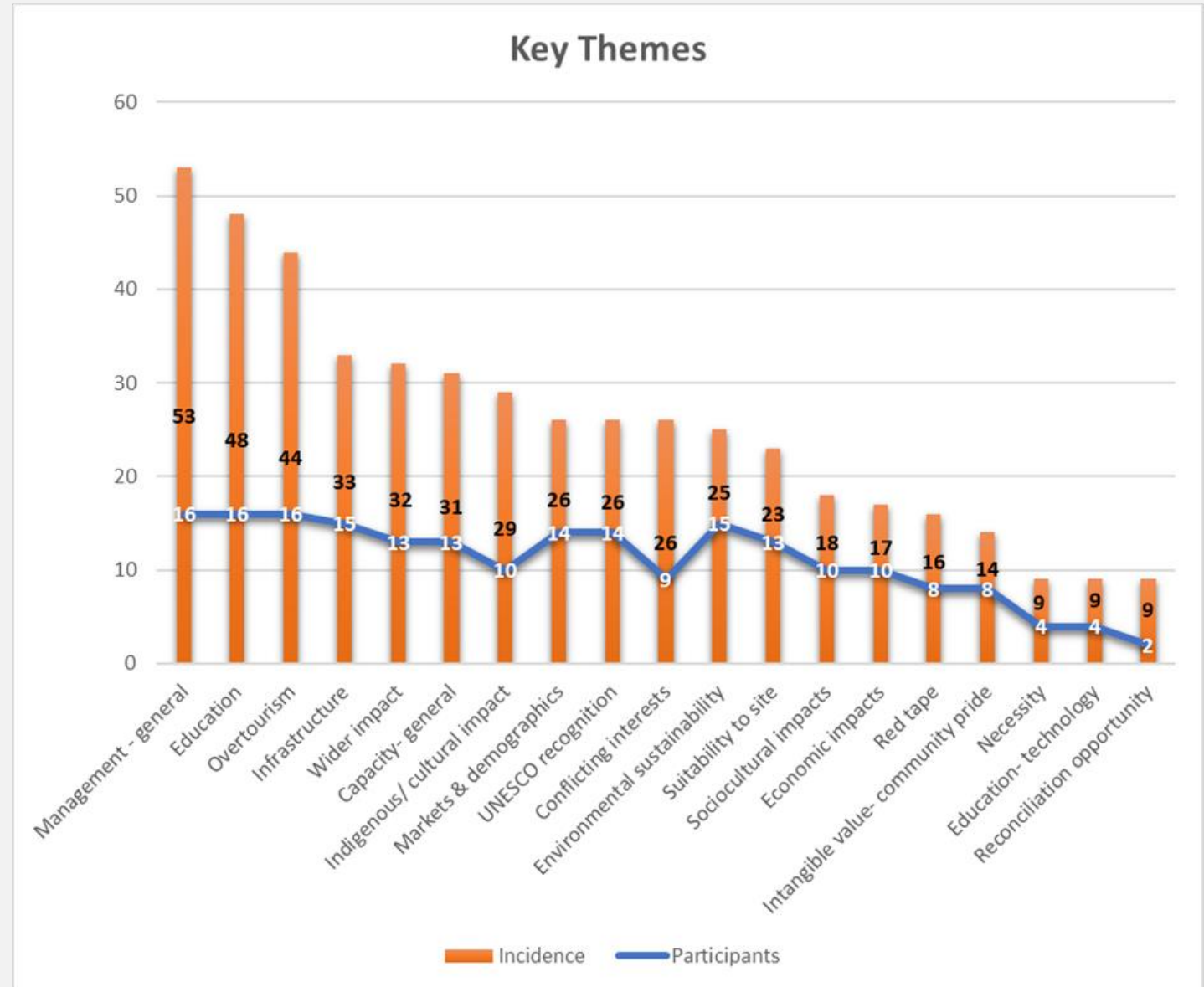
- Rottnest Island Authority
- Government Departments

Community Groups

- Indigenous community representatives
- Conservation groups
- Volunteer Organisations

Key Themes

- Education
- Wider impact
- Cultural impact
- Demographics
- UNESCO label
- Management
- Capacity



Education

“That's where geotourism comes into its own, you can provide scientific information, but in a way that the everyday person can understand, the formation of the earth, and the landforms”

-Community group stakeholder



Wider impact

Establishment of more geoparks

“Western Australia has unique opportunities that we are just not using yet for geotourism...I think this can be a template for us doing it in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Shark Bay, certainly Great Southern, Margaret River region too, you know, where we have fossils, coral reefs. I think that we've really got to push ahead on this because if we're going to get tourism to work for us, it is these niche markets”

- Community group stakeholder

Flow-on effects to other businesses

“If a tourist wants to come to Australia to go to Rottnest, that has obviously indirect benefits to airport, hotels, fall on effects cafes, restaurants etcetera”

- Tourism industry stakeholder

Cultural impact



“I think it's a huge opportunity for the island to recognise what took place historically, especially with the Indigenous culture, and to use that for an educational perspective”

-Tourism industry stakeholder

Market demographics

Attraction during fringe times

“I know one of the issues [Rottnest] always struggled with was economic sustainability. So that has more to do with not just the numbers but the distribution throughout the year”

-Governing body stakeholder

Types of visitors

- Pro-environmental visitors
- High-value tourist market

UNESCO label



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Management

- Conflicting interests
- Red tape

“The way Rottnest sits is the Authority reports both to the tourism department, Minister for Tourism, and Minister for Environment, so you do have a lot of coordination there, and a lot of different interests, it is a bit tricky”

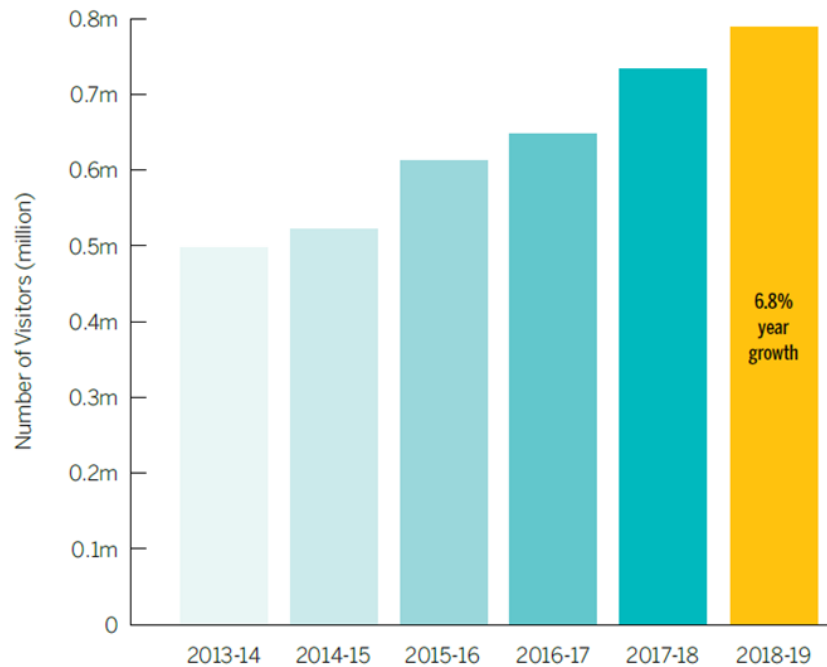
- Governing body stakeholder



Capacity concerns

Total visitation 2013-2019*


[Source: RIA admission data]



*Excludes trips made by RIA staff or volunteers

“During peak periods the island is really under-serviced in terms of how many people are there. It should be capped, while improvements need to be made to existing infrastructure”

-Tourism industry stakeholder



“I can't think of anybody that would be against the idea”

- Tourism industry stakeholder

“Overall, definitely a positive thing and something that I would certainly support”

– Community group stakeholder

Intention to support

“The mining group will see it as a threat”

-Governing body stakeholder

Practical implications



- **Further geopark development**
- **Identification of site challenges**
- **Sustainable development opportunity**
- **Domestic tourism post Covid-19**



THANK YOU