

NINGALOO REEF

A WORLD HERITAGE LISTING



BACKGROUND

Exmouth in Western Australia, is prominent in the media for the exploration of fossil fuels and gas extraction (principally for export) by Woodside.

The biotic diversity of Ningaloo reef is highly valued ecologically and for tourism. This coral fringe reef stretches for 260 kilometres and is close to the shore.

Woodside Energy is seeking to expand the scope of the project. On 8 May 2025 one of Woodside's subsea pipelines detected a spillage of 16,000 litres of oil. Visitors to Ningaloo can see oil rigs from the beaches.

THE INITIATIVE

Bridgette, a member of the Josephite Laudato Si' Action Plan Team, had heard so much about the natural beauty of Ningaloo that she wanted to visit and experience this world heritage listed area first-hand.

Bridgette said, "I had heard about plans for the North West Shelf Project to expand and continue operating the area until 2070. I had signed petitions against it. I wanted to visualise the area and get the impacts clear in my mind."

THE GOAL

Bridgette experienced snorkelling in PNG as awe inspiring and knew that Ningaloo would also be a similar spiritual experience. She wanted to be as close as possible to the underwater wonders and creatures before they are lost.

THE RESULT

Bridgette visited in July 2026 and went snorkelling and on a glass bottom boat. "The colour of the water was completely different to the blue we have in South Australia."

Bridgette missed seeing whale sharks because the weather was too rough. Just one week after her visit a whale died near the beach where she had snorkelled at Oyster Stacks. It was one of five who had been entangled in ghost nets.

REFLECTION

The destruction to the marine habitat through oil and other pollutants and trash can be overwhelming.

Immersed in a colourful, surprising underwater world alive with varied fish, turtles, dugongs, whales and coral formations reminded Bridgette how little we understand of the immensity of creation.