STATION STAYS

A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR PASTORALISTS TO DIVERSIFY INTO TOURISM

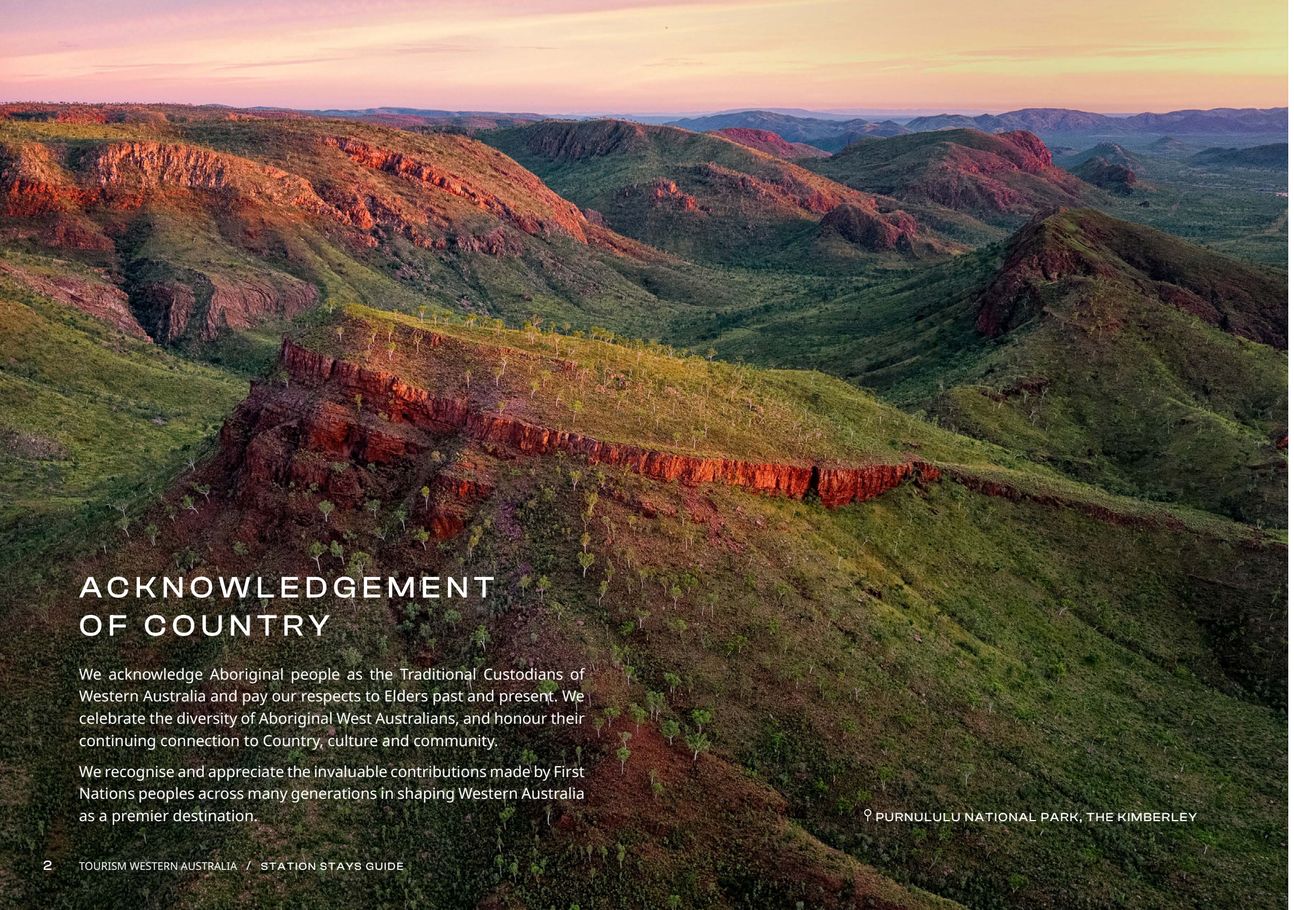


GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Tourism WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
WALKING ON A DREAM

CHEELA PLAINS, PARABURDOO



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of Western Australia and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal West Australians, and honour their continuing connection to Country, culture and community.

We recognise and appreciate the invaluable contributions made by First Nations peoples across many generations in shaping Western Australia as a premier destination.

PURNULULU NATIONAL PARK, THE KIMBERLEY

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION 4
2. IS TOURISM RIGHT FOR YOU AND YOUR PROPERTY? 10
3. ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM 17
4. NAVIGATING THE APPROVAL PROCESS 28
5. DEVELOPING YOUR STATION STAY 51
6. STATION STAY CASE STUDIES 73
7. KEY AGENCY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION 84
8. ABBREVIATIONS 86

Acknowledgements:
The information contained in this guide is for informational purposes only and should not be regarded as legal advice on any matter. It is recommended that independent legal advice is sought for your business where appropriate.
This guide was proudly funded by Tourism Western Australia and developed in consultation with SMA Tourism.
We wish to thank all contributors to this guide.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sheep and cattle stations have been the backbone of Western Australia's outback for more than 130 years. Over the past 30 years, many pastoralists have diversified into tourism, creating station stays, tours and experiences that celebrate their unique environment.

Station stays are a form of agritourism, which is defined as a type of experiential travel which connects people to product or produce, delivered on farming land through a direct "on farm" experience. Agritourism has its origins in income diversification and has quickly expanded to being a means for operators to share their passion for product, farming methods and land management as well as providing much needed social contact for regional and rural bound farmers.

Station stays provide a wide range of accommodation options, including fully self-sufficient campsites, caravan parks, self-contained cottages, and converted shearers' quarters. Visitors can also enjoy unique stays in glamping tents or restored historic homesteads and out-buildings. Some stations feature on-site cafés or restaurants, and others host functions and events.

Beyond accommodation, station stays offer unforgettable experiences that connect guests with the land and its heritage. These experiences are a subset of agritourism - experiential travel that links people to the products or produce central to a station's origins, delivered on the land by station workers. Examples include guided tours of stations and their cultural landscapes; hands on participation in pastoral activities; demonstrations or behind the scenes tours; and campfire conversations with station workers. Increasingly, agritourism also incorporates elements such as sustainability education, Aboriginal cultural experiences, and paddock-to-plate dining, reflecting growing visitor demand for authentic, responsible, and educational travel.

As more pastoralists explore tourism as a diversification strategy, this guide is designed to help you assess whether a station stay is viable; develop a competitive and sustainable concept; navigate necessary approvals; and ultimately build, deliver and market what you have to offer. The guide also includes case studies, in which pastoralists with established tourism ventures share their experiences, as well as contacts for further guidance and support.



WOORAMEL RIVER RETREAT, CARNARVON | GWOONWARDU



WOORAMEL RIVER RETREAT , CARNARVON | GWOONWARDU

1.1 WHAT IS A STATION STAY?

A station stay refers to the accommodation and experiences provided to paying visitors on a working livestock station. A station is typically a pastoral lease or freehold property running livestock over extensive areas of land, often in remote or semi-remote regions. This differs from a farm, which is generally smaller, more intensively managed, and may produce crops, livestock, or mixed enterprises closer to population centres.

For visitors, this distinction is important. A station stay is usually characterised by vast open landscapes, long distances between features, limited infrastructure, and a strong focus on pastoral operations and outback life. Guests should expect an authentic working environment rather than a resort experience.

A station stay can be flexible in scale, configuration, comfort and style, as well as in the experiences offered. However, most visitors are seeking an authentic outback experience that reflects the realities of life on the land.

While the rewards of a station stay are myriad for pastoralists and visitors alike, there are many challenges. Pastoralists thinking about diversifying into tourism need to consider not only the cost, approval process and time it takes to establish a station stay, but the ongoing commitment required to attract new and returning visitors and deliver the promised experience.

THERE ARE FOUR KEY COMPONENTS OF A STATION STAY

EXPERIENCES

Experiences can include guided or self-guided tours of the property, where visitors are given insights into the workings of the station; stargazing evenings or chats around the campfire; artesian baths; activities such as birdwatching and fishing; and special events, such as outdoor movie nights. Station stay experiences often involve storytelling to engage visitors in the history of the property and the area, as well as its many attractions. The more these experiences make the most of the surroundings, the more memorable the occasion, whether visitors are coming for a tour or staying a night or two.

ACCOMMODATION

The type of accommodation offered at station stays varies considerably, from self-sufficient camping grounds and powered sites to historic homesteads, where visitors may share the home, and often meals, with their hosts. Some station owners have adapted existing buildings, making the most of the property's heritage, while others have built new stand-alone cabins for guests. Many also offer glamping-style tents that place guests in the majesty of the outback with a touch of luxury. Most stations offer a mix of accommodation to cater for different tastes and budgets.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Research shows that food service is a very important part of the station stay experience. Given the remoteness of many stations, cafes and restaurants are popular additions and encourage visitors to stay longer. Some stations use their dining offerings to showcase produce grown or raised on the property, while others encourage guests to self-cater by providing areas to store and cook their own food. Some station stays also cater for functions, such as weddings or birthdays, creating memorable occasions for guests.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Facilities and infrastructure are essential foundations for a successful station stay. Ensuring reliable energy and water supplies, as well as appropriate wastewater treatment systems and dump points enables visitation. Good access to the property is also critical, with safe roads, suitable parking and clear signage to help visitors find the station and navigate around it. Then there are amenities for on-site staff as well as guests, such as camp kitchens, shower blocks and laundry facilities.

The way these components are configured will depend on the station's environment and capacity, including its location, character and scale, as well as the preferences of the owners.

Australian Regional Tourism has developed a National Agritourism Strategy and supporting documentation to support the growth of the agritourism sector, based on insights from more than 200 existing tourism businesses in the sector.



WOORAMEL RIVER RETREAT, CARNARVON | GWOONWARDU

1.2 HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

While this guide is comprehensive, the information contained within it is general in nature and you are encouraged to seek your own personal advice on your specific business requirements from the relevant government agencies, business planner and/or your Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO).

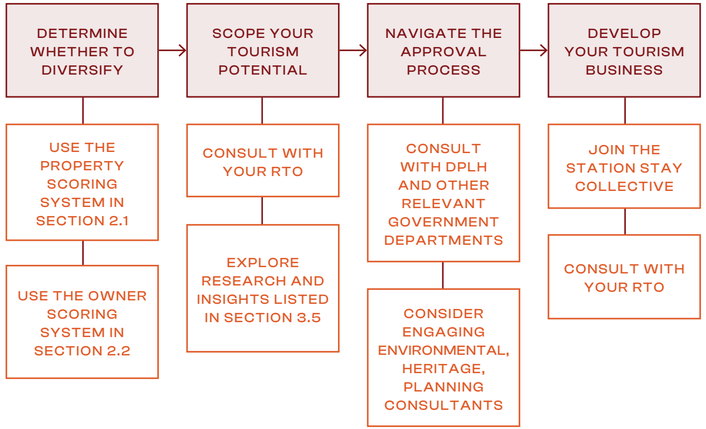
At the back of this guide are five case studies of West Australian station stays which brings to life the lived journeys, learnings and key lessons as they have diversified into successful agritourism station stay operations.

This guide has been structured to reflect the tourism development process for a pastoral business.

It will help you to:

1. determine whether to diversify into tourism
2. scope your tourism proposal
3. navigate the approval process
4. develop your business

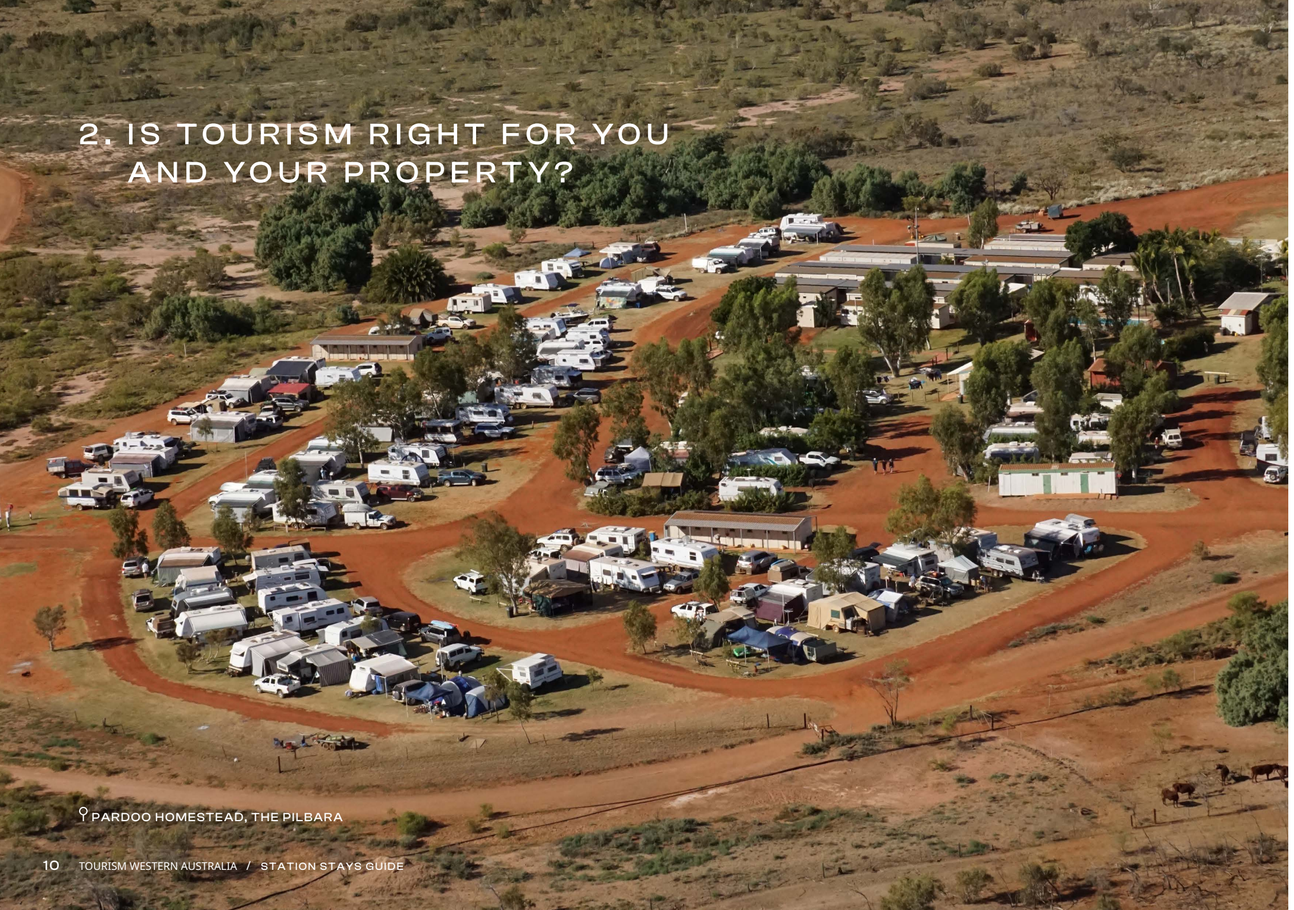
The development process and sources of assistance:





CHEELA PLAINS, PARABURDOO

2. IS TOURISM RIGHT FOR YOU AND YOUR PROPERTY?



PARDOO HOMESTEAD, THE PILBARA

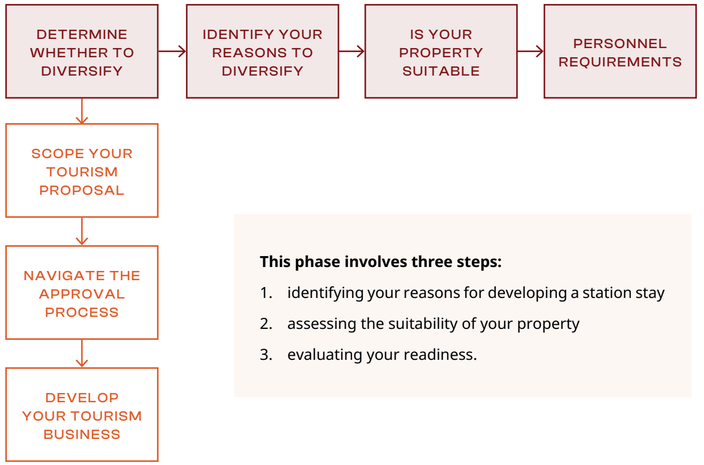
2.1 IDENTIFY THE REASONS FOR A STATION STAY

Station stay operators have shared a variety of motivations for diversifying into tourism, with some evolving over time. The key reasons are outlined below, starting with the most frequently mentioned.

DIVERSIFY THE PROPERTY'S INCOME STREAM

The future viability of pastoral businesses in Western Australia is a complex issue with challenges and opportunities. While some businesses face significant financial constraints and rangeland degradation, others are finding success through diversification, innovation and partnerships. The key is achieving a balance between economic viability and ecological sustainability. In response to declining revenue from pastoral operations, some businesses have chosen to diversify into tourism, creating another income stream to offset losses.

Phase 1 – Steps to determine whether to start a station stay:



This phase involves three steps:

1. identifying your reasons for developing a station stay
2. assessing the suitability of your property
3. evaluating your readiness.

DESTOCK THE PROPERTY AND TREAD MORE LIGHTLY

Some pastoralists want to reduce pastoral activity and its pressure on the land. Tourism revenue can contribute to replacing income lost from destocking or transitioning from sheep to cattle. Property owners also identify that the new revenue stream supports weed and feral animal control, land rehabilitation, and the reintroduction of native species. While some pastoral activity continues, these operators find visitors are interested in the greater focus on sustainability and the restoration of natural landscapes.

HELP OTHERS CONNECT TO LIFE ON A PROPERTY

Proud pastoralists often want to share their land with others. Diversifying into tourism enables visitors to experience the property's natural and cultural landscapes, while gaining insight into the realities of a remote, semi-self-sufficient lifestyle. Guests can also learn about conservation efforts, sustainable land management practices, and the vital role agriculture plays in supporting communities and shaping regional economies.

MAKE CONNECTIONS (COMBAT ISOLATION)

The remote location of many stations can make it difficult for pastoralists to meet and spend time with others. Tourism brings visitors to the doorstep, enabling pastoralists to meet new people and reunite with returning guests. Some enjoy hosting campfire chats or dinners at their homestead for the conversations and shared stories.

BUILD A BRAND FOR STATION PRODUCE

Tourism brings customers to the property, giving them the opportunity to see firsthand how quality products, such as beef, are produced. Experiencing and tasting the product on-site helps build trust, strengthens the brand, and often turns visitors into lifelong advocates. This same principle underpins the success of winery cellar doors: the stronger the brand connection, the stronger the business.

OFFER MORE VARIETY IN ROLES

Not everyone living on a property wants to focus exclusively on traditional pastoral activities. Tourism enables pastoralists to explore other business opportunities, learn new skills, and find different ways for everyone to contribute. Pastoralists can divide roles according to interest and expertise, with some team members leading the tourism and service side of the business while others manage livestock operations.

GIVE YOUNG ADULTS REASONS TO STAY

Children who grow up on a station often leave to seek different opportunities once they reach adulthood. Tourism offers a range of appealing roles at home. Property owners have reported adult children staying on or returning to the property to work in the tourism business.

SUPPORT THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

Station stays have benefits well beyond their boundaries. They support the broader regional economy in several ways, including:

- providing accommodation for travellers in remote areas where there are limited alternatives
- providing accommodation for visitors to nearby attractions
- providing employment for locals
- supporting opportunities for Aboriginal people, through Traditional Owner-led cultural experiences and employment within the station stay business
- generating flow-on economic benefits to the neighbouring businesses and nearby community



BULLARA STATION STAY, EXMOUTH



PARDOO HOMESTEAD, THE PILBARA

BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR REASONS FOR DIVERSIFYING INTO TOURISM

It is important to understand why you are considering tourism, as this will shape the type of station stay you create, the customers you aim to attract, and the roles you take on within the business. When your tourism venture aligns with your motivations, you are far more likely to enjoy the work and feel satisfied with the outcomes.

> "THE TOURISM PART OF THE BUSINESS IS A SOLID ENTITY, EMPLOYING PEOPLE, GENERATING SIGNIFICANT RETURNS AND CREATING A MORE DIVERSIFIED OFFERING TO LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL VISITORS."
>
> Monica Chetty, Pardoo Wagyu

2.2 IS YOUR PROPERTY SUITABLE?

Does your property have the strengths needed to make a station stay successful? If not, the journey could be harder, cost more and take longer to become viable.

Use the tool below to score your property's readiness for tourism.

Station stay readiness tool:

PROPERTY STRENGTHS SUPPORTING DIVERSIFICATION INTO TOURISM	MAXIMUM POTENTIAL SCORE
The property is already a tourist destination. Consider the following: Significant natural features and/or a water body that could motivate people to stay on your property; existing informal visitation; whether these features are year-round or seasonal; and whether they are unique, rare or different and stand out in a competitive tourism landscape.	/5
The property is close to a major drive route or tourist attraction. Consider the following: Significant natural features, national parks or heritage sites nearby; whether your property is enroute to a major tourism town/region; easy to access; and whether your property could be part of a broader regional itinerary.	/3
There is significant opportunity to create an experience that could encourage people to stay for more than one night. Consider the following: Thermal or mineral springs; cultural sites and stories; locally produced food and drink; places with historical significance; native wildlife; farm animals people can safely engage with.	/3
The property already has utilities (eg. power, water, waste management) that can support a station stay or minimise the need to develop new infrastructure.	/2
There are safe hard-roofed buildings that could be adapted to provide visitor accommodation or facilities. Or there is space for campsites.	/2
TOTAL POTENTIAL SCORE	**/15**
Your property may present limited tourism appeal. You may wish to explore other diversification options.	0 - 4
There is potential. Professional guidance is recommended to identify viable tourism experiences and address infrastructure or market gaps.	5 - 10
Your property shows strong potential for station stay tourism. Engaging a tourism professional can help refine your offering.	11 - 15



CHEELA PLAINS, PARABURDOO

2.3 ARE YOU AND YOUR TEAM PREPARED?

Do you and your team have the skills and strengths needed for a successful station stay? Do you understand the potential resources needed to manage and service visitors to your property? If there are gaps, that's okay – understanding them early means you can plan for support and set yourself up for an enjoyable, rewarding experience. The following tool will help identify your strengths, as well as areas to improve, before you take those exciting first steps into tourism.

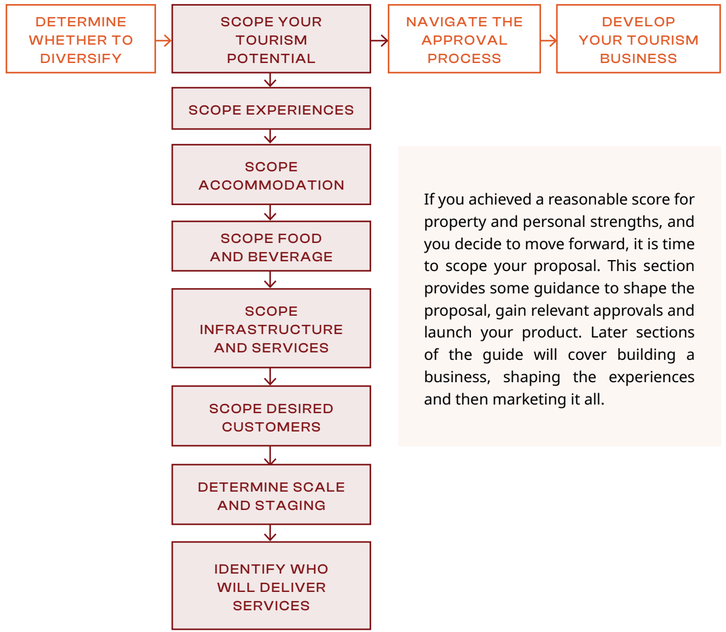
3. ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM

PERSONAL STRENGTHS SUPPORTING DIVERSIFICATION INTO TOURISM	MAXIMUM POTENTIAL SCORE
You are genuinely happy to host people on your property: - You want to share what is special about it.	/5
You are happy to provide customer service and have a positive demeanour, recognising that catering for guests is a 24/7 commitment: - Helping people have a great time feels good to you.	/4
If you face challenges outside your skills and experience, you are comfortable asking for help: - You can justify/are able to employ people to fill gaps – pride won't get in your way.	/3
You are confident in developing new visitor experiences that reflect the authenticity of your property and meet the needs and interests of your guests.	/3
You are happy to share stories about your property, over and over again, without losing enthusiasm.	/2
You are a believer in making the business successful enough to employ people to work in the business so you can work on the business.	/2
You have innovation skills to create and adapt visitor experiences and/or facilities that create unique attributes and/or reduce costs.	/2
TOTAL POTENTIAL SCORE RESULTS	**/21**
Your property may not present strong tourism appeal. Reconsider or explore other diversification options.	0 - 6
There is potential. Professional guidance is recommended to identify viable tourism experiences and address infrastructure or market gaps.	7 - 14
Your property shows strong potential for station stay tourism. Engaging a tourism professional can help refine your offering.	15 - 21



MELANGATA STATION, YALGOO

Phase 2 – Steps to scope a tourism proposal:



If you achieved a reasonable score for property and personal strengths, and you decide to move forward, it is time to scope your proposal. This section provides some guidance to shape the proposal, gain relevant approvals and launch your product. Later sections of the guide will cover building a business, shaping the experiences and then marketing it all.

3.1 ASSESSING THE EXPERIENCES

Pastoral tourism is a form of agritourism that invites visitors to connect with the land, the lifestyle, and the people who care for it. At its heart, it's about sharing the authenticity of the property.

Start by exploring what makes your station special. A unique story can make the station experience extra special.

- What aspects of the pastoral operations might interest visitors?
- Are there interesting and/or attractive natural features on your property?
- Are there interesting cultural or historic elements?

What can you share about these attributes that will engage others?

- What stories can you tell about each of them?
- What is interesting about each story?
- Can you make the stories personal, such as linking them to previous owners, or your own background?
- Can any of the stories be linked to a bigger picture, such as sustainable food production, climate change, land rehabilitation or species recovery?

How can these attributes and stories be converted into an experience?

- How might tourists access them (driving, walking, horse, bike, drone)?
- How might tourists learn about them (guided tour, self-guided tour, interpretive and wayfinding signage, immersive/interactive experience, phone app, evening presentation, demonstration, workshop)?
- How could you enhance the experience (include humour, create a challenge, mystery or competition, or perhaps an imaginative story)?

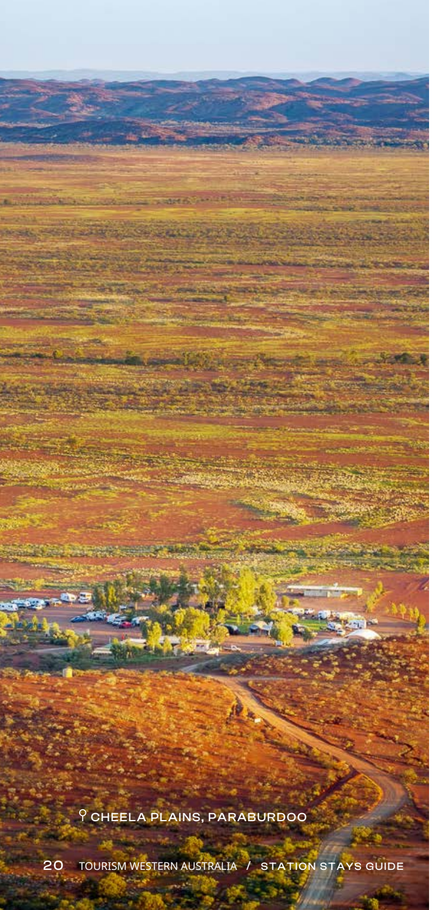
The greater the variety of experiences, the longer guests will want to stay and the more profitable the business becomes. Think about the types of experiences you could offer.

- What is compelling enough to draw people in, no matter what the weather is like?
- Could you offer wellness activities, such as artesian spas or yoga, in unusual locations?
- Do you have the capacity for local foraging and cooking classes?
- What about evening activities, such as storytelling, stargazing, wildlife viewing with night goggles?
- What experiences could be offered to reflect each season?

Try to offer a mix of experiences that can be led or carried out independently/self-guided. Include experiences that connect guests to pastoral activity - not only will it give visitors insight into station life but it is also a condition of your diversification permit.

"YOUR DAY TO DAY IS EXCEPTIONAL TO OTHER PEOPLE. FARM LIFE MIGHT BE YOUR NORMAL BUT THE SIMPLE EVERYDAY PROVIDES GENUINE WONDER AND DELIGHT FOR OTHERS."

Enabling Agritourism,
Australian Regional Tourism Ltd



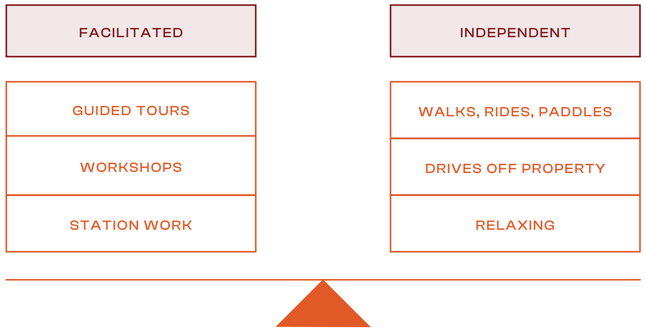
CHEELA PLAINS, PARABURDOO

3.2 ASSESSING THE ACCOMMODATION

How authentic, comfortable and unique is an overnight stay going to be on your property? Consider the list below and ask yourself what would work best.

It could be a mixture of accommodation:

- rustic campsite in a remote area
- campsites and caravan sites with power, water and amenities
- pastoral buildings adapted for simplicity and self-sufficiency
- pastoral buildings adapted for comfort and indulgence
- homestead rooms where guests share space with the hosts
- new building(s), such as rammed earth, mud brick or straw bale
- glamping, bubble tents, shipping containers.



3.3 ASSESSING INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Behind every successful station stay is a well-planned network of infrastructure and services that supports the visitor experience and day-to-day operations. Tourism activities require more than just a scenic location; they depend on reliable systems and thoughtful planning to ensure safety, comfort and sustainability.

You should consider the following infrastructure and logistics before getting too far down the track.

- **Roads and vehicle access:** Assess whether roads are suitable for customer vehicles, including two-wheel drives, caravans and campervans. Identify safe and accessible parking areas for guests. Consider the maintenance required to upkeep roads with increased usage.
- **Staff accommodation and welfare:** Plan where staff will live, eat and take time off. Consider whether meals will be provided, and what recreational options are available during downtime.
- **Water supply:** Determine the source of water for drinking and washing. Consider storage capacity and whether treatment is required to meet health standards.
- **Power supply:** Evaluate whether the current power system is sufficient. Consider upgrades or the integration of renewable energy sources such as solar or wind.
- **Wastewater management:** Identify how wastewater will be treated and where it will be safely discharged or reused.
- **Solid waste management:** Plan for the disposal of general waste. Explore opportunities for recycling or reusing materials to reduce environmental impact.
- **Operational facilities:** Ensure there is adequate space for storage, maintenance and laundry services. A dedicated shed or utility area may be required.
- **Visitors' pets:** Consider whether animals, particularly dogs, can be safely and appropriately accommodated on the property, and communicate any restrictions clearly to guests.
- **Dump points:** Determine whether a dedicated dump point is required for guests travelling with caravans, campervans or RVs. Ensure it is safely located, compliant with environmental standards, and easily accessible without disrupting other operations.
- **Communal camp kitchen:** Assess the need for a shared kitchen facility for guests, ensuring it is equipped with appropriate appliances, food safe preparation areas and waste disposal systems. Consider cleaning schedules and how usage will be managed during peak periods.
- **Mechanical services:** Consider whether guests may require basic mechanical support while travelling, such as minor vehicle checks, replacement tyres and emergency repairs.



RESEARCH SHOWS THAT GREAT FOOD, WINE, AND LOCAL CUISINE IS A MAJOR FACTOR INFLUENCING HOLIDAY DECISION MAKING FOR MANY TRAVELLERS

According to Tourism Australia

WOORAMEL RIVER RETREAT, CARNARVON | GWOONWARDU

3.4 ASSESSING THE FOOD AND BEVERAGE EXPERIENCE

Good food and beverages add to the visitor experience, particularly if food is produced on your property and can be served in an attractive setting. What will it look like at your property?

- Everyone self-caters, brings their own food and cooks it themselves.
- There is a communal camp kitchen and dining facility that brings self-sufficient people together.
- There will be a café serving good coffee, cakes, and perhaps lunch.
- A restaurant, perhaps in an unusual building or outdoor setting.
- Your station stay will showcase local produce.
- You will host special event nights in shoulder periods.
- You will include dinner and some kind of entertainment one or two nights a week.

3.5 IDENTIFYING THE IDEAL CUSTOMER

Precious resources can be wasted trying to attract and satisfy everyone. It is more effective to focus on delivering exceptional value to a clearly defined audience.

Ask your RTO about target markets in your area and get their advice on who might be the best fit for your station stay. Extensive research is available on domestic and international visitors, their travel styles and desired experiences. This will help build a profile of consumers who may be interested in your station stay and help you identify the markets to target.

Explore Tourism WA's Research and Insights for latest visitor facts and figures, including:

- domestic market profiles
- international market profiles
- key cultural considerations
- international market videos.

Other sources of useful information include:

- Tourism Australia
- Tourism Research Australia
- Australian Bureau of Statistics

The *Visitor Experiences and Expectations Research* (VEER) found the top three reasons international visitors want to travel to Western Australia are nature-based; the beaches and coastal scenery, unique natural sights, and pristine natural environments. Domestic visitors are also attracted to our beaches, nature-based activities, food and wine, as well as seeing animals in their natural environment.

Start with the people who want to experience station stays more than others. Having a target market doesn't mean turning visitors away, but it does mean:

- shaping accommodation and experiences to meet the needs of the target market first and foremost
- capturing quality, appropriate imagery and writing a marketing pitch to meet the needs of your target market first and foremost
- ensuring you remain authentic to your offering.

Rather than focusing on where they live or how old they are, it is more useful to think about what the ideal customer might like to do and see, how long they might stay and how much they might spend during their station stay. When selecting a target market, consider not only the country visitors are coming from, but also their travel style and market behaviours. Think about access to the property, as this influences potential target markets.

- Lengthy unsealed roads in poor condition limit markets to the more self-sufficient campers.
- Shorter, unsealed roads in good condition broaden the market to families and early retirees.
- Bitumen roads invite older grey nomads and time-poor couples, as well as fly and drive markets from interstate and overseas.

Once you have chosen a target market, go back to the scoped product to check if it is likely to respond to that market's needs and desires.

3.6 DESIGN PHASE

DETERMINING SCALE AND STAGING

Larger or more complex station stay proposals may require consultation with tourism developers, landscape planners, architects, town planners or other service providers to assist with the required approvals.

With limited funds, the tendency is to start small and as affordable as possible. But if demand outstrips supply, will you have the capacity for expansion? Many established station stay operators say it would have been better to plan for something bigger from the outset, so that expansion did not require moving infrastructure later.

Create a staging plan and cluster what could be added every few years. The staging could evolve your station stay from a simple low yield to a more sophisticated high yield operation over time. Think big, even if you are starting small.

Example of a staging plan that includes main infrastructure and services in Stage 1

YEAR 1 - 3

- Self-guided tour of property; homegrown beef barbecue and campfire chat
- 40 powered campsites, amenities building, camp kitchen
- New bore, water tanks, wastewater system, solar panels and battery for 100 guests

YEAR 4 - 8

- Mineral spring soak tubs, wildlife and cattle tracking (via remote technology)
- Café serving breakfast and barista coffee
- 10 glamping tents with open air ensuites

YEAR 9 - 12

- Adapted shearers quarters to 3-star self-contained rooms
- Convert café to restaurant, signature dish using homegrown beef (eg. burger/roast/barbecue night), cooking classes

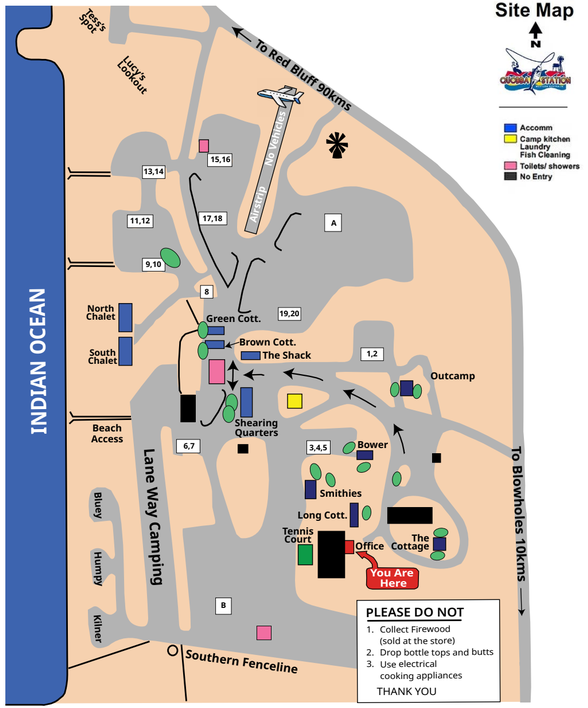
SITE AND BUILDING DESIGN

Start with a site plan. Locate elements to capitalise on property strengths and avoid limitations and risks. Draw a concept map to show where everything could be placed, so nothing needs to be dismantled and moved down the track. Once the layout looks workable, engage a design professional to prepare a scaled plan. It could be adapted as a visitor map.

Next comes design for structures such as accommodation, amenities, kitchens, a café or restaurant.

- If you have limited awareness of the approval process, pause and take your plan to a representative of the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH), representing the Pastoral Lands Board (PLB) and the Local Government Authority (LGA), for a pre-lodgement meeting (see section 4.2). Assuming the outcome is positive, continue to address the building design.
- If you have a reasonable understanding of the process, you could prepare a high-level draft of your building designs and take the plans to the approval agencies for a pre-lodgement meeting to seek preliminary feedback.

Either way, you will need to develop a concept plan and building designs that can be assessed and approved by the relevant authorities. This will require the engagement of an architect and possibly a landscape planner.



Example of a site plan for an existing station stay (Quobba Station)

3.7 REGISTER THE BUSINESS

DETERMINE BUSINESS STRUCTURE

It is suggested that your tourism business be a separate business entity to the pastoral business. Determine what type of business structure to set up. In general, a business structure can determine:

- the licences required
- the amount of tax to pay
- whether you are considered an employee, or the owner of the business
- your potential personal liability as the owner
- the amount of control you have over the business
- ongoing costs and the amount of additional administrative work for the business.

Consult with an accountant, lawyer or business advisor and use the following handy resources:

- Business structures
- Work out your business registrations

Alternative business structures to consider

BUSINESS STRUCTURES	CONSIDERATIONS
SOLE TRADER	• The simplest structure, easy and affordable to establish • Provides the owners full control, but they are also legally responsible for everything, including debts and losses
PARTNERSHIP (GENERAL, LIMITED, INCORPORATED LIMITED)	• Made up of two or more people who distribute the income or losses between themselves • Partners are jointly liable for the business' debts and obligations • Need a written partnership agreement in place to clarify each of the co-owner's rights, responsibilities and obligations
COMPANY	• Distinct legal entity, separate from its shareholders or officers • Suits those who expect their business income to be highly variable and want the option to use losses to offset future profits • Limits owner liability because it is a separate legal entity. Your only financial obligation is to pay the company any amount unpaid on your shares if you are called on to do so. Company directors, on the other hand, may be held personally liable if found to be in breach of their legal obligations
TRUST	• An individual or company carries on business for the benefit of other people (the beneficiaries) • It can be more tax effective than other options

REGISTER YOUR STATION STAY

There are steps you need to take to register the business, though these can vary depending on how you structure your station stay.

- Apply for an Australian Business Number (ABN). There are no costs to register for an ABN, but applications can take up to four weeks.
- A tax file number (TFN) is required for all partnerships, companies and trusts to report business income and deductions to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Applications are not required as it is automatically issued when registering for an ABN as a partnership, company or trust.
- Sole traders can use their personal TFN for both personal and business matters.
- An ABN is required to register a business name. This is managed by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).
- Registering a business name doesn't stop other businesses from using it for their products or services. To protect the business name, consider applying for a trademark through IP Australia.
- If you are operating as a company, this must be registered under the *Corporations Act 2001*.

The Australian Government has developed a Business Registration Service to help with the necessary registrations for setting up a business. Members of the Tourism Council Western Australia (TCWA) can access a Tourism Toolbox that guides this process.



WOORAMEL RIVER RETREAT , CARNARVON | GWOONWARDU



4. NAVIGATING THE APPROVAL PROCESS

QUOBBA STATION, MACLEOD

4.1 THE BIG PICTURE

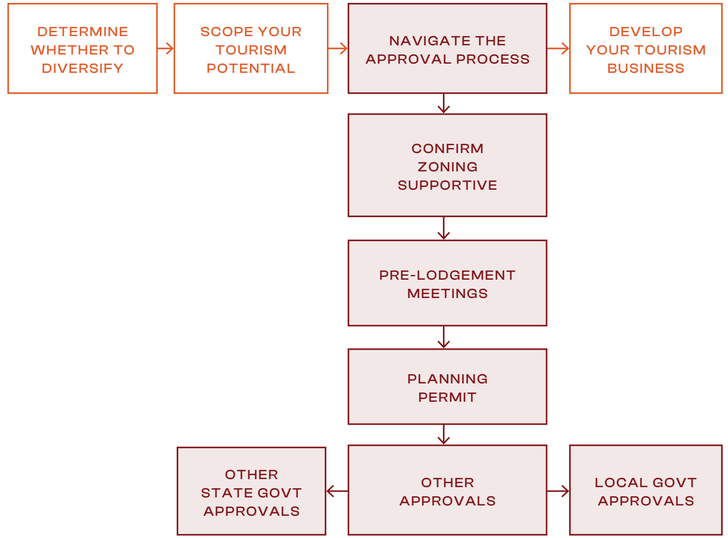
OVERALL PROCESS

There are legal requirements to meet before you can start a station stay. There is no single approval process for any proposed tourism development, including pastoralists diversifying into tourism. The process depends on the land tenure, presence of native title, the significance of environmental, First Nations and other cultural values, and the nature and extent of the proposal.

It is your responsibility to obtain any other approvals or authorisations required to operate a station stay. The following section outlines what you may need to consider. As this process can involve several approvals from different agencies, some of which may not apply to your circumstances, it may be worthwhile appointing a consultant to coordinate this process on your behalf.

A station stay can only be established if it is permissible in the land-use zone that applies to the property. Contact the local government responsible for the area or search the local planning scheme and refer to the zoning table. Search for terms such as 'tourist or visitor accommodation'. Find the zoning of your property by referring to the relevant zoning map at PlanWA.

Simplified process for a tourism development proposal on a pastoral lease that includes building works:



If your station stay is considered an exempt development, it can be in certain zones without the need for planning approval. Exempt developments are identified within the permitted activity list for each zone. Note: local planning schemes list land uses and permissibility against specific zones. Zone/land use names and permissibility may differ from one scheme to the next.

PRE-LODGEMENT MEETINGS

While not compulsory, pre-lodgement meetings with the LGA are recommended to:

- understand the development application process
- prepare all the information needed in the correct order
- guide a large-scale proposal, that may require a complex and lengthier process.

The two organisations you will need to liaise with are:

- your local government planning approvals department
- Pastoral Lease Management and Compliance team at DPLH, representing the PLB (see contacts in section 7).

At a minimum, take the following information to leave with the representatives:

- property address, contact details and explanation of the proposal
- site plan presenting the proposal
- any building plans (if prepared)
- any information on known site features (natural or cultural), including heritage.

The meeting should provide some initial feedback on your proposal, such as its likely acceptability, timelines, and the steps required to have it formally assessed and determined.

4.2 GETTING APPROVAL TO START A STATION STAY

Pastoral stations in Western Australia are on Crown land and administered through pastoral leases overseen by the Minister for Lands (Minister) and the PLB. Day-to-day administration is undertaken by DPLH. Information on the Pastoral Purposes Framework 2024, pastoral land and leases, as well as pastoral land permits for other uses, is available through DPLH. This information outlines the permit application and assessment process including timeframes and requirements when applying for a pastoral permit and the activities that can be undertaken on a pastoral lease.

The PLB aims to ensure pastoral leases are operated in an economically and ecologically sustainable manner and therefore supports diversified activities on pastoral leases, including tourism.

There are several pathways to obtain Minister and/or PLB approval to establish a station stay:

1. a pastoral-based tourism permit
2. a non-pastoral use of enclosed and improved land permit
3. a diversification lease
4. a general lease (section 79)

PLB approval is in addition to all other required permits and approvals, listed in section 4.3 and 4.4.

Key strengths and limitations of each option – potential applicants should approach DPLH before determining (see contacts and further information)

OPTIONS	STRENGTHS	LIMITATIONS
PASTORAL-BASED TOURISM PERMIT	• Ideal for small start-up businesses • Simple and cost-effective application • No Indigenous Land Use agreement (ILUA) needed	• Cannot provide security for finance (mortgage or investors) • Cannot register with Landgate to formally acknowledge business on property (Landgate is a State Government organisation with a website to lodge documents relating to land use). Pastoral-based tourism activities must be purely supplementary to the pastoral activities on the land.
NON-PASTORAL USE OF ENCLOSED AND IMPROVED LAND PERMIT	• Ideal where accommodation is provided for third parties (instead of or in addition to tourists) and/or the tourism being provided is not pastoral based • Simple and cost-effective application	• Cannot provide security for finance (mortgage or investors) • Cannot register with Landgate to formally acknowledge business on Property • An ILUA may be required to authorise the activity and issuing of the permit • Must be located within an already enclosed or improved area.
DIVERSIFICATION LEASE	• Appropriate for larger and geographically spread-out businesses • Can allow proponents to conduct multiple land uses on an area of Crown land, where the lease can coexist with other land uses • Can provide security for finance (mortgage or investors) • Can register with Landgate to formally acknowledge business on property • Ideal for a capital intensive tourism development • Creates a capital asset	• Significant amount of work and costs to prepare application • Where native title exists or is likely to exist an ILUA will most likely be required. It is recommended independent legal advice be obtained. For more information on ILUAs, the registration process and general assistance refer to NNTT About Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) • Requirement to make payment of six months' rent in advance, in addition to the document preparation fee and registration fees on acceptance of the lease. • The Minister for Mines must agree to the grant of diversification lease before the Minister for Lands may issue one. • May require a performance bond. • The relevant pastoral lease would need to surrender the affected land and legal access be determined.
GENERAL LEASE	• Appropriate for smaller areas and any use, required where the activity is not for a pastoral purpose or authorised by issue of a permit • Can provide security for finance (mortgage or investors) • Creates a capital asset • Can register with Landgate to formally acknowledge business on property • Provides exclusive possession terms usually 21 + 21 years	• Where native title exists an ILUA will be required • May require a performance bond for any such lease • For a section 79 lease to be issued, the relevant pastoral lease would need to surrender the affected land and legal access be determined. • Requirement to make payment of six months' rent in advance, in addition to the document preparation fee and registration fees on acceptance of the lease. • The Minister for Mines must agree to the grant of a diversification lease before the Minister for Lands may issue one.



MELANGATA STATION, YALGOO

PASTORAL-BASED TOURISM PERMIT (SECTION 121)

Application requirements

A tourism permit is the easiest, most affordable and most common way to get approval for your station stay. There are two core requirements to address:

- the tourism activity is pastoral-based tourism
- the tourism activity is purely supplementary to the pastoral use of the land.

The first means there must be significant on-ground interactions between pastoral activities and tourism activities on the land. Examples include:

- guided or self-guided tours of the station and its pastoral infrastructure
- active participation in pastoral management activities, such as shearing or mustering
- active participation in land management and conservation activities, such as removing pests, weeds and feral animals, and replanting native vegetation.

The second means pastoralism must remain the principal activity on the land. A judgement about this should consider the comparative:

- proportionality of land used for tourism versus pastoral use
- number of staff employed
- financial turnover; and
- whether the area is stocked per the PLB Pastoral Lease Stocking Policy.

The PLB also considers the scale of the tourism operation and has set the following limits on accommodation:

- up to 100 caravan and camping sites per night and/or up to 100 rooms in other accommodation, such as homestead, cottages, dongas, shearers quarters.

Application requirements: Applying for a permit is relatively straightforward using the following process.

OPERATOR PREPARES APPLICATION

1. Operator scopes tourism proposal
2. Operator meets with DPLH to discuss proposal and options for approval
3. Operator prepares draft application
4. DPLH reviews draft, provides feedback
5. Operator refines application, submits with application fee

GOVERNMENT ASSESSES APPLICATION

1. Preliminary review for completion
2. Option to send back for completion
3. Refer application to relevant agencies to consider impacts and provide comment
4. Document potential conditions
5. PLB considers/approves application in meeting
6. Permit approved (may be subject to conditions)

OPERATOR ADDRESSES APPROVAL CONDITIONS

1. Operator receives written offer of permit; reviews approval conditions and determines whether to proceed
2. Operator accepts, signs and returns the written offer to DPLH within 60 days
3. Permit issued subject to conditions being addressed
4. Operator addresses approval conditions
5. Operator pays upfront rent to DPLH
6. Operation starts

ERSKINE RANGE, THE KIMBERLEY

There is no timeline given to assess or consider a tourism permit, but past applicants suggest six to nine months, depending on the complexity. DPLH refers the permit application to relevant state and local government agencies, and any other applicable parties, for comment, to ensure that it is compliant with relevant legislation, and to help assess the environmental, ecological, economic and social impacts. This may include referrals to the:

- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD)
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)
- Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER)
- Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS)
- Native title holders, claimants, and/or representative Aboriginal body
- Local Government Authority (LGA)
- Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration (DMPE)
- Native Title parties

Potential approval conditions

The permit may be granted subject to the owners addressing various approval conditions. The conditions typically relate to requirements for:

- building and/or construction approvals
- a permit to clear land/remove native vegetation
- a licence for water allocation and/or extraction (DWER).

Duration and costs

A tourism permit is generally allocated for the duration of the pastoral lease (currently 18 to 50 years). It is reviewed every five years when a DPLH representative may inspect your station stay to decide whether the permit should be adjusted. You will have to pay rent to DPLH; the amount is determined by the Valuer General and reflects the scale of the business.

NON-PASTORAL USE OF ENCLOSED AND IMPROVED LAND PERMIT (SECTION 122)

This permit can be applied to a specific part of the leased land for a non-pastoral purpose, such as where the use of existing short-stay accommodation benefits, or is directly related to, pastoral activities on pastoral land. This most commonly happens where accommodation is provided for third parties (instead of, or in addition to, tourists), such as road or construction workers, rangers, researchers, or mining workers. The proposed permit land must be enclosed or improved. Local government planning and building regulations may apply to non-tourist accommodation proposals. Some operators have started their business providing for workers and later converted to tourism.

ALTERNATIVE TENURE – THE DIVERSIFICATION LEASE

Purpose

A diversification lease allows for single or multiple land uses requiring a large area of Crown land, where the proposed lease use(s) can coexist with other land uses. It is attractive to pastoral tourism operators who have expanded their tourism business from a single, intensely used area surrounding a homestead to multiple sites providing accommodation and visitor experiences. The diversification lease offers a stronger platform to apply for finance, and can help integrate tourism uses, providing a management arrangement that could be more appealing to the PLB.

Considerations for application

The criteria for a diversification lease are:

- a large area of Crown land is required
- the proposed use(s) provide(s) social, economic, enviornmental and/or cultural benefits to the State, relevant region or locality
- the land is appropriate for the proposed use(s)
- proponent capability, capacity and experience to deliver the intended outcome has been demonstrated; or will be demonstrated.
- if applicable the operator will provide benefits to Aboriginal peoples and communities.

Application requirements

Applying for a diversification lease is far more complex and time consuming than a tourism permit and will require additional expertise in land tenure, tourism development, native title law and Aboriginal consultation, negotiation and ecological assessment. As an ILUA will likely be required, applicants should begin discussions with the relevant native title party(ies) at an early stage and seek a letter of in-principle support for the negotiation of the agreement.

Diversification lease proposals are considered by the Minister for Lands on a case-by-case basis. For more information about preparing a proposal for a diversification lease, see Guidance for Diversification Lease Proposals and Guiding the use of Diversification Leases on Crown land under the Land Administration Act 1997. The level of detail and information supplied in the proposal should reflect the complexity, nature and scale. Before submitting a proposal, you must:

- complete a Crown land enquiry form
- read the policy framework guiding the use of diversification leases on Crown land under the *Land Administration Act 1997* (WA).

ALTERNATIVE TENURE – CROWN LEASE (SECTION 79)

The Minister for Lands may grant a lease over a parcel of Crown land for any purpose and subject to any conditions. The Minister may require a performance bond for any such lease. For a section 79 lease to be issued, the relevant pastoral lease would need to surrender the affected land and legal access be determined.

A Crown lease may contain conditions, including the:

- option to renew (or extend) and/or
- option to buy the fee simple in the Crown land that is the subject of the lease.

Preference is for release, but under certain circumstances DPLH may enter into a private treaty arrangement. It is not assumed that a pastoral lessee of the land to be excised is the best operator of the activity proposed, so you will need to provide a justified business case and management plan. DPLH can advise whether this applies to a proposal.

An example of this is the Pardoo Wagyu Corporation transferring to a section 79 lease (see case study in section 6).

4.3 COMMONWEALTH AND OTHER STATE GOVERNMENT APPROVALS

NATIVE TITLE

Australian law recognises that native title exists where Aboriginal people have maintained a traditional connection to their land and waters, substantially uninterrupted since sovereignty, except where it has been wholly extinguished by the historical grant of freehold, leasehold and other interests.

These rights and interests may include the right to live and camp in an area, conduct ceremonies, hunt and fish, build shelter, and visit places of cultural importance. Some native title holders may also have the right to control access.

An activity that requires the grant of a permit, licence or other form of tenure may be a future act under the *Native Title Act (NTA) 1993* (Cth) (NTA). The requirements specified under the NTA will need to be met before the grant can be made.

In some instances, native titles need to be considered as part of an approval process for tourism diversification. Where native title exists or may exist, applicants wishing to establish a diversification lease will likely need to have a registered ILUA in place.

For more information on native title and proposal requirements under the NTA, refer to the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT). It is recommended that you contact the Director of Board Support, Land Use Management at DPLH or PLB (see section 7 for contacts), during the early stages of planning a station stay. DPLH can help you understand obligations under the NTA and if an ILUA may be required. If you are considering a diversification lease and negotiating an ILUA, seek legal advice.

The NNTT's visualisation, mapping and query tool Native Title Vision is a good starting point to explore existing native title, using the map layers available.

Where it is clear native title exists, the contact details for any registered native title body corporate for a determination area can be obtained from the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC).

The NNTT's Geospatial Services may also help obtain an overview of native title over the proposed area and enable you to view the Representative Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Body (RATSIB) for your area. RATSIB may be able to help find the right Traditional Owners for you to engage with.

It is important for you to build a relationship with the right Traditional Owners and maintain that relationship.

- Start dialogue at the earliest possible moment, not just when something is needed.
- Find out what the local Aboriginal community needs and try to be part of helping them achieve it.
- Be willing to meet with Traditional Owners in person and, if invited, present the proposal to the relevant Registered Native Title Body Corporate (RNTBC) board.
- Offer opportunities for training, employment and career development.
- Offer opportunities for cultural tourism and do not promote Aboriginal culture without Aboriginal support.
- Understand that different people have different perceptions of importance and time.
- Allow time for Aboriginal stakeholders to discuss among themselves, reflect and discuss some more.

Keep in mind that organisations representing Traditional Owners and wider Aboriginal community interests are often under resourced to engage with this process and may have cultural obligations, which could lengthen the time required to address the matter.

INDIGENOUS LAND USE AGREEMENTS

An ILUA is a voluntary agreement between native title parties and other people or bodies about the use and management of areas of land and/or waters. ILUAs can:

- address issues of access, compensation, extinguishment and co-existence
- be made separately from the formal native title process, form a part of that process, or pave the way for a native title determination
- not extinguish native title but may, by agreement, allow for the surrender of native title.

Station stay operators thinking of applying for a diversification lease or section 79 general lease are likely to be required to negotiate an ILUA for the lease area.

Where native title exists or is likely to exist for the purpose of obtaining a diversification lease or section 79 lease you will need to negotiate an ILUA with the relevant native title party or parties. An ILUA will need to be registered on the Register of Indigenous Land Use Agreements before a diversification lease or section 79 lease can be granted. The State will need to be a party to the ILUA.

Before starting the ILUA process, research the history of your property to explore any documented First Nations significance and activity.

Think about the desired level of involvement with the native title holder for your station stay:

- it could involve training and employing local Aboriginal people for roles in the general business.
- you may invite local Aboriginal people to deliver an Aboriginal tourism experience on the property.
- you might consider a joint venture with the relevant Aboriginal corporate entity to share ownership and/or operation of the business.

Think about the types of discussions you should have with the native title holder:

- listen to their needs and wants in relation to economic, social and cultural objectives.
- find out whether tourism activity is part of their current or future focus and, if so, what it entails.
- learn about the significance the area has to them, and whether there are any places of cultural significance that should be excluded from the proposal.
- ask whether they have any interest in being involved in tourism activity on the property.
- hare any ideas and opportunities that could involve local Aboriginal people.

The focus of discussions for an ILUA should include:

- how native title rights and practices can continue during the diversification lease or section 79 general lease
- all the land uses for which either of the above leases are to be granted (must be expressly permitted by the ILUA).

Native title rights and interests will not be extinguished for the grant of one of the above leases, unless the native title party or parties involved agree to surrender their rights.

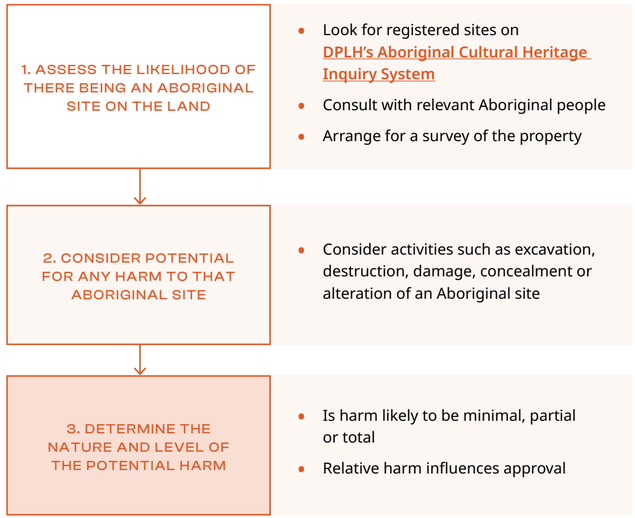
The NNTT is able to provide negotiation assistance to any party involved in ILUA negotiations, along with preparing an application for the registration of the ILUA.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE APPROVALS

Consider the likelihood of Aboriginal sites on the property

Aboriginal heritage could be on your pastoral property without your knowledge. Examples include scarred trees, stone arrangements, hearths, middens, burial sites, earth mounds and fish traps. Particular landforms are more likely to contain Aboriginal sites and objects, such as rock outcrops and shelters, waterways, coastal waters and other water sources, and foreshores and dunes. Bringing visitors onto the property to stay and explore could put Aboriginal heritage at risk. Knowing where it is, and how to protect it, can help minimise potential impacts, maintain good relationships with local Aboriginal people and, in some cases, add a rich layer to the visitor experience.

Ideal steps for assessing the likelihood of Aboriginal sites on the land:



Surveying for Aboriginal sites

Surveys of Aboriginal heritage can reduce the risk of inadvertent harm. Some Aboriginal heritage, such as subsurface Aboriginal heritage, may not be able to be identified as part of a survey; however, the potential that it may exist can be noted.

Opportunity for station stay operators to have their say

The Western Australian Government is embarking on a 10-year Aboriginal Survey Program that aims to:

- record Aboriginal heritage for inclusion in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Inquiry System (ACHIS)
- confirm areas where Aboriginal heritage is not present, allowing land use without requiring approvals under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act (AHA) 1972*
- conduct surveys in consultation with native title parties and Aboriginal people.

Surveys will be conducted by qualified heritage professionals in consultation with the native title party and Aboriginal people and will result in an Aboriginal heritage survey report. There is no cost to participate. Complete a consent form and submit an application via the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Portal.

What to do when sites are found

Where an assessment determines that no Aboriginal heritage has been identified, no approvals under the AHA are required.

When Aboriginal heritage is identified, it needs to be reported to DPLH and an approval under the AHA may be required. When significant potential for Aboriginal heritage is identified, you should consult with the native title party before starting works. Consultation will reduce the risk that Aboriginal heritage is damaged and perhaps make it available for part of the station stay experience.

What to do if there is potential to harm a site

If an Aboriginal site is likely to be harmed by the intended land use, it is your responsibility to seek approval and obtain a section 18 consent – or alternative approval – before starting any work that may harm the Aboriginal site.

It is recommended that you first contact DPLH to confirm whether the proposed activity requires a section 18 notice or another form of regulatory approval. This step ensures you are following the correct process and helps avoid unnecessary applications. If a section 18 notice is required, DPLH can advise on the information needed so your application is complete when lodged. In some cases, approval may not be necessary, so checking early is essential. Visit Aboriginal Heritage for more information.

OTHER CULTURAL HERITAGE

Examples of other cultural heritage on pastoral properties could include historic buildings, farm infrastructure such as fences and dams, and traditional farming practices (such as evidence of extensive livestock grazing) alongside art and music traditions associated with farming.

Just because something is old, however, doesn't mean it is cultural heritage or significant. One way to find out is with a cultural heritage assessment. This evaluates a site's cultural values to ensure its significance is understood and protected, informing planning and development to avoid negative impacts.

This assessment identifies key cultural assets, their importance, potential tourism opportunities, and risks. The process can add real value to a station stay by identifying:

- the condition of the heritage and what could be done to conserve it
- interpretive tourism potential, by researching and generating the raw material to convert into interpretation stories
- potential tourism impacts and how to avoid them.

These assessments are often conducted by heritage consultants or environmental planning firms. There are guidelines for assessment of local heritage places.

Sometimes works are needed for a heritage site or a building (such as adapting it for guest accommodation). The site or building could be formally listed as a heritage site. To check if a building is heritage listed, visit the Heritage Council's InHerit portal or your local government's website and search for its local environmental plan. PlanWA has an interactive mapping tool. You can also search the Australia's National Heritage List if there is a belief that it might be of national significance.

If the site or building is heritage listed, a heritage impact assessment may be needed to determine if the work is acceptable, could be done in a less impactful way, or should not be done at all. This assessment is normally done by a heritage consultant (see section 7). The Heritage Impact Statement guide will give you an understanding of the assessment process.

To check if there is Aboriginal heritage on your land, search via ACHIS. If there is no risk of harm to Aboriginal heritage from your planned activity, no approval is required.

ENVIRONMENTAL APPROVALS

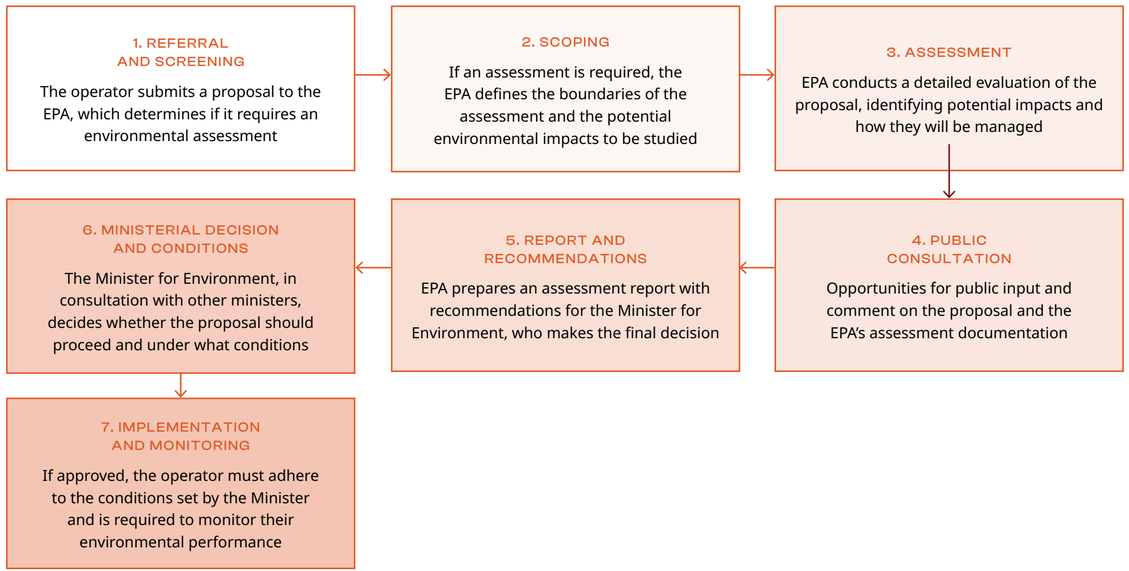
The development of a station stay can trigger environmental impacts. For example, to construct roads, carparks and buildings, you might need to remove native vegetation and habitat, disturbing wildlife and/or causing erosion. Similarly, ensuring enough water for drinking and washing might require the continuous removal of fresh water from watercourses.

Generally, if the scale of change is small or being undertaken in an already disturbed area, it can be approved outright, or with some small mitigative measures.

Proposals within particularly sensitive areas or of a larger scale may generate environmental issues that require a formal environmental assessment. It is recommended you visit the local government environmental planner to explain the situation and determine the likely degree of assessment. More significant assessments will need to be undertaken by an environmental consultant (see section 7).

The environmental assessment process in Western Australia is managed by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). It involves screening to determine if assessment is needed; scoping to define impacts; assessing impacts; and developing management plans and public consultation. Finally, a report with recommendations is prepared for the Minister for Environment, who makes the final decision. Tourism projects likely to have significant environmental impacts undergo this process to ensure impacts are minimised and acceptable.

Key stages of the environmental assessment process:



WATER: ACCESS, APPROVALS AND QUALITY

Accessing sufficient water (water quantity) – what you must do

Station stays typically rely on a private or self-supplied water source. Before investing in infrastructure, operators should confirm they can legally access enough water for accommodation, amenities, cleaning, firefighting preparedness and operational needs. DWER manages access to water and issues licences and permits under the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914*.

Key requirements - potential license/permits needed

Consider the licenses or permits that may be needed to:

- take water from a watercourse (e.g. river/creek), or waterbody (e.g. lake or dam), or from groundwater sources (e.g. bores/soaks) *(requires a 5C groundwater or surface water licence)*
- construct or alter a well (including bores and soaks) *(requires a 26D licence)*
- interfere with the bed or banks of a watercourse (for example, installing a pump or a structure to divert flow, including a dam) *(requires a section 11,17, or 21A surface permit)*

Practical steps to take early:

- use DWER's flowchart to check whether you need a licence or permit, and whether any exemptions may apply.
- check water availability and licensing information on the Water Register (noting that applying does not guarantee water access and other approvals may still be required)
- if unsure, contact DWER early to confirm requirements, timeframes and water availability for your location. Water and Environmental Regulation regional offices

WATER QUALITY AND SAFETY FOR HUMAN INTERACTION (POTABLE AND NON-POTABLE)

Once station stay operators have lawful access to water, they have a responsibility to ensure water used by guests and staff is safe and fit for purpose – especially where it will be consumed or come into contact with people (and where relevant, animals).

Potable (drinking) water – requirements and expectations

In Western Australia, the Department of Health regulates drinking water quality in accordance with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG), which define what safe, good quality drinking water looks like and provide a risk-management framework (often described as "catchment to consumer"). HealthyWA notes that small/private suppliers who provide drinking water to the public sit alongside scheme suppliers and are part of the broader drinking water context in WA.

- If you supply water for drinking, ice, food preparation, or brushing teeth, it needs to be potable (safe to drink) and managed in line with public health expectations and the ADWG framework.
- Consider how the whole system affects safety – source, storage tanks, treatment (if any), reticulation/pipes, and point-of-use. The ADWG emphasises management and assurance of safety at the point of use.

Non-potable water (not safe to drink)

If your station stay uses any non-potable water (water that is not safe for drinking), you must manage it so guests and staff don't accidentally consume it or come into contact with it where there is a health risk. Guidelines for the non-potable uses of recycled water address the safe use of alternative water sources, such as stormwater, rainwater and recycled water, ensuring they are not used for drinking or personal hygiene where they could pose a risk.

LIQUOR LICENCES

If your station stay includes the sale of liquor (such as part of a café or restaurant), you will need an appropriate licence. The Department of Local Government, Industry Regulations and Safety (LGIRS) Liquor Applications provides more information and will assist you to determine which licence type applies to your operation.

Station stay staff will also need to complete an approved Responsible Service of Alcohol course and an approved manager will be required on site at all times. Alternatively, you can suggest to guests that if they wish to drink alcohol, they will need to bring their own, and a licence will not be required.



PARDOO HOMESTEAD, THE PILBARA

4.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPROVALS

DEVELOPMENT (PLANNING) APPROVAL

Whether the intention is to build, extend, or change the use of a property, obtaining a development (planning) approval – commonly called a DA – confirms the project meets all required standards related to safety, aesthetics and environmental impact.

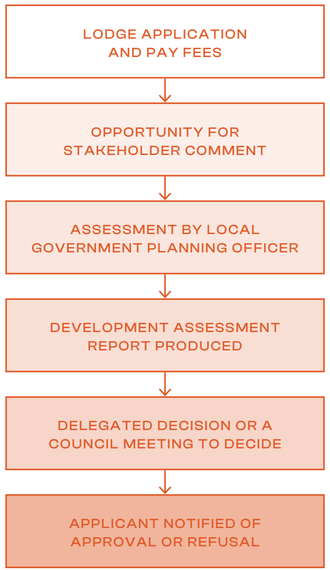
To determine whether an approval is needed, contact the relevant LGA. If an approval is required, you will need to submit an application form, along with building plans and a cover letter. Application fees will apply.

The time taken to assess an application will vary depending on the complexity and nature of the proposal.

The LGA will endeavour to determine an application:

- within 60 days where there is no public advertising or agency referrals required, or
- within 90 days where public advertising or agency referrals are required.

Key stages of the Development Approval assessment process:



BUILDING PERMIT

After the development approval process, you will need to obtain other local government approvals. These could include a demolition permit, a building permit and an occupancy permit. There is a fee associated with each application payable to the local government.

A building permit is required before any building work can begin and is needed for most building works, including new constructions, alterations, extensions, or demolitions. As a rule, if the construction project is valued over $20,000 or involves changes to the building's structure, a permit is required. The assessment focuses on the structural integrity and safety of the proposed building, and the work must comply with the relevant requirements of the National Construction Code (NCC).

It is illegal for construction to start before the permit is approved. You could face fines and legal action, and you will likely need to apply for retrospective approval, which can be a costly and time-consuming process.

Anyone can apply for a building permit, including the owner, builder, designer and building surveyor. The applicant provides details of the person responsible for the work, ie. the builder, in the application form. The builder takes responsibility for ensuring the construction complies with building standards and the provisions in the permit. An application can be made for a building or one or more stages of a building.

The guide to the building approvals process in Western Australia will help you understand how to obtain approval in Western Australia.

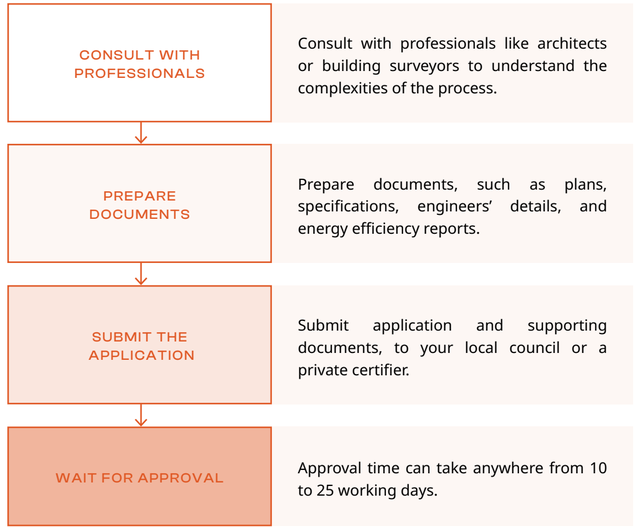
Exemptions

Exceptions to needing a permit are mostly small projects such as minor repairs, low-risk structures (eg. small sheds or fences) and certain internal alterations. Check with the local government planner before starting any building work.

Pre-lodgement meeting

Once the building plans are prepared, it is strongly recommended you arrange a pre-lodgement meeting with the local government's building approval department. At this meeting, the proposal is presented and guidance provided on the exact type of approval needed and any potential modifications to the plans, to ensure approval in the first assessment.

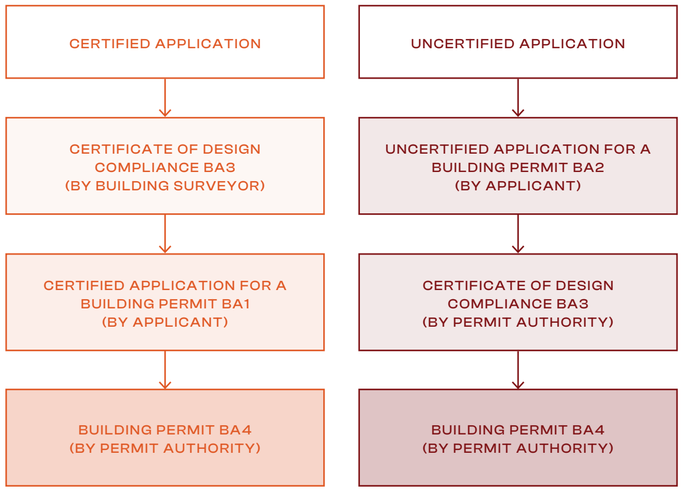
Steps in applying for a building permit in Western Australia:



There are two types of building permit applications: certified and uncertified.

- A certified application is accompanied by a certificate of design compliance and can be made for any class of building and incidental structure. The permit authority has 10 business days to decide on a certified application. Applications for Class 1b and Class 2 to Class 9 buildings must be made as certified applications, whereas this is optional for Class 1a and Class 10 buildings and incidental structures.
- An uncertified application is submitted to the permit authority without a certificate of design compliance and can only be made for single residential dwellings (Class 1a) and non-habitable structures, such as sheds and carports (Class 10 buildings), and incidental structures. An independent building surveyor is appointed by the permit authority to check the proposal and provide a certificate of design compliance. The permit authority has 25 business days to decide on an uncertified application.

Process to make a certified versus uncertified building permit application:



OCCUPANCY PERMIT

A building cannot be occupied without permission from a permit authority. This requires completion of an application for occupancy permit.

This application must be accompanied by:

- a certificate of construction compliance (BA17) for new buildings, including new additions to existing buildings, or a certificate of building compliance (BA18) for existing buildings, signed by a building surveyor
- evidence of the following authorities under written law as relevant to the building or incidental structure (r. 37)
  a) an approval required under the *Health Act 1911* section 107(2)(a) or (b)
  b) an approval required under the *Planning and Development Act 2005*
  c) an approval required under the Health (Aquatic Facilities) Regulations 2007 Part 2 Division 1
  d) an approval required under the Local Government (Uniform Local Provisions) Regulations 1996 regulation 12(2).
- evidence of consent(s) from each affected owner where work encroaches onto or adversely affects other land (if applicable)

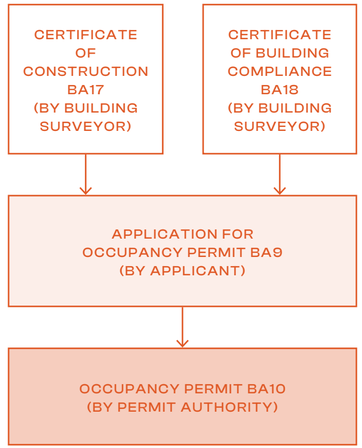
payment of the prescribed fee and levy (if applicable).

Proponents will need to complete:

1. an application for a building permit
2. an application for an occupancy certificate
3. an application to be listed onto the Short-Term Rental Accommodation (STRA) Register

A fee applies to each application and is generally payable to the local government through an online portal.

The process to obtain an occupancy certificate:



SHORT-TERM RENTAL ACCOMMODATION (STRA) REGISTER

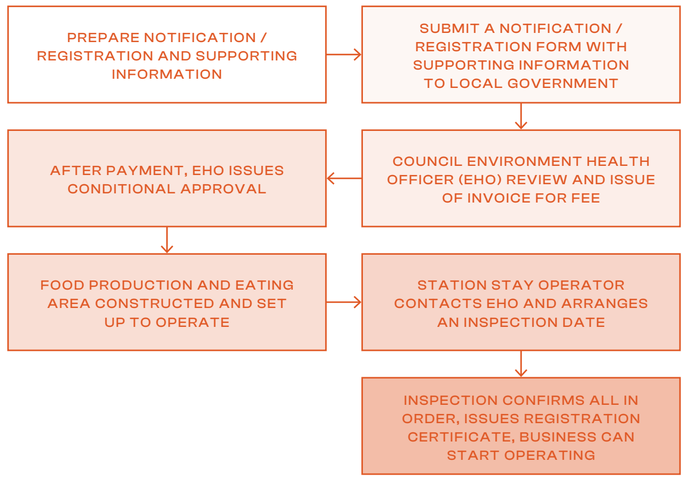
Under the *Short-Term Rental Accommodation Act 2024*, all providers of short-term rental accommodation within Western Australia must register their property with the STRA Register.

This does not apply to station stay operators who have received a development approval for short-term rental accommodation from their local government.

FOOD BUSINESS REGISTRATION

Contact your LGA if you plan to process or butcher meat on site, as there are specific regulation approvals. If you are serving food as part of the station stay, the premises will need to meet all applicable health requirements across various legislation (food and beverage, public building, accommodation and sanitation). Liaise with the LGA to determine what approvals are needed before you provide food to guests. Providing food before receiving approval could result in additional costly works, application refusals, or a closure order.

Process to register a food business



The information that most LGAs will want to support a notification/registration form is:

- the menu
- ASIC/ABN registration certificate
- floor plans
- food safety supervisor certificate to meet compliance with Food Safety Standard 3.2.2A (if required)
- food safety training certificates from food handling staff (if required, see below).

Food Safety Standard 3.2.2A was introduced to reduce foodborne illness by ensuring food handlers have adequate skills, knowledge and supervision. Poor food handling can cause illnesses that result in avoidable hospitalisations, loss of revenue and reputational damage. An overview of the standard is available from the Department of Health: Food safety management tools for food businesses.

Food businesses that handle unpackaged, potentially hazardous and ready-to-eat foods are required to comply with the Food Safety Standard. Station stay food offers are likely to be classified into category one (includes restaurants, cafés, bakeries, fast food outlets, mobile food vans).

FOOD SAFETY STANDARD 3.2.2A:

Some station stays will need to implement food safety management tools.

1. Appoint a suitably qualified food safety supervisor (FSS) who will always be reasonably available when the business is open.
   - This is someone within the business who needs to be trained and certified under the new standard, and reasonably available to advise and supervise food handlers. This may mean you need to appoint another person when the FSS is on leave.
   - Refer to the Department of Health for a list of registered training organisations.
2. Food handling staff must complete a food safety training course.
   - Food handlers will need to show they have had the relevant training. Environmental Health Australia delivers FoodSafe ® online training.
3. Show that food provided is safe.
   - Generally, this can be achieved by keeping records of important food safety controls, activities and processes.
   - Record-keeping templates can be downloaded from the FSANZ Safe Food Australia guide to the food safety standards – refer to Appendix 8: Template examples which can be altered to suit the business. Or you can create your own templates.
   - LGA officers can ask to see business records during assessments, so it is important to ensure they are kept on the premises for easy reference. Records must be kept for a minimum of three months.

Department of Health
GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Food Safety Standard 3.2.2A

To improve food safety and prevent foodborne illness, all food service, retail and catering businesses in Australia must implement food safety management tools by **8 December 2023**.

Business category types

Category one

A caterer or food service that make and serve unpackaged, potentially hazardous, ready-to-eat food. Examples include:

- restaurants and cafes
- bakeries
- fast food outlets
- mobile food vans
- hospitals and aged care
- childcare and school canteens

Category two

A retail business that sells unpackaged, potentially hazardous, ready-to-eat foods that aren't made by the business. Examples include:

- delis
- some service stations
- some market stalls
- seafood retailers
- some supermarkets
- some butchers

Which tools are required?

	Category one	Category two
Food handler training	✓	✓
Food safety supervisor	✓	✓
Show that your food is safe	✓	✗

Food handler training

Food handlers must do a food safety training course **or** show that they understand:

- safe handling of food
- food contamination
- cleaning and sanitising equipment
- personal hygiene

Food safety supervisor

A food business must have a food safety supervisor who:

- is trained
- has a supervisor's certificate
- can give advice to people who make food
- is reasonably available

Show that your food is safe

A food business must show that they are making safe food by:

- keeping a record of important food safety controls, activities and processes

or

- demonstrating safe food handling practices

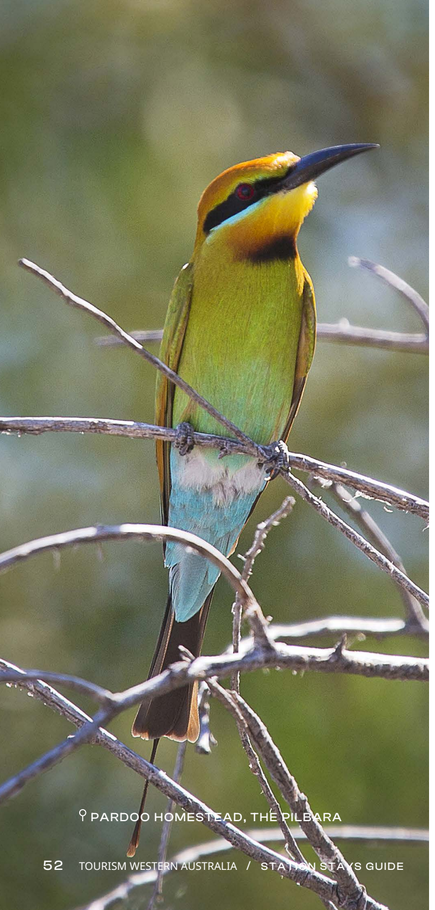
health.wa.gov.au/FSMT

For more information refer to the Guide for food businesses on Food Safety Standard 3.2.2A.

ENV014374MAR23



PARDOO HOMESTEAD, THE PILBARA



PARDOO HOMESTEAD, THE PILBARA

It is now time to start developing your station stay to make it operational. The figure below suggests some key steps and this section explains each of them.

Simplified process for developing your station stay business



5.1 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS PLANNING

Business planning is a crucial process for both start-ups and established businesses, outlining goals and strategies for achieving them. It helps clarify objectives, identify potential risks, and create a roadmap for success. A well-structured business plan is essential for attracting investors and lenders, as well as for internal guidance and accountability.

Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) provides a range of templates to help develop your business plan. TWCA members can access a range of tools and templates to help with this stage.

FINANCING

You might be able to source financing from one or a combination of the following sources:

- personal savings – the most commonly used option, though it can limit the scale and quality of what you can deliver
- private investors
- bank loans – more challenging to obtain if the business is approved through a tourism permit
- external grants – these can be helpful but they come and go and have changing requirements.

If you can demonstrate that at least 20 per cent of your customers are international visitors, you may consider applying for a loan through Export Finance Australia.

It is a good idea to keep an eye on grant opportunities that could help support your development. A key grant funding opportunity for station stays is the Regional Development Commissions' Regional Economic Development (RED) Grants. The Australian Government's grants information system, Grant Connect, provides information about current grant opportunities. Bear in mind that grant funding may require a matching contribution.

RISK IDENTIFICATION AND MITIGATION

Station stays represent a high-risk profile for tourists and for you as the host. Visitors are entering a working pastoral operation, with independent and unsupervised access to parts of the property. Operators need to protect themselves, visitors and workers from the potential risks of fire, flooding, other natural hazards, or the hazards associated with being on a working station and in a rural location.

Consider the potential for contamination on your property from past agricultural practices, such as sheep and cattle dips.

Visitors stimulate several risks, including potential exposure to diseases, pests and weeds, as well as dangers from station machinery and livestock. They can also unknowingly introduce these risks to the farm, potentially impacting livestock, crops and other station operations.

Biosecurity

Under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, anyone visiting or working on a farm/station, or entering processing, packing, or storage facilities, has a legal responsibility to help prevent the spread of pests and diseases. This is known as a General Biosecurity Duty.

Ideally, before starting any development, you should prepare a biosecurity management plan, to help identify and prioritise the implementation of biosecurity practices relevant to your property. The Farm Biosecurity Program provides access to useful templates, a reference guide to offer a high-level overview of risk factors and suggested management strategies; and appendices for producers looking to meet specific requirements for industry-run assurance programs or state legislation.

Visitor management

Visitor management starts with recognising that you have a duty of care towards your guests, and that guests may be unfamiliar with things you take for granted, such as safety around animals.

Before starting development, you should prepare a visitor management plan that identifies risks and establishes responses or policies to address them.

The plan should outline ways to make guests aware of the risks and the behaviour requested to minimise the risks. These could include signage; briefings at check-in or at the start of an activity; a handout showing risk management measures on the back of a property map; or as part of a compendium in accommodation rooms or amenities blocks.

Potential policies to guide visitor management

Below Source: adapted from Gulf Savannah Development Farm Stay 'How To' Guide

POLICY AREA	POLICY CONSIDERATIONS
RISK ASSESSMENT AND PLAN RESPONSE	• Has a risk assessment been done to establish safety measures? • Is there a bushfire management plan? • Is there a flood safety plan? (if relevant) • Is there an emergency management plan that details risks and what happens in an emergency when the property needs to be evacuated? • Are there safe routes to the nearest highway or town?
ACCESS ZONES	• Are there areas where the business prefers guests not to access for owner privacy? • Are there areas restricted for safety reasons? • Are pathways delineated and do they have adequate fencing and no-go zones to protect vulnerable visitors, such as children, from parts of the property (eg: dams)? • Have visitor focus areas been located away from high-risk areas and do they prevent unauthorised access?
GUESTS	• What is the maximum number of guests that the property will accommodate? • Are children welcome at the property? • Do guests with special needs require additional support?
BOOKING AND PAYMENTS	• Will cancellation fees for no-shows or last-minute booking changes be applied? • Will payment be accepted before or on arrival? • Does a deposit apply?
CHECK-IN AND CHECK-OUT TIMES	• Are certain hours for check-in/out required? • How much time is required after checkout to get the room ready for the next guest? • Will there be separate arrangements for people who arrive late at night?

Potential policies to guide visitor management (cont)

Below Source: adapted from Gulf Savannah Development Farm Stay 'How To' Guide

POLICY AREA	POLICY CONSIDERATIONS
GUEST EMPOWERING INFORMATION	• Are guests given information such as an induction on property rules to ensure they are aware of their surroundings and can safely navigate the property? • Is there a map identifying go and no-go areas and is this accessible to all guests? • Are there special briefings before the start of specific activities?
PETS	• Are pets allowed on site? • If so, are there limitations on where pets can go?
ANIMAL INTERACTIONS (STATION ANIMALS AND NATIVE WILDLIFE)	• Are guests allowed to interact with station animals? • What are the limitations? • What procedures are in place for managing encounters with reptiles or native wildlife?
ACTIVITY TIMES AND BOOKINGS	• Are there conditions when the premises need to be closed and guests evacuated? • Is there a minimum/maximum requirement for the number of people the property will host on a tour/experience? • How and when are guests expected to book an experience?
MEALTIMES	• Can guests choose what time to eat? • Will meals be delivered to guest rooms or served in a dining room? • What times will alcohol be served?

Guests can also be asked to sign a waiver form that asks them to accept the risk and sign away owner responsibility. These forms should be signed by all adult guests, who can also sign on behalf of any children they bring onto the property. There are many downloadable examples on the internet. Consider seeking legal advice before preparing these forms.



CHEELA PLAINS, PARABURDOO

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

Public liability insurance is critical for any pastoral business diversifying into tourism. It protects you financially if a visitor is injured or their property is damaged while on your land, including incidents involving livestock, working animals, vehicles, infrastructure, or natural hazards.

If you are adding a station stay or other visitor experiences, you will need to extend your existing pastoral policy or take out a separate tourism-specific policy. Importantly, not all pastoral insurance policies automatically cover tourism activities. You must work closely with your insurance provider to clearly identify which activities are covered and which are not. Operating activities that are not explicitly covered can expose you to significant financial and legal risk.

Specialist insurers that offer public liability insurance for tourism businesses can be found online, and TCWA can also provide guidance and referrals to suitable providers for members.

Insurance premiums can often be reduced by actively managing risk. Developing and implementing a biosecurity management plan, a visitor management plan, and other relevant policies (such as safety procedures and emergency response plans), and providing these as part of your insurance application, demonstrates good risk management and may help lower premiums. More importantly, these plans also reduce the likelihood of incidents occurring in the first place.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

At this point in the process, you should have most of the preliminary approvals completed. You might still need approval for the construction and operation of physical infrastructure, building and landscape works. This is an ideal time to create the visitor experience.

The experience goes beyond the facilities and the activities to include the culture of your station stay. This culture comes from your values and personality as the host, as well as those of your staff, and the stories of your property – what you offer guests and how you manage and care for the property. Often this stays with guests long after they leave, so as you develop the visitor experience, take the time to clarify the culture you want to share and consider the many ways it can be demonstrated throughout their stay.

Examples of experiences

- Shearing sheds and demonstrations
- Farmers markets
- Heritage and historical site tours
- Regional day trips
- Art gallery tours
- Food tours and produce experiences
- Traditional Owner-led tours
- 4WD tours
- Birdwatching
- Gold panning
- River boat cruises
- Photography tours
- Animal/wildlife interactions
- Kayak tours
- Fishing tours

CREATE FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Further refine the site plan. If building plans are needed for adaptations or new buildings, you will need a draftsman or architect. These plans will need to be approved by local government before building can begin (see section 4.4).

Unlike developing a property solely for pastoral activity, a station stay requires much greater consideration of people's needs and visitor behaviour. To minimise damage to the landscape, identify anything that should be retained and protect it with appropriate buffers. Guests will value every native tree and shrub preserved, and any vegetation that must be removed should be replanted elsewhere where possible. Designing from the inside out means identifying the finer details and character elements that enhance authenticity and elevate the quality of the visitor experience.

LOOK FOR AUTHENTIC MATERIALS AND QUIRKY TOUCHES

Station stay operators should try to make the experience as authentic as possible. This could be achieved in many ways:

- reuse surplus pastoral buildings or move the old one for the station stay and build a new one for the pastoral operation
- reuse surplus corrugated iron roofing, timber and pastoral equipment for visitor facilities, such as fireplaces, taps, benches and tables
- where new furnishings are required, consider choosing solid, rustic and robust alternatives
- create quirky signage and incorporate a sense of humour in the messaging (if it is in keeping with the brand and style of your station).



Bullara Station Stay embraces its pastoral heritage through the reuse of farm sheds, equipment, tin, mini orb, and timber, creating a uniquely authentic and quirky café and bar setting.

MAKE THE PASTORAL EXPERIENCE CENTRAL

A pastoral experience should be a central and readily available feature of every station stay. It should offer guests genuine insight into the pastoral operation and what life is like on your property.

Brainstorm the content you could share and look for ways to shape it into engaging stories rather than lists of facts and figures. Think about the best locations to deliver these stories during a tour and consider sequencing them along the route, with a clear introduction and conclusion.

Even less structured activities, such as a campfire chats or casual talks as part of a demonstration or workshop, will flow better when you give thought to how stories connect.

As different guests will gravitate to different activities, having a collection of stories and experiences is helpful.

Invite family or friends to act as guests, so that you can practice planned tours and experiences. Ask them to play different roles, such as quiet guests, inquisitive visitors, and even bored teenagers. The more you practice, the more confident you will become in catering for a wide range of guests.

DESIGN OTHER VISITOR EXPERIENCES

For nature-based experiences, consider adding interpretive content to enrich the visitor journey. You could create a self-guided route supported by a simple guidebook. This can be produced using basic software, printed and bound, or placed in a plastic sleeve within a booklet. Include photos showing the area at different times of the year to help visitors appreciate how the landscape changes outside peak season.

A unique value proposition for some station stays may be an Aboriginal tourism experience. There is strong and growing demand for these experiences, and involving local Aboriginal people in their delivery not only enhances authenticity but also shares economic benefits and fosters meaningful relationships with Aboriginal communities.

Consider engaging with your RTO or Tourism WA during the design and development phase of your visitor experience to lean on their expertise. A tourism consultant may also be able to help.

CREATE INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES

The easiest experiences to offer are the independent and more recreational ones, such as drives, walks, rides, swims and fishing. Think about how you make these experiences more enjoyable and memorable.

You could add value by:

- creating maps for drives, hikes, and bicycle rides, with suggested stops and places to explore
- using signage so guests don't get lost or move into operational areas, putting themselves and/or the property at risk
- offering the hire of equipment, such as mountain bikes, fishing gear or a pop-up shade structure with flyscreens
- offering simple picnic hampers and a rug to make the most of a special location.

Before locking in any of these experiences, invite family or friends unfamiliar with the property to review your plans.

5.2 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING STAFF

Typically, station stay owners start off managing and operating the tourism business themselves. Even if you are only starting with one or two staff, it is important to think about the type of roles, and people, you will need into the future and plan ahead, rather than try to play catch-up with policies and procedures when you are busy. When planning what this will look like, ask yourself the following questions:

- what roles will you play (operational and managerial)?
- how many staff, and in what roles, would you need to support the station stay (now and into the future)?
- how will you train them to adapt to working on a property?
- who is going to write the policy and procedures manual to help guide staff?

As the business grows, and especially during the peak periods, you will need to hire more employees to help deliver day-to-day services. Options for sourcing workers include:

- domestic connections (family, friends and neighbours)
- domestic recruitment channels
- spontaneous (visitors who want to stay longer and work)
- international planned (short-stay work visas).

Tourism and hospitality job vacancies can be registered for free on eeger - a national, industry-led platform and Australia's gateway to exciting career opportunities across tourism, hospitality, and travel.

The remote location of many station stays can make it challenging to find workers. Often the more remote the business, the more reliance there is on the international market.

People holding visas with appropriate work rights may be eligible for fixed-term, seasonal or other employment opportunities. Employers should check each prospective worker's current visa status and work conditions through the Australian Government's Visa Entitlement Verification Online service.

Skilled migration options include the Skilled Nominated visa, subclass 190, which is a permanent visa that allows the holder to work and study anywhere in Australia, and the Skilled Work Regional (Provisional) visa, subclass 491, which supports eligible skilled migrants to live and work in designated regional areas. These are skilled migration pathways and are subject to eligibility, occupation, nomination and visa requirements.

The Working Holiday Maker program may also provide seasonal workforce opportunities for eligible young adults visiting Australia. More information is available through the following Australian Government resources:

- Work and holiday (subclass 462)
- Working holiday visa (subclass 417)

Visa eligibility and work conditions vary. Employers should confirm an individual's work rights before employment.

LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATIONS

Employment legislation sets out considerations for employing staff, such as:

- pay as you go (PAYG) withholding tax – a proportion of an employee's payments you withhold to cover staff income tax
- any Higher Education Loan Program repayments and the Medicare levy
- awards, pay rates and leave entitlements
- WorkCover insurance
- work health and safety
- anti-discrimination and equal opportunities

For information on working requirements in Western Australia, visit WA.gov.au/Employment

RETAINING STAFF

A motivated and supported team is one of the most valuable assets in any tourism operation. When staff feel connected, valued and well-equipped, they are more likely to stay longer, contribute positively to the visitor experience, and help the business thrive. Investing in team wellbeing and workplace culture can reduce turnover, strengthen operations, and create a more enjoyable environment for everyone involved.

There are four key strategic ways to support staff and build a resilient team.

1. **Cultivate culture and connection** – Foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose among team members.
2. **Support growth and recognition** – Provide opportunities for learning, development and celebrating achievements.
3. **Optimise the remote work experience** – Ensure staff have access to comfortable living conditions, downtime, and social connection.
4. **Communicate effectively** – Maintain open, respectful and consistent communication across all levels of the operation.

These are explained further in the table on page 62.



PARDOO HOMESTEAD, THE PILBARA

Methods to retain staff on station stay properties

TECHNIQUES TO CULTIVATE CULTURE AND CONNECTION	EXPLANATION
Foster a strong remote culture	Create a supportive environment where everyone feels included and connected.
Encourage informal interactions	Set up water cooler stations or host coffee breaks to allow for casual conversations that build rapport.
Organise team-building events	Host happy hours, game nights, or an end of season/year get-together to boost morale and connection.
TECHNIQUES TO SUPPORT GROWTH AND RECOGNITION	**EXPLANATION**
Offer career development	Provide access to online courses, workshops and mentorship programs to support skill development and career growth.
Recognise achievements	Publicly acknowledge good work and achievements on a staff noticeboard to show appreciation and keep employees motivated.
Produce a station guidebook for staff	Present policies designed to provide a fair, professional and fun place to work so that everyone knows what to expect. Include topics on how to enjoy time off, such as places to visit where there is personal space, and how to order personal items.
TECHNIQUES TO OPTIMISE THE REMOTE WORK EXPERIENCE	**EXPLANATION**
Provide recreation facilities	Provide a gym and/or group staff lounge with television, speakers and games.
Maintain a healthy work-life balance	Encourage flexible working hours and autonomy, allowing employees to manage personal and professional obligations effectively.
Ensure easy access to information	Make company information, resources and updates easily accessible to keep everyone informed and engaged.
TECHNIQUES TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY	**EXPLANATION**
Schedule regular check-ins	Conduct regular one-on-one meetings to stay connected, provide feedback and address any challenges before they become issues.
Maintain open communication	Use the communication tools that work best for your station, such as notice boards or online channels.
Seek employee input	Use employee sentiment surveys to gather suggestions and feedback, demonstrating that you value their opinions and are committed to improving their remote work experience.

5.3 MARKETING

WRITING A MARKETING PLAN

Marketing needs coordination and financing. The best way to ensure effectiveness of effort and investment is to establish a marketing plan.

Contact your RTO for guidance or ask them for the contact of a tourism marketing consultant.

Consider the below key elements of an effective marketing plan.

1. **Identify the target market.** Who is your station stay for? Who do you want to come to stay, and what do they want most from the stay? (see section 3.5)
2. **Describe the product components** and state the benefits these will provide – customers want, and are paying for, the benefits.
3. **Conduct a competitor analysis** to compare your product to other station stays and determine if any fine tuning is required to strengthen competitiveness.
4. **Set realistic objectives** that can be measured: how many visitors per annum; average occupancy for the season; average length of stay; average spend per customer; proportion of target market guests.
5. **Document pricing for products**. Will prices vary for different seasons/holidays, customers or situations?
6. **Prepare a promotion action plan.** What techniques will be used, when will they happen, how much will they cost and who is going to make them happen (share the load)?
7. **Prepare an annual budget** so it is clear what funds will be needed and when, to ensure your business can afford to meet those requirements.

Prepare a marketing plan that is flexible and that can change with the needs of the station stay. Advice from your RTO may help strengthen the plan. Evaluate the return on the marketing investment and amend the plan accordingly.

With a clearly defined set of products in the marketing plan, some pricing decisions will have already been made. Pricing impacts profit margins, supply, demand and guest satisfaction.

As a rule:

- tours, demonstrations and workshops are priced per person
- accommodation is priced on a per room, or per site, per night basis (usually up to five people per site and two people per room, and it's common to charge for each extra person
- breakfast, lunch or dinner are at an extra charge, but can be packaged into a rate
- equipment hire is charged by time (eg. hour, half day or day).

If there is an intention to market and sell the product through a third party, ensure the price includes an allowance to pay a commission to the third party for marketing and selling the product (some but not all sales may be commissionable). This commission can vary from 10 percent to 40 percent depending on the third party. See section 5.3 for more explanation of the use and benefits of third-party distribution.

If you are not attracting guests or have full occupancy at a particular point in time, this may be a signal that the price has not been optimally set. This is where you can use dynamic pricing, where guests pay more in the peak season and less in the shoulder/low seasons.

Before finalising the pricing, test prices in a budget, where realistic visitation or occupancy is forecast against the pricing to generate revenue, and direct costs associated with delivering the product (eg. housekeeping and cleaning) are deducted. If a gross operating profit of at least 30 percent of revenue is not achieved, pricing might be too low. If it is above 60 percent, it might be too high – or all the direct expenses have not been captured.

Some key steps to pricing station stay products:



PROMOTING YOUR PRODUCT AND GENERATING SALES

Determining what promotional methods to use can be overwhelming. Contact your RTO or TCWA for guidance or ask them for the contact of a tourism marketing consultant.

Different target markets use different promotional channels, so find out what media the target market consumes, what content they trust, and where they tend to research and plan their holidays. If there are several target markets, several promotional methods might be needed.

There are two reasons to promote – to raise awareness and to stimulate sales. Promotion can be categorised into three channels:

1. word of mouth or consumer-generated feedback
2. online channels: your business website, other websites, Google AdWords, YouTube, social media channels, and email marketing to your database
3. offline channels: farm-based, local and regional signage, brochures and maps, print advertising, radio/television advertising and events (consumer and trade).

Merchandise

Merchandise can play a valuable role in extending the station stay experience beyond the visit. By developing a recognisable brand and offering items such as apparel, souvenirs or locally made products, operators can help visitors share their experience with others, build awareness of the station, and potentially attract new customers.

A strong brand – on-site and online – can reinforce your station's identity and contribute to long-term tourism growth. Items that could elevate your brand include:

- clothing with a logo and a tagline epitomising your brand
- novelty souvenirs such as craft, art or toys made from disused parts of the pastoral property
- preserved food made on the property, perhaps in the low season.

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse

The Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) is Australia's largest national tourism platform for digital information. Tourism WA, Tourism Australia and the RTO's use ATDW to acquire, quality assure and distribute West Australian products. It's essential to list your products with ATDW and it's free. Sync your Google profile with your ATDW profile.

Word of mouth or consumer-generated content

Many station stay hosts believe that one of the most effective forms of marketing is via word-of-mouth recommendations. Its strengths are that:

- it is more trusted and thus more influential than most forms of paid advertising
- it is free.

The conventional form of word of mouth is a current or former visitor recommending the experience to a friend or family member. Whilst valuable, this has limited reach. What has far greater reach is consumer generated content through online platforms such as TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Facebook and Wikicamps, where visitors can comment on – and ideally recommend – your station stay to a much wider audience.

You should sign up early, making it clear you are the host or manager in the username, and then continually refresh the information. This raises your profile for more people to see.

Encourage guests to review the product on any of the sites listed above – the more reviews and the greater your profile, the more people find out about your station stay.

These sites will generate positive and negative feedback, and some of the negative feedback may appear unwarranted or unfair. As with all forms of earned media, the negative recommendations can be just as powerful as positive ones. Monitor the sites regularly and respond as soon as possible (ideally before anyone else) with positive and constructive feedback. If the review appears to have been falsely posted, lodge a request with the platform for the removal of the content.

Brief outline of key social media carrying consumer generated content

SOCIAL MEDIA	EXPLANATION
Trip Advisor	TripAdvisor is a very powerful research tool for travellers deciding where to travel, what to do and where to stay. Start-up businesses should list their station stay on TripAdvisor as soon as possible, allowing them to provide more information, links to the business website, phone numbers, emails and images. As a business grows, it might be listed automatically by a former guest.
Google reviews	Businesses can set up profiles via "Google My Business", allowing them to add location and contact details to the listing and providing a space for customers to leave reviews.
Facebook	When a Facebook business page is set up, there is an option to enable or disable reviews. Some tourism operators use Facebook instead of a website to manage their image and direct customers through to booking. Enabling your customers to provide positive reviews might complement marketing efforts significantly.
Wikicamps	Wikicamps is an app that provides an extensive crowd-sourced database of campsite and caravan park locations, prices and reviews around Australia. The app works offline, which is beneficial for people planning last-minute stopovers while on the road. The app charges a fee for prospective guests to use. Unlike TripAdvisor, there is no management portal.

Website

A website is considered an ideal place to capture everything you want to say about your station stay, make changes as you wish, and host your own booking system.

The website should be informative, image-rich and easy to navigate. There is a range of website shells you can buy to upload content however, a professional web developer can build a website for a modest cost much quicker, resulting in a website that is functional, error free and optimised to be found by searchers – known as search engine optimisation or SEO. Try to feature key words in the text that potential customers will use in searches. Optimisation is particularly important as it assists artificial intelligence (AI) to locate the content and provide a concise response to the potential customer. The more concise the content, the more likely AI will use it.

When choosing a website platform, make sure it is easy to access and edit so you can make simple updates without relying on a website contractor. The website will need to have a booking platform, ideally one that works with your finance software. Examples include Rezdy, FareHarbor, Bokun, Booking Boss, Bookeasy and SiteMinder.

Only a few very keen people will find your website through a search engine. Attracting plenty of visitors to the website requires a separate promotional effort, which can come from consumer-generated content or publicity generated through social media and paid advertising.

Facebook

If a website is outside your initial budget, a Facebook business page could be a short-term alternative. Facebook pages are fine for prospective customers who have some awareness of the station stay but want more information or a convenient way of booking. Positive Facebook reviews will provide comfort to prospective guests.

Instagram

Instagram is a great social media platform to showcase the station's unique landscapes, experiences and stories in a visually engaging way. By sharing authentic content, operators can connect with potential visitors, build brand awareness, and inspire travel through word-of-mouth and social sharing. It's also a great platform for guests to market your property for you by sharing their images and videos.

Use captivating visuals – high quality, bright and distinctive imagery. Video content generates more shares than text and images combined. Don't forget to add your direct booking links.

Brochures distributed to visitor centres

Before websites, brochures were a standard way for tourism businesses to present their offering and provide booking information. Brochures are still produced to capture customers choosing a product while travelling. The optimum place to display the brochure is in your region's visitor centre/s. It is important to invite the visitor team to your station (known in the industry as a familiarisation visit, or famil) so that if a customer asks them about it, they can provide an informed response.

Paid tourism industry memberships

Some tourism operators become members of a product chain that helps market them. For example, caravan parks join companies such as Big 4 Holiday Parks, Caravan and Camping WA and G'Day Parks. The chains also have customer-based members who can access discounted rates and special deals. Some key industry memberships from the local to state level include RTOs, TCWA and local tourism organisations (LTOs). There are many others at the national level, but they are not as useful for small operators.

Formed in 2021, the WA Station Stay Collective (WASSC) is a membership program that raises the profile of station stays through various promotions and develops operator capability through capacity building. The collective is coordinated by RTOs Australia's Coral Coast, Australia's Golden Outback and Australia's North West. Speak to your RTO to find out more.

Visitor centre membership

Many visitor centres across Western Australia offer membership to local tourism operators. This can help raise your business profile, with benefits such as inclusion in centre displays and brochures; referrals and bookings from visitor centre staff; listing on the centre's website and/or marketing material; and access to local tourism marketing. Some centres offer different tiers of membership.

Paid advertising

If word of mouth is not yet strong and other free channels are not yet talking about your station stay, you may need to try paid advertising. You will need to pay to produce the advertisement, as well as its placement.

Paid advertising can be purchased:

- in publications (such as travel and drive magazines like RAC Horizons)
- on social media platforms
- on radio and television stations the target market listens to/watches
- on roadside billboards within your region.

Paid advertising can be a valuable tool to build brand awareness, helping audiences become familiar with your station stay's identity, values and unique offerings. While brand marketing focuses on shaping long-term perceptions and emotional connections, tactical marketing is designed to drive immediate actions, such as bookings or event attendance. Together, these approaches can support short-term goals and long-term growth.

Distribution channels

Direct distribution is when a customer approaches you to book directly. This is ideal as you keep all the revenue (no commission payable to anyone else). However, direct distribution requires the business to invest more in promotion and marketing to generate demand and direct sales.

Commission for distribution refers to a fee paid to a third-party distributor for successfully generating a sale. Essentially, it is a marketing fee that reflects the costs of accessing broader audiences and converting interest into bookings. This fee is typically a percentage of the total sale and is only payable when a confirmed booking occurs. Distribution through channel partners costs a little more in commission but lowers the investment and effort of promotion – this is important for time-poor owner operators.

While it may seem more expensive to use third-party distributors, they undertake extensive marketing to a wide range of potential customers that is beyond the ability of an individual station stay. They are particularly beneficial in the early years of business, when few potential customers are aware of your station stay and you have limited time or expertise to do the marketing yourself.

Discuss distribution options with your RTO, local visitor centre, or TCWA.

Tour groups and tour operators

Tour groups and tour operators are an option for station stays that can cater for large groups. Coach groups can provide regular steady business booked well in advance. Their customers could be international or domestic, and they might bring a special interest or school group.

Think carefully about the needs of these markets and whether your station stay can meet them. Expect that tour groups will seek commission of a wholesale rate. For tag-along 4WD tours, ensure you confirm what insurance coverage is required.

Online travel agents

Online travel agents (OTAs) promote and sell accommodation, activities, tours and experiences. Examples include booking.com and Airbnb. OTAs work well as part of a distribution mix and, as they are global, can result in international visitors.

There is a decade-long trend of fewer customers phoning a tourism business directly to make a booking – most customers now choose to do it online, when it suits them. Your website can include its own booking engine (typically customised to the product offer), you can use one hosted by a third party, or it can do both. Presence on several booking platforms can maximise sales.

Each platform takes a commission that needs to be factored into pricing schedules. There are several strategies to manage the use of third-party platforms.

Brief outline of some key OTAs for station stays

PLATFORM	EXPLANATION
Airbnb	Airbnb promotes and books a wide range of accommodation. The platform allows businesses to have full control of the availability, prices, house rules and the way they interact with guests. All bookings are covered with property damage and insurance against accidents. Listing is free, but a booking fee of 14-20% can be expected.
Booking.com	Booking.com is suited to hotels, motels and B&B-type accommodation. The operator provides their property details, photos and payment details. An agreement must be signed. Listing is free, but a booking fee of 15% can be expected.
Hipcamp	Hipcamp is suited to station stays that offer land for camping and caravanning. The platform handles much of the administrative process associated with booking. Listing a property is free, but a booking fee of 15% to 20% can be expected.
Full Range Camping	Full Range Camping is a directory of camping spots and related locations that reaches more than 114,000 members and 128,000 Facebook followers. Full Range Camping also has an offline app for paid members that provides location details on camping and caravanning sites without access to the internet. It is free to list the business on the directory.
Caravan Overnight Farmstay	Caravan Overnight Farmstay links farmers and pastoralists who are willing to host self-contained vehicles on their land. Membership is $66 for two years. The agreement includes signage provided at the station stay entry, along with a website page to promote the product. Guests typically pay by donation or by a fee that the operator sets.

- Consider in the first few years of business, while you are building awareness of your station stay.
- Make sites or room nights available on third party booking platforms in low and shoulder seasons, then remove or reduce the inventory in peak periods.
- Manage short-term low occupancy by placing certain nights on the third-party sites – better to have a sale with a commission than no sale at all.

Inbound Tour Operators (ITOs) and Destination Management Companies (DMCs)

When you have decided that your station stay is ready to actively seek international visitors, it is time to get export ready. Contact your RTO or TCWA for guidance on how to create a package for international distributors. These specialist travel agents have partnerships with wholesalers and travel agencies all over the world. Usually located in Australia, they package full itineraries, including station stays, and make it easier to work with international markets.

MONITORING VISITOR PROFILE AND FEEDBACK

How many visitors and when?

It is important to know how many customers your station stay attracts and when they come, as this helps evaluate past marketing and determine future marketing; guides staff rostering and the purchase of goods and services; and determines the overall evaluation of the business.

Most booking systems allow the operator to collect this information for accommodation, but you might need to customise further to capture customer numbers for experiences.

Was the target market attracted and what did they think?

While it is useful to have a well-defined target market, it is even more useful to know whether these people are actually coming, and what they think of the experience designed for them. If you can, it is valuable to:

- collect a profile of guests to ascertain who is coming and compare to the original target market
- determine the level of satisfaction the target market has with the various experiences on offer
- find out the level of satisfaction other guests have with the various experiences on offer.

This information helps you figure out if the right target market has been chosen or needs to be adjusted; whether any of the experiences should be altered to increase satisfaction; and whether there is enough demand to further invest in the business.

You can build a simple survey to give customers at check-in and hand back at checkout. It is possible to also place this on a survey website, and have visitors complete it online, thus avoiding data entry.

5.4 UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH THE TOURISM SECTOR

Some of the key tourism organisations relevant to station stays in Western Australia

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS	THEIR FOCUS
Tourism Australia	This is the Australian Government's national tourism agency, responsible for attracting international visitors for both leisure and business events. Tourism Australia focuses on marketing the country as a destination, conducting research, and supporting the industry.
Austrade	While Austrade's focus is broader than Tourism Australia, it also plays a role in tourism. Austrade works with partners like Tourism Australia and state and territory tourism organisations to promote Australia as a destination and attract investment.
STATE GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS	**THEIR FOCUS**
Tourism Western Australia	As the State Tourism Organisation, Tourism WA grows the tourism sector by promoting the State globally as an incredible holiday and business destination; attracting and promoting world-class sporting, cultural and arts events; improving access, accommodation and tourism experiences; and by informing and empowering the local tourism industry.
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)	DBCA is responsible for managing Western Australia's parks, reserves, rivers and marine areas; conserving biodiversity; and promoting nature-based tourism across lands and waters under various environmental acts.
REGIONAL AND LOCAL ORGANISATIONS	**THEIR FOCUS**
Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs)	Western Australia has five RTOs – Australia's North West, Australia's Coral Coast, Australia's Golden Outback, Destination Perth, and Australia's South West. These are the peak marketing and management body for their region. RTOs offer support for marketing opportunities to encourage direct bookings; local industry news and updates; regional trade engagement and representation; and facilitate industry development opportunities.
Local Tourism Organisations (LTOs)	They represent tourism within smaller towns or areas within a region, providing networking and advocacy.
Local Government Authority (LGA)	Many LGAs have dedicated tourism staff, and some coordinate and fund visitor centres. LGAs are also responsible for assessing development and building applications.
Local visitor centres	Visitor centres act as a marketing and distribution point for local tourism operators. They promote businesses online and through brochures and displays, providing recommendations to visitors and assistance with booking.
INDUSTRY BODIES AND ASSOCIATIONS	**THEIR FOCUS**
Tourism Council Western Australia (TCWA)	Provides advocacy for tourism businesses, industries and regions in WA and delivers capacity building programs.
Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC)	Represents Aboriginal tours and experiences in WA and promotes authentic cultural experiences at a state, national and international level.
Caravan & Camping Western Australia	Represents and advocates for members to enhance performance and promote the industry.

SNAPSHOT OF KEY ORGANISATIONS

In Australia, tourism is supported by a complex network of organisations at national, state, regional, and local levels. These organisations work together to attract visitors, promote destinations, and ensure sustainable growth of the tourism industry. It can be challenging for a new tourism business to know who to approach and for what. The purpose of this section is to introduce the sector and provide some leads on how to learn more and access supporting resources.

TOURISM WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Tourism WA is the best starting point to better understand the sector. Start with **How to work with Tourism Western Australia**.

Tourism WA's corporate website provides a range of resources for operators, including guidance on:

- requirements for operating in the tourism sector
- strategies for growing a tourism business
- becoming market-ready
- expanding into international markets.

TOURISM COUNCIL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

TCWA offers their members:

- training, networking, and professional development opportunities for tourism businesses
- support to achieve best-practice operations through accreditation programs
- regular industry updates and insights

TCWA has a wide range of online training, as well as a Tourism Toolbox where you can download information on a wide range of topics, including:

- economic estimators
- pricing tool
- accessible tourism
- activities and experiences
- awards
- business development
- business planning
- commercial and legal
- culture and heritage
- customers and reviews
- finance and Pricing
- food and Beverage
- HR job descriptions
- HR performance and offboarding
- HR policies
- HR recruitment and onboarding
- marketing and bookings
- member insights
- member webinars
- operations
- safety and risk
- social media
- sustainability and eco certification
- visitor centres
- governance

NETWORK WITH OTHERS

Networking is an excellent way to learn from peers, build partnerships, and stay connected within the tourism sector. Start by engaging with your RTO and TCWA to explore networking opportunities that suit your business. Consider reaching out to other station stay operators to share ideas and learn from each other's experiences. You can also attend regular industry events to broaden your connections and gain valuable insights.

6. STATION STAY CASE STUDIES



QUOBBA STATION, MACLEOD

WOORAMEL RIVER RETREAT

Wooramel River Retreat, located along the North West Coastal Highway and bordering the Shark Bay World Heritage Area in Australia's Coral Coast region, is a family-owned 140,000-hectare working cattle and goat station.

A distinctive feature of the station is the Wooramel River, often referred to as an upside-down river because surface flow only occurs two to three times a year after significant inland rainfall. This intermittent flow nourishes floodplains, providing rich grazing land, alongside coastal plains with native saltbush and bluebush pastures. The rest of the property is characterised by wagyu and other acacia bushland.

The station's history dates back to the early 1880s, but it was not until the 1920s, under the ownership of the Hall family, that drilling for artesian water began, unlocking vast resources for livestock. Three bores were drilled, supplying naturally pressurised artesian water from a depth of 240 metres to most of the property via free-flowing bore drains.

Since acquiring the station in 1987, the Steadman family has implemented sustainable land management practices to rejuvenate the rangeland ecosystem. Transitioning from merino sheep to Damara-dorper breeds better suited to arid conditions, they also established an international goat trade to manage the transient goat population and reduce grazing pressure.

The family decided to diversify into tourism to increase overall revenue, with heated artesian water containing health-giving magnesium a key point of difference. The tourism business started small, with a modest budget that required creative recycling of existing buildings and materials. In the first year, the business offered 20 campsites and a few artesian hot baths, attracting 14,000 guests for one-night stays between April to October.

Further expansion added simple tents, hard-roofed accommodation with air conditioning, another 80 campsites, more artesian baths and a café offering dinner. Visitation has more than doubled to 35,000 guests between March to November.

The financial success of the tourism business has enabled the employment of dedicated operational staff and managers, helping the station to transition away from sheep grazing. The process of destocking – reducing or removing livestock to relieve pressure on the land – has been part of a broader strategy to support ecological regeneration. Strategic fencing has been introduced to manage grazing zones, and cattle and goats are now used to prune perennial shrubs and grasses naturally. This approach enhances the land's regenerative capacity, particularly following rainfall, while aligning with sustainable land management goals.

Plans to expand further focus on wellness, including a large natural spring, mud baths, sauna, cultural tours and event space.

Wooramel River Retreat identified two key challenges:

- There was limited cash for early development, and banks were disinterested in lending money.
- The business is seasonal, with summer unattractive to the market.

Key lessons:

1. Prepare a plan from the start that sets out a staged approach for expansion and balances tourism and pastoral operations.
2. From the outset, scope the land area, facilities and supporting infrastructure two to three times bigger than the first envisaged phase of development. Get the larger size approved so you are ready for future expansion.
3. As soon as the business is big enough, stop working in the business and start working on the business.
4. If working with a limited budget, start with lower-spend, intrastate markets. As business develops, add value to the experience and expand to lift yield.



WOORAMEL RIVER RETREAT , CARNARVON | GWOONWARDU

QUOBBA STATION

Quobba Station, located about 60km north of Carnarvon in Australia's Coral Coast region, and stretching 80km along the coast, is a 75,000-hectare sheep station and the most westerly station in Western Australia.

Established in 1898, the family-owned property is bound by Gnarloo Station to the north, Lake McLeod and Boolathana Station to the south-east and the Indian Ocean to the West. The station runs about 10,000 Damara (South African meat sheep) after originally running merino (woolly) sheep.

In 2015, the pastoralists renegotiated a lease agreement with the Western Australian Government to excise sections of pastoral land along the World-Heritage Ningaloo Coast from the property, for conservation and tourism ventures. These two parcels of permit-approved land are Red Bluff and the Quobba Homestead.

Red Bluff, about 60km north of the homestead, is a renowned surf break with pristine beaches, attracting a range of visitors, including surfers, adventurous travellers and families. The homestead, which offers fishing, shell hunting and seasonal whale watching, is ideal for families, grey nomads and anglers.

The station is also supported by surrounding attractions, including the spectacular Ningaloo Reef, blowholes, the wreck of the bulk carrier Korean Star, and a memorial cairn to HMAS Sydney, which lost its entire crew off the coast in a battle with the German raider Kormoran in 1941. Survivors of the Kormoran, which also sank, came to shore at Quobba Station.

The variety of wildlife is also a drawcard, with leatherback turtles, manta rays and humpbacks, chiming wedgebills, Australian bustards (bush turkeys), thorny devils, perenties, kangaroos, rock wallabies and echidnas among the many creatures to be spotted on and off shore.

Quobba Station offers four types of accommodation: two retreats – self-contained, hard-deck safari tents with fully equipped kitchenette, 24-hour solar power and ensuite; a separate cluster of three self-contained bungalows; simple rustic shacks; and unpowered self-sufficient camping and caravan sites.

Within the Red Bluff campground is the Totoka Day Spa. There is no food and beverage service, but the station store sells a variety of tinned and dried goods, as well as cool drinks and ice-creams. Visitors can also buy fishing and snorkelling gear.

The heritage of the station is reflected in the original cottages surrounding the homestead. The Smithies was the blacksmith's workshop; The Stables was the tack room that stored saddles and riding equipment; The Cottage was the overseer's residence; The Long Cottage was the garage for the station, with the inspection pit still in one of the bedrooms; and The Outcamp was the jackaroo quarters. The Shearing Quarters were used to accommodate shearers up until 2025, when the family switched to Damara sheep, which are not as woolly as merinos and don't need clipping.

Quobba Station identified several key challenges:

- The pastoral business is financially tight and generally doesn't offer much capital to support tourism development.
- Working through native title is extremely time consuming and unpredictable.
- The DPLH permit system is complex – get professional help to navigate.

Key lessons:

1. Keep visitors in a defined space, as this helps to contain infrastructure and services and minimise risks to visitors and the pastoral operation.
2. Reuse pastoral infrastructure, equipment and materials to reduce development costs and maintain authenticity.
3. Split employees between property and tourism functions – avoid one person doing too many roles.
4. Seek development approval for far more than envisaged, so that when the opportunity arises to expand, there are fewer approvals to slow down the next phase.



QUOBBA STATION, MACLEOD

CHEELA PLAINS STATION

Cheela Plains Station Stay, located 460km north-east of the World Heritage-listed Ningaloo Reef and 270km south-west of Karijini National Park in Australia's North West region, is a 188,000-hectare working cattle station in the semi-arid pastoral rangelands of the Pilbara.

The owners established Cheela Plains Station in 2001 by subdividing it from Wyloo Station. Until 2011, the sole enterprise was grazing cattle (owned and agisted livestock) in a rest-based grazing system, supporting a vision of leaving the rangelands in a better condition for future generations. Due to poor rainfall seasons, the property was destocked in 2010 and rested until cattle were reintroduced in 2015. In 2011, the owners diversified by offering accommodation and meals to short-term resource sector workers within the homestead. In 2012, this was relocated to the staff quarters/workshop area using existing infrastructure. A pastoral-based tourism permit was obtained in 2012, with the first local government planning approval submitted three years later. In 2015, a self-service, low-input campground with 17 unpowered sites was established as a safe overnight stop for tourists. Over the past 10 years, the campground and accommodation have expanded to include a purpose-built reception, 30 powered and unpowered campsites, 13 wilderness campsites, 17 station tents, 31 rooms (combination of ensuites and shared amenities), a conference room and café/restaurant.

Tourist facilities and the café operate seasonally from April to mid-October (May to August peak), while accommodation and meals for short-term corporate guests operate year-round. A year-round tourism model was trialled but resulted in complaints that could not be addressed. The closed period is now used for maintenance, upgrades and refreshing marketing systems. The first website and logo were developed in 2013. Online accommodation bookings were introduced in 2017 via the Little Hotelier cloud-based booking engine, which is still in use, and online dinner bookings commenced in 2025 using WOW app software.

There are 11 staff rostered for the tourist season (including two volunteer camp hosts), with four staff retained over summer. All staff are accommodated on-site. The owners operate as a team, with one primarily managing the pastoral enterprise and the other leading the tourism business.

Key ingredients to success have been add-ons to increase spend per guest, including opening the café, offering dinners, selling branded merchandise and a chargeable 4WD self-drive 90km safari. Interpretation for the safari includes a geological time trail and a map locating points of interest. Guests can also swim in a river pool, bush walk through the Beasley River Gorge, birdwatch, mountain bike, and photograph local wildlife, enhancing overall guest experience and satisfaction. Guided 4WD tours were trialled but discontinued due to challenges in training and retaining staff.

The station stay caters to a broad market, including domestic (intra/interstate) and international guests of all ages (couples, singles and families) travelling with caravans/camper trailers or using station accommodation, as well as backpackers and short-term resource sector workers.

The owners identified key challenges as:

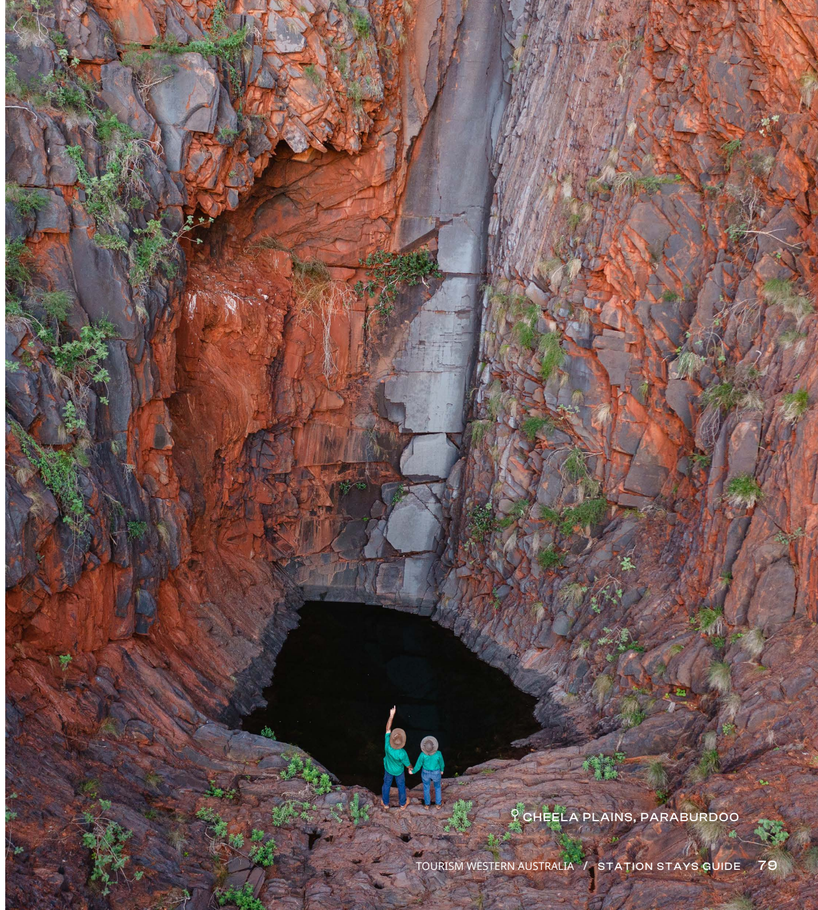
- Lack of experience in marketing accommodation products, brand development and managing a team of 11 staff
- Lack of confidence in the market and from the bank when seeking finance for upgrades.

The following activities have played an important role in strengthening the business through industry connection and capability development:

- Developing relationships with like-minded pastoralists through programs such as WASSC, which provided international trade show exposure and increased bookings
- Maintaining membership and engagement with tourism organisations including Australia's North West, Caravan and Camping Western Australia, TCWA, local visitor centre and Chamber of Commerce
- Participating in mentoring programs and achieving accreditation, and implementing an online booking system.

Key lessons:

1. Set up rate plans through channel managers to connect with international travel agents and OTAs
2. Building relationships with domestic and international travel agents takes five to seven years, as bookings are often made 12 months or more in advance and require confidence in business continuity
3. Listen to guest reviews
4. Stage development to progressively expand scale and sophistication
5. Focus on building a strong reputation and online brand, with support from the tourism sector.



CHEELA PLAINS, PARABURDOO

MELANGATA STATION

Melangata Station, located in Australia's Golden Outback region about 60km north of Yalgoo and 100km west of Mount Magnet, is a 45,000-hectare pastoral lease and sheep station.

Known for its historic John Hawes-designed homestead, the only privately-owned residential Hawes-design in Australia, the station has its own tiny chapel nestled within the walls of the main building. Established in 1916, Melangata initially ran merino sheep for wool but now runs Dorper sheep for meat.

The owners decided to diversify into tourism to offset dwindling returns from their pastoral operation and to share the place with others. In 2016, they gained a tourism permit with minimal difficulty. The permit is focussed on the developed areas of the homestead surrounds and separate camping area. No local government approvals were needed. The permit was renewed five years later and was a relatively simple process.

The business started with a very modest development based on self-sufficiency, providing campsites and amenities, using savings. Today the tourism operation offers several accommodation options, including:

- bed and breakfast guest rooms within the homestead (with self-contained shearers quarters and cottage accommodation in future plans)
- self-contained accommodation within the adapted wildflower cottage
- a refurbished 1970 caravan
- unpowered campsites, supported by a cookhouse and amenities building with hot showers and flushing toilets.

The station trialled a suite of furnished bell tents but found they could not withstand the elements or keep guests warm on winter nights.

Capacity was capped at about 40 campsites and six homestead rooms as the property had to generate its own power.

On-site experiences include a guided tour of the homestead with morning tea; tagalong tour of the property; guided stargazing; bushwalking and bike riding. Dinners offered to homestead guests were later extended to campers which received a hugely positive response. In addition, several attractions within 120km can be visited as an easy day trip; with no accommodation closer to these attractions, the station is ideally placed.

As onsite experiences were added, the length of stay and profitability increased. There is a minimum two-night stay and the average is three to four nights.

The market is made up of retirees and some farmers seeking to escape the winter. About half of all guests come from southern parts of Western Australia, 20 percent from South Australia and Victoria and 10 percent from Queensland and New South Wales. The owners are not targeting international visitors as they believe this market is more challenging and time-consuming.

The business operates from April to mid-October, with June to July the peak months. The owners recruit two staff as campground hosts, changing over every year or two. The tourism business now provides about 80 percent of total income from the property and is proportionately increasing each year. This has allowed a reduction in pasture areas and sheep, and less time invested in pastoral management.

Key lessons:

1. Start with a simple self-contained proposal that the owners can deliver, while skills are developed and the brand is built, then expand and upgrade.
2. Choose brand-new infrastructure to minimise operating issues and costly and disruptive repairs.
3. Offer a communal campfire every two or so nights to join guests and chat. They really enjoy gaining an informal understanding of pastoral life and it builds repeat business and referrals.



MELANGATA STATION, YALGOO

PARDOO HOMESTEAD

Pardoo Wagyu, located on the Great Northern Highway about 160km north-east of Port Hedland and 500km south-west of Broome in Australia's North West region, is a 200,000-hectare working cattle property covering a diverse range of landscapes from tidal flats to spinifex plains.

In 2015, the Executive Chairman of Pardoo Beef Corporation bought the station and the company is transforming the property for wagyu production to service global markets.

Pardoo Homestead is situated 40 minutes south of the Pardoo Wagyu operations. It has recently moved to a longer-term land use through the granting of a section 79 lease by the Western Australian Government, with the agreement of the native title holders. This change enables more diversified use, including tourism activities. Visitors reportedly come to stay for the fishing and beach. The Ngarla people are an intrinsic part of the operation, visiting regularly for leisure and participating in station events. A dedicated accommodation precinct is in progress for the Ngarla people so that they can continue to enjoy coming to Pardoo as their people did before them.

The station stay is owned by Pardoo Wagyu Corporation Pty Ltd, with onsite managers running the tourism business as a separate entity. The tourism business sources capital funds for expansion and upgrades through the broader pastoral company, topped up with tourism business profits. When unforeseen costs (eg. repairs post-natural disaster) occur, the pastoral business and neighbouring business provide support (where feasible). The company has also accessed some government grants for the tourism operation over the years.

The station stay experience includes self-guided 4WD explorations, barramundi fishing and birdwatching. They are also working to establish a range of Aboriginal guided experiences for guests.

Pardoo Homestead has 80 ensuite cabins available as short-stay accommodation. Facilities include a 130-bay campground and caravan park, swimming pool, gym, shared amenities blocks, laundry, barbecue area, firepit, washdown bay and two dump stations. A station store stocks food staples, freshly baked bread and pastries, fishing gear, bait, ice, alcohol, cold drinks, snacks and merchandise. Customers can buy local wagyu beef on site. Starlink-enabled internet also provides connectivity for those who wish to remain connected.

A commercial restaurant seating 70 is serviced by full-time chefs and is very popular with guests. The restaurant has recently started supporting events designed to build the station's wagyu brand. When the property was bought, the restaurant only supported workers, but the company has upgraded the offering to cater for the domestic and international leisure market.

The business is continuously upgrading and expanding, with plans to add high-end ensuite rooms via renovations to existing buildings. The station stay operates year-round and is achieving an average annual occupancy of 75 percent, which only drops to 50 percent in the low season (summer). The low season heat reduces caravan park occupancy, but cabin occupancy stays strong and has a similar length of stay. There is increasing patronage from Port Hedland and other local residents celebrating birthdays and weddings, looking to fish or coming for corporate retreats.

Pardoo Homestead identified several key challenges:

- The distance and the need for ongoing promotion remains a challenge, with promotional efforts being made with local visitor information centres and associations.
- It is not easy to source qualified staff. Most staff are holiday visa workers. Experience shows that only a few are dedicated and the rest just want to complete their working visa requirement. These workers only stay up six months, so constant training is required. Occasionally some workers leave, travel and come back to work, but this is the exception.

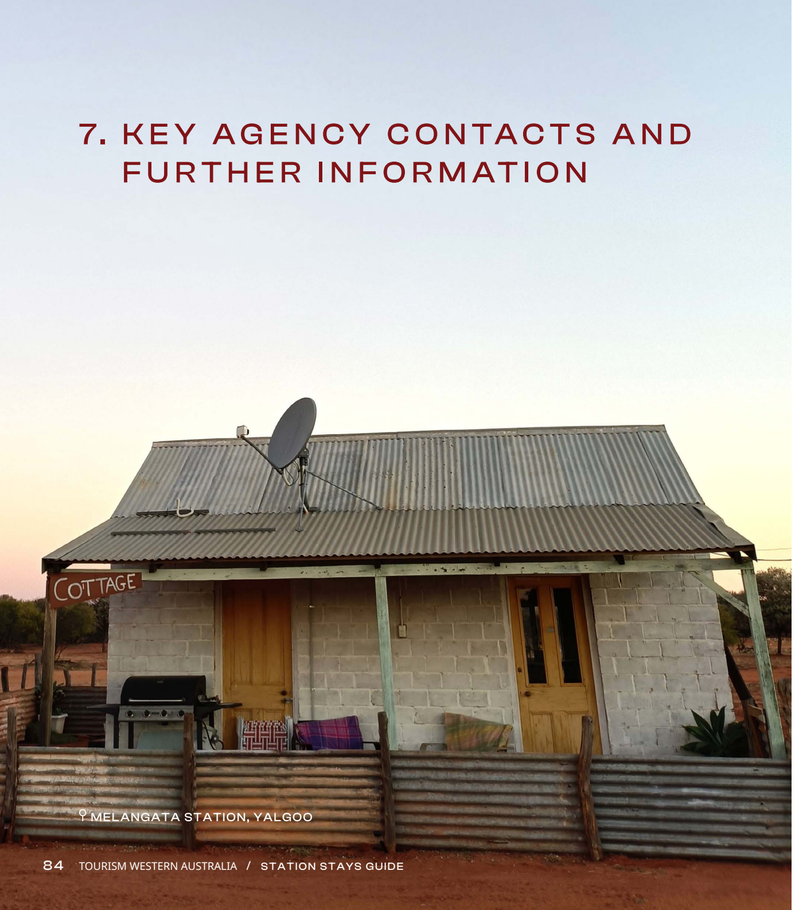
Key lessons:

1. Try to establish a business with accommodation that can run all year (comfortable enough to stay in the summer). This enables the business to employ one or more full-time staff, which in turn significantly lifts the expertise brought in and the standard of management and service.
2. Work closely with local native title holders from the outset. Develop an open relationship and identify and understand their priorities (eg. getting young ones into university via scholarships; supporting Elder access to medical services; enabling continued access to the property; support in advocating their cultural values).
3. A restaurant with quality food is an incredibly effective way to present the company's wagyu (building its brand), thereby encouraging increased length of stay and subsequent yield.



PARDOO HOMESTEAD, THE PILBARA

7. KEY AGENCY CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION



MELANGATA STATION, YALGOO

The following consulting fields could help enhance your business, or help you through approvals:

- tourism planning and development consultants
- Aboriginal consultation and facilitation consultants
- architects with small tourism development experience
- heritage architects
- ecological assessment consultants

To identify specific consultants, contact your RTO.

Alternatively, use the Preferred Supplier Directory provided by the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA).

Use the Local Government Directory (to find the contact details of any local government in Western Australia.

Australia's Golden Outback
www.australiasgoldenoutback.com
admin@goldenoutback.com

Australia's Coral Coast
www.australiascoralcoast.com
admin@australiascoralcoast.com

Australia's North West
www.australiasnorthwest.com
info@australiasnorthwest.com

Tourism Western Australia
www.tourism.wa.gov.au
info@westernaustralia.com

Tourism Council Western Australia (TCWA)
www.tourismcouncilwa.com.au
tcwa@tourismcouncilwa.com.au

Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH, acting for Pastoral Lands Board)
www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-planning-lands-and-heritage
pastoral@dplh.wa.gov.au / plb@plb.wa.gov.au
(Ask to speak with a representative from the Pastoral Lease Management and Compliance team)

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)
www.dbca.wa.gov.au/management/nature-based-tourism/commercial-activities
enquiries@dbca.wa.gov.au

Department of Water and Environment Regulation (DWER)
https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/department-of-water-and-environmental-regulation
info@dwer.wa.gov.au
1800 161 176 or regional offices
Water licensing: licence.enquiry@dwer.wa.gov.au

Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations
www.oric.gov.au
info@oric.gov.au

Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC)
www.waitoc.com
ceo@waitoc.com

Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA)
www.walga.asn.au
info@walga.asn.au

Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS)
www.lgirs.wa.gov.au

Wheatbelt Development Commission
www.wheatbelt.wa.gov.au
info@wheatbelt.wa.gov.au

Gascoyne Development Commission
www.gdc.wa.gov.au
info@gdc.wa.gov.au

Goldfields-Esperance Development Commission
www.gedc.wa.gov.au
info@gedc.wa.gov.au

Mid West Development Commission
www.mwdc.wa.gov.au
info@mwdc.wa.gov.au

Pilbara Development Commission
www.pdc.wa.gov.au
pdc@pdc.wa.gov.au

Kimberley Development Commission
www.kdc.wa.gov.au
info@kdc.wa.gov.au

Austrade
www.austrade.gov.au
info@austrade.gov.au

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse
www.atdw.com.au
support@atdw.com.au

Employment WA
www.jobs.wa.gov.au
jobconnect@dtwd.wa.gov.au

Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC)
www.smallbusiness.wa.gov.au

National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT)
www.nntt.gov.au/Pages/Home-Page.aspx
enquiries@nntt.gov.au

8. ABBREVIATIONS

ABN	Australian Business Number
ACHIS	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Inquiry System
AHA	Aboriginal Heritage Act
AI	Artificial intelligence
ASIC	Australian Securities and Investments Commission
ATDW	Australian Tourism Data Warehouse
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
CCWA	Caravan and Camping Western Australia
DBCA	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
DMC	Destination Management Company
DPIRD	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
DPLH	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage
DWER	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
FSS	Food Safety Supervisor
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
ITO	Inbound Tour Operators
LGA	Local Government Authority
LGIRS	Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety
NCC	National Construction Code
NNTT	National Native Title Tribunal
NTA	Native Title Act
OTA	Online Travel Agent
PAYG	Pay As You Go
PLB	Pastoral Lands Board
RATSIB	Representative Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Body
RTO	Regional Tourism Organisation
SBDC	Small Business Development Corporation
SITP	Strategic Indigenous Tourism Project
STRA	Short-Term Rental Accommodation
WASSC	WA Station Stay Collective
TCWA	Tourism Council Western Australia
TFN	Tax File Number
TWA	Tourism Western Australia.
WAITOC	Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council

PARDOO HOMESTEAD, THE PILBARA

STAY IN CONTACT

facebook.com/extraordinarywesternaustralia

linkedin.com/company/tourism-western-australia

youtube.com/westernaustralia

instagram.com/westernaustralia

x.com/westaustralia

tiktok.com/westernaustralia

Tourism Western Australia

Level 10, 1 William Street, PERTH WA 6000
PO Box 8349, Perth Business Centre WA 6849
T. 08 9262 1700

westernaustralia.com
tourism.wa.gov.au


GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Tourism
WESTERN AUSTRALIA
WESTERN AUSTRALIA
WALKING ON A DREAM
CHEELA PLAINS, PARABURDOO