On the south coast, a diverse range of seagrasses grow in habitats protected from the full force of waves by islands and headlands. South coast seagrasses grow on silica sand to a depth of about 30 m and on carbonate sand beyond 30 m depth. Many seagrasses grow in these sheltered zones, including most of the species found on the west coast. Beyond the shelter of the headlands, waves roll in from the open ocean and seagrasses are subjected to very high wave action. Only those species with special adaptations to strong water movement are able to persist.

Management issues

Coastal development

The construction footprint from marinas, ports, and jetties results in infilling and land reclamation, directly removing seagrass meadows, as well as interrupting natural movement of sediment along the coast. Trawling and anchor/mooring damage also impact upon seagrass meadows.

Reduced water quality

Even though relatively few people live on the south coast, nutrient inputs from farming, industry, and sewage can impact seagrass. The Albany harbours were noted globally as significant cases of seagrass loss.

Aquaculture

Potential threats to seagrasses exist from proposed caged blackfin tuna farming and from abalone and other land-based aquaculture. These include nutrient addition from feeding, increasing light attenuation, and introduced marine pests.

Management responses

Careful site selection and education

Interruption of natural sand movement by constructing breakwaters should be minimised and marinas and jetties should be located to minimise loss of seagrass habitat. Education of boat owners will help reduce seagrass loss caused by moorings and anchors.

Reduce inputs of nutrients and sediments

Catchment management to reduce soil erosion, improving wastewater treatment, and minimising outputs from industry can all assist in improving coastal water quality to maintain seagrass meadows.

Location and monitoring

Minimising the impact of aquaculture will require careful location into areas with high water exchange, and nutrient outputs should be carefully controlled. Careful monitoring will be essential to determine the extent of impacts.