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National Parks Association of NSW Submission to TEMPERATE EAST REGION MARINE PARK DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Network/Australia-wide:

- 1. NPA rejects the cut backs of Marine National Park 'sanctuary' IUCN II zoning (MNPZ) across the Network and calls for the Turnbull Government to fully restore and increase the IUCN II zoning in Australia's Marine Parks without delay.** The Government's independent Review recognised the extensive science and consultation that led to the creation of the 40 parks in 2012. However, the Turnbull Government's draft management plans recommend reducing, relocating and in most cases completely removing the MNPZ protection over key habitats, particularly in the globally important Coral Sea. In the face of devastating coral bleaching, mangrove dieback and vanishing kelp forests, MNPZ coverage in Australia's Marine Parks are even more important now than ever.
- 2. NPA calls for the marine park zoning to be science-based** – the Government's own Expert Science Panel found that marine parks declared in 2012 were the result of sound science and consultation. Further, leading scientists found that the 2012 network would need more marine sanctuary coverage, not less (eg: Barr and Possingham, *Are outcomes matching policy commitments in Australian marine conservation planning?* Marine Policy 42, 39-48 2013).
- 3. Partial protection zones are not a substitute for high level National Park 'sanctuary' (IUCN II) protection** – claims by government that Habitat Protection (HPZs/ yellow zones) are equal to Marine National Park zone (MNPZ/green zones) are false and misleading. Protecting the sea floor provides only partial protection and does not protect the marine life living within the water column. Each marine park should have adequately sized and located zones of high level MNPZ protection, with partial protection zones used in an ancillary way. It is well established in the scientific literature that partial protection does not generate biodiversity benefits comparable to full protection.
- 4. Even the highest level of protection in the current plans (IUCN II) is insufficient** – The current plans have no IUCN Ia (Strict nature reserve: protected area managed mainly for science) or Ib (Wilderness area: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection) zones anywhere in the Temperate East. According to the Australian Government's own web site (2008) Ia zones are "indispensable reference areas for scientific research and monitoring" and Ib zones "are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition". Whilst we welcome the implementation of IUCN II zones, they are not a substitute for Ia and Ib zones.
- 5. Every marine reserve should have at least one IUCN II zone** – in order to achieve

Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) objectives, each reserve should have enough IUCN II or higher zoning to cover key features and populations in that area. The Commonwealth marine reserves review: report of the expert scientific panel (2015), states “each reserve should include at least one Marine National Park Zone” and “a significant sample of each primary conservation feature and each provincial bioregion be included in at least one Marine National Park Zone of an appropriate configuration and size to meet conservation objectives.” Under the current plans, three reserves (Jervis, Hunter and Gifford) have no IUCN II zones, and many key features, such as upwellings, shelf rocky reefs and canyons on the continental slope have no sanctuary-level coverage.

- 6. Overall coverage of IUCN II or above zoning falls well short of international standards**
- Whilst the overall percentage of IUCN II appears significant (15% of reserve area), this is inadequate from two perspectives. Firstly, the IUCN target is for 30% of each marine habitat to be in highly protected (non-extractive) MPAs by 2030 (IUCN 2017). The current plans’ zone II area comprises less than 4% of the region. The Temperate East plans are being formulated just 13 years before the IUCN target date, and fall well short of this internationally-recognised goal. Secondly, the bulk of the zone II area in the Temperate East reserves – 11% of the 15% - is in a single reserve. Just 4% is distributed across the other seven reserves.
- 7. NPA rejects the proposal to allow mining in parks** – the Government proposes to allow mining and pipelines in the vast majority of the parks. Marine parks not currently containing mining exploration rights should be considered for full protection from mining. As emphasised at the recent World Conservation Congress, industrial activities like mining and mining exploration are not compatible with marine parks. Marine parks should be fully protected from mining as has been achieved in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- 8. NPA rejects the proposal for destructive commercial fishing activities such as trawling, gillnetting and longlining in the marine parks** – by opening up 38 of the marine parks to destructive commercial fishing practices such as trawling, gillnetting and longlining, the Government is proposing to ignore the findings of the independent Fishing Gear Risk Assessments it commissioned, which found those types of fishing to be incompatible with many of the conservation values in the parks. Further, allowing in destructive forms of commercial fishing puts at risk the benefits that marine parks provide not only to marine life, but also more broadly to tourism, recreational fishing and other types of commercial fishing that *can* operate sustainably inside parks alongside high level MNPZ zoning.
- 9. There is no justifying economic argument** – Australia’s marine tourism industry is worth \$28b per year, whereas the catch value being returned to commercial fishing from the network-wide MNPZ cuts is worth only \$4m per annum – only 0.3% of the total revenue of Australia’s wild catch fisheries.
- 10. The results of the statutory consultation are being ignored** - it is deeply concerning that despite the vast majority of submissions to Parks Australia’s first consultation round last year strongly supporting the restoration and increase in high level marine national park zone protection, the Government is proposing the complete opposite to the consultation outcomes in all but 1 of the 44 marine parks.

Specific comments regarding TEMPERATE EAST region's marine parks:

The Temperate East marine region is recognised as an area of global significance for a number of protected marine species including the critically-endangered east coast population of grey nurse shark and the vulnerable white shark. The network includes: important offshore reef habitat at Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs (one of Australia's longest standing highly protected marine parks), Lord Howe Island and at Norfolk Island that support the threatened black cod; the southernmost extent of many reef-building coral species; as well as important breeding, foraging and feeding areas for several species of seabird including the little tern.

- **Regarding Lord Howe Marine Park** – NPA is concerned about the Government's proposal to remove protection over part of the seamount ecosystem of Middleton Reef – one of Australia's longest and most highly protected remote coral reef habitats, declared 30 years ago 1987. The returned catch value returned to the fishing industry from the loss of this important ecosystem is estimated by ABARES to be just \$31,000 per annum, or \$770 per annum to each of the 40 active longlining vessels in the Commonwealth's Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery. Therefore there is no economic justification for the loss of such an important legacy area of Australia's marine parks network.
NPA is also concerned that the Government is ignoring the advice of its expert Review, in downgrading the zoning in the northern half of the Lord Howe marine park outside the pre-existing Elizabeth and Middleton Reef area, from the recommended Habitat Protection Zone (yellow) to the very low level Multiple Use Zone (blue) which will in particular allow mining.
- **Regarding Norfolk seamount protection** – NPA is concerned that the government does not propose high level MNPZ protection for any of the Norfolk Seamounts despite being identified by the Howard Government as one of Australia's 11 most unique habitats for marine life. The Government's proposals are contrary to the recommendation of the Government's own Review, which found that **the Vening Meinse Fracture Zone** some way south of Norfolk Island should be given MNPZ status. Research trips have found it to be covered with a thick manganese crust and a community of benthic organisms using as substrate. The biological samples found included: Gorgonians, black coral, soft coral, crinoids, bryozoans, bivalves, gastropods, silica sponges, brittle stars, ascidians, tunicates and polychaete worms.
- **Regarding protection levels in the Norfolk Marine Park overall** – NPA is concerned that the Government is again ignoring the advice of its own expert Review, by not upgrading the zoning outside the MNPZs and the Island's extended MOU Box, from the very low level Multiple Use Zone (blue) to Habitat Protection Zone (yellow). In doing so, the Government is opening up much of the marine park to the possibility of becoming an oil field, and/or the possibility of highly destructive seabed mining. Geoscience Australia reports consider the region to be somewhat prospective for oil and gas finds.
- **Regarding high level protection levels in the Temperate East region overall** – NPA is concerned that the Government is not proposing to increase high level protection in the Temperate East marine region despite 96% of the region having no high level MNPZ protection, and 85% of the region having no protection at all. Further, the proposed zoning fails to implement the CSIRO recommendation for all marine reserves to contain at least one Marine National Park Zone, with the draft plan proposing no MNPZ for the **Gifford, Hunter and Jervis Marine Parks**

Recommendations:

Despite finding that highly protected marine parks are vital as a key tool in marine management, the Government has failed to act on its own advice, missing the opportunity to deliver a science-based result in the Temperate East.

The following are my recommendations to the Government in relation to the redrafting of the Temperate East marine region management arrangements: -

1. NPA supports the Government's proposal to increase protection from mining in the **Central Eastern, Jervis and Hunter Marine Parks**;
2. NPA rejects the proposal removal of MNPZ protection at the long standing highly protected **Middleton Reef in the Lord Howe Marine Park**;
3. NPA rejects the proposal to remove the new MNPZ over the Vening Meinez Fracture Zone in the **Norfolk Marine Marine Park** which was recommended for MNPZ protection by the Government's Review;
4. NPA rejects the proposal to downgrade protection from mining in **Norfolk and Lord Howe Marine Parks** which the Review recommended be protected as yellow Habitat Protection Zone.
5. **NPA calls on the Government to adopt the CSIRO and Expert Scientific Panel recommendations for each marine reserve to contain at least one MNPZ**, with a particular focus on ensuring that the shelf, continental slope and seamounts are better represented with MNPZ coverage, and investigates the opportunities to implement IUCN Ia and Ib zones in locations of high wilderness or scientific reference value.

Yours sincerely,



Alix Goodwin
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National Parks Association of NSW