

Dear Director of National Parks,

Australia's South West is the regional tourism organisation responsible for the promotion of product and experiences in the Australia's South West region. The region's uniqueness as a tourism destination rests on the diversity of premium experiences on offer set against a backdrop of stunning and unique natural landscapes.

Marine Parks with National Park (sanctuary/ green) Zones at their core are crucial for the health of our marine life, as well as our South West community, businesses, regional economy, maintaining our reputation as an iconic nature tourism destination.

Year end June 2016, 6.3m domestic and international visitors experienced the region, spending \$1.91bn and staying 11.5m nights, therefore it is vital that we maintain and protect the unique landscape that our leisure visitors come to see. Our local community and businesses have been vocal throughout the development and subsequent review of our Commonwealth Marine Parks to ensure the best possible protection is in place in the South West.

We are concerned that the Government's draft plans for Geographe Marine Park propose to downgrade the two small but important marine sanctuaries (National Park / green zones). The type of zoning proposed to replace these sanctuaries has only been applied elsewhere in our region in waters more than 600m deep – a very different environment to our shallow, sheltered and heavily pressured Geographe Bay.

The removal of these sanctuaries is contrary to the science recommendations from the Government's own Review of Geographe Marine Park. Acknowledging the level of consultation, the scientific evidence and the community interest, the Review recommended retaining both sanctuaries, while reconfiguring them slightly to better align with immediately adjacent sanctuaries in the Ngari Capes Marine Park established by the previous WA Government, and to improve ease of navigation for fishers. These two sanctuaries would take up only about 4% of the Geographe Marine Park – a balanced approach that would deliver improved outcomes for everyone.

It's important that great fishing will be on offer in the South West region. We know that some of WA's most revered recreational fishing destinations have long been marine parks protected with sanctuaries, including Shark Bay, Ningaloo reef, The Abrolhos islands, Rowley Shoals, and Rottnest Island. This gives us great confidence for a bright future for a Geographe Bay also protected with these small sanctuaries.

I urge the current Government to reject the reduction in sanctuary (National Park zoning / green zone) protection and our Geographe Marine Park be implemented as soon as possible so our visitors can reap the benefits.

Warm regards,

Catrin Allsop

Chief Executive Officer



P: (08) 9791 9197

M: 0408 896 323

E: ceo@australiassouthwest.com

australiassouthwest.com



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