

Brief submission:

The Draft Management Plans do not take into account independent marine science, including the science contained in the ESP Report.

As a brief example, in relation to longlines the ESP Report states (p59):

"Spatial closures appear to offer the best protection where catch rates of non-target species are high.

Until such time that these relationships can be properly understood, a precautionary approach to deepwater fishing should be maintained. For this reason, demersal longline fishing (including auto-longlines) should remain a method that is incompatible with the conservation values of the Central Eastern and Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserves, particularly those relating to seamounts."

On p38 of the Draft Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve Management Plan, longline fishing is allowed in a number of circumstances. This is in flagrant disregard of the science and the precautionary principle.

There are many other examples where the Draft Plans ignore the science. I'll leave this as an exercise for the reader to do the homework as this clearly hasn't been done to date.

It is also disturbing that there is virtually no mention of climate change or its impacts in the drafts. As my science background is in climatology, I can tell you that it is astounding that you are not considering the systemic impacts of multiple ecological pressures affecting the marine environment. I am truly gobsmacked; on this omission alone it is clear that the Plans are totally inadequate.

Please revise the Plans to take into account all the science - science which clearly indicates that the reserves and zoning be left as is until there is a baseline of research into the health and threats to the ecosystem.

Sincerely
Richard Weatherley