

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you as a sixteen-year-old student pleading you to continue efforts to protect our coral reefs.

Coral reefs are highly diverse ecosystems in which organisms rely on each other to survive.

There is already a major threat concerning Australia's reefs, climate change and coral bleaching. Our reef needs all the help it can get, and by halving the area of Marine National Park, you are not doing the underwater ecosystem any favours.

Australia has one of the most well-known and beloved reefs in the world, the Great Barrier Reef. And yes, I know you would never stop the protection of this reef due to its widespread notability and the estimated 5-6 billion dollars each year that goes straight into the Government's back pocket.

But what about the other reefs? What about the ones affected by this unnecessary cut of protection that is the least we can do?

This would be the largest cut of conservation in history. This the largest step backwards in conservation history.

As a country, we are supposed to be moving forward, with everything that makes us special, such as the amazing underwater wonderland that we can call ours. It's our job and our job only to protect it and by halving the area that is conserved you are placing the reef in immediate danger of fishing and overall damage to this place that houses to many unique species of fish, invertebrates, crustaceans, corals, sea grasses and mammals to name just a few. Over 160 species of shark inhabit the waters and its reefs. The variation of species in Australia's reefs are the most diverse on Earth. Just think about the threat that would be posed to these creatures if they were no longer protected by the National Park.

There are estimated to be between 1,200 to 2,000 species of fish on the Great Barrier Reef alone. For example, there are nine species of sweetlip and eight species of anemone fish in this region. This world heritage site is no different to its other neighbouring reefs such as the Shark and Vema reefs. If anything, they are housing a more diverse range of undisturbed organisms. Australia's waters are also housing some of the world's most majestic animals, the humpback whales. After whaling ceased in 1962, fewer than 500 humpbacks remained in the east coast population. Due to protection laws, this number surged to 7000 and continues to grow every year. This could change if the National Parks are compromised and whales could

become just as endangered as before. We cannot allow this to occur again, especially with something that can be so easily avoided.

The biodiversity of Australia's reefs is unmatched anywhere else on the planet. The over 20,000 animal and plant species need the government's protection in order to thrive and have the life that they deserve.

Please help the 400 species of algae and seaweeds. Please help the 37 different mangroves. Please help the 1,500 species of sponges (360 stony corals, and around 500 other cnidarians including soft corals, black corals, sea jellies and hydroids). Please help the 2,000 species of flatworms, 7,500 species of crustaceans, 400 bryozoans, 630 different echinoderm species, 125 species of sharks and rays, more than 1,500 species of bony fish, the 6 turtle species, 17 types of sea snake, 200 species of birds ect.

At this time of peak global warming and climate change the reefs need the protection of the government more than ever.

Thank you,

Hannah White