

**The following submission is being lodged on behalf of the members and affiliated anglers of the Queensland Game Fishing Association Inc.**

**BACKGROUND:**

The Queensland Game Fishing Association was established on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1937 from the Amateur Anglers Association. We have 23 active Member Clubs and 2200 affiliated anglers that we currently represent. Our clubs and anglers are spread from Weipa, Lizard Island, Port Douglas, Cairns, Innisfail, Mission Beach, Ingham, Townsville, Whitsundays, Mackay, Hervey Bay, Sunshine Coast, Bribie Island, Redcliffe, Moreton Bay, Surfers Paradise and the Gold Coast and regularly fish all the waters from Cape York to the Tweed border. Our anglers are a diverse lot made up of ordinary families, businessmen, charter boat fishermen as well as some commercial fishermen. Our anglers also travel extensively to fish recreationally and in tournaments in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory and anglers from those States regularly travel to Queensland to fish our waters as well.

The Queensland Game Fishing Association is a member of the Game Fishing Association of Australia (GFAA) which is the national controlling body for game fishing in Australian waters. The GFAA sets the Rules, Regulations and Code of Practice under which we all fish.

We are a fully self-funded organisation and in 1994 the Queensland Game Fishing Association designed and developed a log book system and database to allow for the collection of information on the fishing activities of all of our anglers in Queensland waters. This system is still operational today and collecting valuable data for us.

Our FAD (Fish Attracting Device) program is also fully funded by our members and benefits the entire community not just us. The FAD's are deployed by members (at their own expense) after whale watching season and removed again prior to the season recommencing.

Our Association and its anglers have provided funds, boat access, granted tournament access for data collection and donated fish samples for scientific research. We have recently provided funding to the University of Queensland to assist marine biology student Mr Samuel Mackey Williams who is working on his thesis with Dr Julian Pepperell.

Whilst we reserve our rights as anglers to capture a fish, we strongly promote the values of Tag and Release for research purposes. We have been supporting the New South Wales Fisheries Game Fish Tagging Program since its inception which has provided valuable scientific data to them over the many years. Our anglers are presently assisting the Game Fishing Association of Australia Research and Development Foundation with the deployment of several satellite tags in north Queensland at their own cost.

The Objectives of the Queensland Game Fishing Association have been in existence for 80 years as follows;

- To Govern and co-ordinate the sport of game fishing in the State of Queensland.
- To affiliate with the Game Fishing Association of Australia and with the International Game Fish Association.
- To conserve the game fish and food fish resources of Queensland waters for the recreational and economic use of present and future generations.
- To encourage and further the study of game fish angling, the related species and the habitat requirements of such species and to assist in the maintenance of the ecological balance of waters.
- To formulate and support fair and ethical angling rules and Tournaments.
- To compile and maintain State records for the heaviest angling catches for men, women and juniors in all line divisions approved by the Association as a game fish and game shark and

fished for by a substantial number of anglers or distributed over a wide area of waters, and to adjudicate such record claims.

- To represent the interests of recreational and game fishermen within the Association's capacity for the time being at any meeting at which the future of the game fish population is being discussed or otherwise determined.
- To assist and participate in domestic and international game fish seminars and symposiums where the expertise data and purposes of the Association may be helpful in assisting other organizations with similar objectives.
- To analyse the pressure of recreational fishing and commercial fishing for the various game fish species.
- To act as a data accumulation centre for fishing results and make such information available to governments and others for the furtherance of education in the wise use of conservation of species.
- To accumulate and maintain a history of game fishing for the use and benefit of present and future generations and to develop and support fish tagging programs and other specific data collection evidence.
- To disseminate information and knowledge of scientific studies of commercial and game fish to Member Associations and Clubs and other parties in Australia or elsewhere.

## **WHAT WE SUPPORT:**

The Queensland Game Fishing Association does not support a “lock it away and forget it approach to natural resource management”, however we do support;

- Commonwealth Marine Reserve management policies that are formulated and developed based upon sound science and best available evidence
- Management objectives that maintain, protect and wherever possible enhance marine habitat
- Management that can contribute to our knowledge and ability to manage our oceans to best obtain these objectives
- Management that recognises the socio-economic, educational, research and cultural values within these areas
- Management processes that will ultimately endure if found to be environmentally, economically and ethically sustainable
- Management processes that have measurable outcomes that lead to real improvements to the environment
- Management that delivers benefits to local residents, communities and recreational fishing that are consistent with the other objectives of management
- Continued access for research and data collection
- Establishment of a review process which is open to all stakeholders, fair and transparent and allows access to the available information on which decisions are made.

## **THE PLANNING PROCESS:**

The Queensland Game Fishing Association has within its membership people with vast amounts of knowledge about the waters we fish and many of them had input into submissions put forward during the initial planning process by groups such as GFAA and ARFF. These people are not scientists, but their knowledge and expertise cannot and should not be overlooked, given that they are people who have actual experience in fishing the areas that were being considered during the planning process. We feel that this type of hands-on understanding of the areas in question should be considered as more significant than ambit submissions or claims based on generalities and without specific understanding of those areas.

We also believe that the experience and knowledge that many of our members possess should not be wasted. Not only was involvement in submissions during the planning process important in assisting a

balanced outcome, but also those attributes should be acknowledged and utilised within the ongoing management of Marine Reserves by including such persons as representatives of recreational fishing with the ability to have their voices heard and take an active role in that management.

## **COMMENTS TO THE DRAFT PLAN:**

In general, the Queensland Game Fishing Association supports the draft plan proposed for Marine Parks. The Association is of the belief that providing comments with regard to regions within the draft plan that are beyond our experience or knowledge is of little value to the process, however, we wish to support and endorse submissions made by similar, like-minded associations regarding their local areas coming within the scope of the plan, based on their more extensive experience within those areas, in the knowledge that they share similar views and ethics to us.

On that basis, the Association wishes to submit the following comments with regard to the Coral Sea Marine Park Draft Plan.

The Queensland Game Fishing Association agrees that:

- The formation of a Marine Park in the Coral Sea is vital to the protection and ongoing management of an important part of Australian Territorial Waters.
- The level of protection provided by the Draft Plan is significant and allows for a good balance between retaining access for recreational fishers and conservation of resources.
- The current Government has lived up to its election promise of reviewing the previous plan, allowing for consultation and more importantly, listening to the true stakeholders and understanding our concerns. We commend those involved for doing that.
- This balance has been achieved by the extensive use of Habitat Protection Zones (IUCN IV), which allow recreational fishing whilst at the same time offering significant protection by prohibiting many other activities.
- Allowing recreational access under the conditions of Habitat Protection Zones offers the opportunity for further citizen science research and feedback regarding the state of the areas. In addition, access will provide eyes and ears on the water as an additional means of identifying and reporting illegal activities which may otherwise go unseen.
- By delivering an outcome that is acceptable to the recreational sector, its support should be expected to lead to greater co-operation with regard to information gathering and sharing, which we as an Association have always been willing to do.

### **Additional Comments and Concerns:**

The Association sees a few issues arising from the Draft Plan that may warrant further consideration or consultation:

- In many Marine Park areas, recreational fishing is permitted within National Park Zones (IUCN II) and the precedent already exists within Australian Waters. Whilst it is acknowledged and agreed that there is significant conservation value and potential research benefit in declaring no-take zones, there are some circumstances where there may be grounds for allowing fishing to occur, albeit on a restricted basis, perhaps by permit. Examples are; Allowing transiting vessels to catch and consume as they pass through zones to other destinations, vessels seeking shelter from storms or bad weather where there may also be a need for catch and consume and also allowing some limited take as a means of assessing populations of fish following periods of closure.
- The Association sees the next steps following approval of the plan as being the most important. That involves setting up a process and finding the right personnel to have input into the management of the Marine Reserves. It is vital that the true stakeholders be adequately represented, that all members are chosen based on their knowledge and expertise within the particular region and that the system allow for their voices and concerns to be both heard and listened to. Without an ongoing, well-structured and transparent management system the hard work done to date is likely to be wasted or at least diminished.

## **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, the Queensland Game Fishing Association wishes to thank all involved in bringing this plan to the final stages and also for allowing us the opportunity to relate our concerns on behalf of our member clubs and anglers.

We look forward to the Plan coming into effect, to hopefully be acknowledged as significant stakeholders within the Coral Sea Sections and on that basis, be involved with the management of this significant area.

*Dianne Hance*

*President*

*Qld Game Fishing Association*

