

## SUBMISSION -SW REGION MARINE PARKS DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

### To Whom it May Concern

The Busselton Dunsborough Environment Centre Inc. is extremely concerned about the cutbacks to the Marine Park sanctuary zoning across the whole network resulting in the loss of critically important habitats. The preference for Partial Protection Zones over Sanctuary Zones will not provide the vital biodiversity protections that are necessary.

Our primary issue is with the area of most significance to our region in the South West of WA. Cutting the NPZ in this area by 40% is unconscionable. Both the former Review and the scientific community found that there was a need for much higher level protection, not less.

**Geographe Bay Marine Park** : The Government's proposal to remove both the Marine National Park (green) zones in the Geographe Bay Marine Park and replacing them with the weaker Habitat Protection Zones (yellow) is of great concern. These yellow zones have 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 the Marine National Park Zones goes against the scientific recommendations from the Government's own Review. Acknowledging the level of consultation, the science evidence and the level of community interest, the Review recommended retaining the Marine National Park Zones, while reconfiguring them slightly to better align with immediately adjacent green zones in the Ngari Capes Marine Park established by the Barnett state government, and to improve navigation for fishers. These two Marine National Park Zones recommended by the Review would take up only about 4% of the Geographe Bay Marine Park – a balanced approach that would deliver improved outcomes for everyone and become a great tourism beacon for the region.

**SW Corner Marine Park/Diamantina Fracture Zone** : Also in our region we are concerned about the loss of a very large area of Marine National Park Zone over the Diamantina Fracture Zone – a key ecological feature whose ridges and seamounts are thought to act as 'stepping stones' for species dispersal and migration across the region and the wider abyssal plain (Wilson & Kaufman 1987, in Richardson et al.2005). Further, its size, physical complexity and isolation indicate that it is likely to support deep-water communities characterised by high species diversity and uniqueness. The zoning proposed is a downgrade to **the lowest level of protection in the park system – Multiple Use (blue) Zone**. This will allow mining and most forms of fishing, despite its extremely remote, rough and deep location (making it unsafe for oil and gas drilling where an adequate response to an oil spill would be almost impossible). It is also highly unlikely that this area would be a serious economic proposition for fishing.

We would support the draft management plan where the Marine National Park Zone (green) areas have not changed from what was declared in 2012, or where there are new and/or increased National Park Zones, eg the new National Park Zone transect over the Swan Canyon in the SW Corner Marine Park.

We would reject the draft management plans where the Marine National Park Zones (green) are reduced or removed entirely eg In the SW Corner Marine Park (Diamantina Fracture Zone section and Peaceful Bay section) and in the Geographe Marine Park.

We are aware there has been long term support for marine sanctuaries in our region. In 2015 200 small businesses were signatories to a statement in support of Commonwealth sanctuaries and in 2005 a majority (88%) of recreational fishers in SW WA, when surveyed, gave in principle support for the creation of sanctuary zones. This year, researchers of recreational fishers at SW boat ramps found that 78% supported or were neutral towards a new marine park with sanctuaries being created off the SW coast.

These dramatically revised management plans for the suspended marine parks are largely unacceptable and will result in greater exploitation and reduced biodiversity in our Commonwealth waters. We need best practice conservation management, supported by science, to maintain their abundance and health into the future. Instead, these draft plans, by encouraging and supporting destructive forms of commercial fishing and mining, mean Australia is only going to go backwards with its marine protection, setting a deplorable international precedent.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cassanet

A/Convenor

Busselton Dunsborough Environment Centre Inc.

PO Box 291

Busselton 6280

Email : [bdec@westnet.com.au](mailto:bdec@westnet.com.au)

September 19, 2017

