

Submitted on Tuesday, September 19, 2017 - 20:53 Submitted by anonymous user: 101.176.176.44  
Submitted values are:

First Name: Kieran

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Organisation:

Which sector do you represent?

- Conservation
- General public
- Recreational fishing
- Recreational diving or snorkeling
- Research

Which draft plans are you commenting on? Coral Sea Which marine park(s) are you commenting on?

What topic(s) or activity(s) are you commenting about?

- General use and access (including recreational)
- Commercial fishing
- Recreational fishing

What part of the plan(s) are you commenting on?

- Part 1 - Managing Australian Marine Parks
- Part 2 - The Marine Park or Network
- Part 3 - Zoning
- Part 4 - Managing activities

Which program are you commenting on? Park protection and management program Please tick this box if you would like to keep up to date with all the latest information on Australian Marine Parks by subscribing to our email updates. :

Your submission may also be published online by the Director of National Parks. Please tick 'No' if you do not want it published. Your submission will still be considered in the Director's Report on the Preparation of the Management Plans, and may be provided to the Minister and tabled before Parliament: Yes

Does your comment relate to the renaming of marine parks? No Please type your comments below:

Dear committee members,

I thank you for the opportunity to contribute my opinion on the draft management plan of Australian marine parks. I am a student of Southern Cross University, undertaking a Bachelor of Marine Science and Management. As a young Australian, I am concerned about the future of environmental health in our country. I firmly believe that our unmatched environmental resources should not be disregarded in favour of monetary gain or political advantage.

This submission will focus on the changes suggested for the Coral Sea bioregion in the new draft management plan.

The new draft management plan of Australia's marine parks gives the impression of protection to the layman, but further research on the plan shows that this is not the case. The draft management plan states that only sustainable activities that do not damage the sea floor may take place in the Coral Sea marine protected area (MPA). It is not possible to be certain that the extractive activities allowed in the MPA will be sustainable, and that no damage will come to the sea floor and coral communities.

The video introduction to the draft management plan readily available for public access does not accurately reflect the nature of the proposed new management plan. Suggesting that the reasoning behind allowing commercial fishing in MPA's is to allow 'Australian fishers to continue to provide us with the seafood we love' is a fallacy. Dr Hugo Harrison from James Cook University has shown the benefit of protection through connectivity.

Dispersal distances of coral trout were observed up to ~250km, showing that reserves provide a true benefit through restocking areas which allow fishing to occur (Williamson et al. 2016). This research clearly shows that iconic and exploited species utilize protected areas for reproduction, without protection, the compounding stressors on coral reef species may prove disastrous. If popular table fish

such as the coral trout utilize no take zones for breeding and aggregation, and in turn spill over, then that protected area is providing Australians with a sustainable source of seafood.

The top down control of species and abundance by large marine predators plays an important role in the health of marine ecosystems. The Coral Sea is home to multiple species of large marine predators, including many endemic species, making it a vital area for conservation of threatened species. Tiger sharks are listed as near threatened by the IUCN, and utilize a massive area within the Coral Sea. The spatial movements of tiger sharks within the Coral Sea show the importance of large protected areas. Other large marine predators, such as great white sharks and humpback whales have also been observed to use the Coral Sea annually as a migratory path (Werry et al. 2014). Allowing commercial fishing within such a vast region of the Coral Sea could have severe detrimental impacts on the life cycles of many important marine predators. The IUCN lists 341 species of conservation significance within the Coral Sea. If conservation of marine species is to be seen as a real goal of environmental managers in Australia, all species and habitat types under threat must be represented.

As a marginal sea between Australia and surrounding small island nations, the Coral Sea marine park is an important aggregation site and haven for pelagic species that are exploited by the surrounding countries. Both predatory and prey species utilize the area for spawning. A lantern fish spawning event has been observed to support aggregations of popular tuna species within Queensland's jurisdiction. A notable spawning aggregation in the Coral Sea is that of the black marlin, which has no other known spawning aggregations.

These aggregations highlight the capacity of the Coral Sea MPA to support vulnerable species (Young et al. 2012).

The 10.2 million square kilometre expanse of Australia's EEZ means Australia must display exemplary management of marine resources within its jurisdiction. If conservation is to be viable on a global scale, Australia has a responsibility to lead by example. Australia's declaration of one of the world's largest marine protected areas holds little value when those areas under protection are the least diverse and at the least risk within the EEZ. Labels and levels of protection such as 'habitat protection zone'

used in Australia can be misleading to the public. This term at a glance gives the impression of protecting species and habitats within, but a habitat protection zone allows destructive and extractive activities. Though Australia boasts extensive marine protected areas within its EEZ, it lacks the key principles of MPA's: comprehensiveness, adequacy, and representativeness (CAR principles) (Fitzsimons 2011). Being an island continent, Australia has been separated from all other landmasses for some time. This separation has led to a high percentage of endemism in the species found in our ecosystems and the Coral Sea in particular. This further reinforces the need for sound protection policies to be developed, monitored and maintained over the long term.

To ensure the preservation of the environmental value of the Coral Sea and its many delicate habitats, I suggest a number of actions be taken into consideration for further review of the management plan:

Limit extractive activities in the Coral Sea, allowing recovery of over exploited species. Recruitment within protection zones will promote spill over of other target species into non-protection areas, boosting fishing economy outside the protection zone.

Revise the terminology and classification associated with Australia's MPA's and national parks to promote public awareness and understanding of these terms.

Compensate commercial fishers that are displaced by the Coral Sea MPA rather than allowing fishing to commence.

Honour agreements made at the world parks meeting in 2003 in relation to 20-30% protection of all oceans globally. If Australia takes action in making protection zones, conservation and a leading example can be achieved.

Strive to meet the 4 primary goals set out by the Australian government in 2007 to identify marine reserves under the CAR principles:

- Goal 1: Each bioregion occurring within a region should be represented at least once within a network.
- Goal 2: The network should cover all depth ranges occurring within a region.
- Goal 3: The network should seek to include examples of benthic and biological feature
- Goal 4: The network should include all types of seafloor within a region.

These goals were listed with the aim of providing the best comprehensiveness, adequacy, and representativeness for marine parks within Australia's jurisdiction.

In conclusion, I believe that the true value of our marine parks lies in their capacity to protect marine species within their boundaries and to promote sustainable populations beyond their borders. The Australian government should use the review of current MPA's as an opportunity to display superior marine park management than previously exhibited.

Fulfillment of commitments made to the global community in 2003 will prove that Australia can remain a leader in conservation and in sustainable fishing practice.

## References.

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