



ABN 91 281 846 548
PO Box 8204
6 Swallow Street
Slade Point Q 4740
email:mrfa@easynet.net.au
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managementplanning.marine@environment.gov.au

MRFA Submission to proposed/draft Management Plan Coral Sea Marine Park.

Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance (MRFA) is the recreational fishing representative body in the Mackay region with approximately 500 members. MRFA is very concerned with the proposed allowable activities in the Draft Coral Sea Marine Park Management Plan 2017 which will allow industrial type commercial fishing operations to be conducted in “our backyard”.

While we support some types of commercial fishing that currently occurs in the Coral Sea, the thought of having a “Geelong Star” type Industrial commercial fishing operation there is very disturbing. The area in question could be regarded as pristine at this point in time, even with the low impact commercial and recreational fishing that presently occurs, and we strongly believe it would be contrary to Marine Park values to allow this to deteriorate.

We believe that once the gate has been opened to allow industrialised commercial fishing operations the game changes. The small, low impact, family owned and operated businesses that currently use the marine park will likely be replaced with multinational scale operations where making money is the priority, not the sustainability of the fishery or the environmental damage that results. This will also impact the coastal towns that rely on the operation of these small businesses.

MRFA has no problem with the small amount of proposed additional Green Zones. Our memberships in the past opposed the introduction of Green Zones but have learned to live with them and have also seen the benefits associated with them.

We disagree with some of the elements in the terms of reference applicable to this current draft proposal. It is clear to us that if a purse seiner or mid-water trawler commenced operations, there would **almost certainly be a repeat of the community uproar witnessed over recent years further south**. Deep sea prawn trawling must also be considered destructive to the sea floor and important habitat, and should have no place in a Marine Park either.

Also, MRFA cannot see to what extent the level of industrial commercial fishing is being proposed in the new plan. By "Application" does not define if there will be 1 or 100 Geelong Star style commercial fishing operations on our back door. In our opinion these fishing operation use modern technology to partake in a third world practice which has resulted in the destruction of many of the worlds fisheries. These industrial style operations should be left in third world countries and should not have no place in Australia.

As such we cannot recommend more strongly that industrial harvest methods of fishing be removed absolutely from the Coral Sea MP. By that we mean: 1/Purse Seine; 2/Mid Water Trawl; 3/Bottom Trawl; 4/Demersal Trawl; 5/Trap

- MRFA supports the current level of recreational and commercial fishing taking place in the Coral Sea Marine Park.
- MRFA is opposed to the introduction of industrial commercial fishing operations described above into the Coral Sea Marine Park.
- MRFA has no concerns with the introduction of the small scale Green Zones proposed.
- MRFA cannot see to what extent the level of industrial commercial fishing is being proposed in the new plan.

John Bennett

President MRFA