

To whom it may concern:

I am very concerned about the draft management plans released on 21 July 2017 by the Australian Government on how the Marine Parks Network should be managed in the future, as it appears to reflect an absence of science-based policy by the Australian Government.

A major concern is the proposed significant reduction in no-take protection and its replacement with so-called habitat protection zoning, which is both inadequate for protecting biodiversity, natural processes and ecosystem functioning, and primarily a means of duping the public into believing conservation and sustainability are being meaningfully implemented while facilitating ongoing ecologically unsustainable exploitation.

In 2012 Australia put in place the world's first nation-wide network of marine parks, representing a turning point for marine conservation. However, the current Australian Government is now proposing to halve the high level protection in the network. What is proposed is not science-based and will set the global endeavour of marine protection back decades. It is a major backward step by the Australian Government on a matter of both national and international significance.

The proposal for replacement of high-level protection by partial protection is a contrary to the best scientific evidence, which indicates that at least 30% of each marine habitat type should be fully protected from all forms of extractive exploitation. The proposal appears to be driven by marginal economic benefits to a very small number of commercial fishery licence holders, and done to satisfy a political rather than ecosystem outcome. This is typical of the short-sighted political thinking that future generations will despise the present generation for.

Rather than decreasing protection the Australian Government should be striving to increase the number and area of fully protected zones, in response to the overwhelming scientific evidence of the value and need for this level of protection.

I urge you to abandon this destructive policy and embrace a scientific ecosystem-based approach to managing the interaction of Australians with the natural ecosystem.

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