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To: Australian Marine Parks Management Planning Comments

Department of the Environment and Energy

Reply Paid 787

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Re: Submission regarding the draft Temperate East Commonwealth Marine Reserve Network

Introduction

The Lord Howe Island Marine Park is internationally significant, and contains the world's southernmost coral reef and the only fringing coral reef lagoon in NSW. The convergence of the warm East Australia Current with the cool waters of the southern temperate Tasman Current off Lord Howe Island results in a unique mix of both tropical and temperate species, many of which are endemic to the area. The reef at Lord Howe Island is internationally recognised as a hotspot for macro-algae diversity.

In 1982, Lord Howe Island and the surrounding waters were declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, the first in NSW. Ninety nine percent of the World Heritage area is ocean. To complement this World Heritage status, in 1999 the NSW Government gazetted the Lord Howe Island Marine Park and in 2000 The Lord Howe Island Marine Park was proclaimed.

The LHIMP is geographically isolated, contains several ecologically unique habitats, has extremely high levels of species richness and diversity, and is scientifically significant. The LHIMP is also culturally important to a small resident Lord Howe Island population and provides social, cultural and economic opportunities for residents. A high proportion of visitors to Lord Howe Island and its Marine Park are attracted by the conservation afforded to the whole region. Any activities and regulations within the LHIMP need to reflect, enhance and protect those unique and valuable assets that provide for a wide range of sustainable uses.

Together, Balls Pyramid, Lord Howe Island, Elizabeth Reef and Middleton Reef comprise a relatively untouched chain of hotspot islands and seamounts off Australia, and as such they are valuable environmental assets for Australia and also the international community. This chain should be subject to stringent conservation regulations to ensure they remain ecologically intact.

The "Proposed Rules For Activities" appears to be a generic with allocated activities allowed in all Temperate East Network Marine Parks, with potentially negative consequences for the LHIMP.

I believe that the following activities need prohibition within the LHPZ

Ballast water/industrial discharge

There is a significant biosecurity risk to the unique ecological communities within the LHIMP with discharge of ballast water so I believe this should not be allowed. While the LHIMP is currently free of introduced marine pests it is one of the biggest threats to the Park should discharge of ballast water be allowed. There should be a Biosecurity Zone of 3 to 12 nautical miles around Lord Howe Island.

Mining Operations, including construction of pipelines

I believe that no mining activities, including construction of pipelines, should be allowed within the new HPZ, HPZ Lord Howe Island, RUZ and NPZs. There could be significant impact on the sensitive habitats and ecological processes within the LHIMP from such activities.

Aquaculture

I believe that aquaculture should be prohibited within the LHPZ and the HPZ. There is the potential for large impacts for the benthic community organisms and those in the water column to be affected by aquaculture activities within the LHIMP. Evidence from aquaculture farms in Tasmania and elsewhere shows it is very difficult to run aquaculture activities that have no impact on the environment.

Commercial Fishing

I believe that hand collecting, hand netting, pelagic long lining, per seine fishing and mid water trawl should not be allowed within the LHPZ

FADs

I believe that the seas, winds and swells around Lord Howe Island are such that any FAD cannot be anchored well enough, or be built robust enough to survive in situ long term; and that such devices if deployed will eventually add to marine pollution, which is a serious threat to our seabirds and other marine creatures.

Spearfishing

I believe that no spearfishing should be allowed in the LHPZ. Lord Howe Island is seen as a World Heritage environment to be protected; and as a tourist destination where the protection of environment is given priority and people can enjoy a near pristine marine environment. Spearfishing is not compatible with these views.

Elizabeth Reef is very remote, and any attempt at compliance there would be difficult. The Reef is known to be an important habitat for Black Cod, which could be a target for spearfishers.

Additional comment - Extension to the LHPZ

To fully protect and ensure the long-standing conservation around Lord Howe Island, Elizabeth Reef and Middleton Reef I believe that an extension of the LHPZ will provide a buffer zone to these areas.

The extension of the LHPZ to surround Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs will be an ecological buffer and should be extending to include the seamount to the north of Middleton reef, while

still allowing for commercial minor hand lining and the existing Blue Fin fishery that operates north of Middleton Reef.

This seamount to the north of Middleton Reef was included in the original 2012 draft management plan and the Independent Review Report suggested to include the northern seamount in NPZ so there is a strong case for implementing LHPZ/HPZ around Middleton Reef

Such an extension of LHPZ will ensure an adequate buffer zone for marine biosecurity protection and prohibition from mining operations. See attached note.

In summary

The UNESCO World Heritage listed LHMP contains significant and unique ecological, social and economic values and importance and special consideration is required for any proposed activities within the draft Lord Howe Marine Park. Unfortunately, the activities within the LHIMP have been lumped generically within the Temperate East Marine Park Network, which I believe threaten the unique values of the LHIMP, so it should receive special consideration in any changes.