



20 September 2017

Ms Sally Barnes
Director of National Parks
Australian Marine Parks Management Planning Comments
Department of the Environment and Energy
Reply Paid 787
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Ms Barnes

Re: Draft Management Plans – Coral Sea – Commonwealth Marine Reserves

On behalf of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) I would like to provide feedback regarding the draft Coral Sea Marine Park Plan as part of the overall Australian Marine Parks Management Planning process.

I believe a balance has been struck between the various competing interests in the development of the plans. The marine resource belongs to the community and my hope is that you will not capitulate to the environmental lobby before implementing the Coral Sea Marine Park Plan.

Current State marine parks and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park allow all forms of commercial fishing and were designed for multiple uses. This principle should not be abandoned because conservation groups dislike multiple use marine parks.

The submission is presented in three sections (1) Industry Issues, (2) Environmental Non-Government Organisation (eNGOs) Agenda and (3) Support for Seafood Industry Australia (SIA) position.

If you have any questions regarding this submission please contact Eric Perez, QSIA Chief Executive Officer on M: 0417 631 353 or E: eo@qsia.com.au

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KH", is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Keith Harris

President
Queensland Seafood Industry Association

Cc:

1. Hon Josh Frydenberg MP, Minister for the Environment and Energy.
2. Hon Barnaby Joyce MP, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and Minister for Resources and Northern Australia.
3. Senator the Hon Anne Ruston, Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources.
4. Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion, Minister for Indigenous Affairs and Leader of The Nationals in the Senate.
5. Hon Keith Pitt MP, Assistant Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment
6. Senator the Hon Matthew Canavan, Senator for Queensland.
7. Veronica Papacosta, Chair, Seafood Industry Australia.
8. Jane Lovell, Chief Executive Officer, Seafood Industry Australia.

1) Industry Issues

Queensland and Australian seafood consumers have come to expect access to fresh local seafood. The retail and tourism sectors have also come to rely on access to locally caught seafood. QSIA is supportive of a planning process that balances competing interests. Some key positive features of the Coral Sea plan:

- It strikes a balance between industry and environmental outcomes in the development of marine reserves;
- It ensures the marine reserves must be based on science and risk assessments; and
- It balances triple bottom line of policy-making, taking into account the environmental, social and economic needs of the community.

Seafood will play a key role in meeting the world's nutrition and food security needs and lockouts will deal Australia's sustainable fisheries and the communities they support out of maintaining and potentially growing the industry. Some elements of the conservation movement unfairly vilify and attack the Australian commercial seafood industry.

Australian fishery management has been recognised as world leading by the conservationist and fishery expert Dr Daniel Pauly who noted¹: 'Australia's fisheries are relatively well managed and have a small footprint when compared with the industrial-scale plunder of the planet's sea life'.

Commercial fishers care about fish stocks and a healthy marine environment and it is in the interests of industry to ensure they remain active stewards of the marine resource.

The process is not without issues for industry. Some issues facing industry include:

- It is important to note that further engagement and consultation is required from the Commonwealth Government with industry on compensation packages for those businesses that are impacted.
- Some prospectivity areas have been zoned National Marine Park

2) eNGO Agenda

eNGOs have been running scare campaigns to undermine a balanced approach to marine park zoning.

Coral Sea waters are very important to fishing communities involved in tuna long-lining from Mooloolaba to Cairns and to prawn trawlers from ports like Urangan, and obviously have room for expansion of fishing for deepwater finfish species.

No-one is cutting back on environmental protection. The Federal Government is imposing environment-based fishing bans which are on top of the existing fisheries

¹ Feneley (2015), '[Ponzi scheme of overfishing is something Australia must not enter: TEDx speaker Daniel](#)', Sydney Morning Herald.

and environment-related management controls already in existence under fisheries and environmental legislation.

Fishing by Queensland commercial fishermen is not a threat to the Coral Sea. Any threats to the marine environment in that vast region will come from factors like climate change, coastal development and water quality should be the focus of eNGOs not limiting sustainable, heavily regulated Australian commercial fishing activity.

However, unable to manage the issues that really make a difference, governments manage fishing instead, and paint big splotches of green – “no fishing” zones – on marine park maps. This approach is what is desired by the conservation groups and organisations like WWF as outlined in Box 1 for example.

Box 1. 80% of Australia’s federal marine parks to be open to fishing

WWF-Australia Head of Oceans Richard Leck had a different description for the change.

“This is a huge step backwards for marine protection,” Mr Leck said.

“To go from 64% of the total marine park area open to fishing to 80% is a massive increase.

“Australia used to be seen as a global leader in marine conservation. That will no longer be the case if these proposals are implemented,” he said.

Mr Leck said the impact on the Coral Sea was of particular concern.

“The Coral Sea is the Serengeti of the ocean. It’s one of the few places in the world where big species – sharks, tuna and bill fish – still roam in relative abundance.

Source: [WWF Website - 21 July 2017](#)

Activists want fishing banned throughout the entire Coral Sea marine park – all one million square kilometres of it. There is no balance in this approach, no understanding that the marine resource belongs to everyone not just those that support the, ‘fish are friends not food’ view of the marine environment.

Our industry will suffer from the unfortunate realities of “politics”. Fishing is already well-managed and banning fishing via green zones will have no identifiable further benefit. However, it is a political reality that the Government must be seen to be closing further areas.

Some myths industry is encountering:

Myth – National Marine Park Zoning are needed to stop the effects of climate change, pollution, port development, ocean acidification and so on.

Lines on maps, massive zones that deny industry the right to access fish stocks has economic and social impacts on a regional basis. The removal of commercial fishing is a simple way for some eNGOs to seem to be doing something about trans-national issues facing the marine environment.

Myth – The current zoning is not science based.

This is wrong on so many levels. There has been a significant increase in conservation areas protected from 192 to 265, whilst maintaining the same conservation areas as the 2012 proposal.

3) Support SIA Position

QSIA supports the overall statement drafted by SIA that commercial fishing supports marine parks if based on science².

- Marine Parks are not a fisheries management tool and are designed to protect marine ecological features.
- Marine Parks are not about commercial fishing but do impact on this important industry.
- Just released draft plans were completed by an eminently qualified and experienced team based on a long and extensive consultation with all affected parties including fishing, tourism, conservation and Indigenous.
- The boundaries of the Marine Parks have not changed but the usage of some areas has been amended. Thirty-six per cent of all of Australian Commonwealth waters will be Marine Parks – the most of any country in the world with significant marine areas. The area covered by these Marine Parks is the size of India.
- The area under high-level green and yellow protection zones have been increased from 60 to 63% with the advantage that there appears to be less impact on public usage. This now allows usage in areas where the seafloor is 2,000-5,000m deep and the usage will have no seafloor impact – a sensible outcome.
- Compared to the 2012 draft plans, a higher scientific rigour has been applied to the ecological features covered by habitat protection zones. This has resulted in an increase in protection of ecological features from 192 to 265 – a 40% increase.
- Australia has the best managed and most sustainable fisheries in the world. State and Federal fisheries management agencies/departments do an excellent job in monitoring and enforcing some of the strictest regulations and laws in the world which protect the public's interest.

² SIA strategic points regarding marine parks – SIA email 27 July 2017.