

As someone who fishes and dives, around the country, I'm totally opposed to the draft plan to significantly cut the levels of protection for our marine reserves. I believe it is imperative to provide the strongest protections to our oceans so my grandchildren like me, can experience the wonder of diving, fishing and exploring in a diverse, healthy, living marine environment with sustainable fish populations.

I'm particularly concerned about the Coral Sea Reserve. This is one of the last wild places on earth where ocean giants (tuna, marlin, sharks, turtles, whales) still thrive, and it's the cradle to the Great Barrier Reef. Indeed, the Coral Sea buffers the Great Barrier Reef and its' protection helps the future of both. A robust Coral Sea ecosystem provides resources for the Reef to recover and makes marine life more resilient and capable of coming back from stresses such as the devastating coral bleaching of 2016.

The proposals to increase commercial fishing in the Coral Sea by doubling the area where pelagic longlining can occur, by opening vulnerable seamounts and recommending a seven-fold increase in the area open to demersal longlining and allowing mid water trawling and purse seining are unacceptable management risks.

In the last few years, I've experienced scuba diving and snorkelling in the Turkish Mediterranean, The Red Sea near Jordan and most recently around the Aeolian Islands off the Sicilian coast. The water is amazingly clear, but in places where the locals talked excitedly about the fish life there was virtually none, with only the occasional very small fish to be seen. Other diving friends have had similar experiences in these and other parts of the world. The sea life in Sydney's Mona Vale Basin is far more prolific than anything I saw in these environments.

We have an obligation as a wealthy country that still has control over large relatively intact marine environments to save them from the depletion I've witnessed first-hand, and to protect them for future generations.

The Coral Sea Marine Reserve was the result of decades of science, work by all sides of politics and has overwhelming community support, including from a clear majority of recreational fishers. I dive I fish, I want to see my grandchildren and future generations enjoy these opportunities.

Please reject the proposed protection cutbacks in Commonwealth Marine Reserves and ensure they are restored as soon as possible with no loss of sanctuary protection.

Yours Faithfully,

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