

Australian Marine Parks Management Planning Comments
Department of the Environment and Energy
Reply Paid 787
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Director of National Parks

Re: Voicing deep concern about cutbacks to Australia's marine sanctuary protection

1. The Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council Inc (WBBEC) is deeply concerned about cutbacks to National Park zone (IUCN II/ 'sanctuary') protection in Australia's marine parks network;

2. The network should be science based, and therefore deliver adequately sized and located National Park zones (IUCN II/ 'sanctuaries') on both the continental shelf and in deeper waters;

3. WBBEC supports the draft management plans where the National Park zones have not changed from what was declared in 2012, or where there are new and/or increased National Park zones, i.e.:

- the new National Park zone transect and National Park zone areas over the canyon in the Bremer Marine Park;
- the new National Park zone transect over the Swan Canyon in the SW Corner Marine Park;
- the increased National Park zone area in the Two Rocks Marine Park;
- and the new National Park zone area at Oceanic Shoals.

4. WBBEC rejects the draft management plans where:

- National Park zone areas are made smaller (eg: the Coral Sea Marine Park, Cape York West Marine Park, Gascoyne Marine Park, Argo Rowley Terrace Marine Park, the SW Corner Marine Park (Diamantina Fracture Zone section), Lord Howe Marine Park, Dampier Marine Park and Twilight Marine Park);
- or removed altogether (ie: the Wessels Marine Park, Geographe Bay Marine Park, the Peaceful Bay section of the SW Corner Marine Park);
- or where National Park zone areas have been moved to areas of far less ecological importance (eg: the Perth Canyon Marine Park, the Gulf of Carpentaria Marine Park);
- or where the Government has ignored the Review's recommendations for additional National Park zone areas (eg: in the Norfolk Island Marine Park).

5. WBBEC is shocked that the Turnbull Government has ignored the findings of its own Independent Review, proposing dramatically less National Park zone protection than the Review recommended.

6. WBBEC is gravely disappointed that the Government has failed to take into account the submissions coming out of last year's first round of consultation – where 54,000 people provided comment, the vast majority of which called for a significant increase in marine National Park zones, not less. This diminishes WBBEC's confidence in government and in particular in Parks Australia.

7. WBBEC rejects the claims by the Government that Habitat Protection (HPZs/yellow zones) are equal to National Park zone (IUCNII) zones. Protecting the sea floor provides only partial protection. Scientific evidence shows that partial protection does not generate biodiversity benefits comparable to sanctuaries. HPZs must not replace sanctuary zones. WBBEC is

disappointed that the opportunity for marine tourism has been largely ignored by the Government, with National Park zone protection reduced at one of Australia's premiere reefs and tourism destinations – Osprey Reef – and at other important tourism assets including Flinders and Holmes Reefs in the Coral Sea, and at Rowley Shoals in the NW marine region.

8. WBBEC is deeply shocked that only 7 of the Coral Sea's 37 reefs are fully protected and that deep cuts have been made to the Coral Sea's large National Park zone – Australia's largest fully protected area, and the only one of a size and nature that is able to protect both the giants of the sea and a series of unique and important deep water reefs. This is a terrible lost opportunity for the environment, for marine tourism and for the long term sustainability of Australia's fishing.

9. WBBEC is very shocked that the Government has gone against its own advice and allowed destructive fishing practices like trawling, gillnetting and longlining in 38 of 44 marine parks.

10. WBBEC urges the Government to make the following changes to the draft management plans:

- a) That no marine National Park zone areas declared in 2012 are removed or reduced;
- b) That new marine National Park zone are declared:

- In the northern section of the Kimberley Marine Park;
- at west Holmes and South Flinders Reefs in the Coral Sea;
- in the Norfolk Island Marine Park as recommended in the Review;
- adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park as recommended in the Review;
- that every marine park under Review be afforded an adequately sized and located National Park zone (currently 16 of the 44 of have none) and;
- that all marine parks on the completion of their management plans should be fully protected from oil and gas mining as has been achieved in the Great Barrier Reef MP and the Coral Sea MP.

11. And finally, WBBEC impresses upon Parks Australia to recognise that this submission is a submission with equal importance as others made in any other format. I ask that you act on this and all other submissions equally.

Yours sincerely,

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