

I, Rebecca Wellard, marine scientist and university graduate, am deeply concerned about the future of the Australian Marine Parks Network and the apparent abandoning of science-based policy by the Australian Government.

On 21 July 2017, the Australian Government released draft management plans that recommend how the Marine Parks Network should be managed. These plans are deeply flawed from a science perspective.

Of particular concern to scientists is the Government's proposal to significantly reduce high-level or no-take protection (Marine National Park Zone IUCN II), replacing it with partial protection (Habitat Protection Zone IUCN IV), the benefits of which are at best modest but more generally have been shown to be inadequate.

The 2012 expansion of Australia's Marine Parks Network was a major step forward in the conservation of marine biodiversity, providing protection to habitats and ecological processes critical to marine life. However, there were flaws in the location of the parks and their planned protection levels, with barely 3% of the continental shelf, the area subject to greatest human use, afforded high-level protection status, and most of that of residual importance to biodiversity.

I encourage the Australian government to increase the number and area of Marine National Park IUCN II Zones, building on the large body of science that supports such decision making. This means achieving a target of at least 30% of each marine habitat in these zones, which is supported by Australian and international marine scientists and affirmed by the World Parks Congress (Sydney, 2015) and the IUCN Members Assembly at the World Conservation Congress (Hawaii, 2016).

I support full protection on marine parks in the South-west region, in particular the Bremer Canyon region and Coral Sea.

Thank you for your time.

Kind Regards,

Rebecca Wellard.

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