

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am a conservation ecologist and am profoundly concerned at the proposed winding back of marine conservation areas. The biodiversity of the Earth is under intense pressure from multiple sources including climate change, over-harvesting of wild / natural resources, pollution, habitat loss and invasion of exotic species. It is extremely important that we set areas aside for protection of intact healthy ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems, including marine ecosystems that are protected from impacts such as mining and fishing provide important ecosystem services. They also form anchor points of health and resilience in an otherwise heavily impacted world. Marine protected areas also underpin the abundance of fish stocks used in wild harvest fisheries in non-protected areas.

The network of marine protected areas that was in place was developed after many years of consultation and is supported by science. I urge you in the strongest possible terms not to dismantle it or diminish it.

It is the responsibility of governments to act as custodians of the environment on behalf of citizens. Your obligation is not solely to business with short term economic interests. You have an obligation to protect the environment for current generations, future generations and for all of the non-human species that depend on a healthy environment. Do not fail us now.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Susan Gould