



Australian Government
Director of National Parks

MEDIA RELEASE

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HAVE YOUR SAY TODAY ON MARINE PARK DRAFT PLANS

Australia is surrounded by magnificent oceans and a marine environment that is the envy of the world. Our marine parks are distinctive and diverse, home to marine life found nowhere else.

And from today you can have your say on how we will manage our marine parks into the future.

The Director of National Parks Sally Barnes has released five draft plans to manage 44 Australian Marine Parks over the next 10 years.

“Our marine parks protect important marine habitats and species,” Ms Barnes said.

“They also support people’s livelihoods and the Australian lifestyle. They provide places for people to watch wildlife, dive and snorkel, go boating, and fish. They create jobs in industries like fishing and tourism, and are a source of food and energy.”

Ms Barnes said Australian Marine Parks recognised our oceans as a shared resource – protecting our environment and supporting the sustainability of our fishing industry and the communities whose livelihoods rely on it.

“I’d encourage everyone to take a look at these five plans my team at Parks Australia have put together,” she said.

“This is your chance to influence how we’ll manage a large area of our marine environment over the next 10 years. We want to hear from you, all of you. It’s your passion that will make marine parks work for everyone.”

Australian Marine Parks (also known as Commonwealth marine reserves) were established in 2012 to protect our oceans. This was a significant contribution to Australia’s marine parks which now cover more than 3.3 million square kilometres of ocean – that’s an area the size of India.

“Before creating these plans, my team and I met with many of you from across our country. We listened to many people, fishers, conservationists, tourism operators, traditional owners and coastal communities before writing these plans,” Ms Barnes said.

“These draft plans balance our commitment to protect the marine environment, while supporting a sustainable fishing industry, promoting tourism and providing cultural, recreational and economic benefits for coastal communities.”

Australian Marine Parks are located in Commonwealth waters that start at the outer edge of state and territory waters, generally no less than three nautical miles (5.5 km) from the shore, and extend to the outer boundary of Australia’s exclusive economic zone, 200 nautical miles (about 370 km) from the shore. The draft plans cover Commonwealth waters off the coast of New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory

Individual marine parks have been carefully zoned to include representative examples of Australia’s marine habitats and features. This builds the resilience of our marine environment to withstand pressures, including some of the impacts of climate change, cyclones, marine pollution, and invasive species.

Ms Barnes has considered comments from over 54,000 submissions providing feedback on the preparation of draft plans. She has also considered the recommendations from the independent review of Commonwealth marine reserves released in 2016; the best available science; the expertise of traditional owners on managing sea country; and experiences from those managing Australian and international marine parks.

“Finalising these plans makes us one of the world’s leaders in marine protection. Already our country’s marine parks cover 36 per cent of waters around this country. That’s more than comparable to many similar countries, like the United States, France, Canada, Mexico or Chile,” Ms Barnes said.

“I truly believe that we will enhance our international reputation as marine park managers with these plans. But I want to hear your thoughts on whether we’ve got that balance right. Doing nothing is not an option for anyone – we want to provide certainty to all. So please have a read of the plans, and let us know what you think.”

To reduce any impacts on commercial fishers, the Australian Government will make funding available to assist those directly affected by the new arrangements.

The draft plans can be found at www.parksaustralia.gov.au/marine.

Ends

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Important facts and figures

With 36 per cent of Australia’s waters included in marine parks, we are well ahead of both the international benchmark ‘Aichi target’ of 10 per cent by 2020, and a recent World Conservation Congress resolution calling for 30 per cent by 2030.

According to data from the IUCN’s World Database on Protected Areas, we compare very favourably with the United States of America (41 per cent), New Zealand (30 per cent), the United Kingdom (28 per cent), Mexico (22 per cent), Canada (less than 1 per cent), and France (15 per cent).

Under the zoning proposed in the draft plans, the portion of green (or no take) zones within all of the marine parks managed by the Commonwealth would be 25 per cent.

There is no reliable ‘league table’ against which we can compare this with other nations as methodology and reporting differ considerably, but we are among the closest nations to meeting the 2016 call by the World Conservation Congress for four countries to designate 30 per cent of their marine parks to have no extractive activities.

Thanks to our carefully targeted approach to zoning, the same number of conservation features are protected in green zones in the plans released today as those in 2012.

Australia’s biodiversity hotspots and sites of ecological significance, including Coral Sea reefs and the Bremer Reserve are protected in these plans.

97 per cent of waters within 100 kilometres of the coast are open for recreational fishing.

By intelligently zoning conservation areas like this, we have halved the economic impact on commercial fishers compared with 2012, from \$8.2 million to \$4.1 million a year (that’s less than 0.3 per cent of total income generated by Australia’s wild catch fisheries). This zoning will also enable a continued Australian tuna fishing industry based out of northern Queensland.

The Australian Government has committed an additional \$56.1 million over four years to fund the management of Australian Marine Parks.

Our more balanced approach means there is a significant increase in yellow zones – where the seafloor is protected, but activities like diving and fishing are allowed. Our green zones are based on the best available science – while minimising impacts on our important tourism and fishing industries.

Zone	At proclamation (2012)	Our draft plans	
Green zones (high level of protection)	866,335km ² 36 per cent 331 conservation features protected	465,327km ² 20 per cent 331 conservation features protected	Of 509 conservation features, such as canyons, seamounts and reefs, a total of 331 or 65 per cent are protected under sanctuary or national park zones – the highest level of protection possible. 63 per cent of marine parks covered by green and yellow zones compared to 60 per cent in 2012. 63 per cent of marine parks closed to oil and gas extraction, compared with 60 per cent today.
Yellow zones (allows for sustainable use, so long as seafloor not harmed)	564,132km ² 24 per cent 192 conservation features protected	1,017,877km ² 43 per cent 265 conservation features protected	Another 265 conservation features are protected under what we call habitat protection zoning, protecting the all-important seafloor.
Blue zones	944,253km ² 40 per cent	891,250 km ² 37 per cent	Allows for sustainable use.