4.8 Estate-wide performance of the options

The proclaimed CMR estate (excluding the South-east CMR Network and Heard Island and McDonald Islands CMR, which are not under review) covers a total area of 2 374 719 km^2 (Figure 4.8.1). As outlined in Chapter 1, the CMR estate was established as part of the NRSMPA, and has the key objective of being comprehensive, adequate and representative. Guided by the terms of reference (see Appendix C), this review has been conducted with regard to the Goals and Principles, a set of policy guidelines that aid the design and establishment of CMRs (see Appendix B). This section provides a high-level analysis of the recommended zoning changes, including performance against the Goals and Principles, how they minimise socio-economic impacts, and their overall contribution to the comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness of the CMR estate.

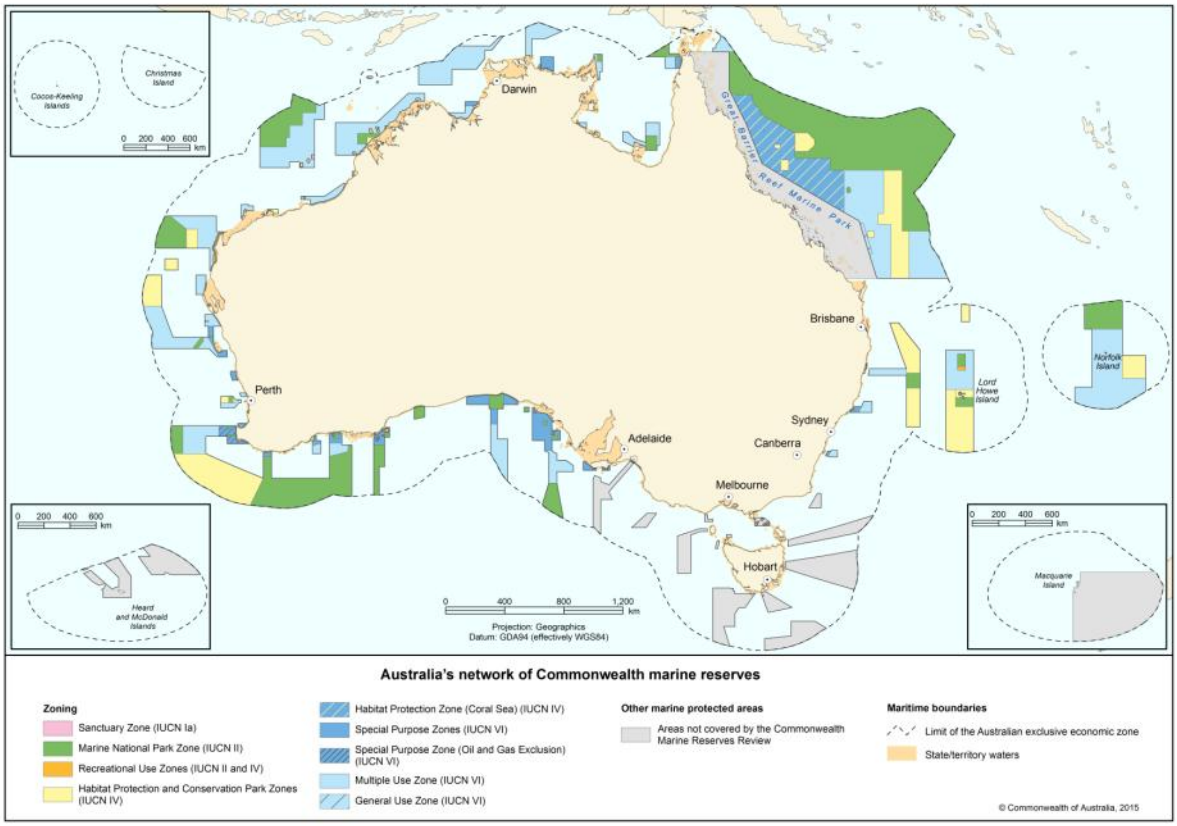

Figure 4.8.1 Australia's network of CMRs, as proclaimed

A number of zoning issues raised during the CMR Review were relevant to the establishment and management of the entire CMR estate. As all of these issues were also relevant to at least one CMR Network, they have been noted and addressed in Sections 4.1 to 4.5. Zoning changes were recommended where a practical solution to these issues was found. These provide either improved conservation outcomes without substantially increasing socio-economic impacts, or improved socio-economic outcomes without unacceptable impacts on the conservation performance of the reserves. A comprehensive list of issues raised is provided at Appendix G.

Figure 4.8.2 depicts the recommended zoning for the CMR networks that were the subject of this review. Changes are recommended for six reserves in the North CMR Network (West Cape York, Gulf of Carpentaria, Limmen, Wessel, Arafura and Oceanic Shoals CMRs); four reserves in the North-west CMR Network (Kimberley, Argo-Rowley Terrace,

Dampier and Gascoyne CMRs); nine reserves in the South-west CMR Network (Two Rocks, Perth Canyon, Geographe, South-west Corner, Bremer, Eastern Recherche, Twilight, Great Australian Bight and Western Eyre CMRs); six reserves in the Temperate East CMR Network (Jervis, Hunter, Solitary Islands, Central Eastern, Lord Howe and Norfolk CMRs); and the Coral Sea CMR. Three additional reserves in the North-west CMR Network (Mermaid Reef, Ningaloo and Ashmore Reef CMRs) have recommended zoning changes for the purposes of improving zoning consistency and ensuring their IUCN categorisation is consistent with the current management of these reserves.

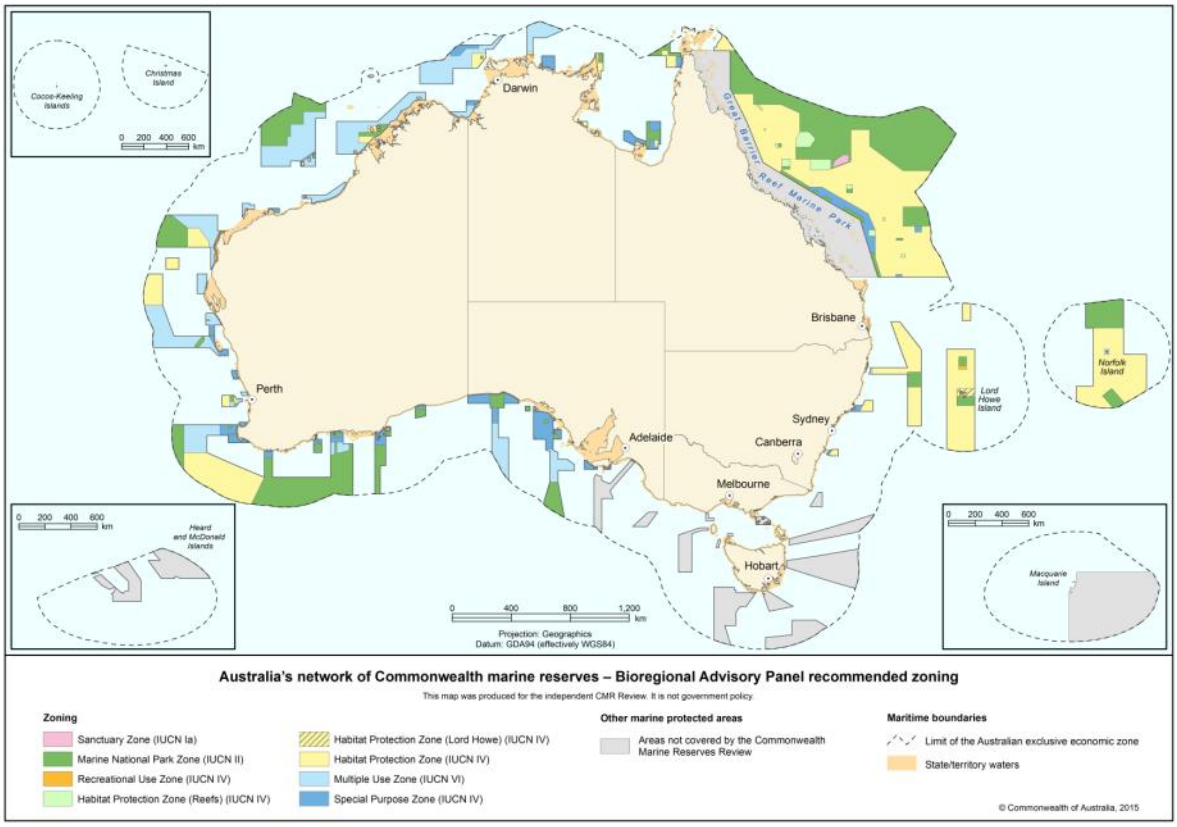

Figure 4.8.2 Recommended zoning for Australia's network of CMRs

Conservation outcomes

Table 4.8.1 provides a comparison between the proclaimed and recommended zoning. Almost half a million km^2 has been added to HPZs (IUCN IV). These zone types provide a high level of protection for habitat, particularly against activities such as seabed mining and the impacts of fishing gear types that are described as incompatible with conservation values of the area. This additional area increases the total number of conservation features in HPZs from 192 to 272 (Table 4.8.2). The increase in HPZs is largely a result of the reduction in area of MUZ (IUCN VI) by almost half (over 436 000 km^2 across the estate). MUZs are managed for multiple use, allowing mining and other extractive uses which are compatible with other values of the reserves.

The area of the estate zoned as SZ (IUCN Ia) has increased slightly, due to the introduction of this zone type in the Coral Sea CMR.

Overall, the area of the estate zoned as MNPZ (IUCN II) has decreased by 3%. This reduction is a result of rezoning in the Coral Sea CMR as there is a small increase in the area under MNPZ in each of the four other networks. Despite the reduction in the total area under MNPZ in the estate, there is an improvement in representativeness and its

performance against guiding principle 18 of the Goals and Principles. Twenty-one additional conservation features are now represented in SZ or MNPZ (Table 4.8.2).

The areas zoned as SPZ (IUCN VI) have increased to approximately 6% but remain a small fraction of the CMR estate (not including the South-east CMR Network). For the most part SPZs are used to allow fishing methods normally excluded from the CMR estate, while some are designed to facilitate port operations and others to exclude mining and mineral exploration. The large reduction in MUZ and small increase in SPZ reflects a more tightly targeted zoning of economic activities.

Table 4.8.1 Comparison of areas of zone types between proclaimed and recommended zoning for the CMR estate (not including South-east CMR Network)

Zone	Proclaimed		Recommended		Difference	
	Area (km²)	% of estate	Area (km²)	% of estate	Area (km²)	% of estate
Sanctuary Zone (IUCN 1a)	1 262	0.05%	5 934	0.25%	+4 672	+0.20%
Marine National Park Zone (IUCN II)	862 604	36.32%	781 833	32.92%	–80 771	–3.40%
Habitat Protection Zones* (IUCN IV)	562 961	23.71%	1 019 568	42.93%	+456 607	+19.23%
Recreational Use Zone (IUCN IV)**	3 639	0.15%	3 639	0.15%	Nil	Nil
Multiple Use Zones (IUCN VI)**	854 770	35.99%	418 508	17.62%	–436 262	–18.37%
Special Purpose Zones** (IUCN VI)**	89 483	3.77%	145 237	6.12%	+55 754	+2.35%
Total	**2 374 719**	**100%**	**2 374 719**	**100%**		

Note: All figures are rounded to the nearest km² (and therefore in some instances can appear to not add up to the totals supplied). No changes have been made to the outer boundaries and total area of the reserves. Percentages are calculated based on the rounded figures. HPZs, MUZs and SPZs have different prescriptions in different CMRs.

*HPZs refers to all proclaimed and/or recommended HPZs, Conservation Park Zones (CPZ), HPZ (Coral Sea), HPZ (Lord Howe), HPZ (Seamounts), and HPZ (Reefs).

** The proclaimed RUZs in Ningaloo and Ashmore CMRs are noted here as IUCN IV, consistent with the other RUZs in the estate.

***MUZs refers to all proclaimed and/or recommended MUZs (including those labeled A).

****SPZs refers to all proclaimed and/or recommended SPZs (including those labeled A, B and C), SPZ (Oil and Gas Exclusion), and GUZ.

Table 4.8.2 shows how the recommended zoning improves the representation of primary conservation features in highly protected SZs, MNPZs and HPZs, and provides an indication of performance against the four primary goals of the NRSMPA. The recommended zoning will provide increased protection to 21 features in SZ (IUCN Ia) or MNPZ (IUCN II), including one Provincial Bioregion, one Meso-Scale Bioregion, 13 Depth Ranges (by Provincial Bioregion), two KEFs and four Biologically Informed Seascapes. The zoning changes in the North-west CMR network will result in the loss from MNPZs of one Meso-scale Bioregion (which will instead be captured within an HPZ), and changes in the South-west CMR Network will result in the loss of one Biologically Informed Seascape. However, this loss is largely offset by the significant increase in primary conservation features represented in HPZs in comparison to the proclaimed zoning, including three additional Provincial Bioregions, 14 Meso-scale Bioregions, 49 Depth Ranges (by Provincial Bioregion), five KEFs, 16 Biologically Informed Seascapes and two Seafloor Types. While across the CMR estate there will be a loss of nine Depth Ranges (by Provincial Bioregion) in HPZs, eight of these occur in the Coral Sea CMR and will now be represented within MNPZs in this reserve.

These conservation features are identified at Appendix H, which provides an analysis of the network-level representation of conservation features as an outcome of the recommended zoning.

Table 4.8.2 Comparison of representation of conservation features between proclaimed and recommended zoning for the CMR estate (not including South-east CMR Network)

Goal	Primary Conservation Feature	Total no. in estate	Proclaimed		Recommended	
			SZ (IUCN Ia) or MNPZ (IUCN II)	HPZs* (IUCN IV)	SZ (IUCN Ia) or MNPZ (IUCN II)	HPZs (IUCN IV)
1	Provincial Bioregions (PBs)	31	26	17	27	20
	Meso-scale Bioregions	33	21	3	22	17
2	Depth by PB	325	200	135	213	175
3	Key Ecological Features	39	26	9	28	14
	Biologically Informed Seascapes	60	38	9	42	25
4	Seafloor Types	21	20	19	20	21
	Total	**509**	**331**	**192**	**352**	**272**

*Includes the proclaimed CPZ (IUCN IV) in the Coral Sea CMR but does not include RUZs.
Note: Some features are represented in SZ/MNPZ and HPZs and therefore the total number of features represented in both zones is not the simple sum of their occurrence in each zone.

Socio-economic outcomes

Overall, the recommended zoning will result in improved socio-economic outcomes for a number of sectors relative to the 2012 proclamation. There will be a significant reduction in the amount of commercial fishing catch displaced by the CMR estate, particularly for fisheries managed under Commonwealth, Queensland, and Western Australian jurisdictions. The substantial reduction in impacts on Commonwealth fisheries in particular will improve the socio-economic outcomes in the North, North-west, South-west and Temperate East CMR Networks and the Coral Sea CMR. This reduction is the result of the lengthy consultations undertaken by the BAP, which allowed the identification of solutions to specific areas of contention raised by stakeholders who were negatively impacted by the proclaimed zoning of the CMR estate.

Similarly for recreational fishers across the estate a number of solutions have been developed to address specific areas of contention, such as the loss of frequently accessed recreational fishing grounds. Zoning changes have been recommended where access could be improved without compromising conservation outcomes, such as in the Perth Canyon and Kimberley CMRs.

As outlined in Section 4.6, the recommended zoning changes are also aimed at improving zoning consistency across the estate. At a minimum, design principles about minimising complexity and increasing complementarity with existing spatial management measures such as state marine park zoning have been followed. The outcome is a reduction in complexity which will ease compliance, and the practicality of implementing the CMRs is expected to improve slightly.

The recommended zoning of the CMR estate will retain and extend areas of high-level protection where mining operations, including the exploration or production of petroleum, are not permitted. For example, the recommended zoning changes in the South-west CMR Network will increase by 18 348 km^2 the area where mining is excluded. Overall the area where seabed mining and oil and gas exploration and production is excluded increases from 60% to 79% of the CMR estate under review.

Recommendations relating to the ongoing management of the reserves are provided in Chapters 5 to 7.

Conclusion

Careful evaluation of the key areas of contention and options for zoning and management has resulted in adjustments that improve the conservation outcomes for the CMR estate while at the same time relieving a substantial number of the socio-economic pressures associated with the proclamation of the reserves. At the network level these changes include significant improvements to protection of Coral Sea coral reefs, improvements and additions to MNPZs in several reserves, a large increase in the area under HPZs and a large reduction in MUZ. The representation of primary conservation features in SZ, MNPZ and HPZs is improved. These conservation gains are achieved with a substantial decrease in the impact on commercial fisheries and improved access to key recreational fishing areas. The recommended changes will improve conservation and socio-economic outcomes for the CMR estate and set a sound foundation for its future management.