



Australian Marine Parks

Summary of submissions
on intent to prepare
Commonwealth Marine
Reserve management plans
2016



Australian Government
Director of National Parks



Australian
Marine Parks

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Message from the Director of National Parks



Our marine parks contain many unique environmental assets including reefs of the Coral Sea, deep-water canyons and seamount chains that are rich in nutrients and support an abundance of marine life.

People like spending time in and on the water – whether they live on the coast or are on holidays with family and friends.

To ensure good management of marine parks, I commenced preparing new management plans that balance the need to protect and conserve marine life, with use and enjoyment of these resources.

In September and October last year, I asked for public comments to inform development of management plans for marine parks in the North, North-west, South-west, Temperate East and Coral Sea.

Thousands of people took the time to write to me about the things I should consider when drafting these plans. This report is a summary of the key issues raised.

Hearing your views and being exposed to new information and emerging science, as I am planning for these parks, is incredibly valuable for me and the Parks Australia staff assisting me.

I have carefully considered the issues you raised as I began drafting the management plans for these parks.

I am looking forward to hearing your views on the draft management plans in the next round of consultation. I will then forward the plans to the Minister for Environment and Energy for his consideration and approval.

Thank you again for your interest and for working with me on the important job of managing Australian Marine Parks – an amazing resource for generations to come.

Sally Barnes
Director National Parks

1. This report

The Australian Government has proclaimed a number of marine parks around Australia, in the North, North-west, South-west, South-east, Temperate East networks and in the Coral Sea.

Under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the Director of National Parks is responsible for preparing management plans for 58 of these parks. The Director must seek public comment on the intention to prepare draft management plans, and on the draft plans themselves, prior to plans being finalised.

Between 5 September and 31 October 2016, the Director of National Parks sought public comments on the *Notice of Intent to Prepare Management Plans for Commonwealth Marine Reserves*. This public consultation is one of the steps required to make new management plans for these parks. This report summarises the submissions and comments received during this first consultation phase.

The views outlined in this report are those of stakeholders and do not represent the views of the Director of National Parks. It is a summary report, so submissions are not reflected in full.

The comments received will inform the development of draft management plans for 44 marine parks in the Coral Sea and in the North, North-west, South-west, Temperate East networks.

The existing management plan for the South-east Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network will not be affected by this process as it is already in place and effective until 2023.

2. Why are management plans needed?

Australia has a National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas. The primary goal of the National Representative System is to establish and effectively manage a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of marine parks and to protect marine biodiversity. Australian Marine Parks are part of this system, as are marine protected areas established by Australian state and territory governments in the waters under their jurisdiction. Establishment and management of a National Representative System have been Australian Government priorities and international commitments since 1998. In 2012, the Australian Government proclaimed 40 new marine parks across five networks under the National Representative System.

The Director of National Parks is legally required to prepare management plans for marine parks, once they have been proclaimed. Management plans set out how parks will be managed for a period of 10 years. They state how natural features, heritage and other values are to be protected and conserved and set out what activities can be undertaken in parks and where.

Management plans are designed to provide certainty to people operating in these places and communities by clearly setting out the activities that can and can't be undertaken in marine parks. Importantly, this includes providing for activities in parks to support local and regional economies and enabling people to experience and enjoy these areas. Management plans also recognise the long term connection of Indigenous people to these seascapes and their cultural obligations to look after these special areas.

To inform the development of management plans for the Australian Marine Parks, in 2014, the Australian Government commissioned an independent review of parks that were established in November 2012: that is, those parks in the North, North-west, South-west, Temperate East and Coral Sea marine regions. The independent review considered what management arrangements would best

protect our marine environment and would accommodate activities in these parks. The independent review was informed by consultation with stakeholders and the best available science and was completed in December 2015. The reports of the Expert Scientific Panel and the Bioregional Advisory Panel are publicly available and have informed the Director of National Parks in management planning.

3. The public comment period

Under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, a two-stage consultation process must be undertaken when preparing management plans for Australian Marine Parks. The first consultation invites feedback on what people want to see in plans. The second consultation invites comments on draft plans arising from the initial consultation.

On 5 September 2016, the Director of National Parks commenced the first period of public consultation on her intention to prepare management plans for marine parks across the North, North-west, South-west and Temperate East networks, and the Coral Sea. The Director also asked for comments on the reports arising from the *Independent Commonwealth Marine Reserves Review*.

Comments from the public were initially invited until 11 October 2016. This first consultation period was extended until 31 October 2016 to provide those interested with further opportunity to have their say.

4. Summary of submissions

Overview

Parks Australia received a total of 54 322 submissions during the consultation period. These submissions comprised 212 individual submissions and 54 110 submissions from 16 different campaigns and petitions (see Appendix A for a list of campaigns and petitions received).

A broad range of individuals and groups across a number of sectors made submissions (see Figure 1).

Both estate-wide and marine park specific comments were received, with some submissions providing information that related to more than one park or network (see Figure 2).

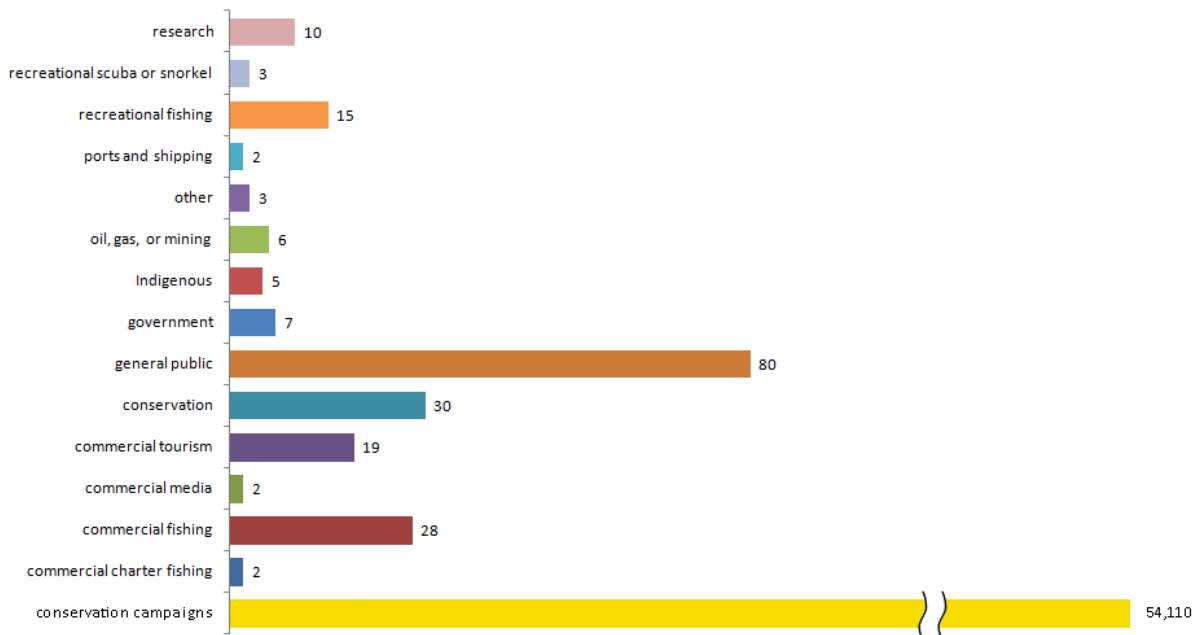


Figure 1: Number of submissions received by sector.

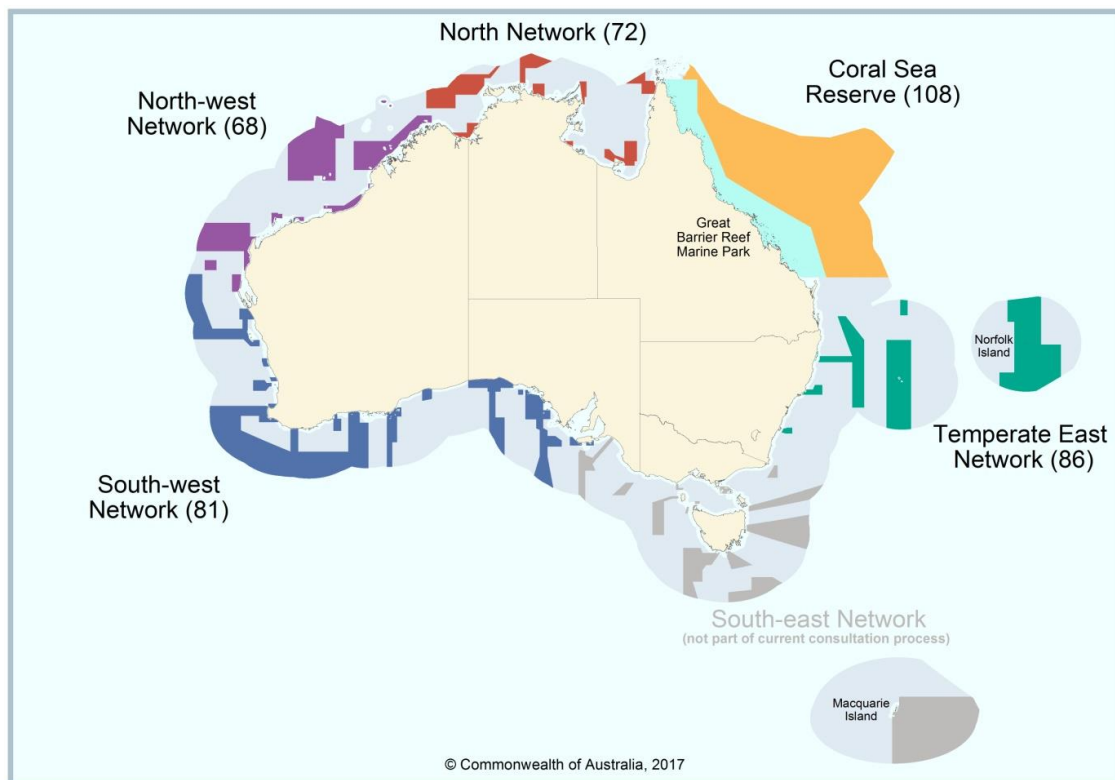


Figure 2: Number of individual submissions received relative to each network. Note: This figure does not reflect the 54 110 campaign submissions received. Some submissions provided comments that related to more than one network.

The submissions received canvassed a wide range of complex issues. Many submissions commented on the importance of achieving conservation outcomes in marine parks, others outlined economic uses of the parks, and others identified issues in relation to future management.

Key comments raised through the submissions included:

- the need for higher protection of environmental and cultural values
- requests for greater commercial and recreational access to fishing areas
- calls for more restrictions on extractive activities, including oil and gas exploration in marine parks
- importance of consistency in management arrangements between adjacent Australian and state and territory parks
- importance of appropriate resourcing for comprehensive, intelligent compliance arrangements, particularly where National Park zones have been proposed
- need for targeted communication about park management, including for different sectoral users
- concerns over restrictions on extractive activities such as oil and gas, commercial and charter fishing in marine parks
- importance of flexible / adaptive management approaches
- need for fisheries adjustment support for commercial fishing businesses affected by new rules in marine parks.

As outlined, the vast majority of submissions (54 110) were received as part of sixteen campaigns and petitions and focussed on marine sanctuaries, rejecting any reduction in the total area of 'no take' zones in each network. These submissions also sought increased protection at Bremer Marine Park and raised concerns about oil and gas and other extractive activities.

At the Director's invitation, respondents also provided feedback on the recommendations from the *Independent Commonwealth Marine Reserves Review*. Comments about the independent review's recommendations were mixed. Some submissions indicated that issues they raised through consultation with the independent review panels had been partially or wholly addressed by the independent review's recommendations, while some indicated that their issues had not been addressed. Some people identified new issues arising from the independent review's recommended management approaches.

Key issues

The submissions received were reviewed and grouped into themes. The key issues identified in each theme are outlined below. The following is a summary of the key issues raised and does not reflect the full content of submissions.

Biodiversity conservation

A large number of submissions, including those received through campaigns and petitions, sought increased protection for conservation features and greater restrictions on extractive activities.

Key issues raised in these submissions included:

- concern from tourism, science and conservation sectors that the reefs of the Coral Sea, particularly Lihou, Coringa-Herald, Marion and Osprey reefs, need to be protected in National Park IUCN Category II (non-extractive) zones
- concerns about zoning of Coral Sea reefs and vulnerability to fishing
- requests for primary conservation features to be represented in National Park IUCN Category II zones
- calls for thirty percent of Australian waters to have high level protection, including increased protection across the shelf
- comments about the importance of maintaining a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of parks to maintain ecosystem health and biodiversity
- calls to reject any cut-backs to marine sanctuaries
- calls to maintain or increase protection at specific sites, including in the Coral Sea, Bremer Canyon, Bremer Bay, Kimberley Coast, Great Australian Bight, Twilight, Middleton Reef, Ningaloo and Perth Canyon
- concerns about potential impacts on conservation values from destructive fishing techniques
- concerns about potential impacts on threatened and endangered species, whales, dolphins and turtles associated with any reduction in National Park IUCN Category II zones
- concerns about potential impacts on recreational fishing associated with any reduction in National Park IUCN Category II zones
- call for interim arrangements to include higher levels of protection if timeframes for development of management plans are extended.

Indigenous interests

Comments provided in relation to Indigenous interests included:

- native title and cultural rights must not be impacted by marine parks
- management plans and associated strategies should recognise the rights and interests of Indigenous people by recognising that Aboriginal people may have economic interests in areas in marine parks in addition to cultural values, rights and interests
- consultation and engagement needs to occur at the local level, to ensure that rights to practice culture are not impacted; and to ensure Indigenous people are involved in the development and implementation of management plans and associated strategies
- strategies need to be developed to ensure that best practice engagement occurs with Indigenous people in accordance with Australia's international obligations
- Indigenous groups with sea country interests in marine parks require support from governments to participate in management. Continuing funding under the Working on Country and Indigenous

Protected Area programs was identified as being critical to Indigenous people's capacity to engage in the management of marine parks

- Indigenous groups need support for the collection and appropriate use of traditional knowledge
- there are opportunities for collaborative management with Indigenous groups who have native title sea claims over sea country and sea country interests
- changes to some zones were requested to protect important cultural values
- the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas Guidelines should be reviewed to recognise Indigenous Protected Areas and the Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database should be updated to include marine Indigenous Protected Areas.

Fishing

A number of submissions were received seeking improved or continued access to marine parks for fishing. These submissions identified the following issues:

- requests for recreational fishers, including charter fishers, to be allowed in National Park IUCN Category II (no-take) zones where there is insufficient scientific evidence of fishing impacts on biodiversity
- requests for access to areas historically used for fishing to be maintained and for opportunities for fishing activities to be increased, including at Norfolk Island and Coral Sea reefs, such as eastern Holmes, Osprey, Wreck, Kenn, Cato, Marion and Mellish reefs. There were also calls for access to be maintained in the South-west at Eastern Recherche, Two Rocks, Geographe and Bremer marine parks and Perth Canyon and access to be allowed in the North at Limmen, Wessel, Arafura and Oceanic Shoals marine parks
- opposed the loss of access to fishing grounds that would result from any increase in size or number of marine national park zones
- when determining location of zones, there is a need to consider the likelihood and commercial impacts of gear drift for commercial long line operators
- the management approach needs to be adaptive and flexible to provide for developmental fisheries and for new fishing technologies
- the increased cost and travelling time to access fishing grounds need to be considered when locating National Park IUCN Category II zones
- adequate and appropriate fisheries adjustment and support would be required for businesses affected by new rules in marine parks.

Oil and gas, ports and infrastructure

A number of submissions were received seeking improved or continued access to marine parks for ports, oil and gas. These submissions included the following issues:

- need for access to areas for exploration and extraction of oil and gas and other mining activities

- provision of sufficient area for ships to manoeuvre around ports, and the need for safe anchorage in cases of emergency in marine sanctuary zones
- consideration of designating anchoring areas
- there is a need to streamline processes with the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority to avoid duplication
- dredge material disposal sites and the provision of infrastructure in some marine park zones.

Other socio-economic considerations

A number of submissions highlighted the importance of inclusion of socio-economic considerations in the management of Australia's marine estate. This included the high tourism value in protecting Coral Sea reefs from fishing, particularly Osprey, Bougainville, Marion, Coringa-Herald, Lihou and western Holmes reefs.

Streamlined management

Key issues in relation to management raised in submissions included:

- Australian Marine Parks adjacent to other Australian, state and territory marine parks should have complementary zoning, for example the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the Coral Sea
- support for the dual objectives of management plans: enabling conservation while also allowing for the sustainable use of natural resources
- support for zones designated for scientific reference, as well as for the establishment of a research, monitoring and evaluation framework that provides baselines and benchmarks for assessment of the effectiveness of park management
- there should be no additional regulatory burden for marine users.

Additional comments

Several submissions were received outside of the public consultation period, however these were considered, where relevant, during the course of drafting new management plans.

A number of submissions called for the extension of Australian Marine Park boundaries beyond those proclaimed. This was outside the scope of this consultation process.

5. Next steps

The key issues identified through the public submissions have been carefully considered by the Director of National Parks in preparing draft management plans. The Director has also considered the recommendations of the Independent Commonwealth Marine Reserves Review, the Government's policies and approaches to supporting competitive and sustainable fisheries and the best available scientific information.

Draft management plans for each network and the Coral Sea, will be released for feedback during a second round of consultation. It is anticipated that final management plans will be provided to the Minister for the Environment and Energy for his consideration and possible approval in late 2017.

Appendix A: List of campaigns

Campaign	Count	Sector
A-AMCS (Australian Marine Conservation Society)	19259	conservation
B-AMCS Do you fish	6402	conservation; recreational fishing
C-WWF (World Wildlife Fund for Nature)	8435	conservation
D-AMCS business statements	13	conservation
E-TWS (The Wilderness Society)	1374	conservation
F-Greenpeace	12971	conservation
G-AMCS (postcards)	1079	conservation
H-Save Bremer	343	conservation
I-Coral Sea business statement (letter with signatories)	171	conservation
J-Northwest campaign (via DoGooder)	76	conservation
K-WA business statement (letter with signatories)	474	conservation
L-IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare)	180	conservation
M-South West business statement (letter with signatories)	202	conservation
N-Norfolk Council of Elders	17	Norfolk Island
O-Sea Life postcards	552	conservation
P-Sea Life petition	2562	conservation
Total	54110	

parksaustralia.gov.au/marine