



Hon Steve Dickson MP  
Member for Buderim



Minister for National Parks,  
Recreation, Sport and Racing

Ref: CTS 18771/12

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 29 November 2012 enclosing a copy of e-petition No.1964-12, tabled in the Queensland Legislative Assembly. The petition draws to the attention of the House two matters: the proposed establishment of a network of Commonwealth marine parks throughout Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone and the request for a review of Queensland marine parks to permit additional recreational fishing opportunities.

Regarding the first matter, on 16 November 2012, the Honourable Tony Burke MP, Commonwealth Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities announced the declaration of 40 new Commonwealth marine reserves as part of achieving a National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas. These marine reserves sit within Commonwealth waters and have been declared right around Australia, with the Coral Sea, West Cape York and the Gulf of Carpentaria marine reserves being located adjacent to Queensland waters. The development of these reserves involved public consultation.

A key consideration in any park proposal process which impacts on Queensland fishers is to recognise that Queensland fisheries are already amongst the healthiest and best managed in the world. This has been documented in a number of reports relating to the status of stock in Queensland's fisheries which led to formal accreditation for export of seafood product from these fisheries. With more than 70 per cent of Australia's consumption of seafood being imported, continued access to local and regional fish stocks is vital for also meeting domestic consumption.

The Commonwealth Government may not have given this key consideration appropriate weighting in determining its reserves, their boundaries and implications for Queensland's fishers (recreational and commercial).

The process to declare these marine reserves, including public consultation, sits with the Commonwealth Government, not the Queensland Government. The petitioners may wish to raise their concerns with the Commonwealth Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

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In relation to the second matter raised in the petition, a multiple use management framework has been adopted within Queensland marine parks. This approach balances conservation with a range of commercial, recreational and tourism activities. The framework was established through extensive public consultation, including recreational fishing interests.

Along with public consultation the following actions are undertaken as a part of this multi use management framework: a review of available science; consideration of expert opinion; identification of values and threats including consideration of possible offset measures; and determining socio-economic values of the area and considering ways to minimise their impacts. This process ensures that a range of conservation, recreational, commercial and tourism interests are considered and that measures are incorporated into marine park planning to manage these interests.

Recreational fishing is recognised as an important activity throughout coastal Queensland, supporting local businesses and enjoyed by many. Given the extremely large area of marine waters in Queensland available for recreational fishing, it is not considered that any change is required to the existing State marine park zones at this time.

The 2009 Moreton Bay Marine Park (MBMP) rezoning process has been the most recent marine planning exercise undertaken by the Queensland Government. Science played a key role in determining the marine park zoning. An independent expert panel determined key principles for planning. These principles formed part of the consultation materials for the rezoning and included adopting conservation measures for habitats and species while seeking to minimise impacts on marine park users.

Recreational fishing interests were consulted on the current MBMP zoning arrangements and recreational fishing data was considered in the planning process. This ensured that the most popular recreational fishing areas of the Bay were excluded from green zones. Changes were also made in yellow zones in the Bay to allow for two fishing lines in these zones rather than the previous single line following feedback from recreational fishers. The overall outcome saw 84 per cent (2,920 square kilometres) of the MBMP remaining available for recreational fishing. Artificial reef structures, introduced as part of these marine park zoning arrangements, were funded to provide additional opportunities for recreational fishing — adding to the habitat diversity able to be fished within the marine park.

Recreational fishing also occurs extensively in other Queensland State marine parks, with protected green zones representing small but important areas established to protect their different marine habitats and fauna from extraction and use.

In regard to the reference in the e-petition to the 'International Union for Conservation of Nature' (IUCN), the current IUCN categories have, as a key objective, 'delivering recreational benefits consistent with the other objectives of (protected area) management'. I believe the current Queensland marine park zoning arrangements appropriately address this objective as well as the other management objectives specific to each of the IUCN categories.

The Queensland Government is also implementing other measures to safeguard Queensland's marine resources and to support improved access to and safety within our coastal waterways. Funding is being invested through a voluntary buyback program being implemented to reduce commercial fishing effort on the east coast as well as for marine infrastructure. New boating facilities will be created and channel access maintained in key areas of Queensland. Also, the establishment of the Gold Coast Waterways Authority will examine marine infrastructure on the Gold Coast to improve safety and recreational fishing opportunities.

I hope this information has been of assistance to you. Should you have any further enquiries, please contact Mr Rhys Turner, Chief of Staff in my office, on telephone 07 3224 7477.

Yours sincerely



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