



FACT SHEET 1 - Marine bioregional planning

Australia has the third largest marine area of any nation in the world. Our marine region extends from the coral-rich tropical seas of the north to the sub-Antarctic waters of the Southern Ocean.

Our oceans are twice the size of our continental land mass. These waters contain extraordinary natural biological diversity and richness. Many of the species found in Australian waters are not found anywhere else in the world. There is still much more to be discovered.

Australians rely on our oceans for resources, recreation and livelihoods – and with this reliance comes a responsibility to manage our oceans sustainably now and for the benefit of future generations.

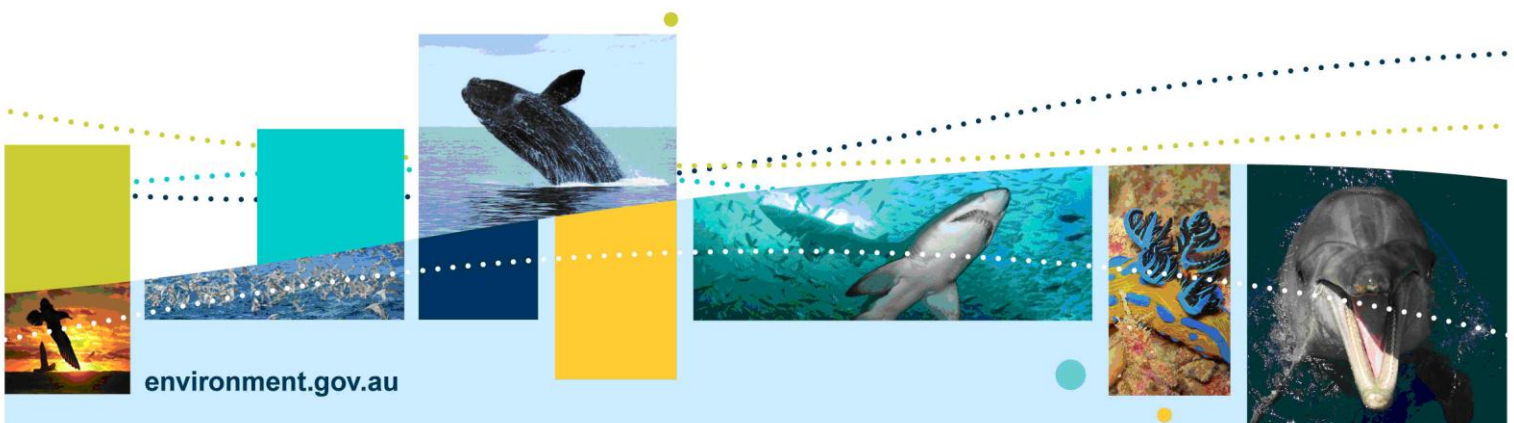
Marine bioregional planning is focused on the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's oceans. The planning process is based on scientific analysis of Australia's marine environment, analysis of socioeconomic factors and community consultation and input.

Marine Bioregional Planning – where it is happening

Marine bioregional plans are being developed in Commonwealth waters in each of the five large marine regions around Australia. They are not being developed in state and Northern Territory waters in close to shore.

State waters start at the coast and usually extend three nautical miles (5.5 kilometres) out to sea. State waters also include a three nautical mile area around islands and include all enclosed waters (e.g. the Spencer Gulf). Commonwealth waters start at the outer limit of state waters and extend to the edge of Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone 200 nautical miles from shore.

Commonwealth waters are protected as a Matter of National Environmental Significance under national environment law (the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*). This is why the marine bioregional plans are being made under national environmental law.



The planning process is also being used to identify regional networks of Commonwealth marine reserves that will become part of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA).

Marine bioregional planning — the process

The Australian Government's objectives for Commonwealth waters are to:

- conserve biodiversity and maintain ecosystem health
- ensure the recovery and protection of threatened species
- improve our understanding of biodiversity and ecosystems and the pressures they face.

The marine bioregional plans are drawing together scientific knowledge and information from many sources to present a clear picture of the characteristics and diversity of our oceans, as well as the pressures on the marine environment.

The planning process has three key stages:

- preparation of a bioregional profile that describes the biodiversity and key ecological processes of each region, as well as how people use it
- development and release of a draft marine bioregional plan and a draft marine reserve network proposal for public consultation. The plans set out broad objectives for the conservation of marine life in each region, identify regional priorities and outline strategies and actions to address these priorities
- completion of a final marine bioregional plan and a marine reserves network proposal following public consultation.

Marine bioregional planning – the outcome

Marine bioregional plans are based on science, detailed planning and community consultation. The plans will be used by government and industry to improve the way we manage and protect the marine environment.

Marine bioregional plans are designed to:

- support strategic, consistent decision-making in relation to Commonwealth marine areas under national environmental law
- support efficient administration of national environmental law to promote the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of the marine environment and its resources
- provide a framework for strategic intervention and investment by government to meet its policy objectives and statutory responsibilities.

Commonwealth marine reserves

Commonwealth marine reserves are a key outcome of the marine bioregional planning process, separate from the plans themselves. The Government is using the same planning process to identify areas that can contribute to the NRSMPA. All governments in Australia are committed to establishing the NRSMPA.

Commonwealth [marine reserves](#) (sometimes called marine protected areas or marine parks) will play an important role in the long-term conservation of marine ecosystems and the biodiversity of our oceans. We are all familiar with national parks on land; marine reserves play the same role in our oceans.

For more detail information go to www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp

