

Submission to GBRMPA Review

To:

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DEH
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From:

Allan & Jennifer Holland

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We welcome this opportunity to at last have a voice in a long-overdue review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

We have operated a small family fishing business for approximately 15 years. We have no employees and primarily earn our family income from mud-crabbing and inshore netting. During the last 15 years we have had many meetings with GBRMPA representatives regarding various issues and can honestly say that GBRMPA have always presented themselves as very arrogant with not a shred of empathy for the small businesses that they have trampled over. It is hard to put into a written submission the depth of feeling of distrust and betrayal that GBRMPA have managed to engender in fisherman in this time. It should not be assumed that this is as a result of wanting opposing goals in environmental management because fishermen care for their environment to preserve the future of their industry in the same way that agricultural primary producers care for their land for future production. We deal with many Federal and State Government Departments, but it is GBRMPA that we have learnt to distrust in every way.

I raise the following points for your consideration:

1. When conducting the dugong studies approximately 10 years ago, the scientific data provided by GBRMPA was later shown to be falsified – no effort was made to review decisions based on the false data.

2. During port visits in the early stages of the RAP process, GBRMPA was represented by very young academics who could not provide mature and relevant answers to the many fishing families whom were understandably very concerned as to whether they would still be able to survive financially after the RAP was implemented. We were concerned with our ability to service business debts and mortgages whilst raising our families And were dealing with what appeared to be teenagers doing some vacation employment.
3. GBRMPA's expensive media campaign during the RAP vilified commercial fisherman. Our taxes were being spent on an advertising budget that was trying to persuade the general public that ours is an undesirable industry. One wonders whether the public servants eating their expense account seafood meals would rather eat fresh Australian seafood with a known origin or imported seafood of dubious hygiene standards.
4. Fishermen attend "consultative" meetings organised by GBRMPA in the hope that they will see hard-working families that are trying to deal with their proposals – we are told that our views will be included in an "independent" report - but when we request to see this report it is never made available.
5. There is a justifiable lack of confidence in the integrity of the GBRMPA. They seem to have no compunction in producing unsubstantiated data – whether it be scientific or financial. Their claims that the impacts of the RAP would be ½ to \$2M had no accurate basis and have subsequently proved to be vastly understated.
6. GBRMPA have no compunction in going back on their word. The GBRMPA Chair told the public that they wanted 25% green – of course the result was 33% green. They also published maps showing areas green and blue that are not even within their jurisdiction.
7. GBRMPA appears to have established a culture of arrogance and disdain for the working Australians whose environment they purport to protect. We believe that the Authority needs to be abolished and its' functions carried out more transparently by an established Govt Dept eg. DEH

8. GBRMPA should not be trying to operate a parallel fisheries management program – fisheries enforcement should remain the responsibility of DPI&F staff. It is a duplication and waste of resources funded by the taxpayer.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission. It is unfortunate that we cannot think of a single positive point in favour of GBRMPA. It is equally important that we should not be categorised as disgruntled fishermen. We have adequate business acumen to run a fishing business despite the many obstacles we have faced in recent years. We deal with bureaucracy on a daily basis and make every effort to contribute to the consultative process initiated by the various departments. Indeed, we spent many hours providing detailed maps and financial data for the RAP process. The level of stress that this process placed on often small fishing businesses should not be underestimated - we had many sleepless nights wondering whether we would be able to continue in the industry, and if not, what we would do to provide for our young family. The arrogance and deceit of the GBRMPA significantly added to our stress.