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Thank you for the opportunity to submit a submission on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's performance during last years Representative Areas Programme consultation and their blatant misleading of the Australian people during this process.

Both as a concerned recreational fisherman and as chairman of a group of people drawn from the whole of the Burdekin community, (SOS Burdekin) I attended every meeting held in the Burdekin district during this fiasco, including two special meetings with the staff of the Authority, hosted by some very concerned stake-holders in the district.

At that meeting, although all expressed concern at the lack of scientific evidence the Authority were able to produce to show a need for such drastic measures to be introduced; the staff of the Authority assured us that if we could produce an alternative map to their draft map, with the same amount of green in each bio-region, which did not impact as heavily on all of the districts fishers, it would be considered. After much input from ALL of the local stake-holders including the Burdekin Shire Council the alternative map was presented to the staff of the Authority, who commended us on the obvious effort and research used to produce something that we could work with.

However, we need not have bothered, as it was totally ignored by them, and in fact they increased the area of the restricted zones in this district in the final plan.

From what I observed during the consultation phase of the RAP, I believe that the GBRMPA staff from <text deleted> down deliberately lied to us on many occasions, and that the whole process was a complete sham!

Lie # 1. From <text deleted>....."that we will only close 20/25%"
Fact:
33% green

Lie # 2. From <text deleted>....."we will look at alternative submissions favourably" Fact: alternative maps totally ignored

Lie # 3. From <text deleted>....."we don't manage the fishery in the GBR" Fact: Re-allocation of the fishery is a management tool, and yellow zones are a re-allocation of the public resource.

The list goes on and on, and all of the above and more were said at public meetings or on television and radio interviews.

The Authority not only lied to us, the Australian people, they also lied to the Australian Parliament and the Treasury Department and to some Federal Members of Parliament regarding the amount of compensation required to be paid out to affected businesses and fishermen and other matters.

It is my opinion that we cannot tolerate an unelected, independent body such as the GBRMPA to exist in their current form.

I believe that the GBRMPA should be run by a Board of Directors, made up of ALL stake-holders in the GBR; and that Board should answer directly to the Minister for the Environment.....that is the only possible way we can have transparency and accountability.

As for the myth that the Reef needs more protection from crown of thorns, coral bleaching, climate change etc etc, how can banning fishing possibly affect any of those outcomes?

The other well-touted myth that the GBR is in danger of being over-fished and needs more protection is also a total disregard of the facts.

Fact # 1. The average size of recreational fisherman's boats is about 6 metres.....the weather and work commitments keep most of us home most of the time.

Fact # 2. The commercial catch of coral reef finfish is capped at approximately 3,000 tonnes per year for the whole reef lagoon. It is not possible to over-fish such a vast area at that level.

Fact # 3. With the amount of green and yellow zones in the Marine Park, fishers are under some restrictions on over 50% of the GBR Lagoon.

Fact # 4. Noted reef scientists (<text deleted>, for one) input was totally ignored or trivialised, if not denigrated outright, unless it agreed with their own goals.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment

Yours faithfully

Bob Kennedy

President SOS Burdekin