



# Oceans Action Bulletin

An Update from the Marine Division of the Department of the Environment and Heritage

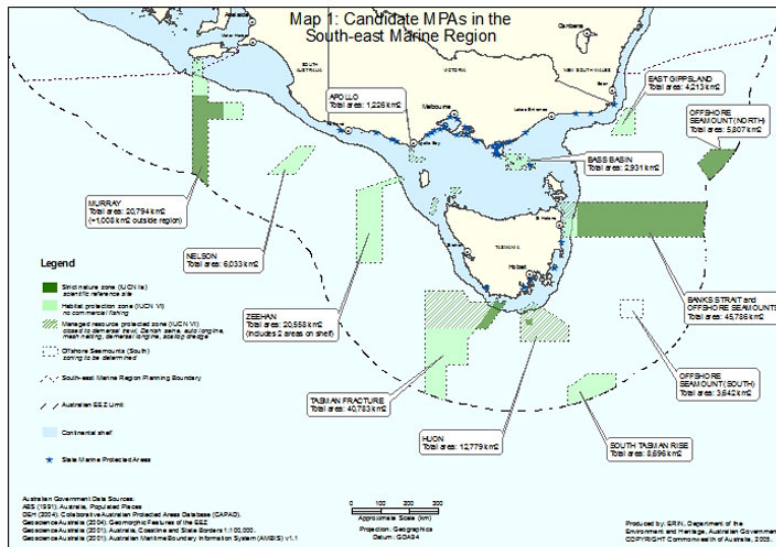
24 February 2006

This Bulletin updates you on Australian Government activities in the marine environment. Please forward to any interested parties. For further information or to unsubscribe from this Bulletin, please email [samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au](mailto:samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au)

## Public Comment Period Closing on South-east Marine Protected Areas

Public comment on a proposed network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) for the South-east Marine Region closes on Tuesday 28 February.

The Australian Government has been working with key stakeholder groups for the past three years to develop the South-east MPA network using agreed criteria and the best available scientific information.



Meetings have been held with stakeholder groups and state fisheries and MPA managers during January and February to consult on MPA boundaries, zoning and management issues and displaced fishing effort. Final written comment is due by Tuesday 28 February.

### The network of candidate MPAs

After Ministerial consideration during March the final boundaries will be released for a public comment period of 60 days, as part of the declaration process under the EPBC Act 1999.

Following the declaration the Director of National parks will begin the Management Planning Process. There are many opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the Management Planning Process, including the opportunity to comment in detail on a Draft Management Plan.

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Details of the candidate Marine Protected Areas are available online at <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/southeast/index.html>. More information can be obtained by contacting Paul Garrett (02 6274 1925) or Leanne Wilks (026274 1767).

The timing of the MPA process coincides with large scale fisheries reform in the region. Assistance measures for fishermen impacted by the creation of the MPAs and fisheries reform were announced under the Australian Government's Securing our Fishing Future package.

The structural adjustment components of the Fishing Future package is being administered by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Enquiries should be directed to a hotline number - (02) 6272 5363.

All enquiries regarding changes to management arrangements of Commonwealth fisheries should be directed to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) on its hotline, 1300 723 621.

### **Restructuring Assistance Cap Removed for Great Barrier Reef Businesses**

The Australian Government this week announced it would remove the \$500,000 cap on Full Business Restructuring Assistance grants under the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Structural Adjustment Package.

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, said the cap was being removed in recognition that a small number of large fishing and land-based businesses required additional financial support due to their exceptional circumstances.

Concerns had been raised by a number of businesses affected by the declaration of expanded marine park areas that they could not obtain sufficient assistance to restructure their businesses into viability.



*Green Island © Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Overseas Information Branch*

“The Government has been made aware of situations where retention of the \$500,000 cap could possibly result in a business getting no help because it would be unable to restructure effectively,” Senator Campbell said.

“We have acted to ensure that doesn't happen. I am determined to ensure the protection of our world class Great Barrier Reef Marine Park will not be at the expense of fair treatment for the fishing industry and related businesses.”

Senator Campbell said business restructuring assistance had originally been capped at \$200,000. In August 2004 this was increased to \$500,000 for larger businesses to address industry concerns about the fairness and equity of the assistance for larger businesses. In lifting the \$500,000 cap, other aspects of the package remain unchanged, including the application, assessment and appeals processes.

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Senator Campbell said the Government expected the vast majority of businesses applying for restructuring assistance would fall within the general cap of \$200,000.

He urged impacted businesses to lodge applications for the Structural Adjustment Package with the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA) by the new closing date of 30 April 2006. The closing date for structural adjustment assistance applications would not be further extended.

### **Australia taking strong action to protect whales**

Australia will attend an international meeting in the United Kingdom this month to work to stop a push to reopen commercial whaling.

Australian Environment Minister Senator Ian Campbell said Australia's position would be forcefully argued by the Government's International Whaling Commissioner Howard Bamsey.

Mr Bamsey will attend the meeting in Cambridge to prosecute Australia's case for a global ban on all forms of scientific and commercial whaling.

The meeting will be held under the auspices of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to discuss what is called a 'Revised Management Scheme' within which pro-whaling nations will push for a return to commercial whaling.



There is currently a moratorium on commercial whaling, however a significant number of members of the IWC have sided with Japan to try to lift this moratorium by negotiating a Revised Management Scheme.

"Australia will continue to oppose any moves to reintroduce commercial whaling," Senator Campbell said.

*Humpback whale © Robert Thorn*

"Mr Bamsey has been tasked with working alongside other pro-conservation nations to gain the support necessary to continue the moratorium on whaling with the eventual aim of leading to a permanent ban."

Japan will this year more than double the number of Antarctic minke whales it has targeted in the past to 935. It also plans to take threatened humpback whales and endangered fin whales, ramping up to 50 of each in 2007/08. Norway and Iceland also continue to undertake whaling in defiance of world opinion.

"Australia strongly objects to all forms of scientific and commercial whaling and will continue to work hard to strengthen and build on the coalition of countries opposed to whaling in the lead up to the next IWC meeting in June," Senator Campbell said.

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“While we continue to review all options to bring about an end to commercial whaling, we believe the most effective way to do this is through international diplomatic effort.

### **United Nations Advances Governance of High Seas Marine Biodiversity**

Australia has played a key role at a United Nations forum in New York this month on issues related to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity on the high seas.

A Working Group of the UN General Assembly examined scientific, technological, legal, economic, environmental and social issues relating to marine biodiversity outside national jurisdiction. The Working Group met from 13-17 February at United Nations headquarters in New York, bringing together government, conservation and industry groups.

The Australian delegation was led by Donna Petrachenko of the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) and comprised officials from DEH and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and a representative of WWF Australia. The meeting was co-chaired by Philip Burgess of DEH.



*Co-chair of the Working Group, Australia's Phil Burgess, centre.*

The Australian delegation played a key role, promoting the need to establish cooperative approaches to working towards MPAs beyond national jurisdiction; the need to address illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing; and the need for an integrated and coordinated approach to oceans management involving all relevant instruments and sectors.

A key advance at this meeting was the increasing sophistication of member states' awareness of the need to address issues relating to the governance of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction. This includes human impacts on biodiversity, marine genetic resource issues, and MPAs beyond national jurisdiction. The meeting was also notable for the increasing acceptance by member states of MPAs as a tool for biodiversity conservation beyond national jurisdiction.

The implications of this meeting will have a far-reaching effect on international policy relating to the governance of the high seas. Comprehensive independent coverage of discussions at the meeting can be viewed at <http://www.iisd.ca/oceans/marinebiodiv/>

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