



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Heritage

Oceans Action Bulletin

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

2 September 2005

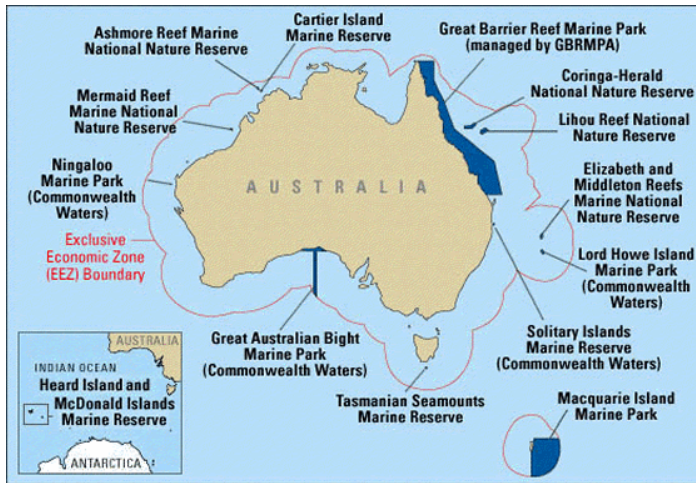
This Bulletin updates you on Australian Government activities in the marine environment. Please forward to any interested parties. For further information or to unsubscribe from this Bulletin, please email samantha.meyer@oceans.gov.au

MPA Scientific Peer Review Panel

The newly established Marine Protected Areas Scientific Review Panel will provide its first formal report towards the end of this year.

The Panel has been set up to help guide the establishment of a national system of marine protected areas (MPAs) in Commonwealth waters. It will provide scientific advice on the extent to which the proposed network of MPAs meets the goals of the National Representative System of MPAs (NRSMPA), particularly in relation to comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness (CAR). The Panel will undertake this assessment initially for the proposed network of MPAs in the South-east region.

The Panel met in May and again in July to prepare a guidance paper on an approach



to assessing a proposed network of Marine Protected Areas. The paper is designed to provide practical guidance on how the Peer Review will interpret the “Guidelines for Establishing the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas” prepared by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC).

Australia's Marine Protected Areas estate

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It will focus on how the Peer Review Panel will assess a candidate network of MPAs against the criteria of CAR as defined in the ANZECC guidelines and applied under the Australian Government's framework for MPA development, including in the South-east marine region.

Panel discussions have focussed on how to deal with a lack of information about marine ecosystems and processes, how to determine that the full range of ecosystems have been represented in a network of MPAs, and how to assess whether a proposed network of MPAs meets the CAR objectives.

The process for developing the NRSMPA in Commonwealth waters began in the South-east in April 2002. The process has been supported by the provision of high level technical and expert advice from Australia's leading marine science institutions. It has also involved extensive stakeholder participation.

The process being used to develop this network of MPAs aims to develop options for sound conservation outcomes balanced with the social, economic and cultural needs of communities. The Australian Government believes that strong stakeholder involvement will foster broad support for MPAs.

The Peer Review Panel will meet to finalise the paper in September and aims to have the paper available for consideration by Government, the Scientific Reference Panel, and stakeholders in October.

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act under review

Public submissions have been invited as part of a review of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*.

The review aims to improve the performance of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, its office holders and its accountability frameworks.

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, said that the Act had not been reviewed for some time and needed to be updated to ensure that it worked in harmony with the Australian Government's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the primary legislation for environmental regulation.



Landscape at Davies Reef © Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

"The Australian Government will work closely with the State Government and will be consulting with key stakeholders in the coming months," the Minister said.

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“Through the Authority, the Australian Government has increased the protection of the reef from 5 to 33 per cent under the Representative Areas Program. This review will not be revisiting the outcomes of that program.

“We need to ensure this world-leading Authority can guarantee the protection of the Park’s biodiversity and conservation values, as well as maintain sustainable fisheries and sustainable tourism industries.”

Senator Campbell added that the Reef was heralded as one of the healthiest reef systems in the world today.

“The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is now hailed as the best protected reef system in the world with 33 per cent of the Park protected,” he said.

The Minister has released the term of reference for the review of that Act, which are available along with the public submission process at www.deh.gov.au/coasts/mpa/gbrmpa.

Senator Campbell said the review was expected to take about six months to complete. Public submissions close on 30 September 2005.

Environmental Assessments for Fisheries under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act

The Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) has received submissions for the assessment of two fisheries under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act).

These are:

1. *Statement of Management Arrangements For The Victorian Sea Urchin Fishery (Heliocidaris erythrogramma & Centrostephanus rodgersii)* from the Department of Primary Industries, Victoria (DPI); and
2. *Draft Ecological Assessment of the South Australian Marine Scalefish Fishery* from the Department of Primary Industries and Resources, South Australia (PIRSA).

The reports have been prepared against the *Australian Government Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries* and will be used to assess the operation of the fisheries for the purposes of Parts 13 and 13A of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

Public comment is invited on these two submissions. Comment closes on the Sea Urchin Fishery on 23 September and on the Marine Scalefish Fishery on 30 September.

Any comments received will form part of the documentation provided to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage for a decision. Copies of comments may be made available to other persons with a particular interest in the application. If you wish to claim confidentiality for any part of your comments, would you please discuss the matter with the Director of the Sustainable Fisheries Section on (02) 6274 1917.

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More information on the submissions and how to comment on them is available on the DEH website at <http://www.deh.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/index.html>

Coast to Coast 2006 Conference

Preparations have begun for Coast to Coast 2006, Australia's biennial national coastal conference.

Next year's conference will be held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre from 22 to 25 May 2006.

The need for sustainable coastal and marine use, planning and management is increasingly hard to ignore. In and around Australia we are seeing more natural disasters, higher demand to live on the coast, more certainty in climate change research, continuous battles with weeds, new marine pests and dwindling fish populations. Coast to Coast will focus debate across the full range of coastal and marine issues being considered at national, state, regional and local levels.



Coastal scene, NSW © DEH / Arthur Mostead

The 2006 Conference program will feature a number of local and international speakers, several concurrent sessions, poster presentations and field trips. The Conference is expected to attract over 400 delegates from across Australia and overseas and provides an opportunity to meet and extend contacts. Delegates are expected to include Commonwealth, State and Local Governments, Natural Resource Management Regions, leading research and education organisations, coastal and marine industries, coastal and marine consultants, managers, planners and engineers, NGOs, user groups and many other community organisations. For more information on the conference, visit

<http://www.iceaustralia.com/coasttocoast2006/index.html>

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