



MEDIA RELEASE
February 23, 2023

'Sustainable fisheries targeted in baseless ocean-grab': Seafood industry responds to Macquarie Island Marine Park announcement

Austral Fisheries (Austral) and Australian Longline Fishing (ALF), along with Seafood Industry Australia (SIA), the national peak body representing Australia's commercial seafood industry, and the Commonwealth Fisheries Association, the peak-body representing commercial fisheries in Australia's Commonwealth waters, have condemned the Albanese Government's announced restructure of the Macquarie Island Marine Park, labelling the tabled plans an ocean-grab funded by international activists with no basis in science, designed to tarnish the sustainably managed Toothfish Fishery.

"Tragically, Minister for the Environment Tanya Plibersek has chosen to use a proposal funded and driven by an international activist group, Pew Charitable Trusts, rather than a proper Australian government review," Austral CEO David Carter said.

"The redesign of the park represents a serious overreach by the Minister that will send shockwaves through the Australian communities and regions who rely on marine estates for employment, tourism and recreation."

"This is nothing more than a green-washed PR stunt designed to garner the support of the Greens and teal-independents, while making the eNGOs happy," SIA CEO Veronica Papacosta said.

"The process of the government using submissions and plans developed by international activists sets a terrifying basis for future land and ocean conservation. If this is a process that will be relied upon by the Albanese Government, then the Australian public and industry requires transparency of this process and how, if at all, it works with existing and endorsed scientific reviews.

"Australia's primary producers should be extremely concerned by the precedent today's announcement sets and the ability for a sitting Minister's agenda to be hijacked by conservation activists.

"The Australian seafood industry welcomes any conversation on sustainability because we are deeply committed to a sustainable ocean. As fishers, our priority is the ocean. It's our future and the future of generations to come. However, this is an attack on one of the world's most sustainable, well-managed fisheries. The fact this is happening to two of the world's most progressive, and forward-thinking fishing companies is a disaster."

"As part of the proposed Macquarie Island Marine Park restructure, grounds that include the current fishing footprint will be categorised as category four. This means although these areas are technically a marine park zone, they will still permit commercial longline fishing," CFA Chair Dr George Kailis said.

For more information or to organise an interview with SIA CEO Veronica Papacosta please contact SIA Communications and Public Affairs Manager Jessica McInerney
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“Austral and ALF represent the only industry members operating within the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery, who will now be forced into taking fish from Marine Parks, despite both operations being classed as sustainable by the Australian Government and independent third-parties. This has poor optics for the businesses and their international trade, and means the clock is ticking for further reduced access in the future.

“This move sends a chilling message to the investment made on environmental and sustainable practices, as demonstrated by both companies.”

“Since 1994, Austral and ALF have supported a collaborative approach to ensuring the entire Macquarie Island ecosystem, including its commercial fishery, is sustainably managed through research, science, industry and conservation inputs, and evidence-based decision making,” ALF Managing Director Malcolm McNeill said.

“Since implementation of the Marine Park around Macquarie Island in 1999 there have been zero interactions between fishing gear and seabirds, and the measures used for seabird and mammal protection remain a leading global example of collaborative approaches to conservation of marine natural resources,” Mr Carter said.

“Despite promises to meaningfully engage with industry during the formal review process, the proposed new park boundaries and zone categorisations announced today do not take the views, contributions, or priorities of longstanding fishers into account,” Mr McNeill said.

“During a number of informal meetings, industry views were tabled, and a design developed that was done in good faith to deliver a truly exceptional, world class outcome giving the highest level of protection to 85% of the entire Macquarie Island Exclusive Economic Zone, however, this design appears to have been ignored,” Mr Carter said.

“Macquarie Island is a special part of the world, and the original Marine Park was established in 1999 with full support of industry, science, conservation, and government.”

“Both ALF and Austral have conducted valuable research over almost 30 years, gaining insights, data and IP throughout this time, which was not accessed or utilised during the formal review,” Mr McNeill said.

“The new boundaries will create increased complexity and red tape for operators and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, the government fisheries regulator, with no change to the conservation outcome. It will also remove sustainable fishing activity from parts of the existing fishing footprint.”

“As an industry that already faces significant scrutiny, this reclassification makes legal fishing operators an easy target for extreme groups, and will ultimately confuse the public, mislead consumers, and adversely impact the commercial viability of this fishery,” Mr McNeill said.

“The message this sends is that the Albanese Government and Minister Plibersek values international activist submissions over collaboration between Australian industry, science, conservation, and government,” Ms Papacosta said.

“This announcement also flags the commencement of the South-east Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2013-2023 review. If we're going into an environment where actually our concerns, our needs, and our performance aren't taken into account, we have a real issue.

“For decades, the Australian seafood industry has worked cooperatively with fisheries managers and scientists to implement best-practice protocols to underpin our long-term, sustainable future. This recent process doesn't add up.

“This decision has missed what could have been an opportunity to proactively engage the Australian seafood community in a discussion on safeguarding the future of our fish-stocks and the environment. Instead it's nothing more than a greenwashed PR stunt, fueled by personal agenda and a desire to generate publicity.

“Just like the broader community, Australia's seafood industry cares about the marine environment and we understand the need to protect and ensure the long-term sustainability of fish stocks.

“Together, Australia's wild-catch fisheries and aquaculture sectors provide fresh, sustainable, high-quality seafood, year-round. Australian seafood is one of the best managed and most sustainable protein sources in the world. Australia has the largest network of Marine Parks in the world with 45% of our waters declared, 48.2% including this announcement. This is well above the AICHI target of 30% by 2030. This protects an area of 744,000 square kilometres and reinforces Australia's global leadership in ocean protection.

“This move is short-sighted and compromises the entire industry and the long-term future of supply of Australian seafood to consumers, and has broad reaching implications for food security. Moves like this unjustly damage the livelihood, reputation and hard work of tens of thousands of hard-working Australians who work in and rely on our seafood industry. And, they have documented and broad reaching impacts on the mental health of our sector.”

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