

**CAIRNS PROFESSIONAL GAME FISHING ASSOCIATION SUBMISSION SUPPORTING
THE PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY OF THE BIOREGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS
MARCH 2011.**

RELEVANCE OF THE GAME FISHING INDUSTRY TO CAIRNS.

CAIRNS HAS LONG BEEN CONSIDERED THE GAME FISHING CAPITAL OF AUSTRALIA, AND THE BLACK MARLIN CAPITAL OF THE WORLD, A REPUTATION THAT HAS BEEN BUILT OVER DECADES AND IS LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROMINENCE OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THE AREA TODAY.

INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED IDENTITIES LIKE LEE MARVIN, GREG NORMAN AND BOB AND DOLLY DYER AIDED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CAIRNS AS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S PREMIER DESTINATIONS. THE INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO PROMOTE AND PROVIDE THE AREA WITH INTERNATIONAL PROMINENCE SECOND TO NO OTHER INTERNATIONAL GAME FISHING DESTINATION.

BESIDES SUPPORTING A SIGNIFICANT FLEET OF LOCALLY BASED OPERATORS MANY VESSELS FROM OTHER EASTERN SEABOARD PORTS MAKE FAR NORTHERN PORTS THEIR OPERATIONAL BASE DURING THE MARLIN SEASON. THE VIABILITY OF MANY OF THESE MIGRATORY BUSINESSES DEPENDS ON THE CAIRNS FISHERY.

INTERNATIONAL AND AUSTRALIAN GAME FISHING CLIENTELE DELIVER A SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE LOCAL AREA. THE HIGH PARTICIPATORY COSTS OF THE SPORT ATTRACT A CLIENTELE WHO CAN AFFORD TO PATRONISE EXPENSIVE RESTAURANTS AND HIGH END ACCOMMODATION BENEFITING OTHER TOURIST ESTABLISHMENTS.

- **ENVIRONMENTAL CREDENTIALS OF THE INDUSTRY.**

THE AUSTRALIAN GAME FISHING INDUSTRY HAS BEEN THE CUSTODIAN OF ONE OF THE MOST PRISTINE AND WELL MANAGED RECREATIONAL FISHERIES FOR DECADES. AS AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED LEADER IN TAG AND RELEASE FISHERY MANAGEMENT THESE INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN IN PLACE LONG BEFORE THEY WERE "CHAMPIONED" BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT.

AUSTRALIAN SCIENTISTS LIKE DR. JULIAN PEPPERELL ARE RECOGNISED INTERNATIONALLY AS EXPERTS IN THIS FIELD. INDEED IT IS PEOPLE LIKE DR. PEPPERELL IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE GAME FISHING INDUSTRY WHO HAVE PROVIDED MUCH OF THE SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION THAT FORMS THE BACKBONE OF THE DATA AVAILABLE TODAY ON THIS FISHERY.

ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE CURRENT MARINE BIOREGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS.

- **CONSULTATION PROCESS.**

THE CONSULTATION PROCEDURE SURROUNDING THE MARINE BIOREGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS HAS BEEN A BONE OF CONTENTION SINCE IT COMMENCED. BOTH INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES CONTINUE TO EXPRESS THEIR CONCERNS AS TO THE MANNER IN WHICH THESE MEETINGS ARE CONDUCTED AND THE RELEVANCE AND ACCURACY OF THE DATA BEING PROVIDED.

SOON AFTER THE INITIAL BIOREGIONAL PLANNING MEETING COMMENCED IN CAIRNS OUR INDUSTRY DEMONSTRATED TO THE DEPARTMENT INACCURACIES IN SOME OF THE DATA PROVIDED. THE CONVENORS RESPONDED BY ACKNOWLEDGING THE POTENTIAL DISCREPANCY BUT POINTING OUT THAT THE TIME SCHEDULE IMPOSED ON THEM BY THE MINISTER (MINISTER GARRETT) PRECLUDED THEM FROM DELAYING THE PROCESS. EFFECTIVELY THE INDUSTRY WAS BEING ASKED TO CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN A CONSULTATION PROCESS EVEN THOUGH THE INFORMATION PROVIDED WAS ACKNOWLEDGED AS POTENTIALLY INACCURATE.

INDUSTRY AND THE PUBLIC WILL ONLY HAVE FAITH IN THE CONSULTATION PROCESS IF IT IS CARRIED OUT IN AN OPEN, UNBIASED AND TRANSPARENT MANNER. THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THE PROCESS WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMUNITY'S ACCEPTANCE AND ENTHUSIASTIC INVOLVEMENT. WITHOUT THAT SUPPORT THE PROCESS WILL FAIL TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THE COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY.

- **AUTHORITY VESTED SOLELY IN THE MINISTER.**

THE DECISIONS MADE ON THIS ISSUE HAVE SIGNIFICANT RAMIFICATIONS FOR INDUSTRY, AFFECTED COMMUNITIES AND FOR THE ENVIRONMENT. DECISIONS OF THIS IMPORTANCE DESERVE TO BE DEBATED AND SCRUTINISED BY PARLIAMENT IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE BEST OUTCOMES FOR ALL ARE ACHIEVED.

THE RE ZONING OF THE GREAT BARRIER REEF IN 2004 AND THE COST TO THE AUSTRALIAN TAXPAYER OF THE MISTAKES MADE DEMONSTRATES THE IMPACT ON REGIONAL INDUSTRIES AND COMMUNITIES BROUGHT ABOUT BY INADEQUATE CONSULTATION, COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY INPUT AND DEBATE.

IMPACT ON THE CAIRNS PROFESSIONAL GAME FISHING INDUSTRY:

- **IMPACT OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE CORAL SEA CONSERVATION ZONE.**

THE INDUSTRY CAN DEMONSTRATE THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THESE DECISIONS ON THE EXPERIENCE THAT HAS BEEN VISITED ON IT BY THE PROCLAMATION OF THE CORAL SEA CONSERVATION ZONE IN MAY 2009 BY THE THEN MINISTER, THE HON. PETER GARRETT.

THE PROCLAMATION WAS HERALDED AS A TRIUMPH BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AND THE MINISTER IN THE MEDIA. THE ATTENTION AND PROMOTION RESULTED IN A PUBLIC PERCEPTION THAT ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS HAD BEEN PLACED ON THE AREA. CANCELLATIONS AND CLIENT DIVERSIONS TO OTHER AREAS RESULTED, FINANCIALLY IMPACTING THE INDUSTRY.

THE PROCLAMATION INCLUDED THE REQUIREMENT FOR A NO COST PERMIT TO BE OBTAINED IN ORDER TO OPERATE WITHIN THE CONSERVATION ZONE. BESIDES ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS THE PERMIT ALSO REQUIRED THAT A NO COST PASSAGE BE PROVIDED TO GOVERNMENT EMPLOYED OBSERVERS ON REQUEST. CLIENTS SEE THIS AS A DETRIMENT TO THEIR ENJOYMENT OF THE EXPERIENCE WITH THEIR FAMILY AND FRIENDS ONCE AGAIN NEGATIVELY IMPACTING ON THE BUSINESSES. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT NONE OF OUR MEMBERS (CAIRNS PROFESSIONAL GAME FISHING ASSOCIATION) HAVE EVER BEEN REQUESTED TO PROVIDE PASSAGE, ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATING THE RAMIFICATIONS OF DECISIONS BEING MADE WITHOUT DUE CONSIDERATION TO THE INDUSTRY.

- **THE MARINE BIOREGIONAL PROCESS.**

THE CURRENT PROCESS IS ALREADY IMPACTING ON THE INDUSTRY AS PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS ARE THAT ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS ARE IMMINENT.

THE ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS CONTINUE TO NEGATIVELY IMPACT ON OUR INDUSTRY.

- **PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE BY DECISION MAKERS.**

THE COLLECTION OF MUCH OF THE REQUIRED DATA HAS BEEN GATHERED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF, OR BY, THE INDUSTRY. GOVERNMENT OBSERVERS HAVE NOT AVAILED THEMSELVES OF THE PERMIT CLAUSE IN THE CORAL SEA CONSERVATION ZONE PERMIT THAT PROVIDES THEM WITH NO COST OBSERVER STATUS ON THE CHARTER FLEET. PARTICIPATION IN THESE TRIPS WOULD HAVE PROVIDED PRACTICAL AND FIRSTHAND KNOWLEDGE OF THE INDUSTRY AND THE AREA.

REGARDLESS OF THE THEORETICAL EXPERTISE AVAILABLE THERE CAN BE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE FROM THE PEOPLE WHO ARE PHYSICALLY OUT THERE. THEIR EXPERTISE AND KNOWLEDGE WILL CONTRIBUTE TO A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME. THE DECISION MAKERS' TENDENCY TO BIAS CERTAIN SPECIFIC GROUPS WITH LIMITED ACTUAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE AREA AND ISSUES CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT ON A DECISION THAT WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PARTIES. CAREFUL CONSIDERATION MUST BE GIVEN TO THE IMPACTS ON REGIONAL COMMUNITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS.

PREFERRED OUTCOME:

- 1) THAT THE CONSULTATION PROCESS BE CARRIED OUT IN AN OPEN AND FORTHRIGHT MANNER.
- 2) THAT ALL DECISIONS BE BASED ON A PROVEN SCIENTIFIC REQUIREMENT.
- 3) THAT ANY SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE USED TO JUSTIFY A POSITION OR DECISION ON ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE MARINE BIOREGIONAL PLANNING PROCESS BE INDEPENDENTLY PEER REVIEWED.
- 4) THAT THE ISSUE IS SUBJECT TO PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY AND THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DECISION NOT LEFT SOLELY IN THE HANDS OF THE MINISTER.
- 5) THAT ALL SECTORS OF THE INDUSTRY BE FULLY CONSULTED PRIOR TO DECISIONS BEING TAKEN THAT WILL IMPACT ON THEM.
- 6) THAT ADEQUATE COMPENSATION ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE TO MITIGATE THE IMPACTS ON THOSE AFFECTED.
- 7) THAT THE CRITERIA FOR COMPENSATION BE DISCUSSED WITH ALL SECTORS OF THE INDUSTRY TO ENSURE FAIR AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT FOR **ALL** OF THOSE IMPACTED.