



Fishing for the Future

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Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
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The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bioregional Plans) Bill 2011 proposes an amendment to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 to provide that bioregional plans are disallowable instruments which are subject to the Legislative Instruments Act 2003.

This supports concerns by recreational anglers that the EPBC Act 1999 currently provides for no appeal rights and no parliamentary review. The opportunity for natural justice and procedural fairness is limited by the extent of the departmental consultation process. The past history of departmental consultation with both State and Federal departments has not resulted in successful outcomes.

Sunfish Qld would suggest that the elected representatives of the Australian Parliament should have the power of veto for declarations of the national marine reserve system, rather than this being largely left to the discretion of unelected officers of a government department.

Without this amendment the department and the Minister have unchallenged power without recourse. Open discussion and debate surrounding the soundness and validity and true peer review of any science based decisions is imperative.

Sunfish Qld would submit that the proposed amendment bill allows for a further level of protection by the Parliament that ensures well voiced and well financed special interest groups are less able to remove the rights of others without due process and scrutiny.

Stakeholder workshops and scientific reports have stated that recreational fishing has little or no impact on biodiversity and minimal or no threat to marine environments. Recreational fishing has been determined to have negligible or no impact on most habitats (low on tropical reefs and temperate corals and sponges). Recreational fishing has also been determined to have negligible or no impact on most species (medium on deep water demersals and low on large pelagic finfish).

Representing the interests of Recreational Fishing

However, we continue to receive reports of Ministerial meetings with stakeholders discussing the benefits of Marine Protected Areas as a Fisheries Management tool. It is unacceptable therefore, to Sunfish Qld that this legislation is not open to frank and open debate with all scientific processes, reports and findings available to scrutiny by parliament and the Australian community.

KEY ISSUES

1. That recreational anglers are not directly impacted by the declaration of Commonwealth Marine Park Areas.

As a result of State legislation Queensland recreational anglers have been subjected to significant management controls by way of size and bag limits after the East Coast Inshore Finfish Review and the Rocky Reef Finfish Review. They have also had severe access restrictions by way of zoning plans within Great Sandy Marine Park and Moreton Bay Marine Park. State owned islands and offshore Marine parks were also reviewed with more complementary closures, the same as was done in inshore State waters. Complicated Commonwealth zoning arrangements within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park have also had an adverse impact on the traditional use by recreational anglers over a very large and important recreational fishing area.

2. That recreational anglers are not indirectly impacted by the declaration of Commonwealth Marine Park Areas.

Significant access restrictions on either the commercial fishing industry and/or charter fishing industry will have a cumulative flow on effect to the recreational fishing industry. For their businesses to survive and for them to not see their assets lose total value they will be required to encroach and transfer further effort into areas that are generally currently only used by the recreational sector.

Local stock depletion may occur, there will be increased conflict on the water, more management of access and fish catches and the recreational fishing experience will be diminished forever.

Many allied industries in the marine environment such as bait and tackle, outboard and boat sales and repairs and chandlers as well as the tourism related business such as accommodation, food and beverages, fuel and fishing tourism dependent communities will all be severely impacted if closures occur that are not based on rigorous science that can be robustly investigated by parliament.

We appreciate the opportunity to make this submission and seek the consideration of the Committee on this important matter.

Regards

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Executive Officer

Sunfish Queensland Inc

Representing the interests of Recreational Fishing