

Senator McEwen, Chair  
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts  
by email to [eca.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:eca.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Senator McEwan,

Please accept this submission to the inquiry into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008.

I am married, and am the Father of three adult Sons, all of whom fish with me.

I dreamed about getting a boat all my life, and was finally able to achieve this in April last year. As a child I fished a lot, but when my Mother died (I was 10) my Father could no longer face fishing. Thus I did little of it until I got the boat at the age of 42, as every land based fishing experience I tried was unsuccessful and discouraging.

Getting on the water has always been a dream for me. My Great...great Grandfather was a Merchant Captain, and was Captain of the second ship of free settlers to Adelaide, in the early 1840's. He was captured and held prisoner of war by the French in 1805. I think it's in my blood.

I consider myself to be a Conservationist, but I cannot for the life of me see the Great Barrier Reef being significantly damaged by fishing. I cannot see it being damaged lastingly by Global Warming either. When I was at school we were regaled with how the Crown of Thorns Starfish was killing the reef. Well, that went away too.

#### **Definition of fishing**

I get the feeling that the Green Zones are being set up for the exclusive use of the Scientific Community. If I am in a Green Zone, I will have to switch off my sounder (I hope it's not going to get shallow – my duty of care to my passengers means I cannot go in there at all). No snorkelling, no Tourism (glass bottomed boats are out). Wait – no looking at the water – is that coming too??? This is tragic. The sounder bit is already Law – that has to gout with the bath water, and the other controls are just stupid. Bad Law, Bad Policy, bad Politics.

#### **Powers to Inspect**

No no no no no! This is something the Police are trained and mentored for years to do. Proper collection of evidence, reasonable suspicion, that sort of thing. A lot of the folks in this organisation (GBRMPA) are a little to the ideological side of things, and think it's ok to shoot people on suspicion. They cannot be given these powers. Particularly when it's predominantly recreational fishermen we are talking about, who are mostly concerned with preservation of the system anyway! Very unfair, in my opinion.

#### **Legal Defence**

Senator Stephens has pointed out that this act attempts to remove our basic legal right to a defence. Come off it, what Country are we in? If I am in a Green Zone I am supposed to just know the boundaries? How can I be expected to have the correct charts on the boat, consult them often, and not have to buy new ones every couple of trips? There are no maps for the GPS with them on either. Please remove the relevant clauses.

#### **Criminal Convictions**

To limit people from overseas travel, getting finance or insurance, or even a job, for the fact that they inadvertently fished in a park is mind boggling. It's a bad Law. It always was, and the implications, past and present, need to be rectified. To be against fixing this is the worst kind of "playing politics".

### **3 strikes and you are out**

It is intended in the Act to ban me for life if I get three strikes. This is totally out of balance. Consider this – I can get caught speeding several times and at most lose my license for a few months, and eventually get my points back. Even after a serious DUI I get back on my feet. Please remove this from the Act.

### **Precautionary Principle**

This clause is just bad policy. The independent umpire said the GBRMPA had to use transparent science to establish Green Zones. They have ignored the umpire. They have no decent Science at all, and we cannot be making far reaching decisions like this on the basis of such poor information.

All they did was ask us where we caught our fish. There is no evidence to prove we are over fishing or damaging the reef to the extent of lasting effect. They told us they wanted to know where we fished so those areas could be spared, and then they targeted those specific areas for closure. I smell a rat, and I have to wonder about their real agenda, what the hell can it be?

### **The goals**

The change of the Goal, from wise use, to Conservation is scary. It's being converted from being a resource that many Australians love to use wisely, to something they can hardly even go and see. The amount of fishing pressure the reef can sustain is enormous. The GBR is vastly underfished in comparison to other reefs in the world – I'm not arguing *carte blanche*, but I'd suggest bag and size limits, combined with good Policing, are a much better method of preservation than doing something Hitler might have been happy with.

Let's be clear on this, it's about a group of people who've managed to achieve a degree of political clout way beyond their size, who think we should all be vegetarian.

These changes are grossly un Australian. We must be allowed the opportunity to use and share the Reef wisely. To have it taken away is unacceptable. Please leave the goal as it is.

The cost of the last zoning plan is \$250 million, after they said it would be 1 or 2. Don't let them keep pulling the wool over your eyes. The EPA will start to push these draconian constraints on every park if they get away with this, and what will be the cost then, in dollars *and* in political capital?

The Bill is bad for the Country, it is very poor Law, and it is bad Policy. It is therefore *very* bad Politics. I DID NOT VOTE FOR THIS, or anything like it. Who DID vote for this???

Many thanks,

Tim Whittle