

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
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PROTEST SUBMISSION INTO GBRMPA'S AMENDMENT BILL FOR THE GREAT BARRIER REEF

The Secretary,

I wish to make a formal written submission to the inquiry into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008, with GBRMPA's proposals.

I am 62 years of age and I have been an avid fisherman since I was 4. Through my career I have been a commercial representative in the main followed by commercial fishing with my own vessel and working on prawn trawlers. I also spent a number of years merchandising seafood. I have lived at Forrest Beach outside of Ingham for the last 27 years. I no longer have any financial interest in the fishing industry what so ever and presently I am a support worker with the handicapped.

However the experience I gained whilst working on the Great Barrier Reef gave me an insight into knowing that when the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) introduced their Representative Areas Program (RAP) it was a SHAM!! Consequently I have been relentless in fighting against this legislation and making government aware. The RAP addresses no real threat to the environment. At the time it was introduced the government realized the world was in the grip of an environmental surge, not unlike a new religion. Although government might have believed the GBRMPA's environmental charade and their claim they were going to save the reef the most important thing politically was that it was good for votes.

There were many seasoned reef users who all in good faith, contributed with constructive input by putting in submissions, only to see them ignored. The submission process was a SHAM!! It was only conducted to make the public feel they contributed. The decision to go ahead with the RAP was decided irrespective. Consequently it was steamrolled through legislation. Australians, especially north Queenslanders hate to be CONNED. Knowing their countless letters of concern were being ignored, they looked to the Fishing Party for support and fight the unjust legislation on the political front.

The surge of support flushed out a number of scientists who approached the Fishing Party stand at a Townsville boat show and voiced their disapproval of what the GBRMPA were claiming. However they were not prepared to go public, in fear of loosing their jobs. Along came Dr Walter Starck PhD. A marine scientist with 50 years experience with coral reefs world wide, including 10 years doing research on the GBR with his own exploring vessel. With Dr Starcks wealth of knowledge he was able to see through the GBRMPA's environmental charade and being a freelancer, he was not frightened to voice his opinion. Dr Starck soon became a thorn in GBRMPA's side and their only defence was to ridicule and defame him. They would

make statements like—‘he is only one scientist and we have many scientists who will disagree with him.’ (When your job depends on it then I guess you would disagree).

Precautionary Principle

No one will forget the bare faced lies the GBRMPA conned us with. How they led us to believe during the second submission process, that if we showed them our most important fishing areas and safe anchorages they would give them a wide birth in their final draft plan. Then they betrayed us. They used this information we gave them, all in good faith, as a basis for their green no go zones. Let’s face it, how else could a body of academics with no knowledge of the fishing industry or fishing in general know where to put fishing no go zones without this information?

Bill Izard is a trawler operator in Cairns specialising in catching brood stock for aquaculture. He received the full brunt of the GBRMPA’s deceit. Bill is the last small trawler operating in the Cairns local area. At the conclusion of the GBRMPA’s first draft plan for the RAP. GBRMPA personal approached Bill and told him if he would show them the area he worked they would make sure he would retain 100% of the area. Bill sat down with the personal and drew the areas on a map and you guessed it!!, when the GBRMPA released their final plan, 92% of the area Bill worked was made green. You can speak to any fishermen that fish the Great Barrier Reef, commercial and amateur alike and you will get a similar story.

We are all aware that the RAP was legislated without one shred of scientific evidence, it was all based on the precautionary principal. Locking everything up and calling it sustainable is irresponsible. The precautionary principal is something these authorities revert back to when they are challenged and forced into a corner without an answer. No science is involved.

Dr Starck has not been alone with his criticism Professor Robert Kearney Bsc (Hons), PhD, DSc—Professor in fisheries management—Institute of Applied Ecology—University of Canberra Australia. (They deal with Ecological Solutions for a Healthy Environment.) Professor Kearney has released a 17 page damning paper condemning the falsehoods and poor science involved in establishing Australia’s Marine Protected Areas. (MPA’s) (<http://aerg.canberra.edu.au/php/showstaff.php?usercode=kearney>) Professor Kearney infers that the placing of the (MPA’s) lacks scientific credibility.

He advocates that some may be doing more harm than good, and said they may even be creating the very problem they are supposed to be preventing. He uses similar terminology in describing MPA’s in NSW, as Professor Starck used when he condemned the GBRMPA’s-- RAP on the GBR. Both of these senior scientists have been highly critical of the poor science used to support MPA’s. Dr Starck has said he has many colleagues who shared his views, but are unwilling to go public in fear of losing their funding even their jobs. Perhaps, now that such a high profile figure as Professor Kearney has spoken out, other scientists will begin to voice their dissent and stem the flow of taxpayers money being wasted on unwarranted MPA’s.

Australia’s MPA’s now comprise of 1/3 of the global total and with the planned additions this is set to soon become close to half of the world’s MPA’s.—Not a single marine species has been lost in Australia and no reduction in marine biodiversity has ever been found or even suspected. MPA mania has become detached from both

good science and competent resource management. If anyone is to speak out in this day and age against environmental matters, they receive personal denigration and social disapproval. **A person of Professor Kearney's statue would not come out and say these things without being convinced they are valid and important. What he has to say deserves careful consideration.** This precautionary principle should be deleted.

Definition of Fishing

Overfishing was the main claim by the GBRMPA for introducing the RAP on the GBR. De-Anne Kelly Federal member for Dawson called for an independent inquiry into GBRMPA's RAP and cited fishing was the only thing the RAP was addressing. Her request was ignored. This claim is totally absurd and only scaremongering. The Florida Keys with less than 1% of the reef area of the GBR, has for many years sustainably supported a larger catch than the entire GBR. The commercial sector has been restricted to a mere 3161 tons of product per year averaged over the 347,000 km square of reef and lagoon area which comes to just under 9Kg/kmsq/year. The average harvest over a broad range of reef areas elsewhere in the Pacific is 7700Kg/kmsq/year and even the conservation NGO World Resource Institute cites 4000Kg/kmsq/year as being a sustainable level for coral reef fisheries.

Now the GBRMPA are not only refusing to acknowledge the facts on overfishing which make their claims ridiculous, they propose to ban any activity in a green zone that remotely is associated with fishing, like operating an echo sounder, a safety navigation must when negotiating the reef and general activities such as viewing in glass bottom boats, snorkelling, viewing sea animals like whales etc and underwater observatories. Overfishing is unfounded and stopping the public from carrying out every day leisure activities is not justified and making these illegal is unwarranted and wrong.

3 strikes and you are OUT

The most frightening proposal is if a person is breached three times in ten years, this attracts a lifetime ban. This Authority is obsessed and completely out of control. This is absurd and must be omitted from the act.

Powers to inspect

From my interpretation this means the authority is given the powers to search, even frisk fishers. It would be outrageous and irresponsible to give them further powers to impose such laws on Australian citizens for frivolous instances. This also must be omitted from the act.

Legal Defence

The GBRMPA are proposing to reword the act to cover up loop holes where they have lost cases in the past and take away basic legal rights of ones defence. This is not right and must not be allowed.

The Goals

They have disregarded sharing the zoning with wide use activities other than fishing just the same as they have evicted the fishing industry (which has been decimated as a result), a pearl industry, giant clam research for aquaculture to name a few.

Queensland, more so the Australian economy can ill afford to loose such industries. I ask you to omit these clauses.

Criminal Convictions

The GBRMPA (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority) and AFMA-(Australian Fish Management Authority) believe they are a law unto themselves. Criminal convictions for fishing in a green zone is absurd; yet over 300 Australians have received such convictions which restricts them from obtaining a passport, a bank loan and many areas of employment. Most never caught anything. Their only “crime” was to cross an imaginary unmarked boundary in the sea while fishing.

Commonsense has prevailed and the legislation has since been changed and now only attracts an on the spot fine. It is no longer a criminal conviction for this offence that is equivalent to a parking fine. However 300 plus Australians still have these criminal convictions and the Labor Party have gone against their pre-election promise to waver them. Investigation into the people who made these laws initially is a must. There is simply no comparison or balance in relation with the penalty for such a minor crime that warrants a criminal conviction. This has to be addressed as it is not acceptable.

This country is vastly over governed and overregulated. Fifteen years ago, a caravan park in Cairns required only six permits to operate. Today it must have over 100. Finally a few politicians have spoken out in our support. Senator Ron Boswell and MP Warren Entsch have delivered very factual scathing speech's in parliament condemning the GBRMPA. I must confess I never thought such an attack would ever happen. It is a shame these politicians didn't come forward sooner. However they were lied to and mislead also. Senator Boswell recalls GBRMPA personnel sitting in his office and they assured him that a minimum of reef users would be disadvantaged with the RAP. Warren Entsch did approach the then federal environmental minister Senator Ian Kemp expressing his concern about how the livelihoods of local fishermen would be affected by the RAP. Kemp told Entsch you are making a fuss about nothing, he said the GBRMPA have allocated \$ 2.4 million to compensate them. Compensation payments to date are well over \$200 million and there is every real chance they will exceed \$ 300 million.

The GBRMPA are constantly sending flawed surveys, scaremongering stories to the government and media to justifying their existence. Presently just running this organization is to the tune of approximately \$40 million dollars a year. Government should be looking at ways to clip the Authorities wings instead of allowing them to shore up their ivory tower. What GBRMPA is proposing is **WRONG—WRONG—WRONG and must not be allowed.**

Yours faithfully

Glenn Winsen