

08-09-2008

Senator McEwen, Chair
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Email: eca.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator McEwen,

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

I am a business owner in a non related industry and a private recreational fisherman. I am approaching retirement age and have dreamed of fishing the Great Barrier Reef in my retirement. I want to comment on some basic issues at stake.

Firstly, I believe most recreational fisherpeople would be like myself, conscientious of the limited resource fish represent. I strictly adhere to size and bag limits for the various species we regularly catch off the Sunshine Coast and try and release all fish not being kept, in as good condition as possible. I believe these measures are sufficient for any recreational fishing community to preserve the fish stocks of any species. If a species seems to be under population stress the bag and size limits should remain flexible to adjust accordingly and this measure alone preserves those fish stocks in respect of the recreational fishing community. It seems that some other law is being applied to this scenario....the law of the minimum. A minority group brays loud enough for change and you believe it to be the voice of the majority. If this same principle was applied to other laws in our society we would have no private vehicle usage because the minority of the people that drink and drive or speed or break road rules in other ways that endanger the public would have resulted in all drivers being banned from using the roads. It would seem a ridiculous scenario in that case but this is exactly how these laws affecting fishing are being applied. You may as well not bother sending rangers out to sea to catch offenders because the way the law looks at present you will be able to nab every fisherman at the boat ramp on the basis of them "attempting to search for or take fish", especially when there is no burden of proof for the prosecutor. What sort of dictatorial government would so entrap their own citizens? Has the green vote become so important that you will pander to their every demand? Whatever happened to the common sense for which Australians are renown? Where is there common sense in being able to fine and give a criminal record to someone out fishing in an ocean with no signs and no software to assist in determining exact boundaries of all the green areas to ensure that they don't accidentally drive over or through one. Let alone the danger it creates by causing longer routes around these areas rather than face the possibility of being fined for passing through them. How is it "green" to impose laws that can add great distances to a typical fishing trip with all the extra fuel use that entails?

If you seriously want to preserve fish stocks then look further into ways of commercial fish netting becoming more selective as I have seen the hundreds

of tonnes of waste by-product (any species other than the one being targeted) being dumped at sea and it is truly frightening to think how much collateral damage is being done. Fishing is the Australian way of life and should not become a criminal pastime as your legislation will surely make it. In private industry if we make a mistake we have to own up to it and correct it....surely this is a feat the government can achieve and you have the opportunity now to do so. No one should have a criminal offence against their name for such an offence that is so poorly regulated. It should have been made compulsory for all GPS software to show Green Zones and the legislation should not have come into effect until that had been achieved. You are part of a major injustice if you allow this to continue and any faith I had in justice and common sense in politics will be destroyed.

Yours respectfully
Bryan Sait.