

Inquiry into Australia's National Parks, Conservation Reserves and Marine Protected Areas

The Association of Australian Ports and Marine Authorities (AAPMA) is the peak body representing the interests of Australia's government and privately owned ports and several state marine regulatory agencies.

Over 99% of Australia's import and export trade by volume moves through Australia's ports. The ports are a focal part of the overall international, national and regional transport and logistic chains as the interface between land and sea transport.

Several of Australia's ports have marine protected areas within or abutting the declared port area. It is our understanding that when marine protected areas are declared there is an expressed intent that they will be managed for a variety of activities including the existing uses. However, our experience is that over time, there is a perception within the community, and more broadly, that a marine protected area is only for conservation and that existing industry activities (which have been taking place since well before the declaration of the marine protected area) such as shipping and its associated port impacts, are not necessarily compatible with the status of a marine protected area.

It must be recognised that ports are major economic generators at national, state and regional levels and that of necessity they, and the shipping interests using the port, are dynamic operations. Vessel sizes are increasing which necessitates dredging of channels and berths and as trade expands, new port areas within existing ports need to be developed. The report of the Prime Minister's Task Force on Exports and Infrastructure (May 2005) acknowledged that this is an important consideration for Australia.

We therefore consider it to be essential for Australia's ongoing economic development that the multi-use management of marine protected areas be maintained and that there is a recognition that designated port areas as well as channels and shipping areas leading to ports will continue to be dynamic in terms of ongoing development and growth.

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