

# Submission

to the

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

Andrew Chapman 10/3/06



One of the many pressings of specimens collected from the Bunurong waters for identification

### Inquiry Terms of Reference

The Senate has referred the following matter to the Committee for inquiry and report by 30 November 2006:

The funding and resources available to meet the objectives of Australia's national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas, with particular reference to:

- a. the values and objectives of Australia's national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas;
- b. whether governments are providing sufficient resources to meet those objectives and their management requirements;
- c. any threats to the objectives and management of our national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas;
- d. the responsibilities of governments with regard to the creation and management of national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas, with particular reference to long-term plans; and
- e. the record of governments with regard to the creation and management of national parks, other conservation reserves and marine protected areas.

## Response to the Inquiry Terms of Reference

### 1. INTRODUCTION

My interest is in natural history and although I have concerns about a number of conservation reserves my comments here relate to Marine Protected Areas.

#### Relevant Experience

##### As an Amateur Naturalist

I've held membership with:

- Bird Observers Club of Australia
- Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union
- Conservation Council of Victoria
- South Gippsland Conservation Society
- SGCS Marine Study Group
- SGCS' Wader and Raptor Study Groups, both affiliated with RAOU
- Natural Environment Incorporated and
- The Minister for Conservation Forest and Lands, Conservation Advisory Committee.

And

- Australian Plant Society – Life Member
- National Geographic Society – Life Member

##### Professional Experience

- Shire of Korumburra - Project Engineer
- Shire of Woorayl – Construction Engineer, Senior Design Engineer
- Hardcastle & Richards Pty Ltd – Senior Executive Engineer
- Dames and Moore (Australia) Pty Ltd – Supervising Engineer
- URS Australia Pty Ltd - Principal
- Andrew Chapman Consulting Engineer

I have provided professional engineering services for infrastructure and land use planning projects throughout South Gippsland, Victoria, Australia and South East Asia and chaired or been a member of the Victorian Governments Planning Panels for 11 years.

In 1977, a Marine Protected Area (MPA) was proposed near Inverloch, the place where I live, and being a naturalist I became interested in the concept of establishing areas of the marine environment worthy of protection. I sought information about the emerging marine protected areas around the world and joined with others to assist with the creation of the Bunurong Marine Park. In Victoria the first MPAs proclaimed were the Harold Holt Marine Reserves followed by the South Gippsland Marine and Coastal Parks and Bunurong Marine Park, which is the one near Inverloch.

It is beyond my capacity to articulate all of the details related to the matters I intend to bring forward, however some brief background on the process will be provided to give an indication of how an end result was achieved.

## **2. PROCESS FOR CREATING MARINE PROTECTED AREAS**

The Harold Holt Marine Reserves, South Gippsland Marine and Coastal Parks (around Wilsons Promontory) and Bunurong Marine Park were developed by the Victorian Fisheries and Wildlife Division from the 1970s to mid 80s, most of the staff undertaking this work were involved in the management of commercial fisheries. The important aspects of these reserves were that they were developed in close consultation with the diving community and fishing interests. Much of the supporting information for the Harold Holt Marine Reserves was based on diver experience and local knowledge, however Wilsons Promontory and the Bunurong were the subject of a specific marine field survey undertaken by the National Museum of Victoria working in cooperation with the Fisheries and Wildlife Division.

Following the establishment of these MPAs the Land Conservation Council (LCC) undertook to evaluate all of the Victorian coastal waters with a view to establishing MPAs around the entire Victorian coast. The LCC's previous work, which was quite outstanding, dealt with public land in one region at a time which allowed for focused in-depth investigations and public participation that resulted in carefully constructed and well founded recommendations.

The LCC proceeded to undertake its marine investigations and produce proposed recommendations, published in April 1995, however a short time later the LCC was itself replaced by the Environment Conservation Council (ECC). The ECC not only replaced the LCC but its methodology and eventual recommendations which deviated sharply from those of the LCC. Within the ECC there was a rigidly held view that different substrata were the main factor for identifying different marine habitats and ecosystems and that surveys were not essential. Although the ECC was shown examples where great diversity occurred within a particular substratum and that identifying important biological and ecological sites was more important, they rejected that view.

## **3. VICTORIA'S MARINE PROTECTED AREAS**

The Marine National Parks around the Victorian coast, proclaimed in 2002, are a product of a particular methodology employed by the ECC. My experience with the way ECC created the Bunurong Marine National Park and the consequences led me to make a brief review of other Marine National Parks in Victoria.

The LCC collected information from around the Victorian coast, mainly intertidal, and produced an interim report '*Land Conservation Council Marine and Coastal Special Investigation Sites with Important Biological and Ecological Values 3/3/94*'. This work led to the LCC publishing the report '*Marine and Coastal Special Investigation Proposed Recommendations April 1995*' which outlined proposed MPAs for the Victorian Coast. The LCC recommended Marine Parks with three different zones which were Sanctuary, Conservation and General Protection Zones. Reviewing the LCC's proposed recommendations reveals that there was an underlying objective approach, albeit with limited field survey data. These documents were issued for public comment, which the public did.

The new replacement body, the ECC, created a new convention, used only in Victoria, the standardised Marine National Park, and nominated selected locations along the Victorian coast where these were to be placed. The new Marine National Parks, as can be seen in the following section, have simplistic geometric boundaries that bear little or no resemblance to physical features and/or water movements that are important when attempting to isolate site with important biological or ecological values. They appear to be borne more of ideology and expediency rather than science.

## Victoria's Early Marine Protected Areas

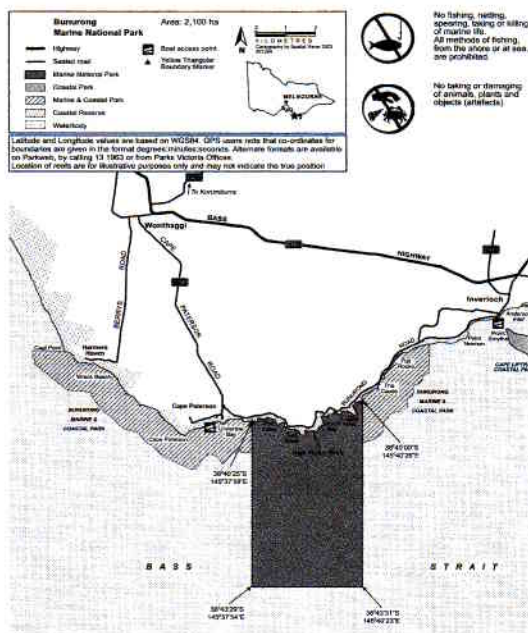
- Bunurong

An MPA along the Bunurong coast was conceived in 1977 and after considerable planning a proposal exhibited in 1987 gained widespread public support. A Regulatory Impact Statement in 1990 was followed by the proclamation of the Bunurong Marine Park in 1991. A draft management plan for the park was prepared and issued for public comment in 1992 but the responsible department was unable to finalise or conclude the work. The Bunurong Marine National Park was proclaimed in 2002, along with all of the others in Victoria, and a new draft management plan for Bunurong was issued in 2005.

The submission to the Victorian Government on the management plan, '*Bunurong Marine National Park Bunurong Marine Park, Bunurong Coastal Reserve and Kilcunda-Harmers Haven Coastal Reserve Draft Management Plan*' submission of Andrew and Marion Chapman 9 December 05 with Supplementary Information', clearly describes where the protection of important biological and ecological values has failed. A copy of that submission is at Attachment B.

The relatively meaningless extension of the Bunurong Marine Park Sanctuary Zone 5.0 kilometres seaward to form a Marine National Park and the downgrading of the rest of the Marine Park is not supported by any of the previous investigations and planning. A copy of the section on Bunurong from the '*Land Conservation Council Marine and Coastal Special Investigation Sites with Important Biological and Ecological Values 3/3/94*' notes areas with important values within the Bunurong Marine Park but outside the Bunurong Marine National Park. The important areas along the Bunurong are intertidal and inshore subtidal. A copy of this LCC report is at Attachment A.

The Bunurong Marine Park was formed as a result of widespread community action to have that section of coast protected, however the Bunurong Marine National Park, like others along the Victorian coast, is by comparison not understood, appreciated or widely supported by the community.

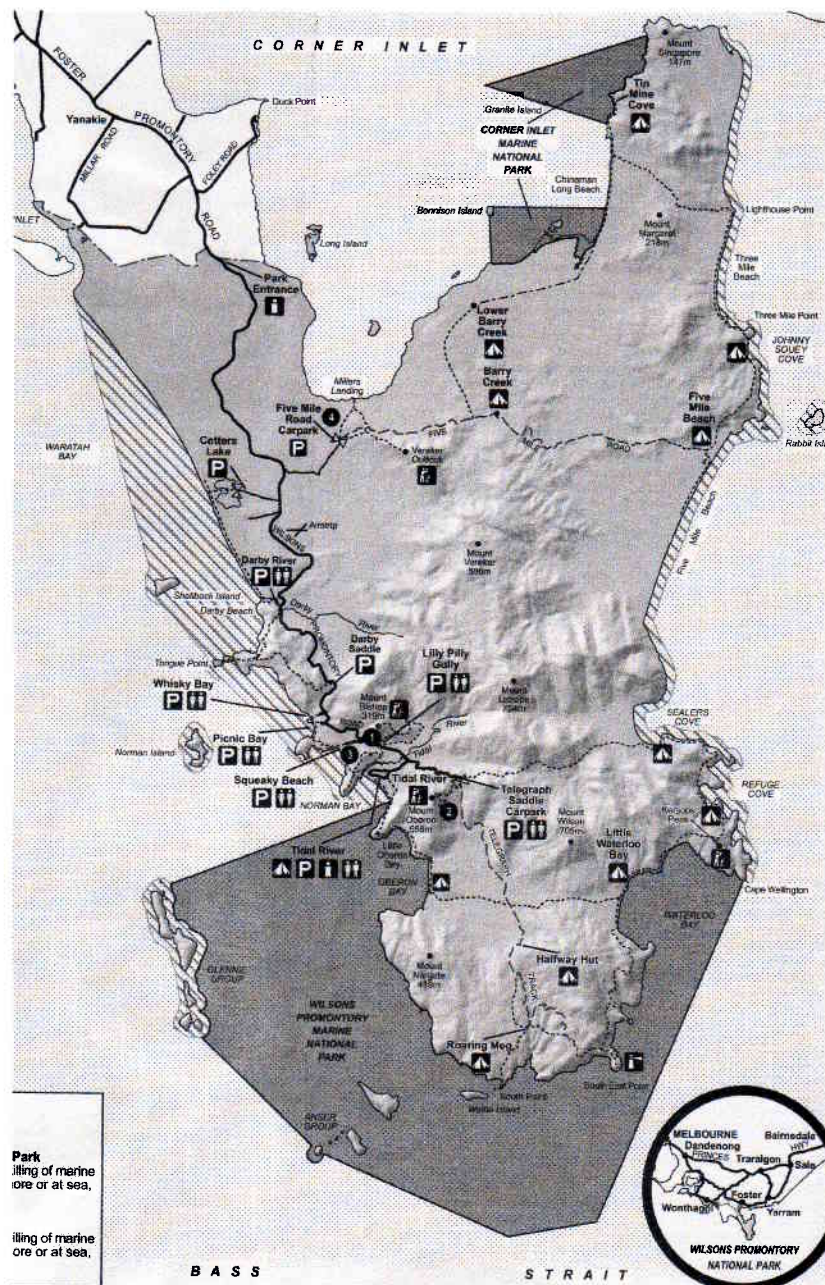


The map shows the imposed Marine National Park. It extends along lines from arbitrary points on the coast, adopted for the Sanctuary Zone, due south that are linked by an east west line.

The locations within the Bunurong Marine Park identified as areas of important biological and ecological values need to be properly protected and arbitrary lines do not achieve this.

- Wilson's Promontory

The Marine National Parks do not relate to adjoining land forms or land management units. An example is at Wilson's Promontory National Park where the Marine National Park does not abut all of the shoreline of the National Park nor does it encompass the Glennie Group. There was an opportunity to improve the Wilson's Promontory Marine Park but instead a Marine National Park was created and the result is just another zone and one that is inappropriately named. The objective of an MPA to protect important biological and ecological values has been lost.



At the Glennie's the Marine Park, which has a lower level than that of the Marine National Park, surrounds the Islands.

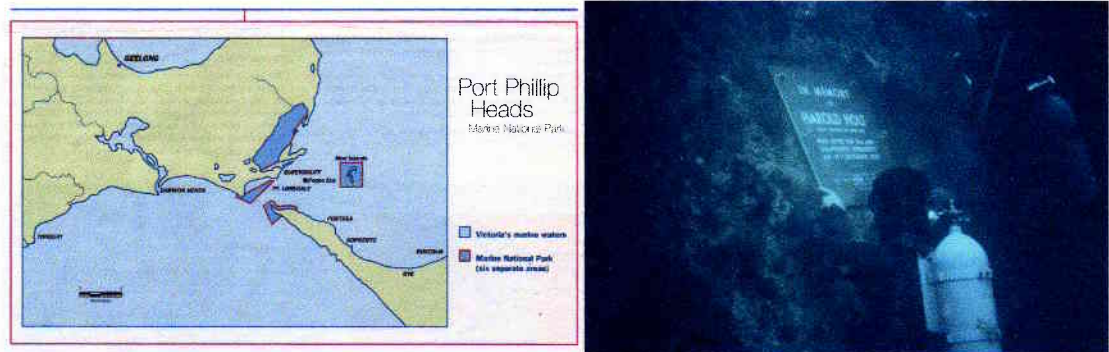
The MPAs around Wilson's Promontory need to be reviewed and a plan redrawn that ensures protection of the important biological and ecological values. The abutting land and land management should also be taken into account.

- Port Phillip Heads

The Harold Holt Marine Reserves were the first MPAs in Victoria proclaimed in 1979 after extensive community consultation by the Fisheries and Wildlife Division with divers and other interested groups.

The Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park, replacing the former Harold Holt Marine Reserves, again sets new geometric boundaries in place. It does not extend around the adjoining public land at Point Nepean and does not include Cheviot Beach.

The LCC recommended the Harold Holt Marine Park which included a Sanctuary zone along the southern coastline.



It is inappropriate that the State Government has dropped the use of Harold Holt's name from the MPA.

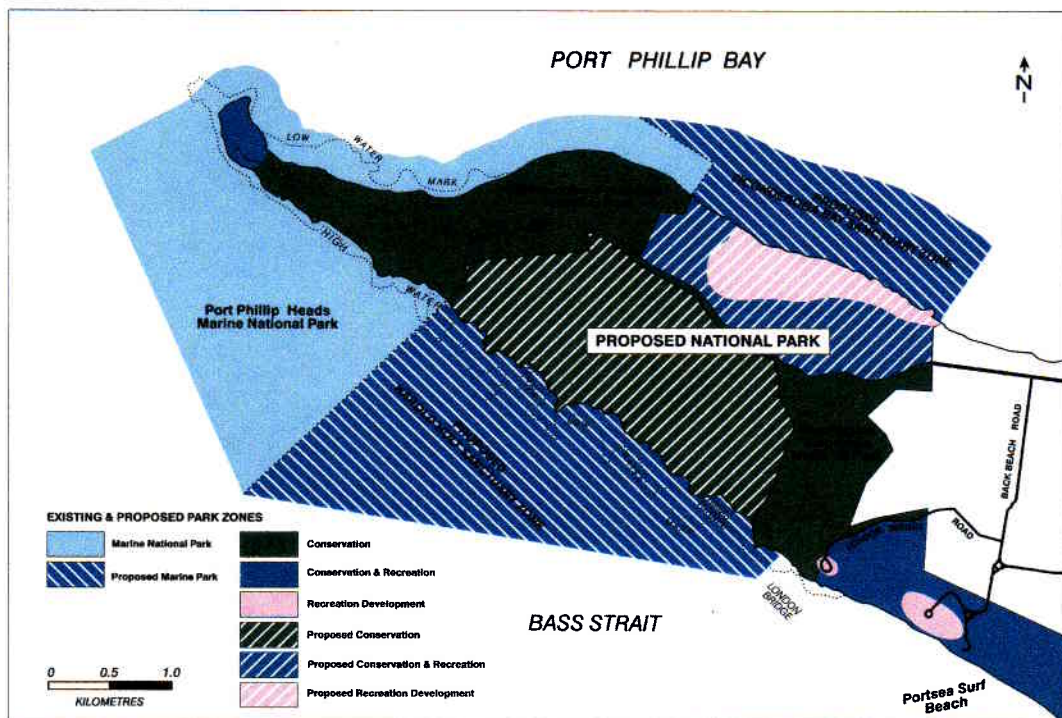


Figure 4 - Existing and Proposed Park Zones

A proposed extension of the Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park drawn up for the Plan for Point Nepean in 2003 by the community. These extensions were endorsed by all of the leading wildlife and conservation groups in Victoria and Australia.

In 1995 the LCC proposed an MPA, with Sanctuary Zone, along the southern coastline which should have been included. Extension of the MPA along the northern shoreline would also include dolphin breeding areas and marine archaeological sites. This is an example of the corrections required to one MPA.

## Recent MPAs around the Victorian Coast

I know the Bunurong marine environment well, have dived at Wilsons Promontory and managed the team that prepared the conservation plan for Point Nepean. Although I have limited knowledge of marine environments at other locations it appears the EC applied the same methodology used at Bunurong to those locations.

### Western Port Bay

At Phillip Island the Summerland peninsula has not been given an MPA and yet it is an important area for marine life and one of Australia's major marine natural history tourist attractions.



Marine National Parks in Western Port Bay

The LCC proposed a Marine Park around the Nobbies however it was relatively small in size and did not include Seal Rocks.

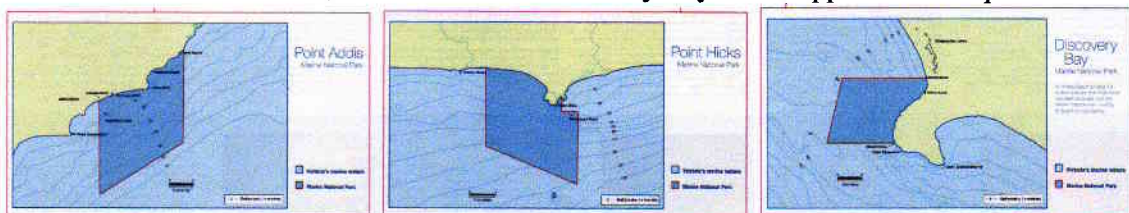
In view of the marine life around the Summerland Peninsula, particularly penguins and seals, and the fact that the protection of this marine life is of economic significance to Australia a MPA should be established at that location. The research staff at Phillip Island Nature Park would be well placed to undertake surveys and plan the MPA.

### Other MPAs

- Marine National Parks with geometric square like boundaries have been established along the Victorian coast at Ninety Mile Beach and Cape Howe.



- And Point Addis, Point Hicks and Discovery Bay which approximate trapezoids.



- The Twelve Apostles may be an important scenic area but it is difficult to see what special marine qualities it has in preference to the Summerland Peninsula of Phillip Island.



It does not take much scrutiny to see that the process adopted to establish the Bunurong Marine National Park was probably employed for other locations and as a result the Marine National Parks established around the Victorian coastline are not the best examples of how to identify, establish and protect important marine environments in MPAs.

#### 4. SUMMARY

It is important that funding and resources be applied to meet the objectives of Australia's marine protected areas, however in Victoria the following occurs.

- The values and objectives for the MPAs do not relate to important biological and ecological values.
- Funding for management of MPAs is not directed to protecting sites with important biological and ecological values.
- The major threats to the MPAs arise because there is insufficient field research to clearly identify important biological and ecological values which should determine the objectives for protection.
- The widespread adoption of Marine National Parks appears to have been established for short term political gain. This was at the expense of areas identified as warranting protection in the long term.

The methodology employed by the Fisheries and Wildlife Division during the 1970s and 80s was effective, successful and supported by the public. This process was replaced by the Land Conservation Council which embarked on an ambitious program to investigate, assess and recommend MPAs for the whole of the Victorian coast as a single exercise. Their land use planning skills were a valuable asset, however the required level of subtidal field information was lacking and the scale was unrealistic. The Environment Conservation Council's moved further away from recognised site values and confirming marine research to produce the 'desk top' Marine National Parks we have today. Since the first MPAs there has been a decreasing level of marine expertise and skill applied to the task resulting in some very poor outcomes.



## 5. CONCLUSION

The Inquiry should not use the Victorian MPA's, particularly the Marine National Parks, as examples of a good marine conservation model. It should take the opportunity to delve into the science and methodology behind them and make sure it is not repeated elsewhere.

The serious deficiencies in the Victorian Marine National Parks could be rectified if a new planning exercise were undertaken that dealt with sections of the Victorian coast one at a time. The existing MPAs would provide a starting point however site selection should be based on scientific investigations to identify locations with important biological and ecological values, their extent, water movements and abutting land units including their management. Once this has been done boundaries of selected areas should be determined through meaningful and extensive public consultation.

The success of the Harold Holt Marine Reserves and Bunurong Marine Park resulted from genuine and meaningful public consultation.



Andrew Chapman

## Attachment A

Land Conservation Council Marine and Coastal Special Investigation, Sites with Important Biological and Ecological Values 3/3/94. Pages 33-37 Bunurong

## Attachment B

'Bunurong Marine National Park Bunurong Marine Park, Bunurong Coastal Reserve and Kilcunda-Harmers Haven Coastal Reserve Draft Management Plan' submission of Andrew and Marion Chapman 9 December 05 with Supplementary Information