



## ASIC POLICY STATEMENT

### IMPLEMENTATION OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

#### INTRODUCTION

The commercial fishing industry is a key stakeholder in the development of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). ASIC represents the commercial fishing, aquaculture and aspects of the post harvest sectors of the Australian Seafood Industry on national issues.

The IUCN defines an MPA as *"Any area of inter-tidal or sub-tidal terrain, together with its overlying water and associated flora, fauna, historical and cultural features, which has been reserved by law or other effective means to protect part or all of the enclosed environment"* (IUCN Resolution GA 17:38).

MPAs have emerged as the key plank in a number of government initiatives over recent years, including, Oceans Policy, Coast and Clean Seas Policy, National Strategy for Marine Protected Areas, National Strategy for Maintenance of Biodiversity and the National Action Plan for Implementing the Biosphere Reserve Program.

The purpose of this policy is to promote a rational and justified approach to the implementation of MPAs.

The industry believes that adopting the approach to implementing MPAs outlined in this policy is required to ensure:

- the objectives of MPAs are achieved;
- unnecessary uncertainty, job loss and other social impacts in the seafood industry are avoided;
- the achievement of common environmental goals;
- governments, industry and environmental groups achieve win/win outcomes in the complex process of implementing MPAs in Australia; and,
- a reduction in the level of conflict that has accompanied the implementation of MPAs in Australia in the past.

#### AUSTRALIAN SEAFOOD INDUSTRY COUNCIL

ACN 008 664 999

PO Box 533, Curtin ACT 2605

email: [asic@asic.org.au](mailto:asic@asic.org.au)

Telephone (02) 6281 0383 Facsimile (02) 6281 0438

## SECTION 1. MULTIPLE USE REGIONAL PLANNING MANAGEMENT

### ***Recommendation 1:***

**The fishing industry planning and management mechanisms for the marine environment must be regional scale, catchment based and multiple-use.**

Australia's \$3 billion fishing industry relies on maintaining access to a healthy and productive marine environment. Planning mechanisms for the marine environment should be catchment based to effectively address land use impacts.

It is also critical that the concept of multiple-use be embedded throughout all relevant planning exercises. This concept need not exclude 'no take zones', but they should allow for uncertainties and new knowledge to be addressed within a planning framework.

The fishing industry has a well established track record on supporting the protection of fish habitats such as wetlands. Such areas need more than representative areas set aside and the fishing industry is an important and supportive constituency for such action.

## SECTION 2. ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING MPAS

### ***Recommendation 2:***

**An assessment of the effectiveness of existing MPAs in Australia should be undertaken urgently and the outcomes of this project be used to revise (if necessary) the National strategy for MPAs and other relevant strategies.**

While significant resources have been dedicated to implementing MPAs, considerably less appear to have been directed towards assessing their effectiveness.

The fishing industry remains uncertain about the net benefits or otherwise of MPAs. A full and rigorous assessment of the effectiveness of MPAs in achieving their objectives is essential.

A logical first step before further progressing further MPAs would be to review the effectiveness of existing MPAs. In the absence of this assessment it is likely that the fishing industry will remain concerned and sceptical about MPAs and continue to strongly oppose their implementation.

### SECTION 3. OBJECTIVES OF MPAs

***Recommendation 3:***

**Defining clear agreed objectives agreeable must be the first step in developing MPAs. These objectives must be used as a key determinant in considering selection, evaluation and implementation of suitable areas for MPAs.**

The objectives of MPAs must be clearly and unequivocally defined before their declaration. This step has been frequently omitted or quickly passed over (Potter, 1994). McNeill (1994) identifies that a lack of clarity in the objectives of declared MPAs in Australia has hampered any assessment of their success.

The fishing industry has seen several examples where stated objectives have been unclear, or worse, frequently changing. Several of the objectives for protected areas in the Cape York Marine Park were insufficiently detailed.

Correspondence and discussions with agencies involved in establishing protected areas in the Cape York and Moreton Bay Marine Parks revealed that the agencies involved were unclear themselves as to the objectives of these protected areas.

The objectives continued to evolve *after* areas had been identified as no fishing areas. Such actions create cynicism rather than instil confidence in the planning and implementation process for MPAs.

### SECTION 4. ECONOMIC & SOCIAL IMPACTS

***Recommendation 4:***

**Assessment of the potential economic and social impacts (including flow on effects) of modifying the fishing industry's access to fisheries resources must be undertaken and considered during the planning process of MPAs.**

ESD requires consideration of economic and social, as well as ecological factors.

However, consideration and implementation of MPAs to date have been done with scant analysis, or even recognition, of the social or economic impacts of the establishment of MPAs. MPA agencies seem to be failing to learn the lessons of the forestry debate which resulted in a level of conflict unprecedented in this country before serious action was commenced to integrate data on the social and economic impact of reserve systems into the decision making process.

It is important to note that a key determinant in resolving the conflict generated by the implementation of Dugong Protected Areas (DPAs) in the Great Barrier Reef region, was the provision of rigorous independent data on the impact the proposed DPAs would have on seafood production and jobs, particularly in regional areas. That data enabled an agreed outcome whereby a high level of protection was afforded to dugong with minimal impact on jobs and fishing families.

## **SECTION 5: ASSESSMENT AND METHODOLOGY CRITERIA**

### ***Recommendation 5:***

**Rigorous performance assessment methodology and criteria must be developed for all MPAs (before implementation for new MPAs) and resources to ensure these assessments are adequately undertaken must be allocated as a matter of urgency.**

Studies of the impact of MPAs on biomass or biodiversity have often had to rely on comparing fished and unfished areas, thus leaving natural spatial variability as a confounding factor (eg. Ferreira and Russ, 1995). This is not a result of poor research by scientists, but rather a reflection of poor planning of MPAs and a lack of commitment and timely provision of research support by agencies. The success or otherwise of many protected areas has not been assessed.

The fishing industry believes that experimental designs such as "BACI" or "Beyond BACI" (Underwood, 1992) or other appropriate and rigorous experimental designs must be used to assess the effectiveness of MPAs. Such experimental designs typically need provision of resources for research before implementation of the MPA.

## **SECTION 6. MPAs MUST MEET AGREED OBJECTIVES**

### ***Recommendation 6:***

**The fishing industry believes that MPAs which are assessed as not meeting their objectives must be removed or modified to enable fishing activities which do not impede the MPA meeting its objectives.**

Regulations impacting on the fishing industry, and in particular closures have typically been a "one way gate". In the past once an area is closed to fishing, political pressure, regardless of the effectiveness of the closure has prevented its reopening.

This was highlighted by the opposition to the opening of several "green" reefs in the Great Barrier Reef as part of the Reef CRC's Effects of Line Fishing Project (Mapstone and Davies, 1997).

Commitment to the removal of the "one way gate" philosophy is essential to ensure that a network of MPAs meet their objectives in the long term, while maintaining at least some level of access to resources by the fishing industry.

## SECTION 7: CONSULTATION WITH FISHING INDUSTRY & FISHERIES AGENCIES

### ***Recommendation 7:***

**The fishing industry and fisheries agencies must be fully integrated into the decision making process regarding assessment, selection and implementation of MPAs.**

**Any MPA which may impact on fisheries must be considered through the relevant management process and enacted under fisheries legislation.**

**The planning approach must ensure consultation with stakeholders prior to an area being defined and then consulted on the proposed zoning plan.**

**The fishing industry believes a legislative basis for the consultation and ongoing management processes is required.**

Fisheries agencies through the management process are best placed to determine MPAs from the aspects of fisheries ecology and biodiversity, determine the fisheries undertaken in a specific area, the socio-economic impact of its cessation and the potential of the fishery to impact on the objectives of the MPA.

Conflict with the establishment of protected areas in Moreton Bay could have been reduced or eliminated if the State Department of Environment had consulted with relevant fisheries agencies.

The fisheries management process is a comprehensive, collaborative and inclusive process. It provides the broad stakeholder representation necessary to ensure all issues are discussed from all perspective's and that final decisions have the appropriate community ownership necessary for their long term adoption and success.

There is a general paucity of information about the marine environment and fishers are an important source of information useful for planning purposes.

Accessing such information prior to formal zoning proposals are shaped can help identify valuable areas (both ecologically and economically) and prevent conflict.

Both consultation and the existence and composition of management committees need to be both guaranteed in law and need to involve commercial fishers. Such involvement has been emphasised on many occasions by experts in the field of marine park planning (Kelleher & Kenchington 1991).

## SECTION 8. CRITERIA FOR CLOSED AREAS

### **Recommendation 8:**

**The industry believes that decisions to close areas should be taken for ecological reasons and not for stock reallocation reasons.**

The industry notes the well documented size of recreational catches of fish. In many inshore areas the closure of commercial fishing without an associated closure of recreational fishing merely reallocates fish resources, not protect them. Closure decisions should be taken on ecological grounds and take into account all environmental impacts in the area of interest.

## SECTION 9. STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

### **Recommendation 9:**

**Structural adjustment assistance must be offered to the fishing industry for loss of access because of the establishment of MPA.**

Structural adjustment assistance is necessary to ensure that effort is not transferred out of a newly declared marine protected area to another area. Structural adjustment must include purchase of sufficient licences to offset any fishing effort displaced by the MPA, compensate fishers for loss of income caused by the establishment of the MPA, purchase any seafood industry businesses which become non-viable because of the establishment of the MPA.

### **Literature cited:**

Ferreira, B.F. and Russ, G.R. (1995) Population structure of the leopard coral grouper, *Plectropomus leopardus*, on fished and unfished reefs off Townsville, Central Great Barrier Reef, Australia. *Fishery Bulletin*. 93:629-642.

Kelleher, G. & Kenchington, R. (1991). Guidelines for establishing marine protected areas. A Marine Conservation and Development Report. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland, 79pp.

McNeill, S.E. (1994) The selection and design of marine protected areas: Australia as a case study. *Biodiversity and Conservation*. 3:586-605.

Mapstone, B.D. and Davies, C.R. (1997) The effects of line fishing experiment- large scale manipulations of fishing to reduce uncertainty in management of fishing on the GBR. *Proceedings of the Australian Society for Fish Biology*, Darwin. p.53 (abstract only).

Potter, F.M. (1994) What are coastal and marine protected areas supposed to do? In: D.J. Brunckhorst, *Marine Protected Areas and Biosphere Reserves. Proceedings of the 1st International Workshop on Marine and Coastal Protected Areas*, Australia, August 1994.p10.

Underwood, A.J. (1992) Beyond BACI: the detection of environmental impacts on populations in the real, but variable, world. *Journal of Experimental Marine Biology and Ecology*. 161:145-178.