

# **MORETON BAY ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE**

## **Caring and Protecting the Bay Environment**

The Secretary  
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and  
Arts Reference Committee  
Parliament House, Canberra ACT  
[Ecita.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:Ecita.sen@aph.gov.au)

### **Re: Inquiry into Australia's National parks, Conservation Reserves and Marine Protected Areas.**

The Moreton Bay Environmental Alliance is a networking organisation set up during the 1996 Ramsar Convention Meeting in Brisbane. The Alliance's main concern is with the protection of Moreton Bay Marine Park, Ramsar Area and surrounding catchments and there are a number of issues that have come to light that relate to your Inquiry.

#### *a) The values and objectives of Australia's national parks other reserves and marine protected areas*

Over the years we have seen an increase in the number of parks, reserves and marine protected areas declared. We believe that protecting areas is all about preserving and presenting natural areas and cultural heritage. However despite the statements made by Ministers that "Parks are for people" and the fact that officers in Park's departments are clearly instructed that "customers come first" there is a general lack of interaction between officers/rangers and the public. Indeed we believe, for example, that there are a number of parks that are not staffed at week ends. It is also noted that officers responsible for protected areas are getting nowhere with natural resource management. Their time appears to be taken up with the improvement of facilities and infrastructure to cope with the ever increasing visitor numbers.

#### *b) Whether governments are providing sufficient resources to meet those objectives and management requirements.*

There is a constant call for additional funding to achieve the objectives and management of areas. However it may be possible for the values and objectives to be better protected if more on-ground work was carried out and less time spend in the office on reporting and evaluating duties. While generally legislation exists it is ineffectual because there are insufficient officers in the field to provide the necessary education and enforcement activities. There are also many issues that can be addressed by the provision of NHT funding by the Federal Government. The recent successes with the study and protection work carried out for threatened grey nurse shark population is a good example of what can be achieved with well directed funding allocations.

*c) Any threats to the objectives and management of our national parks, other conservation areas and marine protected areas.*

Governments tend to make it difficult for the reporting of issues that need to be discussed or reported. One is often directed to a 1300 telephone number by officers that, to say the least, is both obstructive and irritating and definitely not appropriate for people with mobile phones. There is also a problem with officers not being in a position to deal with “wildlife calls”. The complexity of permitting and the time taken for assessments to be made is another issue many have also become aware. This is also often compounded by the number of departments involved in management. Departments of transport, primary industries (fisheries), parks and wildlife, local government all have a responsibility or want to have their say on most issues that involve the granting of a permit.

*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.*

We see parks, reserves and marine protected areas created but often only after a long drawn out process. However, zoning in a Marine Park, for example is carried out with what appears a greater concern for ensuring that future port, airport, industrial, tourism and recreational development is not “locked out” rather than providing protection for the important natural ecosystems and habitat. Having probably upset a number of sectors and individuals in the community government appears reluctant to revisit any zoning plan and indeed in some cases, such as the Moreton Bay Marine Park, compile a proper Management Plan that would help both park officers and the community. We also see a problem with management plans not having any costing carried out so that government is aware and can budget for the funding required to implement any plan. We are sure that in private enterprise approvals would not be given for any plan without a clear knowledge of the costs involve for implementing it effectively

Yours sincerely

Mary Patchett and John Dobson  
Co Chairs