



MEDIA RELEASE

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Conservationists call on EPA to prevent Artificial Reef bonanza - Moreton Bay

The Australian Marine Conservation Society and Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland today expressed extreme concern at an EPA plan to create artificial fishing reefs in Moreton Bay Marine Park.

Work (apparently) begins this week on the first of three artificial fishing reefs planned by the EPA for Moreton Bay Marine Park. Each reef will occupy a 500m wide area in three locations – the middle of Moreton Bay (near the Rous Channel), off Cape Moreton and east of Bribie Island.

A massive 8000t of rock will be dumped into the Park to form the base of these reefs. Other materials, such as concrete piers and 'reef balls' will then be added to each reef to create the final shape. Diving will be prohibited at all three sites, as will commercial fishing. \$1m of public money allocated for protecting Moreton Bay has been allocated to this scheme.

Craig Bohm, Campaigns Director with the Australian Marine Conservation Society said, "We are deeply concerned by this proposal. Artificial reefs are detrimental to Moreton Bay's wildlife and we want this ludicrous scheme stopped."

Simon Baltais from the Bayside Branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland said, "Our research indicates that artificial reefs aggregate fish into one spot making them easier to catch. With Moreton Bay's fish populations already under so much fishing pressure, and thousands of baysiders concerned about overfishing already, why would we risk our local fish to this scheme?"

Conservationists expect that these reefs are a trade off to fishing interests for the new green zones created under Moreton Bay's new zoning plan. While many fishers know that they don't work, many others are not as well researched.

Bohm continued, "The crazy thing is, that fishing is best served by protecting the health of fish populations, that is, by preventing overfishing, leaving some places for them to thrive in peace and by protecting their nursery areas. Artificial reefs do none of these things and just make fish easier to catch."

Baltais concluded, "The purpose of Moreton Bay Marine Park is to protect wildlife and to ensure all uses of the Bay are sustainable. The EPA's own research shows there are limited areas artificial reefs can be placed without having a negative impact. We need to be mindful that promoting over fishing is inconsistent with this objective of the Marine Park. There is also no policy framework to stop a future bonanza on artificial reefs occurring."

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