

Hon. Kate Jones MP
Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change
PO Box 15155 City East
Queensland 4002

8 December 2009

via email: ccs@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Re: Continuous border to border Marine Parks along Queensland coast

I have been directed by the State Council of Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (Wildlife Queensland) to contact you in regards to the Government's current commitment to a continuous network of border to border marine parks in Queensland.

In 1998 the Beattie Government made an election promise to deliver border to border marine parks for Queensland and to the best of our information this has not been removed from Labor policy. Since this announcement, there has been some extensions to Queensland marine parks, however there are a number of gaps remaining that require immediate Government attention.

Recommendation 22 Building a Global System of Marine and Coastal Protected Area Networks, of the 2003 IUCN World Parks Congress calls on the international communities to:

1. "Establish by 2012 a global system of effectively managed, representative networks of marine and coastal protected areas, consistent with international law and based on scientific information, that:
 - a. Greatly increases the marine and coastal area managed in marine protected areas by 2012; these networks should be extensive and include strictly protected areas that amount to at least 20-30% of each habitat, and contribute to a global target for healthy and productive oceans....
2. Implement an ecosystem-based approach to sustainable fisheries management and marine biodiversity conservation:
 - a. Through marine protected areas integrated with other marine and coastal governance and management actions, as appropriate, through the application of best available science and consistent with international law to...." (IUCN, 2003)

Currently in Queensland there are four marine bioregions (Carpenteria, Wellesley-Karumba-Nassau, West Cape York and Torres Strait) that are not represented in a marine protected area (MPA). The Government must act on their 1998 election promise and protect and effectively managed these marine ecosystems.

Prior to any declaration there is an urgent need for an increased research effort into the ecological and cultural values of marine and coastal ecosystems in the Gulf and Torres Strait. An opportunity exists to conduct baseline research and monitoring of these ecosystems before further human expansion and developments affect them. This baseline data is vital in monitoring the effectiveness of MPAs and determining the impacts of climate change. An increased research effort will also benefit the Governments capacity to monitor the sustainability of the fisheries working in these areas. There remains a paucity of information of the Gulf and Torres Strait ecosystems, particularly the impacts of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and as a result Wildlife Queensland has concerns of the capacity for fisheries to achieve ecologically sustainable development in these areas. There must be recognition of the accumulative impacts and ecosystem consequences of fisheries and they

must be managed through an ecosystem approach. This is extremely difficult when there is a general lack of knowledge of the system in which they are managed. The declaration of a system of MPAs to complement the current fisheries management practises would be a step forward to achieving ecologically sustainable fisheries in these areas.

Individual MPAs should be sufficient in size to adequately protect identified conservation values and reflect ecosystem linkage and connectivity of surrounding system. They must follow the CAR system: comprehensive, adequate and representative but also incorporate connectivity and resilience to mitigate climate change. Scientists recommend that at least 20-30% of each marine habitat must be fully protected in marine national park zones. Wildlife Queensland recommends an investigation into the feasibility of the use of international protocols and treaties such as RAMSAR, CAMBA, JAMBA and the potential to extend the Coral Triangle Initiative into Torres Strait to strengthen the case for gazettal of additional marine parks.

World Heritage listing for Cape York Peninsula has been advocated to both State and Federal and it is our understanding that this has been well received. Wildlife Queensland is of the opinion that the declaration of an MPA on the western Cape would further complement this.

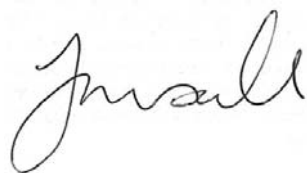
Indigenous peoples of the Gulf and Torres Strait have a deep connection to the land and sea. There is a need to document and integrate Indigenous knowledge with conventional management practises. Indigenous peoples must be involved in MPA declaration and management strategies.

Marine tourism is expected to increase within these regions. Well-managed MPAs with core protected areas are major tourist attractions. Reef industries on the Great Barrier Reef, reliant on a healthy environment to operate, contributed approximately \$5.8 billion to the Australian economy in 2004 and employed about 63,000 people. The capacity to view abundant marine life from observatories, with glass-bottomed boats, by snorkelling or scuba diving is a major draw card to tourists. The quality of these experiences depends on the ability to see the diverse life of healthy marine ecosystems and large charismatic species such as dolphins, sharks, turtles, rays. The establishment of a marine protected area is an excellent way to raise the profile of an area for marine tourism and to broaden the local economic options.

Wildlife Queensland is aware of the Torres Strait Treaty and other agreements that make management of Torres Strait extremely complex. Wildlife Queensland is also aware of a number of native title claims and cultural issues within Torres Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria which may complicate MPA declaration. In order to develop a clearer understanding Wildlife Queensland asks if it is feasible to arrange a meeting to brief us in full on the implications and challenges of establishing conservation zones or MPAs within the Torres Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Wildlife Queensland looks forward to your response and further consultation on these issues.

Yours Sincerely



Fiona Maxwell

Community Conservation Officer

Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland

cc Hon Anna Bligh MP, Premier of Queensland

Reference

IUCN 2003. *WPC Recommendation 22, Building a Global System of Marine and Coastal Protected Area Networks*, World Parks Congress 2003, Durban.

<http://www.internationalwildlifelaw.org/MPARecs.pdf> as at 7 December 2009