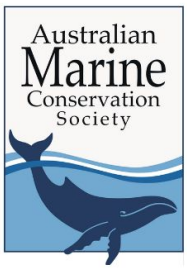

25 February 2019

Submission on the Great Sandy Marine Park discussion paper

The Great Sandy Strait's outstanding natural environment supports a unique lifestyle for the local community as well as a thriving tourism industry. It is also home to significant numbers of endangered species including whales, dolphins, dugongs, grey nurse sharks and turtles, and significant populations of migratory seabirds.

The beauty and wildlife of the Great Sandy Strait make it a tourism hotspot. Fishing and wildlife tours are the basis of a thriving economy, generating jobs and supporting local businesses. There is also a whale sanctuary and major transit point for humpback whales on their annual migration, as well as the most significant nesting population of endangered loggerhead turtles in the South Pacific, both of which draw visitors from around the world. As a UNESCO biosphere site, one of the largest Ramsar-listed wetlands in the world, and a World Heritage Site in-waiting, the Great Sandy Strait has outstanding economic, environmental and lifestyle values that must be protected.

However, the health of the Great Sandy Strait is in decline. The quality of recreational fishing has deteriorated due to the impact of excessive gill-netting and trawling on fish stocks, while threatening endangered species such as dugong and turtles. Important natural habitats remain unprotected, including seagrass beds which provide critical nursery grounds for fish species as well as feeding grounds for dugong and turtles. In line with community expectations, the Great Sandy Marine Park review provides the opportunity to turn this around.

Our organisations are calling for a structural adjustment package, estimated at $10million, from the Queensland Government to support the required improvements to the Great Sandy Marine Park. The package described below can protect the Strait's outstanding natural values, boost recreational fishing and support a thriving tourism industry. The package has three key aspects:

1. Remove the Great Sandy area (red cross-hatch) and non-conforming use provisions that allow commercial netting and beam trawling in a conservation park zone.
2. Increase marine national park zones (green) to a minimum of 10%, in line with the Moreton Bay Marine Park Scientific Principles to provide representative coverage of critical habitats.
3. Create new conservation park zones (yellow), habitat protection zones (blue), and buffer zones (olive) to provide additional protection to endangered species and critical habitats.

1. Remove the designated 'Great Sandy area'

The existing Designated Great Sandy area should be removed to allow the area to be a true conservation park zone (yellow zone) by removing more destructive fishing methods. In particular, we urge Government to:

- End commercial netting in the Great Sandy Marine Park to protect a vast array of habitats, help restore fish stocks and provide much needed protection to threatened and endangered species including dugongs, turtles, dolphins and hammerhead sharks.
- Bait netting in yellow zones must prohibit the take of all fish species with the exception of designated bait species.
- Withdrawal of all non-conforming use permits that allow environmentally damaging commercial beam trawling in conservation park or habitat protection zones.

Due to the low impacts of commercial mud crab operations, our organisations support the continuation of commercial crabbing on non-conforming use permits.

2. Marine Park Re-Zoning

We strongly recommend that rezoning of the Great Sandy Marine Park should apply the Scientific Guiding Principles (SGP) developed for the Moreton Bay Marine Park (MBMP) rezoning, including the Comprehensive, Adequate, Representative and Efficient (CARE) principles of marine national park (green zone) design. There are strong economic, social and scientific arguments for establishing National Park Zones as key regional economic infrastructure for nature based tourism, particularly dive tourism and whale watching, to maintain ecosystem services and to realise the economic value of community aspirations for healthy oceans.

Of key importance is the representation of a minimum of 10% of each habitat type in marine national park zone. We recognise that this may not be feasible for all habitat types of the Great Sandy Marine Park due to the very small areas (<2km²) of some habitat types.

Our organisations recommend the following zoning amendments to provide protection to critical habitats - see map attached:

1. Marine national park zone (green) linking MNP4 and MNP10, this increases the green zone protection of shallow seagrass from 8% to more than 10% and provides connectivity between the existing green zones.
2. The wreck of the HMAS Tobruk is currently a restricted access zone surrounded by deep subtidal seagrass. This should be designated a green zone to the border of the yellow zone at 25 fathom hole (the 25 fathom hole remains in the yellow zone). This will protect high conservation value habitat that surrounds the Tobruk.
3. Extend the MNP4 Marine national park (green) zone to the north to protect deep subtidal seagrass. Deep subtidal seagrass is important habitat as a fish nursery ground and is critical habitat for turtles and dugongs. This habitat type currently has no protection in green zones and in addition to the proposed green zone for the HMAS Tobruk should deliver a minimum of 10% of this habitat type in green zones.
4. Extend the Buffer zone (olive) protecting grey nurse shark. An expanded buffer zone offers more protection to the endangered grey nurse shark.
5. A reduction in the size of the Conservation park zone (yellow) zone within the above proposed Buffer zone at Double Island Point. Research is needed into the habitat connectivity of Wolf Rock and Double Island Point for Grey Nurse Sharks.The parties to this agreement request independent science to determine whether there is a connectivity between Double Island Point and Wolf Rock for Grey Nurse Shark. If habitat and connectivity is established by independent science, appropriate zoning protections, such as Olive zoning, of those areas will be required. If habitat and connectivity is not identified, both parties support a 100m yellow zone around Double Island Point.
6. National park zone (green) protecting low to moderate energy sand habitat. The east coast of Fraser Island is a high energy coastline and currently only 4% of this habitat type is within green zones. We recommend that this is increased to 10% and that the areas captured by that increase are identified through comprehensive consultation with the recreational and commercial fishing sectors to ensure an optimal environmental as well as economic and social outcome.
7. Localised green zone extension in Searys Creek to add further protection to an area utilised by turtles.

Further to the above proposed marine national park and buffer zones, our organisations request a review of and increase in conservation park zones (such as that proposed to surround the proposed HMAS Tobruk green zone - number 2 on the map attachment) and habitat protection zones (such as that proposed to protect deep subtidal seagrass of Rooneys Point - number 8 on map attached) to provide additional protection to high value habitats, threatened species and improve fish stocks at these sites.

We also recomment that the review process considers and implements further go-slow zones in areas utilised by dugongs and turtles, such as Moore Park Beach, to reduce the risk of boat strikes to these threatened species. Additional No Anchoring provisions may also be appropriate to protect fragile high conservation habitats such as coral reefs.

3. Structural Adjustment Package

The review must include a suitably designed Structural Adjustment Package (SAP) for commercial fishers displaced by the removal of the Great Sandy Area and Marine Park rezoning. The SAP should be developed by the Department of Environment and Science (DES) and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to provide for rezoning of the marine park in line with the Scientific Guiding Principles and to assist in meeting the objectives of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027.

DES should be provided with access to commercial fisheries vessel monitoring systems (VMS) data to assist with appropriate rezoning and for monitoring and compliance with marine park zoning and go slow areas.

The SAP should also be designed based on the impact assessments developed for the Morton Bay Marine Park SAP, with the SAP implementation overseen by a Technical Working Group that includes industry representatives.

A positive future for the Great Sandy

The Great Sandy Marine Park is unique in its wealth of natural, social and economic values. The inadequacy of marine national park zone coverage and the persistence of destructive netting operations within conservation park zones are incompatible with the values of the marine park and puts this precious natural, commercial and community asset. The Palaszczuk Government's marine park review can set a new course for the management and protection of the region's waters. We believe that the package of solutions outlined in this submission can deliver a marine park that will safeguard the outstanding natural values of the region, recreational fishing and provide for fresh local seafood into the future.