

# Australia's Marine Reserve Network



THE IDEA IS NOT THE PROBLEM,  
it's the management plans with  
no cost benefit analysis that are.

The Gillard Government is heading to an election in September and wants the management plans for the big, green, world's greatest marine reserve network rushed through parliament as a last hooray.

Recent history is littered with examples of plans rushed into action by Government, resulting in dire consequences and laments of the "benefit of hindsight" and poor planning due to the need for speedy implementation.

It is simply irresponsible for Australia to pioneer the world's biggest marine reserve network – which covers 40% of our nation's oceans - without a formal cost benefit analysis on the plan.

The Director of National Parks report to Environment Minister Tony Burke clearly states that no formal analysis has been commissioned:

*The analysis undertaken by ABARES was not a full cost/benefit analysis of the draft and final Commonwealth marine reserves network proposals.*<sup>1</sup>

Ernest & Young<sup>2</sup> and Bond University's Associate Professor Daryl McPhee<sup>3</sup> each prepared a report for the industry. Both reviews found no basis on which to assess whether the benefits of the marine reserves network proposal would outweigh the costs and found:

1. The ABARES assessments of the entire reserve network to be too narrow in scope for use in reliably determining social and economic implications; and
2. The ABARES assessments failed to provide evidence-based justification of associated benefits.

**The Australian people are entitled to ask why a formal cost benefit analysis is not mandatory prior to implementing a plan of this magnitude?**

1. Report of the Director National Parks (23 October 2012) p.36. 2. Ernest & Young (2012), Review of ABARES' Social and Economic Assessment of the Proposed Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network. 3. McPhee, Daryl (2012) Advice in relation to the Commonwealth's Marine Reserve Network for the South West, North, North West, Coral Sea & Temperate East Regions.

# NO NEW FISHERIES in large areas of our marine reserve network. It is a massive call for this generation to limit seafood supply for future generations of Australians.

Food security is a challenge for the world. Australia, with the world's third largest fishing zone, already imports over 70% of the seafood we eat.

How can we possibly say that we will not try to supply more sustainable seafood to our nation and the world? Not now, not ever. This has to be the ramification behind the management plan's total failure to address new sustainable fisheries in the 40% of our oceans now covered by marine reserves.

And the reason for not addressing future exploitation is based on ABARE's caveat to their whole assessments for the Government's decision making. The caveat states:

*"This analysis assumes that fishing is at optimum levels and there is no scope for further expansion of catch in the future."<sup>4</sup>*

It is not true that all fishing is at sustainable optimum levels, and it is ludicrous to suggest there is no scope for further expansion and development in the future, particularly in areas like the Coral Sea and Northern Australia.

## **Putting to one side:**

- + The consequences of extinguishing interest in all future capital investment in the fishing industry;
- + The loss of the skill base to fish in some of the most isolated waters in the world; and
- + The issues surrounding protecting our fisheries from illegal and foreign fishing, if we are simply not interested in sustainably utilizing our renewable seafood resource.

**What is our nation's potential, and our responsibility, to supply sustainable seafood to our own citizens, and to stop relying so heavily on imported seafood, often from developing countries that are not as committed to sustainable fishing practices?**

4. ABARES 2012. North Marine Region Commonwealth Reserves Network: social and economic assessment of the impacts on commercial and charter fishing. Report prepared for the Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Canberra, June 2012.

# BEWARE THE COSTING

## that's just too good to be true.

The only costing on the public record is calculated on a marginal (>1% of GVP) on displaced catch, resulting in a Government allocation of around \$100 million in fisheries adjustment assistance.

This costing could only be described as modest, manageable – almost miraculous - in its affordability.

Ernst & Young<sup>5</sup> found that the ABARES study lacked the consideration of the full impacts of the Marine Reserves Network Proposal. In particular, it did **NOT** consider the following costs:

- + The loss of prospective revenues and earnings associated with current licences;
- + The impacts on the downstream processing industry;
- + The impacts on charter fishing, tourism and recreational fishing;
- + The costs of implementing the Marine Reserves Proposal, including enforcement costs.

**Q** What is the true and total cost of implementing the marine reserves network and importantly the ongoing management budget?

# It is hard to understand how SEISMIC SURVEYS AND THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY IS OK, but sustainably managed fishing gears are simply banned.

The current management plans are going to allow mining in many of the proposed reserves, but arbitrarily ban some fishing gears. We have seen no scientific evidence to justify this.

**Q** How is it that large scale seismic surveys and the oil and gas industry can be less damaging than low impact trawl vessels in sustainably managed and accredited fisheries?

## **The Marine Reserve Network management plan should not be rushed through parliament, just in time for the election, without serious questions being asked.**

The commercial fishing industry, as do the Australian community, has a vested interested in how our Marine Reserve Network is managed.

**A management plan of this magnitude should be implemented based on independent cost benefit analysis.**

For more information and contacts for fishermen and women who are operating in fisheries in the Marine Reserve Network around Australia email the National Seafood Industry Alliance at [nsia09@gmail.com](mailto:nsia09@gmail.com)

Members of National Seafood Industry Alliance

