

Press release

Marine Parks Work, say Scientists

Tuesday 17th August 2010.

This year, 2010, is the international year of biodiversity but the threats to marine biodiversity are getting worse.

On land and in the sea, protected areas form the central plank of all biodiversity protection strategies, in Australia and globally. The establishment of networks of protected areas has had bipartisan support in Australia.

“Marine reserves sometimes contribute substantially to regional economies through tourism. However, the establishment of marine parks has often resulted in restrictions on fishing activities or locations. Both State and Federal Governments have been under pressure to limit the expansion of marine protected areas, or even roll back established marine reserves,” said Dr Nevill

“The scientific evidence is quite clear, marine protected areas (MPAs) have more fish, and those fish are bigger. This means biodiversity flourishes and the chance of fishery collapse is reduced. Marine parks work,” said Professor Possingham of The University of Queensland.

A group of scientists have recently written an open letter to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, stressing the importance of networks of marine protected areas, and their strong scientific basis.

In brief, the scientist’s letter, coordinated by Professor Hugh Possingham and Dr Jon Nevill, says that:

1. the science being done around the issues of MPAs in Australia is world class: Australia leads the world in many aspects of the science of MPAs,
2. the government programs (state and federal) have been started and are all based on scientific evidence,
3. the science is taking account of the issues of fishing, including keeping fisheries activities viable and sustainable,
4. evidence is continuing to build that MPAs can help fisheries to be sustainable – areas closed to fishing have been used for centuries to provide for better yields of targeted species; the modern science approach is to protect biodiversity at the same time as providing for fisheries, and
5. in Australia the history of MPA development has enjoyed bipartisan political support, commencing with initiatives by the coalition in the late 90s that the current government is delivering.

The scientists call on politicians to protect Australia’s valuable marine biodiversity assets, recognising that the long term health of marine ecosystems is essential to maintain many important activities, such as tourism and fishing.

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The letter is available at [HERE](#)