



EXPRESS NEWS – 18 MARCH 2006

Commonwealth MPAs

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On the 5 May 2006 the finalised network of South East Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) was announced by the Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH). After an enormous effort from a large number of people, the seafood industry was able to convey logic and good science, while working with relevant stakeholders towards a mutually acceptable outcome. Overall the estimated impacts to the seafood industry were reduced by over 90% when compared to the original proposal put forward by DEH in mid December 2005.

From a conservation point of view, the total area encompassed by the revised MPA network is over 20% greater than the original proposal and represents 19% of Commonwealth waters in the South East region or 226,000 square kilometres. Over 80% of seamounts in the South East region have been protected, providing refuge for many deepwater species. This builds on a number of initiatives put forward/contributed to by the seafood industry over the past decade in an effort towards conservation based outcomes.

Although the revised MPA network provides a more balanced outcome, a number of individual fishers will be adversely impacted upon. It is generally agreed that impacts

associated with a reallocation of resources from one user (the seafood industry) to another (the broader public) should be accounted for through some form of assistance. The issue of adjustment assistance will be pursued in coming weeks for those that are effected – at this stage there has been no decision made as to how this will progress.

There also remains concern regarding how issues of management and compliance for the MPA network will be funded and enforced. It is difficult to imagine how the management of such a large area will be achieved; however the seafood industry will work closely with all stakeholders towards a practical and cost effective outcome on this issue.

The following Media Statement was released on 5 May 2006 by Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz, Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation:

“Final Marine Protected Areas: A win-win for fishers and for conservation

The final network of South East Region Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) announced today are a win-win for fishers and for conservation, the Minister for Fisheries and Conservation, Senator Eric Abetz, said today.

“As a result of stakeholder consultation, more than 20 changes have been made to the draft boundaries proposed in December 2005,” the Minister said.

“This final proposed network reduces the impact on the fishing industry by more than 90 per cent from the original proposal, while increasing the protected areas by over 20 per cent.

“The MPA area has actually been increased by 24 per cent to about 226,000km² — an area equivalent to more than three times the size of Tasmania.

“Significantly, the impact on the scallop industry has been entirely removed.” The Minister said that this outcome proved that only the Howard Government can be trusted to effectively balance jobs and conservation.

“I have always said that I believed a sensible, balanced outcome between jobs and conservation could be achieved,” he said.

“We did it in forestry with the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement.

“Any fair and objective observer would have to agree we have now also achieved it in the south east oceans.”

The Minister praised the work of former Parliamentary Secretary for Fisheries, Senator Richard Colbeck, Braddon MHR Mark Baker, Bass MHR Michael Ferguson, the Tasmanian State Parliamentary Liberal Party, and all his Federal colleagues who advocated strongly on behalf of local fishers.

“These people know that conservation and the legitimate human need to sustainably harvest our resources can co-exist,” the Minister said.

He also thanked all those who had contributed to the consultation process, particularly Professor Colin Buxton of the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute, whose scientific input was invaluable.

Fishers impacted by the creation of the MPA network may be able to obtain assistance under the \$220m Securing Our Fishing Future package, including if they are eligible to participate in the fishing concession buyout currently being conducted by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.”

For a detailed explanation of the revised MPA network, visit the TFIC website at www.tfic.com.au. If you have any further queries regarding the above information please contact me at TFIC by email afebey@tfic.com.au or phone the office on 03 6224 2332.

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