



14th February, 2013

Charlton Clark
Assistant Secretary
Commonwealth Marine Reserves Branch
Marine Division
(Coral Sea Marine Reserve Draft Management Plan)
Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
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Via email: CoralSea.draftplan@environment.gov.au

Dear Mr Charlton

Re: Coral Sea Marine Reserve Draft Management Plan

On behalf of our Regional Development Australia Townsville and North West Queensland (RDA) Committee, I am pleased to forward this submission.

Management of our environment, economy and communities in a long term sustainable way is of high importance and relevance to our RDA Committee, hence we support initiatives that aim to address the sustainability of our local environment, and in this case, the Coral Sea Marine Reserve.

In preparing our brief document, we have participated in a consultation meeting with regional stakeholders from across the northern Queensland region. We share many common points of interest with organisations such as Regional Development Australia Far North Queensland & Torres Strait and Gulf Savannah Development.

Introduction to RDA – why are we interested

Regional Development Australia is an established network of 55 Committees across Australia made up of local community leaders who are volunteers to champion the development of long-term sustainable communities. (Refer to www.rda.gov.au)

The Regional Development Australia Committee for Townsville and North West Queensland (RDA) is an incorporated not-for-profit association and has twelve ministerially appointed members. Funding is provided by the Federal Government and in-kind support is provided by the Queensland Government. The Committee's purpose is to achieve a prosperous, sustainable, cohesive and liveable region incorporating 15 local government areas. Our region covers 449,190 km², including the Gulf shires of Bourke, Carpentaria and Mornington Island. (Refer Appendix 1 and www.rdanwq.org.au)



RDA has developed and regularly updates a Regional Roadmap which informs the Federal and Queensland Governments of the community's vision for the region to 2030, the priorities that need to be addressed and the strategies that can be undertaken to achieve outcomes. RDA works with partners across the region to progress prioritised initiatives and projects that support the long term vision. (Refer to <http://www.rdatanwq.org.au/regional-roadmap>)

Comments

1. RDA supports the concept of the Marine Management Plans and in this case the plan for the Coral Sea. Many of the comments below relate to more than one strategy.
2. We believe that environmental sustainability must be considered in the context of economic and social sustainability. It cannot be divorced from people, whole communities and their well-being through participation in the economy.
3. We are concerned about the timeframe and processes that will be applied to the roll out of the Management Plan. It is important to ensure that engagement activities are thorough and allow for a smooth transition to the new Plan. Engaging and listening to local industry and residents will be critical for the successful implementation and monitoring of the Plan.
4. The development and forthcoming implementation of the Plan has come at considerable cost to the Australian tax-payer. It is essential that targets be set and progress and outcomes be measured to assess the value and success, or otherwise, of the Plan to inform future decision-making. This should be done on an annual basis with transparency and review by a steering group made up of government, industry and local stakeholders, and chaired by a local resident. There must be scope to make amendments to the Plan within 10 years if issues are identified.
5. Reporting will also require further investment in research and monitoring of the region. This is ideally and best done in region by locals with support of the government. Townsville, as the home to James Cook University, the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and CSIRO's Davies Laboratory, is already the home to world leading marine science and research and would be well-placed to play a lead role.
6. Employment opportunities for Indigenous people, the long-term unemployed and others of a disadvantaged background are important. It is a goal that aligns with the Townsville and North West Queensland Regional Roadmap.
7. Measures to protect and manage the region's marine reserves need to take into account all users of the reserves including freight ships.

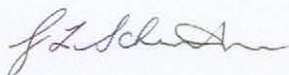
We hope that the above information proves to be helpful in your finalising of the Management Plans.

RDA can provide:

- Sound advice on regional development strategies;
- Access to an extensive database of existing regional stakeholders and more importantly personal connections with key stakeholders;
- Apolitical support and advocacy for engaging communities in the program;
- Promotional support for your Plan and its implementation through our marketing channels including e-newsletters, our corporate website and corporate Facebook pages; and
- In-kind support to workshops focussing on the Plan in the Townsville and North West Queensland region.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide any further information that you may require and I can be reached at my office on 07 4760 1612.

Yours sincerely



Glenys Schuntner
Chief Executive Officer

Appendix 1 – Map of RDA Townsville and North West Queensland Region

