



Regional
Development
Australia

TOWNSVILLE
AND NORTH WEST
QUEENSLAND INC

14th February, 2013

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

Dear Mr Charlton

Re: North Marine Reserves Network 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, hence we support initiatives that aim to address the sustainability of our local environment, and in this case, the North 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)



An Australian Government Initiative



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 North and in particular the Southern Gulf and West Cape York region. 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 residents will be critical for the successful implementation and monitoring of the Plan. Anecdotally we have heard that many local stakeholders do not feel they have been properly consulted.
4. It is critically important to consider the full impact of closure of fishing businesses. As with any other industry, there are a supply chains to and from fishing businesses. The closure of their businesses will negatively impact the businesses of all their suppliers and customers and in turn their suppliers and customers. Hence there will be a direct and an indirect flow on impact across the local businesses and the families and community they support. Any discussion about compensation for business closures must take into account all businesses that are affected and not just the fishing businesses. I note there could also be a negative impact on family numbers in small communities if jobs disappear. This will in turn affect student enrolments and demand for health services which may see the closure of these if the local population decreases. A downward spiral affect could take place.
5. 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.
6. 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.

7. 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.
8. Measures to protect and manage the region's marine reserves need to take into account not only the fishing industry but also the other users of the reserves such as freight ships and potentially oil and gas industries.
9. Creative solutions for transition and compensation should be considered. The industry will be best placed to provide advice on matters such as the potential to issue special permits for exclusive use and access in alternate zones.
10. It must be recognised that the fishing industry has experienced significant cost increases in its operations in recent years and any further imposts like the compulsory use of certain equipment may make their businesses financially unviable. Compensation or special concessions should be made for new regulations that require additional spending.

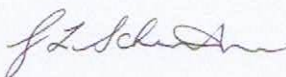
We hope that the above information proves to be helpful in your finalising of the Management Plans.

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

