

# **The Nature Coast Marine Group Inc (NCMG)**



Dr Mike Kelly AM MP  
Member for Eden-Monaro  
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests

Dear Dr Kelly

The Nature Coast Marine Group urges the Government to take robust action to protect marine life in Commonwealth waters in the South West Marine Region.

We understand that the Government is about to take a decision on this but are concerned that the proposed plan for the South West Region is inadequate. In particular, we are concerned that plan does not meet the fundamental principles set down in Australia's Oceans Policy - i.e. that the marine sanctuaries should be 'comprehensive, adequate and representative'. While protection of areas of deeper water are welcome, the amount of protection afforded to areas closer to shore is minimal and fails to protect areas of high conservation value such as the Abrolhos Islands, the Rottnest Shelf, Perth's Grand Canyon, Geographe Bay and the Capes, the Recherche Archipelago, the Great Australian Bight and areas around Kangaroo Island. We request that sanctuary zones be established to protect parts of all of these areas.

The threats to the marine environment are clear, as is the scientific evidence in favour of using marine sanctuaries as an important element in a wider suite of measures aimed at ensuring the oceans are protected into the future. Appropriate conservation principles are already enshrined in the Government's Oceans Policy. At this important time of decision, the Government should ensure that these principles are carried forward to effective implementation.

We are of course aware that there is vocal opposition to marine conservation coming from some sectors of the commercial and recreational fishing industry. It is important that good policy should not be sacrificed to sectional interests. Opinion polls suggest the wider fishing community and the general public are supportive of effective protection of the marine environment. In any case, good planning and strong government leadership can produce 'win-win' outcomes, combining effective protection of the marine environment with a sustainable a fishing industry.

While Western Australia is far from our area, we want to see good conservation outcomes everywhere. In addition, we are conscious that the South West Region is just the first in a series of decisions on protecting the marine environment in Commonwealth waters and that a decision will be taken next year on the Temperate East Marine Region. We are aware that Minister Burke launched plan proposals for the East Marine Region last week and expect to be in contact with you again after we have studied the proposals carefully.

As you will know from our meeting with you in 2008, the NCMG is a community organisation based in the Eurobodalla that supports protecting the marine environment, together with activities, education and research with a marine focus. The Group now has over 200 members and many other supporters.

We have of course written directly to Minister Burke on this issue.

**The Nature Coast Marine Group Inc**  
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At the same time, we believe it is important that you know of the concerns of our group. Your support would be very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

*Jenny Edwards*

President