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Submission to Select Committee on Marine Parks in South Australia by the Friends of Gulf St Vincent

The Friends of Gulf St Vincent urge the SA Parliament, via this Select Committee, to shoulder its responsibility to protect and manage our current and future marine resources and heritage.

The Friends of Gulf St Vincent have addressed most of the Terms of Reference of the Select Committee below, but we summarise our position and major concerns for your consideration.

- It is coming up 30 years since the last comprehensive proclamation of various marine protected areas in SA waters. When those areas were proclaimed, it was in the expectation that there would be further extensions during the 1980s - the sites had been broadly identified, and studies were underway to verify need and boundaries. The state has lost all that time and opportunity - and restoration of several fish stocks - through lack of political will (?) in either major party. That is a real loss of amenity, and fish production, to the citizens of SA. Doing nothing has a cost.
- South Australia (and Australia more widely), even the non-green sector, prides itself on access to high quality marine coastal areas, bountiful seafood, pristine waters – this is how we see our country and how we sell ourselves in the world.
- We protect our territorial waters from invaders, but it is beginning to look as though we are not above tolerating a comparable threat from within.
- We would wish to see evidence of commitment, by all South Australian political parties, to the establishment of marine protection strategies of some kind.
- We strongly recommend more resources for marine surveillance

Terms of Reference

Scientific evidence available to guide the design and management of marine parks

It seems to us, from reading the marine parks proposal, and from representations from many of our Members who contributed to the proposal, that the locations and design of the marine parks network has been based on long-term and comprehensive studies by South Australian (and other) government agencies, universities and individuals. Many of these people are eminent individuals in their fields, and this State is fortunate to have benefited from their dedication over many decades.

Detrimental effects to recreational fishers and the commercial fishing industry

We have seen convincing evidence that current commercial fisheries are not adequately managing fish stocks in some species, which makes it likely that, at some point, some of these species will collapse.

If recreational fishers were being honest some, or perhaps cases many, would have to admit that they are already experiencing depletion of our favourite species, and are going further afield to find fish.

The Friends have been presenting information in meetings around Gulf St Vincent for nearly ten years. Recreational fishers, with meticulous records going back 50 or more years, have demonstrated that catch rates of preferred species have fallen to a fraction of what was once available. For a few

hundred dollars, fishers can equip small boats to locate 'marks' and identify fish in a way that would have cost commercial operators the equivalent of the price of a luxury car a few years ago. This has increased recreational fishing capacity many times. As one presenter at a country forum said 'The fish have no place left to hide'. That alone is probably the single best reason to extend absolute 'no take' zones in South Australia.

Recreational fishers would also have to acknowledge their community's part in this, whether by exceeding bag limits, taking or causing death of undersize fish or fish caught out of season. (Inevitably some fish intended for release die when caught – due to damage from hook retrieval or swim bladder damage from being hauled to the surface from depth).

Marine parks -, and particularly no take zones will provide some refuge for species, therefore it is also important that a representative range of habitats is included to protect the widest possible range of species.

Detrimental effects to property values

It is the Friends' opinion that this is a non-issue and presupposes that people will not buy coastal properties if they are adjacent to Marine Reserves. We would argue that people seeking to move to the coast have a range of options and move for a variety of reasons.

Evidence was presented at a recent Friends' forum that land values have been shown to increase in proximity to marine parks. This is certainly used as a selling point adjacent to terrestrial national parks.

Complaints by local communities and fishing groups regarding the consultation process

The Friends of Gulf St Vincent is aware of the consultation process that is being conducted across the State. Community consultations are, at best, a tool to gauge interest and knowledge within a region, and it is unlikely that a single scenario – that accommodates all perspectives and opinions – can be devised.

This should not, however, replace scientific knowledge, gained over many years and paid for by the citizens, or absolve the relevant authorities from making well thought out and defensible decisions – even if they are unpopular with some parts of the community.

Interstate and international moves to limit the extent of sanctuary zones

This group supports initiatives by the Federal Government to investigate the declaration of Marine Parks and No Catch sanctuaries for the very same reasons we outline in our submission. Protection from over-fishing and encroachment is essential for the sustainability of marine life, commercial fisheries and community prosperity.

Balance of general marine park areas to no-take sanctuary zone areas

The Friends of Gulf St Vincent would advocate for more and larger rather than fewer marine park areas – our interest is, of course, in maximising biodiversity, robustness and health of the marine environment.

Because the tools for managing a stock under open access are so limited, and have failed in practice, we must move to exclusion of fishing, year round, literally to establish 'reserve' areas. Already the evidence that such zones help to maintain stocks is much more convincing than supposed bag, size or seasonal 'controls' placed on a stock otherwise open to plunder by all.

Angela Gackle

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