

Australian Marine Reserve Network

November 2012

On Friday 16 November 2012 the Hon. Tony Burke MP, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, proclaimed the expanded Australian marine reserve network. In June 2012 Minister Burke released the plans for the expanded marine reserves, and announced a 60 day public consultation period.

The proclamation of the reserve represents the most comprehensive network of marine protected areas in the world, and the largest addition to the conservation estate in Australia’s history. The protections will come into effect at midnight on 16 November 2012.

Minister Burke’s press release is available [here](#).

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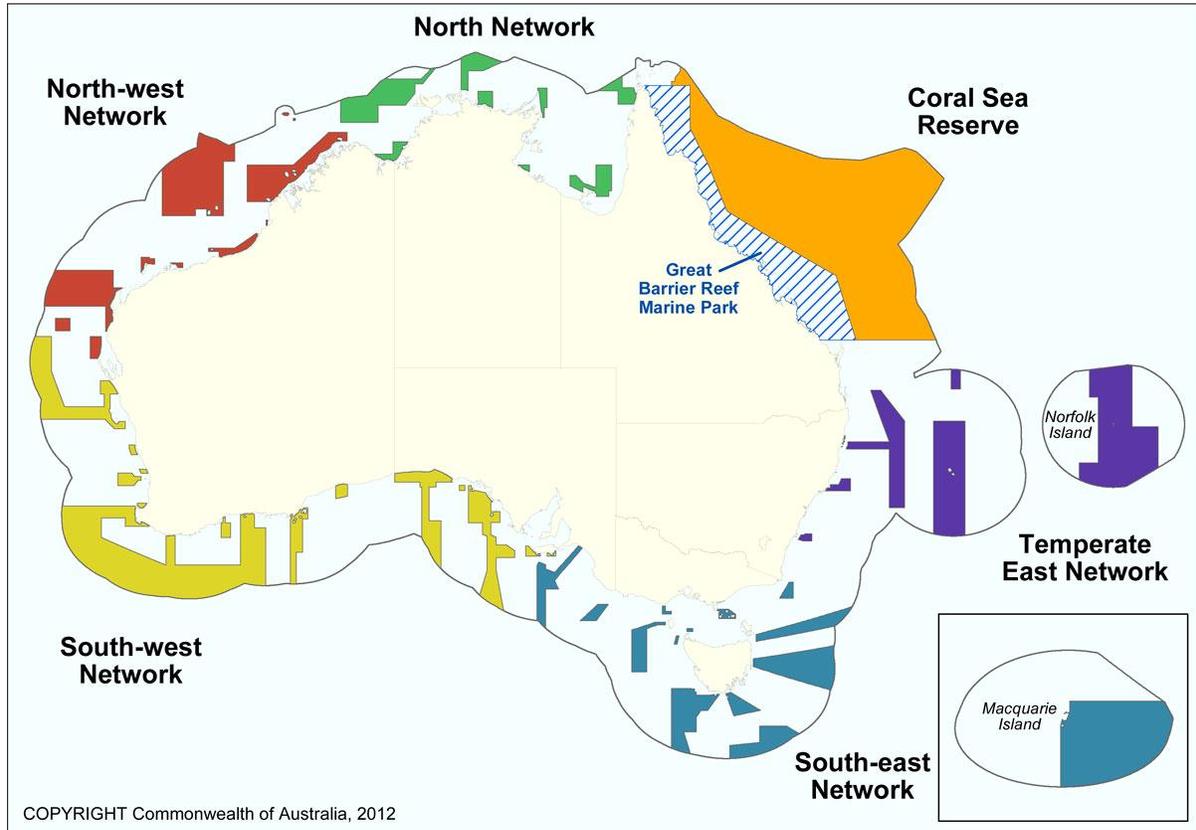
The Expansion of the Australian Marine Reserve Network

The expansion to the marine reserve network will take the overall size of the Commonwealth marine reserves network to 3.1 million square kilometres, making it the largest network of marine protected areas in the world. Within the network, there will be differing levels of protection and conservation, ranging from the highly protected Marine National Park Zone, where most commercial and recreational fishing activities are not allowed; to General and Multi Use Zones, which will allow activities such as commercial fishing and oil and gas exploration.

The expansion map was developed following a twelve month consultation process that included over 250 public meetings across the country, involving more than 1950 individuals. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) also conducted a socio-economic assessment of each of the final regional marine reserves network proposals. More information on the ABARES assessment process is available [here](#).

More detailed regional and reserve maps, including zoning information, is available on the [Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities’ website](#).

Areas of Expansion



The announced expansion covers five key areas, in addition to the already established South-east Reserve. The new reserve areas are:

- **The Coral Sea Region** - Described by Minister Burke as “the jewel in the Crown,” this region covers an area of more than half the size of Queensland. It supports critical nesting sites for the green turtle and is renowned for its diversity of big predatory fish and sharks. The network includes protection for all reefs in the Coral Sea with the final proposal adding iconic reefs such as Osprey Reef, Marion Reef, Bougainville Reef, Vema Reef, and Shark Reef included as marine national parks. A table detailing the zoning scheme for the Coral Sea Region is available [here](#).
- **The South-West Marine Region** - This region extends from the eastern end of Kangaroo Island in South Australia to Shark Bay in Western Australia. It is of global significance as a breeding and feeding ground for a number of protected marine species such as southern right whales, blue whales and the Australian Sea Lion. Features in the South-West region include the Perth Canyon – an underwater area bigger than the Grand Canyon and the Diamantina Fracture Zone – a large underwater mountain chain which includes Australia’s deepest water. A table detailing the zoning scheme for the South-West Marine Region is available [here](#).
- **The Temperate East Marine Region** – This region runs from the southern boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to Bermagui in southern New South Wales, and includes the waters surrounding Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands. It is home to the critically endangered east coast

population of grey nurse shark, the vulnerable white shark and has important offshore reef habitat at Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs and Lord Howe Island that support the threatened black cod. A table detailing the zoning scheme for the Temperate East Marine Region is available [here](#).

- **The North Marine Region** - This region includes only the Commonwealth waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria, Arafura Sea and the Timor Sea extending as far west as the Northern Territory-Western Australian border. Globally important nesting and resting areas for threatened marine turtle species including flatback, hawksbill, green and olive ridley turtles will be protected, as will important foraging areas for breeding colonies of migratory seabirds and large aggregations of dugongs. A table detailing the zoning scheme for the North Marine Region is available [here](#).
- **The North-west Marine Region** – This region stretches from the Western Australian - Northern Territory border through to Kalbarri, south of Shark Bay in Western Australia, and is home to the whale shark, which is the world’s largest fish, and provides protection to the world’s largest population of humpback whales that migrate annually from Antarctica to give birth in the water off the Kimberley. A table detailing the zoning scheme for the North-west Marine Region is available [here](#).

Adjustment Assistance

Adjustment assistance for significantly affected fishers and fishing-dependent communities will be provided as stipulated by the Fisheries Adjustment Policy. First released by the Commonwealth in 2004 and updated in 2011, the Fisheries Adjustment Policy recognises that the costs of marine protected areas are likely to be borne in the short-term by a small group of private individuals and communities in marine-related industry sectors, while the public good benefits flow to all Australians.

The Fisheries Adjustment Policy sets out that any decision on whether adjustment assistance will be provided to fishers or fishing dependent communities as a result of a marine protected area declaration or re-zoning will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Analysis done by the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences showed that overall the new marine reserves will displace around one per cent of the catch from Australia’s diverse wild-catch fisheries.

Accordingly, following the announcement of the proposed expanded marine reserves in June 2012, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig announced an assistance package in the vicinity of \$100 million to be put in place prior to the activation of the expanded marine reserves.

The package will be designed to meet case-by-case needs of these fishers and businesses, and the Government will work with industry to develop measures such as:

- **Transitional Business Assistance** – payments to fishing businesses based on their recent fishing history in those parts of the new marine reserves where they are impacted once the management plans are operational.

- **Sectoral measures** - competitive grants to improve the long term sustainability of fisheries displaced by the marine reserves.
- **Removal of commercial fishing effort** – the purchase of individual fishers’ entitlements or quota units in fisheries where the scale of the fishery has been reduced by the reserves to help ensure that they remain sustainable.

Since the announcement in June, industry representatives have participated in a national workshop on the scope of the package and provided feedback on a discussion paper outlining proposed features and design considerations for the assistance package.

The funding available for the assistance will begin to flow from early in 2013-14 once the management plans for the new reserves were in place but before any zoning restrictions take effect in July 2014.

Details of eligibility and how fishers can access those payments will be released next year following further consultation with the fishing industry and fisheries management agencies on guidelines and delivery.

More information on the Fisheries Adjustment Policy is available [here](#).

Next Steps

The Government is now developing the management plans for the new reserves. The management plans will detail how the reserves are to be managed and what activities can and cannot be undertaken in these areas, and will come into effect in July 2014.

During the development of the plans, transitional arrangements will be in place that maintain current arrangements for industry and recreation fishers, meaning although the protections are in place from midnight on 16 November 2012, there will be no ‘on the water’ changes for users in the new reserve areas until July 2014.

Background

Marine area conservation has been an ongoing policy issue for over two decades in Australia. In 1991 the Australian Government initiated a long term marine conservation program to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's marine and estuarine environments. A key component of this initiative was a commitment to expand Australia's existing marine reserve system through the establishment of a National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA).

The primary goal of the NRSMPA is to establish and manage a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of marine protected areas to contribute to the long-term ecological viability of marine and estuarine systems, to maintain ecological processes and systems, and to protect Australia's biological diversity at all levels.

The NRSMPA helps to meet Australia's responsibilities and obligations as a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the major components of the Jakarta Mandate developed under that Convention. Australia signed the Convention on World Environment Day, 5 June 1992, at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and subsequently ratified it on 18 June 1993. It came into force on 29 December 1993.

In 1998, guidelines for establishing the NRSMPA were developed by an inter-governmental Task Force on Marine Protected Areas and agreed to by all Australian governments. The Australian Government later developed a set of Goals and Principles to apply the guidelines in Commonwealth waters. These Goals and Principles provide a consistent framework for identifying new marine reserves and they emphasise the strong role of science in the process.

Australia furthered its international commitments to marine area conservation when in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Australian Government commitment to establishing a representative network of marine reserves by 2012.

Under the NRSMPA, the South-east Marine Region was established by the Howard Government in 2007. The South-east Marine Region includes thirteen reserves located around the south-eastern portion of the Australian continent and Tasmania, with a combined area of over 226 000 square kilometres. The fourteenth reserve is located off Macquarie Island, adding approximately 162 000 square kilometres to the marine reserves network in the South-east.

More information on the expanded network is available at www.environment.gov.au/marinereserves