



CAN-065-Criticized marine park-Coral Sea

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The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation 281.971.7703 P.O. Box 311117 Houston Texas 77231

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Conservationists critical of plan to reduce Coral Sea marine park protection



PHOTO: The report shows the protected area for the Coral Sea will be cut by 10pc. (Supplied: Tourism Australia)

The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) has slammed recommendations from a Federal Government-commissioned review to reduce marine park protection in the Coral Sea.

In 2013, the Abbott government stopped plans for a new national network of marine parks, pending a review.

The report, handed down yesterday, shows the protected area for the Coral Sea will be cut by 10 per cent but will still cover about 41 per cent of the reserve.

It said protection for Coral Sea reefs would improve, with six new reefs added to the protected zone.

"To address these concerns the recommended zoning will afford a high level of protection ... to all of the 34 reefs in the Coral Sea, and notably improves the protection of reefs of the Marion Plateau," the report said.

But AMCS spokeswoman Fiona Maxwell said the Coral Sea protection had been "well and truly sliced and diced".

"A 10 per cent cut adds up to about 97,000 square kilometres that will no longer have full protection," she said.

"The report has recommended huge cutbacks in the level of marine national park protection in the Coral Sea, which is one of Australia's most incredible ecosystems.



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PHOTO: The Federal Government plans to reduce protected marine zones in the Coral Sea. (Supplied: Geoscience Australia)

"That includes large areas that were fully protected for species like sharks, tuna and marlin.

"And important coral reefs including Boganville Reef, which is an incredible dive site, has been reduced in protection."

Ms Maxwell said marine life and the tourism industry would be hit hard by the wind-backs in protection.

"We're seeing the largest area of marine national park being wound back to allow commercial fishing operations like long-liners to expand into the Coral Sea," she said.

"We would urge our new minister Josh Frydenberg

to reject this Abbott-era review and go back to the science and community consultation and restore the 2012 protections that looked after the Coral Sea.

"Other nations are moving ahead on protecting their important marine areas and it's extremely disappointing to see Australia is going backwards."

Federal Environment Minister Josh Frydenberg said the recommendations followed the work of two expert panels that looked at the science behind marine reserves and consulted with local communities, Indigenous groups, scientists, and commercial and recreational fishers.

Mr Frydenberg said he asked the director of National Parks to start public consultation about the report's recommendations, with final management plans due by mid-2017.

He said the Federal Government would assess the need for any industry assistance when the plans were finalised.

"We will also consider the broader recommendations of the review, such as extending protection over the Bremer Canyon [off south-west WA], which is renowned for its large aggregations of marine life including, orcas, sperm whales, seals, sharks and giant squid," he said.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-06/amcs-slams-reduction-in-coral-sea-marine-protection/7819256>



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*Liberty Cast
The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation
Intern
P.O. Box 311117
Houston, Texas 77231
liberty.cast@wfcrc.org
www.wfcrc.org
281.971.7703 (office)
+447929334034 (cell)*

*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing" ...**Edmund Burke***