

A Brief Guide to responding to the Australian Government's Draft Plan for the Coral Sea

The shortcomings

- Only 2 out of 25 reefs currently open to fishing in the Coral Sea are given a high level of protection under the draft plan. That means 90% of the unprotected reefs remain open to various forms of fishing.
- Of the 23 reefs that remain open to fishing in the draft plan, the government has proposed to close only one to commercial fishing: Marion Reef. However, it still remains open to commercial charter fishing.
- 49% of the proposed Coral Sea marine park remains open to various forms of fishing. This area is in the western, northern and southern Coral Sea. It contains:
 1. most of the species-rich coral reefs;
 2. Australia's largest trough system which hosts the only known spawning aggregation of black marlin in the world, and spawning aggregations of globally vulnerable bigeye tuna and near threatened yellowfin tuna; and
 3. the southern Coral Sea which is considered a global hotspot for large pelagic species such as tunas, billfish and sharks.
- Pelagic longline fishing is allowed to continue in almost one quarter of the marine park (in the southern section). Pelagic longlining is globally recognized as a threat to seabirds, turtles and sharks. Longline fishing is banned in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and should be banned in the proposed Coral Sea marine park.
- The draft plan is too complicated. It contains 4 different zones and 8 spatial configurations of these zones. The proposed marine park will be very costly to enforce and will most likely not be effectively enforced.

The positive aspects

- The outer boundary of the proposed Coral Sea marine park is almost one million square kms: 989,842 km².
- The entire area is protected from mining, including petroleum exploration and development, all types of gillnetting, demersal trawling and demersal longlining.
- Three quarters of the area is protected from pelagic longlining (almost 730,000 km²).
- The government has proposed a highly protected zone in the eastern Coral Sea. This area comprises 51% of the proposed marine park and is fully protected from all types of extractive activities. Covering 507,487 km², it includes two existing Commonwealth no-take reserves created in 1982. The *additional* protection provided by this plan is therefore 490,000 km².

Ask for these changes

- Create the world's largest highly protected area in the Coral Sea.
- Protect all the coral reefs, cays and seamounts of the Coral Sea by extending the highly protected zone further west and to the southern and northern boundaries of the reserve.
- Protect Australia's largest trough system which hosts spawning aggregations of large pelagic fish by extending the highly protected zone much further west.
- Provide a fair & reasonable financial assistance package to affected commercial fishers.