



# OUR FUTURE SHOALHAVEN

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## **Submission: Draft NSW Mainland Marine Park Network Management Plan 2021-2031**

*Our Future Shoalhaven* is a support network and advocacy group of over 300 people for the Shoalhaven. The objects of which are to:

- 1) Support for the community of the Shoalhaven to campaign for protection of the environment, health, wellbeing and social justice and their interdependencies.
- 2) Advocate for protection of the environment, health, wellbeing and social justice with all relevant bodies and other community agencies / with community, all levels of government, non-government organisations, and business entities.
- 3) Support sustainable interdependencies between community and environment
- 4) Establish a network of individuals and groups with community concerns that accord with our values.

Our Future Shoalhaven (OFS) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the draft NSW Mainland Marine Park Network Management Plan 2021-31 (the draft Plan). We look forward to continuing our engagement with this process when Stage 2 is undertaken.

The primary concern of OFS is that decisions that are made now in the Shoalhaven will lead to a better situation for future communities and environments. Our comments on this draft Plan are with this focus.

Currently the Shoalhaven has two marine parks off its shores: the Jervis Bay Marine Park and a portion of the Batemans Bay Marine Park. The Shoalhaven has a reputation of offering residents and visitors relatively pristine natural environments and these attributes have led to a thriving tourism industry and, particularly in the ocean environment, supports healthy primary industries such as mussel farming, and fishing. **All** of these economic activities depend upon a healthy marine ecosystem which is able to sustain:

- clean water for swimming, surfing, diving, snorkelling, viewing
- healthy fish populations for recreational fishing and commercial fishing
- healthy aquatic ecosystems which feed dolphins, turtles, seals, penguins and marine bird life – all of which make up tourism opportunities, such as the very successful tour boats in Jervis Bay, in the Shoalhaven.

Therefore, it is essential that our marine park management plan works hard toward maintaining this marine ecosystem.

However, contrary to the primary purpose of marine parks in NSW it isn't clear in this draft Plan that the ecosystems of the marine parks will be protected. The current science indicates that the most effective strategy to ensure maintenance of healthy marine ecosystems is to have strongly protected sanctuary zones, and strong compliance.



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We therefore recommend the following changes to the draft Plan.

1. That the Batemans Bay sanctuary zones are re-instated
2. That sanctuary zones are increased to 30% of the marine park area, in line with international thought that 30 to 50% of our oceans and aquatic ecosystems need to be **protected** (Rovellini & Shaffer 2020).
3. The draft Plan follow the TARA more closely in framing the proposed actions and acknowledge the significant threats of fishing, recreational boating, and infrastructure development.
4. The removal of all Actions that aim to enhance or maximise use / extractive use of marine parks. Instead that research is undertaken to assess the impact of current levels of use. Marine tourism has blossomed in recent years with increases in population, desire to get out of city environments to more natural places, and relatively cheaper access to motorised access to the water. This increase should be acknowledged, and the increased threat this presents considered in proposed actions. Anecdotal evidence is that fishing craft have doubled in Jervis Bay over the last 5 years.
5. Cruise ships not be given permission to use Jervis Bay as a port, due to the risk of negative impacts on existing environment, social, cultural and economic values and the need to take a precautionary approach.
6. Increase resources to compliance and research.
7. Detail how progress will be monitored, and a timeline for key activities
8. Include an evaluation of the current status of the marine parks against the primary purpose of marine parks.

The draft Plan is very light on references to current science; this does not make it credible as a management plan for our precious aquatic ecosystems. The plan needs to be rewritten giving greater weight to current science in achieving the primary purpose of marine parks.

Currently the draft Plan reads as if it is the outcome of strong fishing lobbyists, which is reflected in the list of stakeholders and partners. The marine park is for future generations as much as the current generation and it is important that extractive uses do not dominate their management.

Consequently the current draft Plan is highly likely to fail in protecting all the values that it states are important: environmental, social, cultural and economic. Without healthy ocean ecosystems all four of these values will be diminished.

Dr Evan Christen  
President, Our Future Shoalhaven

Rovellini, A. & Shaffer, M.R. 2020 Quantitative targets for marine protection: a review of the scientific basis and applications. Department of Conservation, Wellington. New Zealand.