

**From:** [Paul Aubin](#)  
**To:** [Committee, EC \(SEN\)](#)  
**Subject:** Senate Inquiry into GBR Management  
**Date:** Monday, 2 June 2014 11:53:21 PM  
**Attachments:** [CAREFISH description.pdf](#)  
[CAREFISH Submission Strategic Assessment GBRMPA 31.01.2014.pdf](#)

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# CAREFISH

## CAirns REcreational Fishing Industries StakeHolders

2 June 2014

**Committee Secretary**

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Senate Inquiry into GBR Management**

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**CAREFISH** is a group of stakeholders having business and environmental interest in the condition of the GBR. We have studied the documents available during (and well beyond) the Strategic Assessment process and attended multiple workshops and meetings, and we have made our own observations over decades of interaction with the environment of the GBR, primarily out of Cairns.

We feel there is inadequate scope for the GBRMPA to adequately manage the GBR, and unfortunately see the condition of the management area declining further. We've gone to great lengths to point this out and offer some solutions. Many in the science world with interest in all this agree with most of our views.

Without rewriting our extensive submission made to the Strategic Assessment, it is resubmitted in its entirety here as attachment.

Our understanding of the major basic problems causing the declines in the health of the GBR are

- 1/ Water Quality
- 2/ Habitat Destruction
- 3/ Over harvesting by commercial fisheries
- 4/ Global Warming

Our focus has been on the over harvest issues, as we believe it plays a significant and dominant role obviously in mortality of species therefore declining abundance, therefore declining vitality. It is clear to us that precautionary principles have been manipulated to facilitate commercial and economic outcomes over an extended time at the hefty cost to the environment, as well as social values and tourism experience.

We have been repeating these concerns for decades and still we are not heard.

Our main recommendations to address commercial overharvest are

- 1/ Provide GBRMPA with the tools and necessity to manage the GBRMP **‘WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR’**. Currently they are not a truly independent Authority and are weak in their decision making capability from fear of government reprisal.
- 2/ GBRMPA **MUST** take control or joint control of all commercial enterprises within the GBR. Currently GBRMPA have NO control or significant input into the State run fishery within the Park, and therefore NO control over extraction (mortality).
- 3/ The coastal fishery has to be managed on a finer spatial scale. Allocating TACC's for the entire coast does nothing to protect species from localised depletions, which have occurred over and over and over.
- 4/ Protection must be given to species at risk. All mega fauna have suffered serious decline and gillnets capture and kill many more than what's reported. Species of philopatric behaviour also suffer greatly from legal localised overharvest especially during spawn and flooding events.
- 5/ Gill nets are at the crutch of the problem (since prawn trawler activity has been rationalised). It is well recognised they are indiscriminate and disastrous to marine species abundance, hence serial depletion over decades leading to the current unsatisfactory situation. Both legal and illegal netting must be significantly curtailed.

The points below (that we have studied) have been briefly answered in blue to indicate our position as a recreational fisher advocacy group.

### **The adequacy of the Australian and Queensland Governments' efforts to stop the rapid decline of the Great Barrier Reef, including but not limited to:**

management of the impacts of industrialisation of the reef coastline, including dredging, offshore dumping, and industrial shipping, in particular, but not limited to, current and proposed development in the following regions or locations:

Gladstone Harbour and Curtis Island, Obviously a very badly handled mess, irritating the

community after outrageous environmental outcomes.

Abbot Point, Seen by the community as big money over riding common sense, and highlighting GBRMPA inadequacy

Fitzroy Delta, and Clearly burning coal and global warming go hand in hand. Creating massive coal facilities is against sensible logic if environmental outcomes are important.

Cape Melville and Bathurst Bay; ditto

management of the impacts of agricultural runoff; Excellent work has been implemented by GBRMPA (Reef Guardians) but decisions like Abbott Point make participants wonder why they bother.

management of non-agricultural activities within reef catchments impacting on the reef, including legacy mines, current mining activities and practices, residential and tourism developments, and industrial operations including Yabulu; The first test for all activities ought to be environmental sustainability, provided improvement in GBR health is desired over decline.

ensuring the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has the independence, resourcing and capacity to act in the best interest of the long-term health of the reef; Absolutely it should. It should be able to say NO to Abbott Point etc and that should be the end to it. The application process should not have proceeded anywhere near as far as it has. This will continue to be a toxic legacy for both gov and GBRMPA, not to mention the environment

the adequacy, timeliness and transparency of independent scientific work undertaken to support government decisions impacting the reef; GBRMPA do not even listen to their OWN scientists on fisheries issues. There are not that many independent fisheries scientists working the scene. Some are considered 'hired guns' others have ideological (or other) agendas and the good guys don't seem to get much traction. Politics and science are not good bedfellows.

whether government decision processes impacting the reef are consistent with the precautionary principle; OBVIOUSLY NOT. OUTRAGEOUSLY NOT! Why else would it be declining? Take coral trout as one glaring example. In the last 20 years somewhere between 50 and 100 MILLION trout have been killed in the name of commercial harvest. All from the GBR! Absolutely NO precaution was placed on the developmental fishery. Years after serial depletion was identified, a TACC was implemented WAY OVER WHAT WAS BEING HARVESTED. Recently another lower TACC has been applied WAY OVER THE

HARVEST LEVEL, whilst it continues to fall. FQ has a terrible history in the application of the precautionary principle in almost all species.

whether the strategic assessments currently underway are likely to protect the reef from further decline; It may do some good on water quality and habitat destruction but it did not address commercial extraction and that was a serious error in judgement and was the cause for bitter backlash from those studying the subject. My understanding is that the finished Strategic Assessment and Programme Report will not make any serious comment on the problem of overharvest and this will further disenfranchise those that advocate for positive environmental outcomes.

the identification and protection of off-limits areas on the reef coastline to help protect the health of the reef; There is serious roting of almost all protected areas by both recreational and commercial fishers, as well as so called traditional hunting. These must be addressed.

consistency of efforts with the World Heritage Committee's recommendations on what is required to protect the reef; It is unlikely the State will comply in any meaningful way, little confidence is felt there. We'll have to see what will happen at a Federal level but the Abbott Point decision was not a good indication especially as it was announced in the middle of the Strategic Assessment process, which was implemented to advise decision makers better. Clearly, as the process was not nearly complete, it could not serve that purpose, therefore the decision to allow it to proceed is seen as a pre determined one. At least GBRPMA took the Strategic Assessment and Report seriously, as opposed to the State effort.

the extent to which government decisions impacting the reef, including development of the strategic assessments and Reef 2050 Plan, involve genuine, open and transparent consultation with the Australian community, affected industries and relevant scientific experts, and genuine consideration of the broader community's views in final decisions; and [we shall see](#)

any other related matters.

Submissions should be received by 2 June 2014

Paul Aubin

**CAREFISH**

**Cairns Bed n Boat**

**Rent a Reef Boat**