

Australian Greens' additional comments:

Warming oceans – the canary in the coal mine

1.1 The Australian Greens would have preferred the committee's report to have been titled "Warming oceans – the canary in the coal mine". This cuts straight to the point: our carbon emissions—especially from burning coal—are the primary cause of our warming oceans; and the consequential and terrible impacts on our fisheries and biodiversity. We are disappointed that the major parties would not agree to this. This is symptomatic of a bigger problem where the role of coal is continually downplayed as a result of bipartisan political support for the industry in this country.

Funding of the RV *Investigator* and GBRMPA

1.2 Whilst the Australian Greens accept the committee's recommendations that the Government should review funding for research into the impacts of climate change on our oceans, increased funding should be provided without delay:

- for the RV *Investigator* to conduct a full year of scientific ocean research (above the current 180 days); and
- to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for more scientific research on the impacts of coral bleaching, ocean acidification and other climate impacts.

1.3 With the World Heritage Committee looking at the future health of the Great Barrier Reef—and, more broadly, the health of the world's coral reefs—and a potential 'world heritage in danger' listing within two years, now is the time to commit funds to conduct the necessary surveys and research and development. A recent review into Australia's climate science capability by the Australian Academy of Science is just one of a number of pieces of evidence that supports the need for funds to be committed urgently to climate research. To quote Bill McKibben, a world-renowned climate activist, winning slowly is the same as losing.

Recommendation 1

1.4 That the Australian Government provide further funding to increase the number of days the RV *Investigator* can be at sea.

Recommendation 2

1.5 That the Australian Government immediately increase funding provided for researching the effects of climate change and weather, with an emphasis on the marine environment and possible adaptation measures.

An Oceans Commissioner

1.6 The Greens believe a key recommendation from this inquiry should be the immediate appointment of an Oceans Commissioner. Both the public service and the Parliament need an oceans champion, a public figure who can without fear or favour stand up and advocate for the health of our oceans, play a co-ordination role across many government departments, and drive change and action to help fix an ocean that is fast becoming 'broken'.

1.7 The Australian Greens note that the establishment of a National Oceans Commissioner could be compared to the Government's appointment of a Threatened Species Commissioner, which has not been without its detractors. However, we feel that a short consultation process on how the Threatened Species Commissioner position could be better resourced and more independent of government could help remedy this. Similarly, a National Oceans Commissioner should be adequately resourced and have an appropriate degree of independence from government.

1.8 The Australian Greens would also like to see the selection process for an Oceans Commissioner involving a public submissions and nomination process for a suitably qualified person who has broad stakeholder support, to avoid the potential for any political appointments.

Recommendation 3

1.9 That the Australian Government appoint a National Oceans Commissioner.

Recommendation 4

1.10 That, within the first twelve months after the appointment of a National Oceans Commissioner, the Australian Government direct the Commissioner to undertake consultation and report on whether the current allocation of policy, regulatory, coordination and research responsibilities within the Commonwealth public sector is appropriate for addressing the most pressing challenges facing Australia's oceans and seas.

**Senator Peter Whish-Wilson
Chair**