

To Senator Ewen,

Please accept this submission to the enquiry into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008.

My name is Paul Dawson. I am married with 3 children. I grew up on the river bank at Nambucca Heads NSW, and have been living in Qld since 1987 and have enjoyed many of the recreational water activities in this state, especially those involving salt water. I have lived in Brisbane since moving up north, and have fished on a regular basis in that time. Sometimes as regularly as weekly, weather permitting.

My 3 children range from the ages of 15 months to 9 years. The older ones especially enjoy the water activities that are afforded by the bay waters, significantly on our trips over to Peel Island, where we swim, fish and picnic in the protected child friendly waters at Horseshoe Bay.

I come from a long line (excuse the pun) of recreational fisherman, and have enjoyed fishing for as long as I can remember, from those early days on the riverbank with my grandfather (now deceased) to the offshore fishing that is now my focus and takes up much of my spare time. Some call me obsessed and I suppose if you look at the amount of money and time I spend on the sport you could say that. A quick summary - \$25000 on a boat, \$3000 on rods and reels, \$150 per trip offshore = (breakdown) \$120 fuel + \$20 bait + \$5 ice + \$5 hooks etc X 20 trips per year = \$3000/year, \$25000 on a suitable tow vehicle. So I suppose you could label me obsessed, but I and my family really do get a lot of family pleasure from the Bay and offshore waters adjacent to Brisbane and its one of the few recreational activities that a family can enjoy together and that the kids want to go on. If you want to talk about social capital this is one of the few activities families can enjoy together and something that does instill life's lessons.

I am also the vice Commodore of a prominent fishing club in Brisbane (I don't think the name is relevant but to say there are about 150 paying members and between us we have approx. 40 boats. We concentrate on fishing the offshore waters of Brisbane. As an initiative we have raised the minimum length of some species that can be weighed in ourselves, and also reduced the bag on certain species so as to assist with the sustainability of the fish stocks in the area. Quite often we do not catch enough fish to cover our outlays).

As you can imagine the arrival of marine parks has given me cause for concern. My family and myself advocate the need for environmental protection and wish to be able to access the areas of the bay and Great Barrier reef freely, but we also advocate the use of scientific evidence with which to make decisions. I also work in the health industry and in what manner would you look at a change in surgical technique that was based on hear say or guess work and not supported by hard evidence. I don't think you would agree to the change, would you, neither would I, and those that implement without support should question that decision.

I appeal to you to revise the penalty of criminal convictions resulting in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the power the Fishing Inspectors have at the moment. One would have to ask if the inspectors have had sufficient training to wield this power with truth, wisdom, and fairness. I question whether the public's best interests are at heart here, after all isn't that what a politician is working for, is he not an advocate of the people deciding what is best for the benefit of all and not to a preferential group.

I am scared for the future of my children to be able to enjoy this precious resource due to a lack of research, consultation, and evidence base on the changes that are being implemented or intending to be implemented. I realise change is necessary and the environment needs protection but I think that if the current legislation and laws that are in place now were policed and resourced properly this would go a long way to protecting our fishery and waterways.

I hope you find my email useful and if I can assist with any of the issues I have raised please contact me as my family and I really do care about what is happening with the environment and really do want to do what we can to preserve this special place that has so many family values for us.

Thanks
Paul