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C/o - The Haines Group
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The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts by email to eca.sen@aph.gov.au

Senator McEwen, Chair

Re: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008.

Dear Senator McEwan,

As the founder of one of Australia's largest and most awarded marine businesses, I felt compelled to make a submission to the inquiry into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2008.

With a significant personal and financial investment in the fishing and boating industries, it is in my best interest to protect the environment and ensure sustainability.

In my opinion, the proposed amendments will do little to protect the Great Barrier Reef, but rather will cause hundreds of millions of dollars of on going damage to the Australian boating, fishing and tourism industries.

I believe the claim on the Great Barrier Reef is at risk from recreational fishing is an emotional claim and is scientifically unfounded, ill-considered and doesn't address the real issues affecting the area. More government attention should be directed at the *real* problems and addressing these with *real* environmental solutions.

Residential and industrial run-off as well as outboard emissions should take precedence over these closures.

Has the Department considered how the closures will compromise the safety of boaties and their families? Under the new scheme people will have to take their boats further offshore into more dangerous waters to save fish closer to shore that the EPA claim to be threatened but cannot scientifically verify.

In doing so, they run the risk of being convicted and receiving a life-long criminal record. The Amendments do not just ban fishing in a green zone, it bans doing anything that resembles fishing – even turning on a sounder (which is a responsible safety precaution) is banned.

From what I read relating to this law, fishing inspectors will be afforded unrealistic powers to search and even frisk fishermen and women. This is out of balance and needs to be omitted. Fishing and boating is a leisure and recreational activity – not an act of terrorism. Boat enthusiasts should not have to fear the hard arm of the law every time they venture out onto the water.

We all want to see the Great Barrier Reef thrive and prosper, and agree that the area needs careful management – not despotic enforcement of one theology.

I strongly urge the Senate to reconsider this amendment, and work closely with industries who work in and on the Reef to develop a more acceptable management response.

Kind regards,

John Haines Snr

Member of the General Division of the Order of Australia in 2004 for service to recreational boating and the development of national safety standards.