



Australian Government



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
OF MARINE SCIENCE

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8 September 2008

The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Department of the Senate
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Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

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Inquiry into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to this review process. The Australian Institute of Marine science (AIMS) is the primary provider of research supporting management of the Great Barrier Reef and has internationally recognised expertise in coral reef research.

The Bill provides greater clarity on the objectives of GBRMPA by bringing the primary goal of long term ecological sustainability together with subsidiary goals of allowing sustainable use, understanding and education.

As background, AIMS would like to support the zoning approach to management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Our research has shown that 'no take' or green zones are critically important to maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health of this complex and diverse marine region. Two important pieces of evidence are that:

- The rezoning established in 2004 is already having a positive impact on the Reef's fish communities. In less than 2 years following the increase in green zones, coral trout numbers had increased and the biomass had also increased.
- More recently AIMS research indicates that outbreaks of Crown-of-Thorns Starfish (COTS) are nearly 4 times as frequent on reefs that are open to fishing than reefs that are closed to fishing (green zones). This is currently being further investigated by AIMS scientists.

However, the green zones will only work if they are obeyed and there is a need to match the rising level of use of the Reef with continuously improving compliance and enforcement regimes. The legislation provides a much improved framework but there needs to be a focus on the 'tools' required to use the new framework. For example: trained compliance officers, vessels and information systems.

AIMS also supports efforts put in place to increase transparency, accountability and community consultation. However, it should be noted that there are costs associated

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with these initiatives which are impacting investment in R&D. Improving the information flow to the public, the parliament and the industrial users of the Reef requires enhanced efforts in research and monitoring.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Poiner". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Dr Ian Poiner
Chief Executive Officer