



MEDIA STATEMENT

Recreational fishers declare war on ‘Aquatic apartheid’

Recfishwest has declared war on what it calls ‘aquatic apartheid’. Recfishwest says that it has had enough of the government’s irresponsible planning process for marine parks.

Recfishwest feels cheated by a process which specifically targets recreational fishing but which excludes them from reasonable input into the development of the plans.

Executive Director of Recfishwest, Frank Prokop said. “While the marine planning process in Western Australia is not racially motivated, it seeks to segregate the users of the aquatic environment, condemning recreational fishers to the poorest areas in a similar unfair way.”

Recfishwest had been previously disgusted at the gross injustices regarding among other issues the lack of recreation zones in the Jurien Bay Marine Park. However more recent processes have been even worse.

There is a proposal to exclude recreational fishers from 95% of the inshore fishing areas at the Rowley Shoals with absolutely no consultation with groups such as Recfishwest. When Recfishwest queried this, we were told it was because one dive charter operator didn’t see any of the already protected hump-headed Maori wrasse on one day.

Recfishwest’s submission on Rowley Shoals has not even been acknowledged yet we believe that the park is about to be declared.

“The government is clearly hoping that Rowley Shoals is too far away for it to worry about community accountability. The plan they have proposed will be extremely expensive for compliance and CALM have no credibility in this regard with the community.” Mr Prokop said.

Recfishwest claims that Ningaloo is an even bigger disaster.

“We believe that the proposed northern extension to the Ningaloo Marine Park, to include the Murion Islands as a Marine Management Area, cannot include sanctuary zones as have been proposed. The New Horizons document clearly states that a marine management area cannot exclude activities including recreational fishing.”

The irony is that the Fisheries Department already has a protected area at South Muiron Island which would either have to be excised from the marine management area or revoked.

“This clearly demonstrates that Fisheries legislation is the most suitable for managing the aquatic resources of this state. The Fisheries Department has also shown a willingness to work with fishing interests rather than continually attacking them and their activities.”

Mr Prokop said.

In Ningaloo there are sanctuary zone proposals that ban fishing to allow exclusive access to snorkellers.

“I ask you, which is likely to damage the environment more, an angler drifting a bait through the area or a dive boat that has to drop an anchor on the delicate coral?”

Recreational fishing is under attack in the Dampier Archipelago, Rowley Shoals, Ningaloo and the Cape to Cape region. Recfishwest has joined with the commercial fishing industry to express concerns about the Cape to Cape planning process.

“It is clear to us that the Premier is getting very poor advice on the extent of community outrage over the discrimination against recreational fishers in the marine parks planning process. The Premier was quick to squash the irresponsible Rottnest Island sanctuary zone proposals but does not see that the CALM processes are even more discriminatory.”

Recfishwest is calling on all recreational fishers to let the Premier know that it is essential that marine parks that have community support include adequate involvement of recreational fishers. Otherwise recreational fishers will become extinct in Western Australia.

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