

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Estuaries die while Marine Parks fly**

There is increased community concern about the lack of action by the government on estuarine health throughout the South-west.

“Recreational fishers, together with all Western Australians, demand effective action to save the environment of our estuaries,” Recfishwest’s executive director Frank Prokop said today.

“We are absolutely disgusted by the different treatment of marine conservation and what happens in our rivers and estuaries,” said Frank Prokop. “Western Australia’s coastal marine waters are in good condition. The recently released Government discussion paper on biodiversity conservation confirmed that with the exception of enclosed areas like Cockburn Sound or Peel-Harvey estuary, the marine environment is in particularly good health.”

Similarly the report ‘Status of Coral Reefs of the World 2004’ says that Western Australian coral reefs are in good condition and are exposed to fewer local impacts than other reefs around the world. However, where does our government put almost all its efforts? Spurred on by the propaganda of some environmental lobbyists, most of the effort has gone into the easy fix of establishing marine parks and marine sanctuary areas!”

Mr Prokop says that the government as well as the Departments of Environment and Conservation and Land Management are letting down present and future West Australians. “We are all aware of the sorry story of pollution and algal blooms in the Swan-Canning in recent years but tragically the same thing is happening in other estuaries and rivers between Geraldton and Albany.”

Recfishwest believes that the new Swan and Canning River protection legislation will not adequately address the catastrophic declines by requiring long periods for consultation and other delaying procedures rather than reflecting the community’s clear desire to improve the rivers and estuaries.

Mr Prokop believes that anti-fishing sentiment in some parts of the community plus a desire to capitalise on association with Western Australia’s iconic marine attractions is distorting government conservation priorities.

“While CALM are concentrating on locking people out of environmentally healthy areas like the Rowley Shoals and Ningaloo, our estuaries are being overwhelmed with excessive nutrient inflows and the destruction of wetlands and fringing vegetation which is needed to buffer such damaging influences.”

Recfishwest believes rivers and estuaries are seriously threatened compared to a generally healthy coastal marine environment and asks the government to seriously re-examine its environmental priorities, not just in the Swan-Canning system, but throughout the south-west. Recfishwest would be pleased to be involved in any constructive way.

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