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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Recfishwest reject claims marine sanctuaries are the magic bullet for fisheries management**

Western Australia's peak body representing recreational fishers has questioned the validity of research into the value of marine sanctuaries, funded by an international environmental lobby group, and has urged the Federal Government to treat the findings with scepticism.

Recfishwest Acting Executive Director Kane Moyle said the American Pew Environmental Group continued to use its abundant financial power to attempt to influence policy decisions in Australia.

Mr Moyle was responding to comments made by Professor Jessica Meeuwig at a forum in Canberra. He warned the claims of "broad scientific agreement" on the benefits of marine sanctuaries to fisheries were misleading.

"This is yet another attempt by the environmental lobby to manipulate the public into believing marine parks are necessary to protect Australian fish stocks," Mr Moyle said.

"The Pew Environment Group continues to use its significant international financial resources to fund Australian scientists sympathetic to its agenda.

"This is a story we've heard time and again – marine parks are the only way to protect fish stocks. This is a massive overstatement designed to persuade politicians that Australian waters are in serious and immediate danger.

"Whilst we understand the Minister must consider all views, Recfishwest believes scientific opinion remains extremely divided and we would urge him to be wary of broad generalisations."

Mr Moyle said a recent report delivered by the Victorian Auditor-General, Des Pearson, disputed the value of sanctuary zones as a tool for conservation.

Mr Pearson's report found that marine sanctuaries are not a "magic bullet". His audit concluded that effective marine conservation requires a holistic approach with integrated management across catchments and coastal areas.

"Recfishwest agrees with Mr Pearson's position and we believe there's more to managing the marine environment than "fortress conservation" - simply locking away vast areas of the ocean."

Indeed the recreational sector in WA is leading the way with practical conservation measures with their support for Wilderness Conservation Areas within marine parks. When combined with sound fisheries management this provides more than adequate protection for our fish stocks around the State.

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