

fact sheet

Securing Tasmania's Marine Assets

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Tasmania has some of the most unique and diverse marine ecosystems in the world – offshore reefs, drowned river valleys, ancient sponge gardens and towering kelp forests, which provide homes to extraordinary wildlife. These include migratory whales, dolphins, sea birds, and over 600 species of fish including the endangered and utterly unique Handfish.

Yet Tasmania's marine ecosystems are under extreme pressure, limiting the ocean's capacity to perform crucial ecosystem services and threatening a safe and viable future for us all.



Handfish. G.Edgar

The solution to these challenges lies in networks of fully protected marine national parks in key areas, complimented by other efforts such as sustainable fisheries management and action against climate change. Governments, industry, conservationists and scientists agree that these are central to sustaining resilient marine ecosystems and biodiversity. They have also proven successful around the world.

What Have We Got To Lose?

Some of the jobs of a healthy ocean include producing half of the planet's oxygen; providing nourishment and livelihood through a seafood industry; regulating temperature and controlling climatic systems such as rainfall; protecting coasts from erosion; offering medical treatments for diseases like cancer and providing the largest store of carbon in the world.

Currently our oceans and all those services they provide are facing threats from climate change and ocean acidification, invading marine pests, industrial and recreational fishing, pollution and poor coastal management. As the evidence pours in, it is increasingly obvious we must do more, quickly.

The declaration of marine national parks can have a profoundly positive effect.

The Big Picture

In the last ten years, marine protection has been embraced internationally. In 2003 the World Parks Congress called on the international community to establish a global system of effectively managed, representative networks of marine and coastal protected areas by 2012. These must be extensive and include strictly protected areas that amount to at least 20-30% of each habitat. Governments reached international agreement at the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2004 to protect at least 10% of each marine region around the world, to protect biodiversity and sustain the health of our oceans.

In Australia we have committed to establishing a National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA) in 10% of each region by 2012, and Tasmania has adopted the Tasmanian Marine Protected Areas Strategy.

Protecting our oceans is common sense.
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The Opportunity We Can't Afford To Miss

The Tasmanian Together process identified the establishment of a network of marine national parks as a priority for fostering a prosperous and sustainable future. At Maria Island, we already have a marine reserve that rates as world-class for the research conducted there over the years, which is just one of the benefits of a network of fully protected marine national parks. Others include:

- Employment – stability in regional fisheries has positive spin-offs for local economies. These include employment security, families remaining in regional areas to boost community health through school use, and small business ownership.
- Education – centres for marine research spring up around national parks, bringing education opportunities and intellectual capital that offers benefits to the local and national scientific collective. This also provides scope for international exchanges in research.
- Economic and social infrastructure – rangers and park enforcement officers, nature-based tourism operators, educational activities, hospitality and support businesses are a positive and sustainable side-effect of the establishment of marine national parks.
- Resilience – against pest invasions and in the face of the effects of climate change, such as more frequent and damaging storm events, or change in ocean temperature that threatens species-survival. Fully protected marine parks can act as recovery zones and refuges.

Tasmania has seven marine protected areas in the state – the Ninepin Point, Governor Island and Maria Island Marine Protected Areas, the Kent Group, Tinderbox Marine, Port Davey and sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island Marine Reserves. These reserves offer species some, but not full protection with the ensuing benefits.

Using Common Sense

Our unique marine environment supports the livelihood and lifestyle of many Tasmanians. It also supports a vast number of endemic and threatened species. In order to secure the future of our marine assets the Tasmanian Government must act quickly to:

- Implement a public education campaign on the values of Tasmania's marine environment and marine national parks in line with the objectives of the Tasmanian MPA Strategy;
- Conduct a concurrent state-wide inquiry into the establishment of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of marine national parks in line with the Tasmanian MPA strategy and in consultation with local communities, resource users and scientists;
- Substantially increase resources for the management of marine national parks across Tasmania;
- Implement ecosystem-based management and increase public research and resources to ensure a holistic, strategic and sustainable future for the Tasmanian marine environment and the industries and communities dependant on it.

To read more, including a
list of references, please go to:
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