

Briefing Note: *A Statewide Marine Plan for Tasmania*

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Tasmania is a unique and special place, wild in parts and populated in others, nestled inside a spectacular coastline. Our coastal waters are home to some of the highest marine diversity and endemism on earth, including kelp forests, rocky reefs, seagrass beds and sponge gardens. Tasmania's coasts support our economy, including over 3000 jobs, hold cultural significance for First Nations Tasmanians and provide recreation for hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors.

Why do we need a marine plan?

Tasmania's east coast waters are warming four times faster than the global average and as a result we are seeing marine life extending their ranges south. Climate change has led to the decimation of the giant kelp forests and compounded pressures such as spiny sea urchins and the barrens they create.

Fifty percent of scale fish are not harvested sustainably, abalone and crayfish are also overfished, and recreational catch rates and populations of target species are largely unknown. Effluent from fish farms is changing water chemistry resulting in jellyfish and algal blooms. Industrial level noise, loss of amenity, impacts on wildlife, biosecurity risks and marine debris are some of the other concerns associate with this industry.

Poor government regulation is compounding these problems by taking a piecemeal approach to managing our coastal waters. This approach ignores interacting pressures and is allowing marine ecosystems to decline.

What are the current management tools?

To achieve sustainable use of marine ecosystems, current management tools such as fishery stock assessments, catch limits, closed areas and consideration of other uses such as shipping, and land-based industries must be considered in a coordinated manner.

Australia Institute research found overwhelming support among scientists for an integrated approach to marine management, which includes consideration of human activities, impacts and the needs of the environment to remain healthy.

Australia's national objective is to manage 100% of our oceans sustainably, including through use of marine spatial planning (see overleaf).

Tasmanian researchers from IMAS, CSIRO, UTAS and the Centre for Marine Socioecology recommend initiating a coordinated approach to managing our coastal waters by linking and modifying existing sector-based plans into an overarching framework.

What is a marine plan?

A marine plan is a strategic document that supports management decisions. It describes the goals and objectives for an area and outlines when, where, and how these will be met. Comprehensive marine plans integrate different activities and are ecosystem based, allowing for the needs of the environment to remain healthy. They identify current and future objectives for all uses, users and values.

A Plan would provide a framework for guidance and a process for achieving integrated and coordinated planning and management of the marine environment. It would be informed by comprehensive data on environmental, social and economic factors, and established through a science based, consultative, multi-sector marine spatial planning process.

What is marine spatial planning?

Marine spatial planning (MSP) uses mapping to organise marine space and the interactions among uses and between uses and the marine environment. It provides a process for assessing where activities and uses may be compatible or incompatible, and where activities and uses (either individually or cumulatively) conflict. Undertaking a marine spatial planning process can have significant benefits including proactively identifying and reducing conflicts between uses, and between uses and natural values. When done well, MSP supports First Nations communities, industry, and the broader community to participate in marine planning and management. MSP is used internationally and nationally, including in Canada, Europe, New Zealand, the Southern Ocean, the Great Barrier Reef, Victoria and in Australian waters beyond State/Territory jurisdictions.

Next steps

- 1 // Progress on Tasmania's marine planning process stalled in 2014 and needs to recommence.
- 2 // Doing so would help to protect economic, social, cultural, and environmental values by determining where it is appropriate for different activities to occur and which areas are important to protect in order to maintain the overall health of marine ecosystems.
- 3 // Our coasts are in trouble. Climate change, overfishing, impacts from aquaculture, land-based run-off and plastic are some of the pressures impacting Tasmania's coasts.
- 4 // Developing and implementing a comprehensive and integrated State-wide Marine Plan for Tasmania's coasts is the best way to ensure healthy marine ecosystems long-term.

Add your name to the call for a statewide marine plan for Tasmania
<http://theaus.in/marineplan>