



**HUMANE SOCIETY  
INTERNATIONAL**



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF NSW  
protecting nature through community action



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**SAVE OUR MARINE LIFE**

To The Hon Minister for Agriculture & Western NSW  
Adam Marshall MP  
52 Martin Place  
Sydney NSW 2000  
2020

15th May

**Re: Batemans Marine Park amnesty and rezoning of sanctuary zones**

We write about your decision in December last year to put in place an amnesty from prosecution for illegal fishing in certain Batemans Marine Park sanctuary zones. As national, state and local conservation organisations, some of us with strong ties to the local South Coast community, we strongly oppose moves to wind back sanctuary protections and are seeking a meeting with you to discuss the future of Batemans Marine Park.

We are deeply concerned that the amnesty decision was made without consultation with the community, local marine park officers, the Batemans Marine Park Advisory Committee, the Marine Estate Management Authority or their scientific advisors, the Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel. This lack of consultation and transparency is in direct contrast to the policy and rhetoric of the Marine Estate Management Authority.

The decision was also made outside the review of the Marine Estate initiated by your Government in 2014 as well as outside the processes of the ongoing review of the Batemans Marine Park management plan. This complex and controversial process of reform, focused on Batemans Marine Park, requires significant buy-in from the community and the Batemans Marine Park Advisory Committee. Having a rezoning proposal operating at the same time outside the management plan pilot process undermines the Government's reform package and jeopardises any community confidence around the future management of the marine park.

Marine parks are vital assets for many coastal communities and a flourishing Batemans Marine Park supports diving, fishing and boating businesses, particularly around Montague Island. It also supports tourism accommodation, hospitality and aquaculture industries. At a time when the South Coast community and local business are still suffering from the devastating bushfire season and more recently COVID, nature-based tourism and a healthy Marine Park should be

supported and promoted, not impaired. Any changes to existing measures of protection must have scientific justification, as well as community support.

This decision to wind back sanctuary zones threatens long-term detrimental consequences for the marine park. Locally, the survival of marine species and habitats in Batemans Marine Park are now threatened as a result of this decision. In particular, critically endangered grey nurse sharks are now at greater risk because sanctuary zones offered a refuge from the threat of incidental hooking.

There is widespread agreement that sanctuary zones support healthy fisheries. By acting as breeding zones they actually have flow-on benefits for recreational fishing in surrounding fishing areas. Weakening sanctuary zone protections will also impair the resilience of the South Coast marine environment to deal with the increasing impacts of climate change and bushfires as well as the long-standing problem of urchin barrens.

More broadly, the use of methods that are inconsistent with the spirit of the Government's own legislation and that preempt the principle of transparent consultation has undermined the integrity and credibility of marine park reform across the state and country. It will only tend to create more conflict at a time when calm discussion and consultation could lead to lasting solutions supported by the whole community.

The small group of people advocating the roll back of Marine Park sanctuary zones in Batemans cannot be said to represent the interests of all marine park users in the South Coast community. The pilot process for reviewing marine parks moving forward must involve consultation and a focus on harmonising the community rather than dividing it. It is important to note that the vast majority of recreational fishers support marine sanctuaries in NSW.

As a result, we urge you to lift the amnesty and proceed with the management plan pilot program only and carry out your responsibilities under the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014* through proper consultation with scientists, the Marine Estate Management Authority, all members of the Batemans Marine Park Advisory Committee and a broad range of user groups within the community.

With this in mind, we request a meeting to discuss with you the following:

- Why there must be no winding back of sanctuary zones in Batemans Marine Park
- How best to proceed with the management plan pilot program
- How to ensure proper engagement with the Advisory Committee, the Marine Estate Management Authority and the Marine Expert Knowledge Panel
- How best to engage with the community in light of COVID-19
- The most appropriate direction for the Marine Park in light of the bushfire recovery and COVID-19 response.

Please contact Sharnie Connell ph: 0449 193 993 to organise a meeting when it is safe to meet in person in light of COVID-19.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'Sharnie Connell', is positioned above the typed name. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract.

Sharnie Connell  
Senior Campaigns Officer  
National Parks Association NSW