



**HUMANE SOCIETY
INTERNATIONAL**



**Nature
Conservation
Council**
The voice for
nature in NSW



Coastwatchers
Eurobodalla's voice for nature



SAVE OUR MARINE LIFE

The Hon. Minister for Energy and the Environment
Matt Kean, MP
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000
2020

15th May

Re: Batemans Marine Park amnesty and rezoning of sanctuary zones

We write about the alarming decision by the NSW Government in December last year to put in place an amnesty from prosecution for illegal fishing in a number of 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 any move to wind back sanctuary protections and are seeking a meeting with you to discuss the future of the Batemans Marine Park.

We acknowledge the amnesty decision was made primarily by the Minister for Agriculture, the Hon. Adam Marshall MP, but the *Marine Estate Management Act 2014* gives you a key role in making decisions with regard to marine park management. Rezoning proposals are of the highest importance and should not be allowed to proceed without your concurrence. As Minister for the Environment over the past year you have shown an eagerness to promote the terrestrial environment and we thank you for your advocacy. However, the critical role of marine parks and in particular fully protected sanctuary zones cannot be undervalued and urgently requires your attention and advocacy.

Providing concurrence to a decision that winds back sanctuary zones has long-term detrimental consequences. Locally, the health 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.

Further, we are deeply concerned that the amnesty decision was made without any 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.

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 as it deals with the increasing impacts of bushfires and climate change, as well as the long-standing problem of urchin barrens.

More broadly, moves to reduce sanctuary protections subvert the integrity and credibility of marine park reform across the state and country. Despite some more recent drawbacks, the Liberal Party has made important contributions to marine conservation, particularly through the establishment of Australia's Oceans Policy and the ongoing commitment and delivery of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA). We urge you not to undermine this legacy.

Community support for marine parks, and sanctuary zones within them, is extremely high across all sectors of the community, as shown in the Government's own research. Support for sanctuary zones in most marine parks is at 80% or higher. Healthy marine parks and sanctuary zones also support nature-based tourism, one of the biggest drawcards to the South Coast, which now needs government support and promotion more than ever.

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

- Why there must be no winding back of sanctuary zones in Batemans Marine Park and your role in providing concurrence
- How best to proceed with the management plan pilot program
- How to ensure proper engagement with the Marine Park 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 zoom meeting while the COVID-19 measures are in place.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'Sharnie Connell', is placed over a light pink rectangular background.

Sharnie Connell
Senior Campaigns Officer
National Parks Association NSW