



Marine Park plan sets bright tourism future for Great Sandy region, says Coalition

For immediate release: Tuesday 27 August 2019

A coalition of recreational fishers, conservationists and tourism leaders want commercial fishing nets removed from the Great Sandy Marine Park's conservation zone as part of a plan that would also see marine sanctuaries expanded.

The Coalition, which includes some eleven recreational fishing groups and the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS), have mapped out a future for the Great Sandy Marine Park that could boost the region's reputation as one of Australia's premiere nature tourism and recreational fishing destinations.

Representatives from many of the groups will hold a meeting at the Beach House Hotel in Hervey Bay on Wednesday 28 August to reveal and discuss their full proposal.

The Queensland Government's Department of Environment and Science is currently reviewing the way the marine park is managed after closing a public consultation period on 25 February 2019

Scott Mitchell, of the Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance, said: "Our Fraser Coast and the Great Sandy Marine Park has some of the most diverse fishing around thanks to this amazing marine environment. Right now, commercial gillnetting is allowed in 'yellow conservation zone' areas. That doesn't make sense and we don't know of any other marine park in the country that allows gillnetting in conservation park zones.

"Commercial netting should not be allowed in conservation park zones that are supposed to protect marine life and habitat. Officially it's called the 'Designated Great Sandy Area' but it's an anomaly that just doesn't belong in a marine sanctuary. It needs to be removed without exception."

“With that area gone, we have genuine sanctuary habitat areas that support fish populations. The Fraser Coast will then become a drawcard for fishers from across Australia and the rest of the world, as we’ve seen in other net-free areas in QLD. More fish means more visitors, more tourism and more jobs. That’s why this government review is so crucial.”

Keith Reid of Freedom III Whale Watch and Charters said: “The Great Sandy is a natural playground attracting significant tourism dollars and jobs to the region. Our reputation relies on a healthy environment full of life. With less than four per cent of the area protected and harmful gillnetting continuing to take its toll on our fish and special animals like turtles and dugongs, I am concerned about our future. This must change if we are to grow our local tourism economy. This marine park review gives us a crucial chance to get it right.”

Adele Pedder, AMCS marine parks campaign manager, said: “The Great Sandy is critical habitat for threatened wildlife like turtles, dolphins, dugongs and shorebirds. We are asking for ten per cent of the park to be put aside as marine sanctuary to give fish and wildlife some protection. Research has shown that when you have areas protected, you have as much as five times as many fish in the water. All that boosts the nature tourism jobs in the area.”

Also on Wednesday, the alliance’s plan to better manage and protect the Great Sandy Marine Park will be made public. Groups behind the plan are:

Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance
Australian Marine Conservation Society
Caravanning Queensland
Noosa Parks Association
WWF
Friends of Burrum River System Group Inc
Sea Turtle Foundation
Queensland Conservation Council
Sunfish Queensland
Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland
Queensland Recreational Fishing Network
Queensland Wader Study Group
Birdlife Southern Queensland
Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council
CAREFISH (Cairns Recreational Fishing Industry Stakeholders)
Cooloola Coastcare Association

ENDS

AMCS media advisor Graham Readfearn 0406 241 081
Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance spokesperson Scott Mitchell 0428 484 499