



## **Marine Reserve Network Proves a Mixed Bag for the WA Fishing Industry**

22 March 2018

The Western Australian Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) noted yesterday's release of the Commonwealth Government's final decision on its Marine Reserve Network.

John Harrison, CEO of WAFIC, said the decision represents a mixed bag for the WA fishing industry –including sensible proposals that support the industry but disappointing results in Geographe and Bremer Bay zones that will impact on fishers losing part of their livelihoods.

“On a positive note we are pleased that zones in the South West in deep water will be amended to allow for pelagic fishing activities such as longlining to continue.”

“Whilst there is currently a low level of activity, the amendments will preserve the prospectivity of these waters for future sustainable fishing.”

“It will also preserve the practical operations of current longlining in that lines that drift into these zones will be permitted,” he said.

Disappointingly, Mr Harrison said that the Government, in its final decision, chose to ignore the advice from its Expert Scientific Panel and has subsequently banned shark fishing and scallop trawling in the Geographe Bay and Bremer Bay zones respectively.

“It is a disappointing result to see a ban implemented in both the shark fishing and scallop trawling in the Geographe and Bremer Bay zones.”

“The Panel had advised the Government that both these activities were consistent with the maintenance of conservation values in each of these zones,” he said.

“It is also disappointing that the Government has maintained access for the oil and gas industries in the 80 Mile Beach Zone despite the critical importance of this area to the South Sea Pearling industry.”

“The zone contains extensive oyster shell beds that are the foundation for the pearl industry. Oil and gas activities are not consistent with the maintenance of these beds which are extremely sensitive to disturbance,” he said.

Mr Harrison said that given the impact of these decisions WAFIC is calling on the Government to release an adjustment package for those fishers who will lose some of their livelihood as a result of the Government's decisions to ban certain fishing methods.

"The fact that no adjustment package has been released is particularly disappointing."

Mr Harrison concluded by saying that the results mark the culmination of a decade plus of exhaustive discussions and negotiations over the design of the Commonwealth's Marine Reserve Network.

"We are pleased that this has come to a conclusion with a generally reasonable outcome of balanced access and conservation."

"The hard work of turning these plans into practical reality will now begin," he said.

**(Ends)**

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