

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Wednesday, 1 June 2011**

## **Stop playing politics with marine parks say conservation groups**

The NSW government's roll back of protection at Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks represents an unprecedented attack on marine protected areas, according to Australia's leading conservation groups.

A coalition of 47 groups has condemned the State government's roll back of sanctuary zones as a cynical political move and a dangerous precedent in marine reserve management nationally.

Nature Conservation Council of NSW, Chief Executive Officer, Pepe Clarke said, "The NSW government has justified winding back protection measures at Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay on the basis that the re-zonings earlier this year were rushed through and not based on thorough community consultation.

"Today a community of 47 conservation groups representing more than 190,000 community members refutes these claims as entirely unfounded.

"Protections for the Solitary Islands and Jervis Bay marine parks were increased following extensive community consultation, including a review of almost 10,000 submissions and 70 stakeholder meetings attended by hundreds of people.

"The zoning plans introduced earlier this year represent a strong balance between conservation, recreational fishing and commercial fishing needs. Weakening sanctuary protection is out of step with the overwhelming majority of people in NSW who support marine parks as vital havens for our marine life," he said.

Australian Marine Conservation Society, Marine Campaigns Officer, Tooni Mahto said, "Far from taking the politics out of marine parks as claimed, the NSW Government is putting them centre stage in a process that has, to date, been driven by science not political whim.

"Their claims of a marine parks policy based on science not politics are highly questionable. The NSW government is clearly demonstrating that it isn't listening to the science, so how can the public have faith in their approach to marine conservation?" she said.

National Parks Association of NSW Executive Officer Kevin Evans said, "Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson has claimed the re-zoning was 'rushed' and did not consider local community views. This claim is more than misleading, it is disrespectful to the thousands of people who participated in a two year process that led to better protection of threatened species, other marine life and their habitat.

“The community understands the importance of marine parks in safeguarding the long-term future of their favourite fishing and swimming locations. A truly independent and non-political scientific review of marine parks is an essential step for informed community participation in the ongoing management of our precious marine parks,” he said.

**Contacts**

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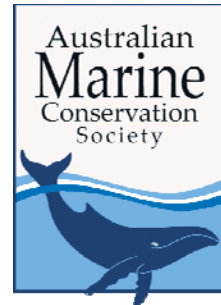
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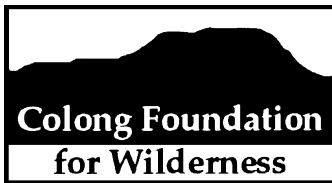


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The Conservation Council

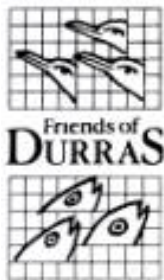


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