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Contact: Secretary 0407 207 441

Dr Leanne Fernandes PhD
Acting Director – Marine Park Planning Section
Marine Park Policy, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
email: consultation@gbmpa.gov.au

31 January 2023

Dear Dr Fernandes,

RE: DRAFT POLICY ON FISH AGGREGATING DEVICES AND ARTIFICIAL REEFS

The Whitsunday Conservation Council (WCC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft policy on Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) and Artificial Reefs in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The WCC is an umbrella organisation associated with a large number of Whitsunday based conservation groups. Our membership currently stands at 250. We fill the gap between the Mackay Conservation Group and the North Queensland Conservation Council (based in Townsville). We also work closely with the Queensland Conservation Council.

In general, we support the policy as it currently stands. Artificial reefs and FADs have no place in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area.

The Background section of the draft policy (paragraphs 21 to 33) highlight many important points supporting this policy, particularly paragraph 25 which states, *“the management effectiveness of fishing is generally assessed as stable, however, the outcomes achieved are poor. Fishing and illegal fishing are already identified as high and very high risks to Marine Park values and indicative of the need for improved management.”*

Artificial reefs and FADs have proven to be very effective at concentrating fish populations, making them easy targets for both commercial and recreational fishing. By prohibiting artificial reefs and FADs, GBRMPA has taken an important step that will help fish populations recover from overfishing and illegal fishing.

Paragraphs 27 thru 30 explain how the current science shows that the potential risks outweigh the potential benefits. The science cannot be ignored.

We also support that underwater artwork will be designated artificial reef and as such, prohibited in the Marine Park.

As you would be aware, artwork was introduced in the Whitsundays shortly after Cyclone Debbie as a tourism attraction. What may have seemed like a good idea at the time, has proven to be entirely ineffective and provides no benefit to the marine ecosystem.

We congratulate GBRPMA for recognising the ineffectiveness of artwork in the Marine Park and then ruling against a precedent.

By doing so, GBRMPA has put the health of the Reef first and foremost.

Sincerely,



Faye C Chapman
Secretary
Whitsunday Conservation Council
0407 407 441



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COUNCIL

Caring for the future is in our nature

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