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Marine Estate Management Authority
C/o NSW Department of Primary Industries
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RE: HAWKESBURY SHELF MARINE BIOREGION – MARINE PARK PROPOSAL

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Hawkesbury Bioregion Marine Park proposal. Randwick Council provides the following feedback on the proposal to establish a multi-use marine park for the Hawkesbury Shelf Marine Bioregion.

Proposed Marine Park zonings

Overall Council is supportive of the Marine Park Proposal to enhance the conservation of marine biodiversity and maximise environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits to the NSW community.

Council recognises that the uses within a Marine Park in this highly populated bioregion requires a balanced approach developed in consultation with the community and key stakeholders.

For example it is important to recognise the long recreational rock fishing heritage, as well as diving, swimming and boating activities in areas such as Gordons Bay and Clovelly.

It is noted that all rock fishing would be prohibited by the proposed sanctuary zones applicable to the Randwick area and would exclude recreational fishing from popular rock fishing locations within the Reserve such as Shark Point at Clovelly and Henry Head at La Perouse.

Council supports a line fishing ban in the highly popular sections of the Aquatic Reserves to reduce user conflict with swimmers/divers. However Council also recognises that line fishing may be feasible in other areas of the Reserves where there are no or a low number of swimmers/divers, however this has not been determined to date and requires further investigation. Subsequently Council recommends that this be addressed via the Management Planning process for the proposed Marine Park.

Similar to the approach taken for the Bronte Coogee Aquatic Reserve, consideration should be given to allowing line and boat fishing in restricted locations as part of the Management planning process for the Cape Banks Aquatic Reserve.

Council also notes that the proposed conservation zone is to extend 3 nautical mile out to sea and this will impact on boat based fishing activities held by local fishing clubs; within the Aquatic Reserve there are two fishing clubs Gordon's Bay and Coogee and Council has provided support to these organisations to ensure their ongoing recreational activities.

Council questions the practicality of zones being delineated by water depth contours rather than distance from land. For example the conservation zone adjacent to the sanctuary zone at Bronte Coogee Aquatic Reserve is delineated by the 50m depth contour. Recreational fishers are unlikely to have access to technology/devices to measure this depth and hence interpret the extent of the various zones.

Council is concerned that the proposed conservation zone in the Bronte Coogee Aquatic Reserve from a 50m depth contour may encourage recreational fishers to attempt to fish for eastern rock lobster and abalone in this location at these unsafe depths. Council notes that the regulations specify that lobster traps must not be used in inland waters or any waters more than 10 m deep so this restriction would not be applicable within the conservation zone. Council also notes that the 50m depth is beyond safe recreational diving limits. Subsequently Council would like to seek a reconsideration of the purpose and feasibility of this proposed zoning in this section of the Aquatic Reserve during the Management Plan development process.

Management Plan for the Marine Park

The NSW Marine Environmental Management (MEM) Act requires the development of a Management Plan (MP) for the Marine Park. Council notes that a single MP is proposed for the 25 sites of the Marine Park.

Council recommends that this plan should be developed collaboratively with Councils and the community and that the NSW Government commit to deliver this in a timely manner. The Management Plan should specifically address the management of the individual sites to ensure their unique characteristics are recognised and addressed. For example within the Bronte Coogee Aquatic Reserve the MP should address the importance of the Blue Groper and Weedy Sea Dragon species.

This MP should also address any ambiguity and uncertainty regarding the zoning management and regulation of the Marine Park to ensure clarity over potential permissibility of usage.

A collaborative agency approach is necessary on the management of the Marine Park to address required compliance and enforcement activities.

Council recommends that a Management Plan for the Marine Park be prepared as a matter of priority and should be developed in close consultation with relevant Councils and the communities with a commitment to deliver it within 12 months of gazettal of the Marine Park.

Grey Nurse Shark Habitat

Critical habitat of Grey Nurse Shark at Magic Point Maroubra, by definition is essential for the survival of the species. However, Council notes that this site has not been included in the 25 sites listed under the proposed Marine Park.

Given that the Grey Nurse Shark is listed as Critically Endangered in the Fisheries Management Act 1994 and the east coast population is also listed as critically endangered in the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, Council requests that this site be included in the Marine Park proposal. This will ensure consistency and certainty for the community for the protection of the Grey nurse shark habitat in the long-term.

Community Awareness of Proposal

It is important that the public is made fully aware of the locations of marine protected areas and the management rules that govern these sites.

Easily interpreted signage for the public to understand would be encouraged. It is also important that compliance officers in both State and local government are appropriately trained and resourced so that new requirements under the Marine Park are implemented.

The success of MPAs and zones is highly dependent on community support and regulation. Council is concerned that there is currently a lack of detail on how regulation will be undertaken and resourced. Hence, Council is of the opinion that it is very important that the Marine Estate Management Authority and associated State Government agencies have sufficient resources to effectively manage the proposed Marine Park.

Council is supportive of the development of an education program so that the local community and relevant stakeholders are aware of the new park and associated zones in the Randwick LGA. Council has supported educational workshops and provided marine biodiversity signage at key locations. With significant visitation/tourism to the area there is a need for appropriate and targeted education activities and programs to influence a large number of visitors.

Further consideration should be given to renaming the proposed Marine Park to facilitate a greater understanding of its geographic application e.g. the Greater Sydney Marine Park.

Management of Marine Park Areas

Council notes that the size of the area proposed as a non-extractive zone (Sanctuary Zone) within the Marine Park as a whole is approximately 2.4% of the bioregion and that well managed Marine Park Areas, particularly no-take zones, can provide protection against population decline for hundreds of species if well designed.

Council is of the opinion that more work is needed to refine these sanctuary and conservation zone boundaries during the Management Planning process and is of the view that a more balanced approach is taken to ensure all stakeholders including boat and rock based fishing are considered in this process.

Should you have any further questions or wish to discuss any of the comments, please contact David Ongkili Co-ordinator Strategic Planning on 9093 6793.

Yours sincerely

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