

# PRESS RELEASE

## **International Scientists, Other Academics, and Visitors Call on NSW Government to Restore Protection to Marine Sanctuaries**

The NSW government recently decided to allow recreational line-fishing in marine sanctuary zones. The new rules are temporary at present but may be made permanent. Twenty-two academics in a range of scientific and humanistic fields working in the USA, UK, The Netherlands, Israel, Canada, and New Zealand have called on the NSW Government to restore full protection from fishing to all marine sanctuaries in the state.

Those making the call include working scientists, experts on marine ecology, and academics in other fields who have visited NSW. They are joined by leading Australian nature photographer Darren Jew.

A sample of comments in support of the call:

**Professor Roger Hanlon**, Senior Scientist at the Marine Biological Laboratories in Woods Hole, Massachusetts and Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Brown University (USA), has written directly to the NSW government:

I urge you to reconsider your decision to open Marine Sanctuaries to recreational fishing. *Such fishing removes key predators and upsets the entire ecosystem.* You are in a position to exert responsible leadership and stewardship as a model of how the rest of the world should be treating our oceans. Please take that step and fully protect those Marine Sanctuaries.

**Darren Jew**, the Australian Institute of Professional Photography's "Science, Environment and Nature Photographer of the Year" in 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2013:

I've seen incredible regeneration on reefs off the Queensland coast after they've been zoned "no-fishing". Respecting and protecting key marine environments in NSW will ensure the State stays a great place to dive and photograph.

The text of the petition and comments from individual signatories follow below.  
The petition has been coordinated by:

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To: Premier Barry O'Farrell,  
Minister Katrina Hodgkinson (Primary Industries),  
Minister Robyn Parker (Environment)

Dear Premier O'Farrell, and Ministers Hodgkinson and Parker,

We write to urge the NSW Government to restore full protection to the small number of Marine Sanctuaries in NSW, and not to open them up for recreational fishing.

None of us presently live in NSW. We have visited the state in the past, and have good memories of its marvellous marine life, encountered through snorkeling, swimming, and diving. We've spent plenty of money in coastal communities on these visits. Removal of protection from NSW marine sanctuaries will make the state a considerably less attractive option for future trips. We're not interested in getting tangled in fishing lines as we explore NSW waters.

If even a small fraction of the NSW coast is given full and permanent protection from fishing, it will have a significant positive effect on tourist income. Please restore protection to NSW Marine Sanctuaries immediately.

Signatories:

**Professor Nicholas Shea**

King's College  
London, UK.

Although based in the UK, I have twice visited the NSW marine sanctuaries, visiting because of my professional interests in zoology, and to show my family the wonderful marine environment. If this encroachment happens, it is much less likely that I would visit in the future.

**Professor Brian L. Keeley**

Pitzer College  
California, USA:

I currently live in Southern California, USA and have traveled to Australia on at least 4 separate occasions over the past decade, including an extended stay of several months as a Visiting Fellow at the University of Sydney. On all of my trips, I have taken advantage of the opportunities to scuba dive. Indeed, the near pristine nature of many of the dive spots--particularly the presence of marine sanctuaries--in New South Wales is one of the main attractions of coming to the area. Here in Southern California, in my opinion, the only areas worth diving in are the few marine sanctuaries that remain. The rest of the coastal region is too depleted by recreational and commercial fishing to make diving much fun. Instead, I spend the money it takes to travel to NSW to experience the better diving opportunities there. If NSW were to eliminate or limit the existing marine sanctuaries, I fear your underwater environment would no longer remain an attractive option to me and other travelers. You have a valuable resource in your marine environment that is inexpensive to maintain and which pays you dividends in many different ways. I hope you see the value of this and will maintain it.

**Dr Rebecca Fraser**

Department of Earth Sciences  
University of Oxford, UK:

Going home stirs excitement for visiting our iconic coastline and their communities; I will not go if I risk trampling on dumped fish hooks and plastic lines. Let's not be

short-sighted about a valuable resource. Protect our priceless legacy and work at maintaining its high international reputation.

**Associate Professor Patrick Forber**

Tufts University,  
Massachusetts, USA:

I have visited NSW several times and I never miss the chance to snorkel and dive your marine sanctuaries. I have also seen the damage wrought by fishing on marine ecologies elsewhere in the world. Opening marine sanctuaries to fishing risks turning unique dive and snorkel sites into unremarkable, barren marine environments.

**Sylke Nestman**

Department of Biology  
Massey University  
New Zealand:

Opening up the marine sanctuaries (i.e. Byron Bay, Shelly Beach and Jervis Bay) for recreational fishing will lead to the loss of diversity and will destroy ecosystems. This will affect the attractiveness of these regions for visitors. I prefer to visit marine sanctuaries where I can still find a high diversity and an intact ecosystem.

**Alkistis Elliott-Graves**

University of Pennsylvania  
Pennsylvania, USA:

I come from the Mediterranean and I have seen first hand what fishing does to marine sanctuaries. There really would be no point visiting NSW if it became as dead as the Mediterranean.

**Professor Stephen Downes**

University of Utah

Utah, USA:

I have been visiting Manly Beach since the early nineties and was extremely distressed to hear of the opening Manly's Marine Sanctuary to line fishing. This will seriously impact marine life in the short run and long run, due to discarded line and hooks. The latter also jeopardise sea birds. What's more, snorkeling will become much less desirable as well as dangerous. Visitors to Manly (as well as Byron Bay and other beaches with Marine Sanctuaries) will not just be put off by the disastrous decision to allow line fishing, they simply will not come any more.

**Associate Professor Stefan Linquist**

University of Guelph

Guelph, Canada:

Since 2008 I have made annual visits to the Julian Rocks Marine Park, as a snorkeler and scuba diver. In recent years our family has started visiting Jervis Bay Marine Park. Our primary reason for traveling from Canada to these locations is to enjoy the diverse and accessible marine life. These locations are special. Species abundance and diversity is much greater compared to other, comparable locations. It would greatly sadden us to see these regions depleted, and I doubt that we would continue to visit.

**Assistant Professor James Justus**

Florida State University

Tallahassee, Florida, USA:

As a regular visitor to Australia and avid diver, I've experienced some truly amazing marine sanctuaries in NSW. Byron and Jervis Bay in particular are the source of treasured experiences. If such places were destroyed or tarnished, I'd be looking elsewhere to dive and travel in general.

**Dr Brett Calcott**

Johns Hopkins University  
Baltimore, Maryland, USA:

I've had wonderful times snorkelling the protected waters of NSW. If you don't keep them protected, there won't be much to come and see.

**Associate Professor Michael Weisberg**

University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA:

I had hoped to be able to show my son the incredible sanctuaries in NSW, and now I fear I will never have the chance.

**Professor Joshua Lande**

Stanford University  
Stanford CA, USA:

In 2009 I made a memorable visit to Manly Cove, where I saw a range of remarkable marine life. Ever since then I've been planning to return to New South Wales. The proposed policy would certainly give me second thoughts.

**Emily Parke**

University of Pennsylvania  
Pennsylvania, USA:

I have visited Jervis Bay and Byron Bay and hoped to go back over the next years; if the sanctuary is destroyed I will be much less likely to do so.

**Chiara Ellettra Ferrario**

Victoria University

Wellington, New Zealand:

The government should realize that the long-standing value and touristic attractiveness of marine sanctuaries lies clearly in their integrity, which is what most tourists are after when visiting Australia.

**Dr Joeri Witteveen**

Utrecht University and Leiden University

The Netherlands:

I have made two road trips along the NSW coast in recent years, and have enjoyed snorkeling at several of its marine sanctuaries. If the ban on recreational line fishing will be lifted permanently and for all sanctuaries, I will be less inclined to recommend NSW as a holiday destination to friends, and will myself think twice before returning.

**Joyce Havstad**

University of California, San Diego

California, USA:

Having worked on a marine reserve, I've seen firsthand the striking difference between protected coastal environments and those impacted by commercialization. I doubt I'll return to the coast of NSW, should this change take effect.

**Dr Ellen Clarke**

Postdoctoral Research Fellow

Oxford University, UK:

I holidayed at the beaches around the Batemans Bay area in the winter of 2009, while I was visiting the Australian National University with my husband. I expect to visit the area again in the future but would be most unlikely to book holidays at these

destinations if their status as marine sanctuaries is compromised by the introduction of line fishing.

**Assistant Professor Arnon Levy**

Hebrew University

Jerusalem, Israel:

I have visited Manly and Shelly Beach in particular several times. It would sadden me if this lovely marine environment were open to fishing. I would think twice about coming back.

**Dr Deena Weisberg**

University of Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania, USA:

The first time I ever went snorkeling was off the NSW coast, and I have such fond memories of the unique wildlife. I hate to think that others may not have the chance to have those experiences.

**Dr. Matt Bateman**

Franklin and Marshall College

Pennsylvania, USA.

**Associate Professor Karen Bennett**

Cornell University

Ithaca, New York, USA