



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources**

Submission on the Northern Territory Coastal and Marine Management Strategy



Please provide any comments you may have on the Marine Coastal Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Northern Territory Coastal and Marine Management Discussion Paper. In part this response has been prepared by the Marine Pest Unit in the Biosecurity Animal Division and therefore includes a focus on Marine Biosecurity. The Fisheries Branch in the Sustainable Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Division has also provided input to this submission.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources recognises marine biosecurity and ecologically sustainable development as important issues in coastal and marine management.

The department encourages the Northern Territory to include a focus on biosecurity in the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy. Strong marine biosecurity measures support the objectives outlined in the discussion paper by reducing the likelihood of the entry and establishment of exotic marine pests and associated disease risks, being responsive to marine pest incursions and managing established marine pests.

The Department suggests that the Northern Territory may like to consider the merits of reflecting the importance of maintaining the sustainability of fish stocks in the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy. Australia's fisheries are an important resource that must be carefully and sustainably managed for future generations. Fisheries management decisions must be based on the best available evidence and scientific data and we must take steps to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in an effort to maintain healthy fish stocks and look after the marine environment.

1. What do you value most about our coasts and seas?

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources notes that the values identified in the discussion paper (including defence, aboriginal land, liquefied national gas activities, unique islands, aquaculture, subsistence and recreational fishing and sacred marine sites) benefit from biosecurity protection.

Marine biosecurity is a global issue and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has a lead role to ensure Australia implements and maintains border controls to mitigate biosecurity risks that could impact on local environmental, social, cultural and economic values.

2. Are there any other environmental, social, cultural and economic values and benefits do we need to consider when developing the Strategy?

Protecting our marine and coastal areas has significant environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits.

Biosecurity plays a critical role in reducing risk and shaping our nation to become one of the few countries in the world to remain free from the world's most severe pests and diseases.

While our geographical isolation has played a key role in maintaining this status, our isolation as an island nation is rapidly changing. As noted in the discussion paper, the Northern Territory coastline extends for 10,953km and includes 887 islands. As international travel and trade to the territory increases, a focus on maintaining biosecurity is critical to safeguard the Northern Territory from exotic pests and diseases.

Fisheries are a public resource and governments play an important role in conserving our natural resources and to make sure these are managed sustainably into the future. It is important to strike the right balance between conserving our natural resources, protecting marine mammals, protecting the environment, local economic benefits and supporting all sectors of the fishing industry including Indigenous, recreational and commercial fishing.

The Commonwealth promotes the integration of science and economics in decision-making, and participation from all fisheries users in the management of our fisheries to ensure continued success.

The Commonwealth promotes the management of fisheries resources on a stock-centric basis and shared access arrangements between commercial, recreational and Indigenous sectors where multiple jurisdictions fish a shared fisheries resource. The growth of recreational fishing over recent years presents an opportunity to consider both the recreational and indigenous sectors when developing management arrangements for the commercial sector into the future.

3. What are the major opportunities to protect and sustainably develop our coast and seas?

Nil response.

4. Do these challenges reflect the key issues in our coasts and seas?

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources acknowledges the challenges noted in the discussion paper reflect the key issues for Northern Territory. With regards to the biosecurity risks, the department would suggest to further consider the inclusion of risks relating to the introduction of invasive plants and animals particularly in the marine environment.

As Australia maintains a strong reliance on vessels to move people and goods; future forecasts of increases to vessel traffic and changes to movement patterns influence the marine environment and marine pest risk. The expansion of port activities and looking at how vessels (commercial and recreational) move between Northern Territory and overseas and domestic ports could be considered as key issues in coastal and marine management.

The department notes that challenges such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities and environmental concerns regarding marine debris could also be incorporated into the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy.

5. Is the goal appropriate and reflective of the NT needs?

Nil response.

6. Are the guiding principles relevant and appropriate? Is their purpose clear?

Nil response.

7. Are these objectives appropriate and reflective of the key issues?

Nil response.

8. Do these outcomes reflect what you would expect to see in the Strategy?

Nil response

9. Are there additional outcomes you think should be included in the Strategy?

Nil response

10. What kind of partnership arrangements do you think could support the implementation of the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy?

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources is supportive of the approach to implement the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy outlined in the discussion paper. The department will work with the Northern Territory through our existing committees such as Marine Pest Sectoral Committee and the Subcommittee for Aquatic Animal Health and other working groups to provide support to implement the plan where applicable and appropriate.

Additionally, the Department is establishing a Marine Pest Network to enable interested members of the public, scientists, industry and government to work together to improve Australia's marine biosecurity.

These partnerships and collaborations will help facilitate gathering and sharing of information to better identify, assess, communicate and manage the risks of marine pests and support a nationally consistent approach to marine biosecurity.

The Australian Government has committed to reducing red tape and streamlining regulatory processes with particular regards to the fisheries of Northern Australia. As part of this the Australian Government (the Australian Fisheries Management Authority) is currently working with the Northern Territory government to transitioning the management of fisheries from joint arrangements to single jurisdiction management.

11. What is the best way for the community and industry to be involved in management and decision making of our coasts and seas?

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources supports the Northern Territory's approach to engage and include the community and industry in decision making; recognising the shared responsibility principle in managing marine biosecurity and fisheries management.