Queensland Government

Queensland Treasury

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Dear Mr Weinert

Decision Regulatory Impact Statement – *Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan Review*

Thank you for your enquiry of 29 June 2023, and further information to 3 July 2023, regarding the Great Sandy Marine Park Zoning Plan Review Decision Regulatory Impact Statement (DRIS).

Background

The Department of Environment and Science (the department) notes that the Great Sandy Marine Park (GSMP) is a 6,000 square kilometre area of coastal and inshore habitats in the Wide Bay–Fraser Coast Region. The *Marine Parks (Great Sandy) Zoning Plan 2017* (zoning plan) provides a management framework for conservation and sustainable use of the GSMP marine environment. A review has investigated whether the GSMP zoning plan remains effective and efficient in delivering its objectives. A Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement (CRIS) was publicly released on 23 September 2022, including options to address issues of:

- habitat protection—by increasing the area in the protection zones and restricting access and commercial fishing
- competition between recreational and commercial fishing in designated waterways within the conservation zone (known as the Great Sandy Area, GSA)—by removing types of commercial net fishing
- protection of threatened species—by increasing the area in protection zones and restricting recreational activities and commercial net fishing
- protection of cultural and amenity values—by restricting recreational activities in certain areas
- management of Platypus Bay to complement K'gari management—by restricting activities in the bay
- coastal management and alignment with declared Fish Habitat Areas—by addressing inconsistencies in the Conservation Park zone
- offence penalties and a range of other amendments—by increasing maximum penalties for some offences
- the description of the marine park boundary—by using contemporary definitions.

Key features of the recommended options were to prohibit commercial large mesh gill nets and ring nets from conservation zones within the GSA and to increase the area of the GSMP in the highest protection Marine National Park zone from 3.9 to 12.8 per cent.

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Proposal

The DRIS retains the recommended options from the CRIS with adjustments which respond to feedback from stakeholders. Those adjustments modify park zoning and use restrictions to reduce the impacts on some marine park users, including small scale commercial fishing, improve the effectiveness of habitat protection, and enhance cultural values.

The key direct effects of the recommended options are to:

- increase the protection of GSMP habitats and species
- modify and reduce areas available for some existing recreational uses (such as increased go-slow and no-motor vessel zones)
- remove commercial fishing by large mesh gill nets and ring nets from the GSA.

The DRIS includes a cost benefit analysis (CBA) that attempts to identify potential net benefits that arise due to increased recreational fishing from removing commercial gill and ring net fishing. The analysis indicates that:

- the removal of commercial large mesh gill and ring net fishing from the GSA would reduce the current commercial catch within the GSA by an estimated 52 per cent—(144,000 kg of fish per annum) with the majority of that reduction from the removal of large mesh gill nets.
- the additional value of fishing, over and above the resources used, has been estimated to be significantly higher for recreational fishers than for commercial fishing licence holders.

The overall impacts are uncertain and will depend on how commercial fishers and recreational fishers adjust. For the commercial fishing industry, this will depend on how easily the displaced resources, such as employees and processing facilities, can shift to other opportunities; and for recreational fishers, how much the changes encourage their greater use of that resource.

The DRIS indicates that a mitigation package will be made available to the commercial fishing industry to address the impacts. The DRIS also notes that a recent decision has been made, as part of broader policy on the Great Barrier Reef, to phase out the use of large mesh gill nets, which will have potential implications for commercial fishing in the GSMP. The DRIS does not attempt to identify the impacts that arise from that decision.

Consultation

The Department undertook over 40 stakeholder meetings as part of the CRIS and received 1,245 online survey responses and 215 written submissions.

Assessment

In making its assessment of a DRIS, the Office of Best Practice Regulation (the OBPR) has regard to the adequacy criteria specified in *the Queensland Government Guide to Better Regulation* (the guidelines).

The OBPR notes that the DRIS proposes multiple changes for the GSMP zoning plan which are difficult to value, creating challenges for ensuring the proposed plan maximises the total social, environmental and commercial value of the GSMP. Nevertheless, the DRIS adequately identifies the various direct impacts from the plan changes, provides available evidence on the value of some of the key trade-offs, and has been informed by extensive consultation. On that basis, the DRIS meets the requirements of the guidelines and is adequate for publication.

Please contact Brian Johnson, Senior Economist, on (07) 3035 3471 if you require additional information or guidance concerning the above comments or the guidelines in general. Please note that in accordance with Cabinet Handbook requirements, this letter of advice should be attached to relevant Cabinet submissions.

Yours sincerely



Dr Karen Hooper
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5 July 2023