

Dear Mr Guy Dickson, Friday, 29th July 2011

Marine Parks Select Committee Secretary

Having recently read and studied the new proposed marine park zones around Sceale Bay that will be in place as from 2012, I have to say I am shocked and confused.

All I ask for is a little of your time to understand why and to maybe see another side to the debate. Everything written is completely my own views and with my own knowledge.

I grew up in the small town of Sceale Bay, 30 km's south of Streaky Bay on the Eyre Peninsula. My mother, sister and myself moved there when I was 13 after my father, a local farmer passed away. From a young age I took an interest in all things to do with the outdoors, nature and the environment. This interest was passed on from my mother who herself spent time growing up in the small town of Wardang Island along with 5 other siblings. Her interest was passed down from her mother and so on.

I understand my family and I have not got a degree in marine sustainability or marine biology but we do possess a very special and important skill which is local understanding of our marine environment which can only come from the desire, passion and love for it. All of this can only be gained from years, not weeks, of time spent within the environment.

Much of the time growing up I was fishing, boating and snorkelling as our town only had a population of about 20 people so any other activities available to someone in a larger town was simply not possible. Eventually my mother and I started a Fishing Charter business in Sceale Bay as I was lucky enough to have gained much knowledge of our waters. As a skipper and continuing my passion for the marine environment I ALWAYS promoted sustainable fishing and never encouraged people to take more than they needed and so on. I also "farmed" the fish as such I never took too many fish from one area and allowed them to re-populate and stay in that area. We ran the business for over 6 years clocking up over 4000 engine hours out at sea both in inshore and offshore waters. I can comfortably say that I know the local waters of Sceale Bay better than any other person.

The local charts do not show half of the offshore cartography present in our waters of which I know of. I have proof to back this up and will do so at a given moment.

One of the obstacles I was always trying to overcome was the weather. Sceale Bay is an open water bay susceptible to bad weather and swell. I was always cancelling tours as the weather simply did not allow safe boating. This also acts as a superb defence to over fishing and use as no matter what size vessel you have you simply cannot go to sea safely. But this has helped prevent any possible threats to over use and over fishing and this will NEVER change.

I can't stress the importance of this enough!

Since I have been here I have not seen a single major change in the marine environment surrounding Sceale Bay, Just the usual cycles that all environments go through noticeable only by the few who have had the privilege to spend considerable time in it.

In contrast, I am now skippering a large tour vessel in Coral Bay, WA. I take up to 37 passengers out 4-6 days a week. We can operate tours in almost all conditions except when a Tropical Low (Cyclone) is within 400 kilometres of which is 2-4 times a year! Coral Bay has a population of 200 people but has an average of 200,000 tourists visit each year. At any given day there are over 100 recreational vessels fishing in the area and two large fishing charter vessels taking up to 20 passengers out fishing. Coral Bay as far as I understand is still sustaining the impact from such a great number of people visiting. There are certain marine parks in place but they do not disrupt people from using most of the area.

Sceale Bay would be lucky to get 200 different boats fish the area in one year. When I was at sea with tourists they could not believe how few boats were around. It is simply not possible to damage the environment from boats and people. We don't get enough of them! Of the people that do use the area half don't know where to go and the other half are locals that look after the place like they always have done. If the number of boats that used the area increased as it will with progress it will have no effect at all. The weather still regulates this.

We have put our business on hold and are presently not operating fishing charters in Sceale Bay. We still own and maintain a fishing charter operator license. We have the intention to commence our fishing charter business in the future and again showing people this wonderful place. The proposed marine park "no take zones" will make this absolutely impossible and would be detrimental to our business in more ways than one. The proposed state and federal marine parks in and around Sceale Bay with no take zones is absolutely unnecessary.

At the same time I do not believe Sceale Bay should be free of all Marine Parks but I think more careful thought should go into where and of what sort. I understand there are delicate marine animals at stake and some that are not found in many other places but I would like to see evidence they are affected from recreational fishing. I have never liked netting as I can see the damage it can do to an eco-system, and believe netting should be banned in most areas. So I believe more thought should go into the zoning and activities permit able within the proposed marine parks.

We also own a substantial amount of land zoned residential and a house in the township of Sceale Bay. We have plans to develop this land in the future. It is the last remaining land within the township.

The depreciation of our land and house value would be damaging if the proposed State and Federal marine park zones around Sceale Bay went ahead!

As you are well aware, tourism is a driving force behind the Eyre Peninsula's success and people come over here to experience some of the best coastline and environments available anywhere in the world.

Sceale Bay is becoming a popular tourism destination but will always be a very seasonal one. As I have previously said the waters of Sceale Bay especially offshore can only be fished 50-60% of the time.

I have witnessed 15-20 recreational boats at sea one day and then 1-2 at sea for a week following! This is in peak periods. Have any actual studies gone into how many times SceleBay gets fished let alone how many fish or animals are taken? I would like to see the results.

The truth is I don't think enough evidence is available to warrant the implementation of no take zones in marine parks in or around Scele Bay, or at least in the area's proposed! I have noted neither absolutely any major change to these areas nor any evidence of harm to the environment within them from boating and fishing.

I fully understand it is a very delicate environment and once damage is done it is hard or impossible to undo but also understand this place has been and will always be a big part of my life and I can say I understand it better than most. I would never want it to change for the worse and the moment I think it is I would be all for protecting and preventing this to happen.

I wish you could see this place exposed to the mighty powers of Mother Nature when we get deep lows come through producing one to two days of 20-40knot plus North west/westerly winds and 4 to 6 metre swells.

How anything survives I will never know but the fact remains that it does! It is far more destructive than any amount of boats Scele Bay receives in any given year.

You see if the proposed no take zones go ahead it will be completely unnecessary and will also be extremely difficult for the locals, tourism and I to cope with. It will completely rule any plans I have to once again resume our fishing charters and also our own enjoyment of Scele Bay the way we always have done.

I sincerely thank you for your time,

Kind Regards,

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