

220 marine scientists raise alarm about NSW recreational fishing

January 14 2014, by Verity Leatherdale

(Phys.org) —More than 220 marine scientists from across Australia and internationally, including from the University of Sydney, have raised concerns for NSW's marine life if the state government moves to permanently allow recreational fishing in no-take sanctuary zones.

In advance of the imminent and globally unprecedented decision, 222 [marine scientists](#) have written a [joint statement](#) to the NSW premier, Barry O'Farrell, urging him to keep no-take marine sanctuary zones free from fishing, in keeping with well-established scientific practice.

Dr Will Figueira, a [marine ecologist](#) at the University of Sydney's School of Biological Sciences and president of the NSW branch of the Australian Marine Sciences Association, said:

"Last year Premier O'Farrell temporarily allowed [recreational fishing](#) in sanctuary zones, a decision made without consultation and not based on scientific research."

"Now the government may decide to make fishing in sanctuary zones a permanent feature of marine parks in this state.

"The concern felt by the science community, both in NSW and internationally, is of such significance that an unprecedented number of scientists have been motivated to write to the premier.

"Permanently allowing fishing in protected no-take sanctuaries will

undermine their conservation value. No-take zones are essential for maintaining healthy marine life over the long term and serve as buffers against the risk of over-fishing.

"Around the world, scientists support marine sanctuaries as an essential tool for protecting marine life. However for these zones to be effective there must be no take of any kind."

NSW has six multiple-use marine parks, each with no-take marine sanctuary areas zoned within them.

Sanctuaries account for only seven per cent of NSW state waters, which extend three nautical miles (5.5 km) from shore. It is these state waters where both extraction of resources and biodiversity values are most intense.

Marine ecologist Professor David Booth, from the University of Technology, Sydney, said:

"Globally, the scientific evidence is overwhelming that no-take sanctuary zones are essential to protect our [marine life](#), and NSW is unique in the developed world in allowing fishing back in."

"A decision to allow any form of extractive use in NSW marine no-take zones would represent a fundamental backwards step in our efforts to protect our diverse coastal ecosystems from the impact of ever-growing human pressures. "

The joint statement has been supported by fourteen academics and researchers from the University of Sydney.

Provided by University of Sydney

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