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MEDIA RELEASE
Recfishers Support Boswell

Recfish Australia, the peak body for Australia's more than 3 million recreational fishers believes that the sector has no choice but to take their concerns to parliament. The motion by Senator Boswell to have the declaration of the Coral Sea Conservation Zone disallowed reflects the frustration that fishers are feeling about their inability to engage in marine park planning processes.

Recfish Australia's policy on marine protected areas states that any declaration of no fishing zones must be risk based and have sound, peer-reviewed scientific evidence demonstrating the impact of recreational fishers.

Recfish Australia is opposed to a Coral Sea Heritage Park that would lock all fishers out of the Coral Sea as proposed by the Pew Environment Group and other organisations. "There is no logic or science behind the proposal. It is based on a fundamental opposition to all forms of fishing and we cannot allow such patent environmental extremism to go unchallenged." said Len Olyott, CEO of Recfish Australia.

Marine reserves that include sanctuary areas to lock out "extractive users" such as recreational fishers are habitually used as a method to protect biodiversity both in Australia and elsewhere. Australia is signatory to an international agreement to have a representative system of marine protected areas in place by 2012. Australia already has a staggering 68 million hectares in marine reserves and recreational fishers are already banned from large sections of these areas.

Australian fisheries are incredibly well managed and over half of the fish caught by recreational fishers are released alive. Many species are tagged and recreational fishers contribute significantly to the scientific research of iconic species such as marlin and tuna.

Additionally, recreational fishing is a significant component of the economies of regional centres and estimates of expenditure range between 1 and 2 billion dollars.

Recreational fishing is a healthy, active, outdoor activity that the whole family can enjoy and is an integral part of Australian culture. With over a quarter of all Australians fishing at least once a year that translates into a lot of votes.

"Anti-fishing extremists use any mechanism at their disposal to turn the public and politicians against recreational fishers and its time that recreational fishers did the same." said Olyott. "If we cannot have our voice heard in the consultation process we must resort to the political process and let our elected representatives lobby on our behalf."

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Caption: Charter operators in the Coral Sea have invested millions of dollars and conduct their activities in a sustainable manner. **Photo:** Digsfish Services