

SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP COMMUNIQUÉ – MEETING No. 20 – 11 November 2008

Members of the Scientific Working Group would like to advise the Minister for Environment and Conservation that the following outcomes were achieved at its twentieth meeting held on 11 November 2008.

- ❖ SWG members present included Anthony Cheshire (Chair), Peter Fairweather, Bronwyn Gillanders, Cath Kemper, Martine Kinloch, Hazel Lindsay, John Middleton and Scoresby Shepherd. Apologies from Hugh Kirkman and Sean Connell.
- ❖ A presentation was given by Simon Goldsworthy, Senior Marine Scientist, SARDI, on Australian Sea Lions: Status, Threats and MPAs. The SWG again acknowledged the importance of a coherent approach to marine park planning, between the State and Commonwealth, in order to ensure the conservation of key species.
- ❖ Bryan McDonald, Principal Marine Advisor (Science) presented on the modelling undertaken for the selection of marine park boundaries. Although the OSS (optimal site selection) tool was initially used in early iterations of the network, Marxan has been used in the final audits. Both biophysical and socio-economic modelling have been conducted to identify areas of highest conservation value and least socio-economic activity and use. A recommendation from the SWG is to map the spatial overlap of conservation and socio-economic hotspots to use in marine parks management planning and in discussions with stakeholders.
- ❖ Peter Fairweather presented information on site-specific counts of significant features contained within the network compared to State waters generally. Most attributes (eg seal/sea lion haulout and breeding sites, endangered algae sites, conservation hotspots, islands, estuaries, recreational fishing and dive sites, indigenous sites, shipwreck sites, State heritage listed sites, aquatic reserves, piers and jetties) were well represented apart from registered or reported indigenous sites for which fewer cases, than expected by chance alone, were included.
- ❖ The SWG considered whether CSIRO's Australian Connectivity Interface model, Aus – Connle, could be applicable for marine parks to support an assessment of connectivity and linkages. Alison Wright, Senior Marine Advisor (Science), presented information on how Aus Connle was developed. The SWG agreed that the model had very limited application and could not be used effectively in water depths less than 50 m. John Middleton's group at SARDI is developing a much more comprehensive model for connectivity using IMOS (integrated Marine Observation System). This model should be available next year. The SWG recommended that an interim approach would be to provide a spatial map overlaying known oceanographic information to help identify connectivity and linkages within and between parks.
- ❖ Chris Thomas, CMCB Branch Manager, updated the SWG on how the marine parks boundaries release was tracking and on how SWG members should respond if directly asked to comment. Essentially SWG members were asked to refer any requests for information to appropriate contacts within DEH (CMCB Manager and community engagement Senior Officers).
- ❖ The SWG discussed peer review of scientific communiqués and products including the technical report for the marine parks boundaries. The SWG will confidentially review the technical report. Other less confidential products can be reviewed by the SWG and, where appropriate, an expert external reviewer could also be engaged.