



SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP COMMUNIQUÉ – MEETING No. 40 8 March 2011

The Scientific Working Group (SWG) meeting held on 8 March 2011 assessed in detail Professor Robert Kearney's appraisal of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources paper "*Science shows marine park benefits*". SWG members comprehensively rejected Prof Kearney's critique of the DENR work for three key reasons: (a) its misleading perspective; (b) its errors of fact; (c) its reliance on outmoded thinking.

1. **Misleading perspective**

Prof Kearney consistently ignores the fact that the objective of South Australia's marine parks program is integrated biodiversity conservation, maintaining that fisheries management provides sufficient environmental protection. This is wrong in that fisheries are managed to maximise yield and not to conserve biodiversity.

2. **Errors of fact , including:**

(a) Prof Kearney argues that it is wrong to identify fishing as a threat to marine ecosystems and that to do so contradicts international and Australian norms.

This is incorrect: The United Nations, the Federal Government and The Australian Marine Sciences Association all identify fishing as a key threat.

(b) Prof Kearney states there is no evidence of the threats posed by fishing.

This is incorrect: This threat has been copiously identified in scientific literature.

Furthermore, six of the 16 fisheries in South Australia are over-fished or depleted.

(c) Prof Kearney selectively quotes Buxton et al (2006) to support his argument, failing to note that Buxton did not prove their contentions (but rather provided predictions based on a model) and he ignores their conclusion that marine protected areas have "value for understanding the ecological effects of fishing thus leading to a greater fisheries resource security".

3. **Outmoded thinking**

Prof Kearney argues that fishing will promote biodiversity due to an increase in the disturbance regime and supports this claim with reference to the "intermediate disturbance hypothesis". This hypothesis was used 30 years ago to support claims that logging of native forests was a benefit. It fails for two reasons:

(a) it applies only to natural disturbance regimes, not to deliberate extractive activities such as fishing, and

(b) the objective of biodiversity conservation is to maintain biodiversity at a natural level, not to "maximise biodiversity" *per se*.

SWG members will soon provide the Minister with a detailed rebuttal of the paper.

Prof. Anthony Cheshire

Chair, Scientific Working Group for Marine Protected Areas and Marine Planning
