

Tasmanians for Marine Parks propose plan for marine park network in Tasmania



By [Duncan Bailey](#)

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Spider crab in an invertebrate garden. Picture by Jun Zhang.

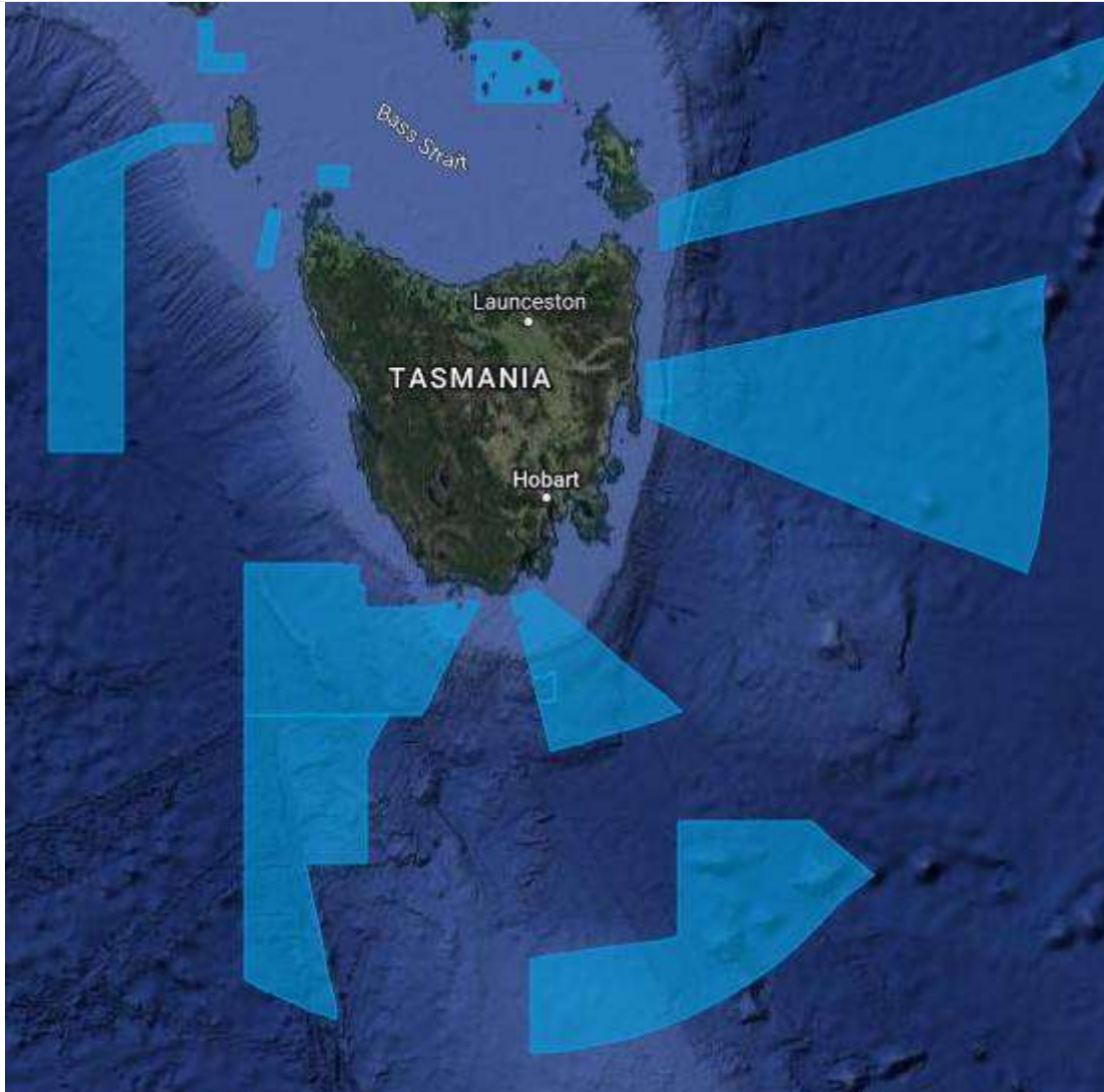
A community-run marine parks advocacy group called on the state government to increase the amount of marine protected areas this week.

Tasmanians for Marine Parks, a campaign from Marine Life Network, released a proposal detailing areas for new marine parks across the state and asked the government to complete a network of high-quality marine parks along the Tasmanian coast.

Tasmanians for Marine Parks coordinator Michael Jacques said Tasmania was at the "bottom of the pack" in terms of getting areas protected in marine parks.

"At present, the protected marine parks around the Tasmanian coastline only extend from Bicheno in the northern east coast around to Port Davey, in the southwest," Mr Jacques said.

"The north of the State is particularly missing protection for unique ocean areas."



Marine protected areas in Tasmania. Picture: Australian Marine Parks
Currently, only 1.7 per cent of Tasmania's mainland waters are highly protected marine parks.

"That figure is very low by Australian and international terms," Mr Jacques said.

"What we're proposing wouldn't increase that by a very large amount," Mr Jacques said.

He said the government recently reinforced its policy on having a moratorium on new marine parks that has been in place for the past 15 years.

"We understood when it was put in place originally it was meant to be a temporary thing but it's virtually become a permanent policy," Mr Jacques said.

"We're concerned it means not only do they not want new marine parks, but they don't want to talk about it at all.

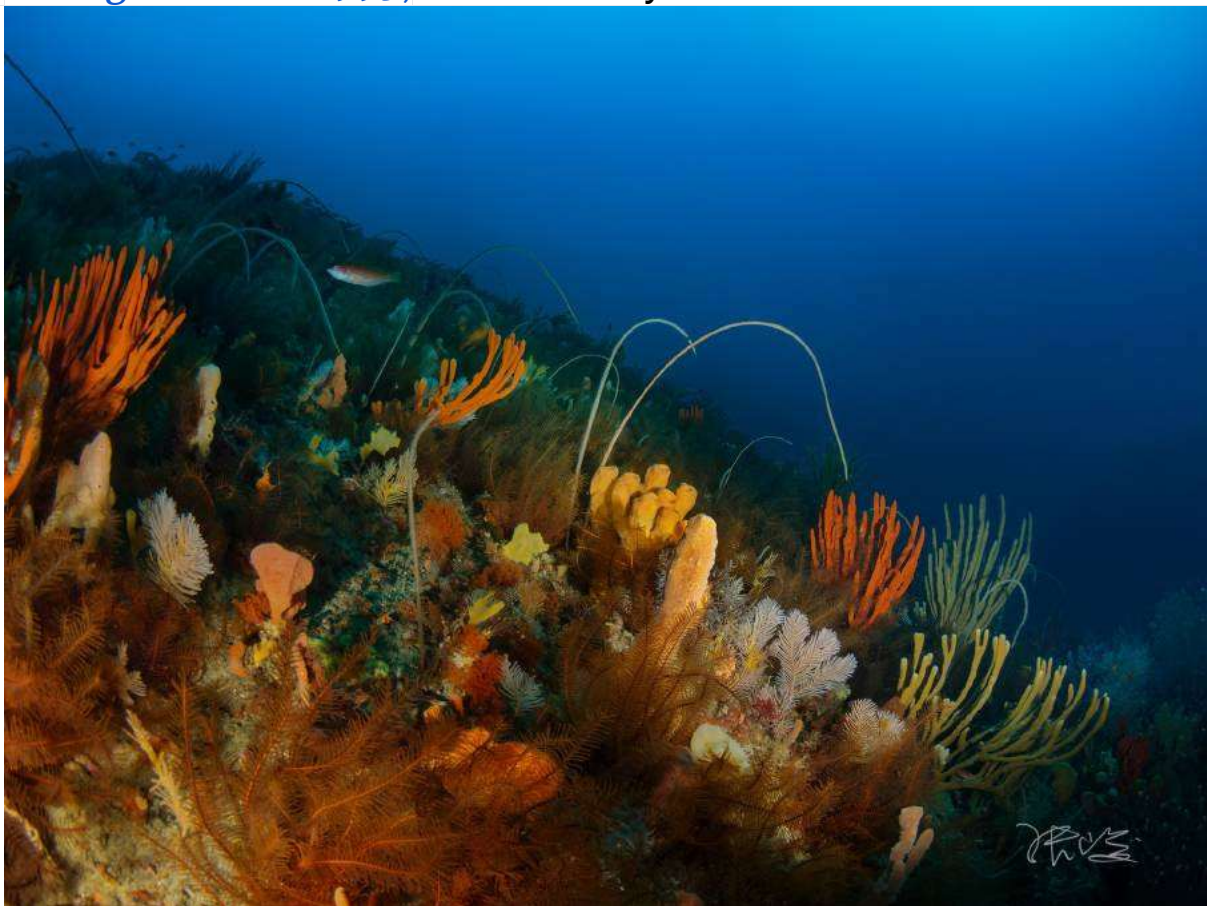
"Policies, regardless of what they are should be open for community discussion."

Minister for Parks Roger Jaensch said the Tasmanian government was not planning to establish any new marine protected areas in State waters.

"The Tasmanian government remains committed to the effective management of its marine park reserve system comprising 21 marine reserves and marine conservation areas that protect and conserve species and habitats across a number of bioregions," Mr Jaensch said.

"In addition, under the Living Marine Resources Management Act there are a range of provisions for protection and sustainable development of marine resources and species.

Mr Jaensch said the act, [Review of the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995](#), was currently under review.



Tasmania comprises of seven Marine Nature Reserves including Maria Island, Tinderbox, Ninepin Point, Governor Island, Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour, the Kent Group and sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island. Picture by Jun Zhang

Marine Ecologist and Professor at the University of Tasmania Graham Edgar spent the past 40 years studying marine parks and said Tasmania was behind on a global level.

"Tasmania is not just behind the other states of Australia and the Commonwealth, but is almost unique in the global sense in doing nothing over the past decade," Dr Edgar said.

"Populations of marine life are declining more rapidly off Tasmania than other states."

He said this was reflected in fisheries catches, which dropped by two-thirds in the past 20 years.

"Would so many fisheries have collapsed if more marine reserves had been declared long ago? Probably not, but without no-fishing areas to scientifically compare with the fished coast, we cannot know", Dr Edgar said.

Minister Jaensch said the government had an ongoing agreement with the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies to conduct research.

"The research will continue to support the science-based management of Tasmania's marine environment, ensuring the approach to marine conservation is backed by robust scientific information," Mr Jaensch said.

Mr Jacques said current marine parks at Tinderbox, Maria Island or Governor Island were a great success and did not impact recreational or commercial fishing.

"In the last 30 years, the Tinderbox marine reserve has transformed from a barely visited and remote bay to one of Hobart's more popular ways to interact with the ocean," Mr Jacques said.

"I'm sure a similar location, at say Low Head or Rocky Cape will be just as successful."

"What people will see is a place busy with diving, snorkelling, boating, kayaking, bird watching, sand castle building and inter-tidal walks".

Tasmanians for Marine Parks asked the public for feedback about possible new marine parks, and organised public ocean fun and information days in Hobart, Launceston and Boat Harbour. More information can be found on their [Facebook page](#) or marinelife.org.au.