

Hi People,

NEW COMMONWEALTH MACQUARIE ISLAND MPA

[Consultation hub | Expansion of Macquarie Island Marine Park - Climate Change \(dcceew.gov.au\)](https://www.dcceew.gov.au/consultation-hub/expansion-of-macquarie-island-marine-park-climate-change)

Nothing like wet weather for off the side of the desk environment work.

I had a chance to read the “Proposal to expand Macquarie Island Marine Park Public consultation Paper”. It’s a great paper, worth a look just for the nice photos.

I approach the deeper water MPAs with some reservations for a couple of reasons,

1. I have no first hand knowledge other than a few bits of stuff Ive read and photos from CSIRO survey media releases. Yes, out of reach(sight) out of mind affects me too. Im aware of the land-based stuff at Mac Is and I know enough to be able to see that its especially AWESOME, but that’s in the State MPA.
2. Ive been exposed to the scepticism of some marine biologists after the Coral Sea MPA effort, who thought that was largely a waste of effort and an exercise in putting MPAs anywhere except where you can fish, so that the Minister of the day can claim 45% of Australian waters are already in an MPA (see page 4, 3rd para) and no fishermen are upset and no MPA got anywhere near a city full of voters.

I must say I was pretty happy with this proposal. Some observations;

Natural Values - What won me over was that we have actually spent some money on mapping and benthic surveys, it is not lifeless mud there are some cool things there.

Habitats- We know that there is a lot of complex bottom along the Macquarie Ridge (5 seamounts and more in 90-2000M) which would get some extra protection. A bit of this gets protected in on the northern and southern parts of the new section close to the island. Still a lot is abyssal plain or in a fishing zone.

Concerned about fishing - A large area of this high value ridge structure inshore closer to the island from 3NM to 12NM on the west side, and part of the WHA, is still open to fishing (and potting if that ever gets going). All of that angst is to protect ONE longline boat catching 635 tonnes of Patagonian toothfish (worth \$33m USD landed 2018 value – the profit would be way less). I would have thought this western offshore part was the best area to protect as it is a convergence of transiting route to the island for the birdlife and seals. Why so close?, that because the fish are also over that complex ridge structure, as well as all the other marine life.

We are assured that the fishery is sustainable and FSC certified as such, which I don’t necessarily find very persuasive. I understand that practices have changed since longliners drowned every endangered albatross in the area in gear interactions. Im also told there are onboard observers. I’m not told what they have observed, nor do the references in the back seem to refer to a report I could read to reassure myself. I had to take it on trust that it had been assessed not a high risk.



Birds and Seals- There was no real information on how important the new area to the west was for seals and birds (especially the bits to be fished.) In terms of size you can't ask them to do more as they are declaring the whole EEZ, but I suspect most species don't "get" jurisdictional boundaries and are probably roaming way farther than that..

### **Bird By-catch**

"Seabird bycatch mitigation strategies Patagonian Toothfish is increasingly being targeted using demersal longlining in sub-Antarctic fisheries..."

The Commonwealth has listed the incidental capture of seabirds in oceanic longline operations as a key threatening process. Sub-Antarctic fisheries manage seabird bycatch by longline through provisions under the 'Threat Abatement Plan 2006 for the incidental catch (or bycatch) of seabirds during oceanic longline fishing operations' (TAP). Under the TAP, the interaction rate for seabirds must be less than 0.01 seabirds per 1000 hooks set. "[according to Wiki, that might be 25 per line, put it goes up to 2500 per line in the Bering Sea fishery]

"Additionally in the MITF [Mac Is Toothfish Fishery], AFMA has decided that the group of seabirds comprising wandering albatross, black-browed albatross, grey headed albatross, grey petrel or soft-plumaged petrel have protection in excess of the TAP and a trigger limit of one, will apply on a per vessel basis. Therefore if one of these species is killed as a result of an interaction with the fishing gear, the vessel is required to immediately cease fishing in the MITF for the remainder of the season".

"For other species of seabirds in the MITF, AFMA has decided that any interactions should comply with the TAP, where a seasonal rate of 0.01 birds per 1000 hooks is specified. The rate is applied retrospectively over a season to the fishery as a whole, so the capture of a bird(s) will not require an operator to cease fishing for the season. "

" Should an interaction occur, fishers are required to submit detailed reports of the wildlife interaction within 24 hours of the incident occurring. Each report must also include a detailed response to the wildlife interaction which must be implemented immediately by the fisher to minimise the likelihood of similar interactions."

"There have been no seabird interactions with fishing gear in the MITF since operations began in 1994. There has been one marine mammal interaction with the fishing gear in the MITF."

[Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery \(afma.gov.au\)](http://afma.gov.au)

According to Wiki as many as 8000 albatross may be drowned a year, but not in boats with proper mitigation such as Hookpod gear.

Would you like me to put together a brief reply before the submission date runs out on 22 May, you can also put in your own one. More the merrier. I was not planning to raise any protests about it unless you know something about fisheries observation on Australian vessels that I don't.

Regards Mike