

Developing a management plan for

Batemans Marine Park

Summary of discussions & outcomes from

Aboriginal community workshops



The NSW Department of Primary Industries [DPI] is preparing a management plan for Batemans Marine Park [BMP] to replace the current Zoning and Operational Plans. The plan will be the first marine park management plan in NSW and is a 'pilot' which will guide the preparation of management plans for the other marine parks in NSW.

The DPI consultation process for community input into developing the plan included a programme of Aboriginal consultation which was undertaken in 2018 by consultants Sue Feary and Susan Donaldson. The Aboriginal consultation framework identified three main steps;

- * Prepare a list of Aboriginal organisations, families and individuals known or likely to have an interest in management of Batemans Marine Park;
- * Organise and run community workshops at appropriate venues and locations to encourage participation of ideas around management objectives and actions;

- * Document everything discussed at the workshops and prepare a report which identifies how issues and aspirations of Aboriginal people can be incorporated into the management plan.

Three one day workshops were held on 18-20 July 2018; at the Wallaga Lake Hall, Moruya Surf Lifesaving Club and Ulladulla Civic Centre. A number of small group meetings were also held with families and individuals. Moruya was the best attended workshop with 14 community members participating in discussions, followed by Wallaga Lake with 12 and Ulladulla with only 2. The poor turn up at the Ulladulla was likely due to Native Title meetings occurring on the same day.

At each session, many questions were directed at DPI staff about marine park management more generally, and about the regulation of fishing, both inside and outside marine parks. There was interest in the terms of reference being used for developing the management plan.

At the Moruya and Wallaga Lake workshops, participants were provided with 'stick-it' notepaper and pencils and asked to write down the three most important issues or concerns that needed to be addressed in developing objectives and management actions. This system worked well for stimulating discussion and ideas.

Generally, the matters raised reflected how people interacted with the marine park at a local level. However, there were many issues raised that went beyond local concerns, for example, how *'risk' should include risk to mental and physical health. With a reduction of access to seafood, Aboriginal life expectancy is 25 years less than non-Aboriginal people.*

To help with understanding what should be included in the plan, issues raised at the workshops and focus group meetings were grouped into broad categories or themes. Many issues were raised and all were important, but most discussion was around the ideas listed below;

- ☞ **Regulation** – changes around access are required to recognise and allow continuing traditional uses - *'An objective should be self-regulation by culturally aware people'*.
- ☞ **Participation** – in decision making, through employment [e.g. sea country rangers] and community-based monitoring programmes.
- ☞ **Governance** – NSW government needs to have a more holistic approach to Aboriginal affairs – *'The marine environment is connected to the land; the resources in the water and on the land are connected.'*
- ☞ **Cultural heritage protection** – particularly sites drowned by rising sea level.

- ☞ **Traditional knowledge** – should be respected, maintained and used in conjunction with scientific western knowledge.
- ☞ **Aboriginal rights** – need recognition as original custodians, through specific actions.
- ☞ **Cooperation and collaboration** – many different organisations and agencies are looking at connections between Aboriginal people and the marine environment.
- ☞ **Protect natural environment** - such as fish stocks, water quality and erosion control.
- ☞ **Education** – of the public and the government about Aboriginal values of BMP and the marine environment.
- ☞ **Relationship building** – overcome poor relationship between Fisheries Officers and local Aboriginal people

One important point raised was to give Batemans Marine Park an Aboriginal name.

When the issues raised at these workshops were compared with the outcomes of earlier consultations with Aboriginal people over many decades, it was clear that Aboriginal people have been raising the same concerns for a very long time. Although the community acknowledges there have been some positive changes, such as the introduction of a cultural fishing policy, there is still a long way to go.

The strongest message to DPI from the consultation process was that Aboriginal people have been coming to meetings like this for a long time and saying basically the same thing. It is now up to the government to take the information provided and develop objectives and actions that will ensure that Aboriginal values are protected and that Aboriginal people play a very strong role in that protection.

Report prepared by Sue Feary & Susan Donaldson

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