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Minister for Small Business

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MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 12 March 2013

A NEW APPROACH TO MARINE ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Minister for Primary Industries Katrina Hodgkinson and Minister for the Environment Robyn Parker today announced decisions around the management of the NSW marine estate will now be based on science and in the long term interest of community, marine ecosystems and industry.

“The NSW Government is delivering on its election commitment for a common sense marine parks policy and is supporting the principal recommendations of the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

The NSW Government is taking a new approach to protect the NSW marine estate, which includes coastal waters, estuaries and beaches:

- Establishing two new advisory bodies, the Marine Estate Management Authority, to replace the existing Marine Parks Authority, and the Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel;
- Effective immediately there will be an amnesty allowing line fishing from ocean beaches and headlands in sanctuary zones with the exception of identified sites for the protection of threatened species. All other recreational fishing restrictions including bag and size limits will apply. The Expert Knowledge Panel will undertake a six month assessment of recreational fishing access to these areas;
- Undertaking threat and risk assessments for the NSW marine estate; and
- Remaining committed to the moratorium on new marine parks, pending advice from the new Marine Estate Expert Knowledge Panel.

“After years of political interference and decisions based on poor or incomplete science by the previous Labor Government, the credibility of Marine Parks and our fishing industries has been undermined,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“The NSW Government’s vision is for a balance between economic growth, particularly in our regional communities, and conserving our marine ecosystems leading to a greater appreciation of its unique value,” Ms Parker said.

Associate Professor Bob Beeton, Chair of the Audit Panel, said the key recommendations for effective and sustainable management are captured in the Government’s response and will benefit recreational and commercial interests, marine biodiversity and the community.

“These changes will not adversely impact the commercial fishing industry, which is currently undergoing significant reform, and industry can take confidence that future decisions around access to resources will be undertaken in an independent and transparent manner,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“The average commercial catch from NSW wild fisheries over five years to 2010/11 was approximately 15,000 tonnes, the NSW Government expects this to continue in the foreseeable future notwithstanding unexpected circumstances.”

The Marine Estate Management Authority will replace the Marine Parks Authority and will be informed by the work of the Expert Knowledge Panel, providing independent advice across ecology, economics, and social sciences.

“I am pleased to announce two eminent individuals to lead the respective organisations who have extensive experience in public administration, natural resource management and economics. The independent chair of the Authority is Dr Wendy Craik and the independent chair of the Expert Knowledge Panel is Dr Andrew Stoeckel,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

The Authority will convene its first meeting in the coming weeks. Expressions of interest for the remaining Expert Knowledge Panel positions are now open.

For further information visit www.marine.nsw.gov.au