

## More Marine Park Spin

I recently read, with much amazement, the article '*Fishing still on the menu*' published in The Islander on 20 November 2014 and quoting Natural Resources [SA - Kangaroo Island].

The article mentioned that close to 90 percent of the waters around Kangaroo Island are still 'open' to commercial and recreational fishing.

The article again mentions the 'carefully designed' sanctuary zones and the 'extensive' public consultation process and the need to avoid placing 'too many restrictions on popular recreational and commercial fishing areas'.

Unfortunately the article failed to mention:

- The Department responsible for managing the 'areas of ecological importance' apparently now 'protected' by the 'carefully designed' sanctuary zones, does not actually know what it is they are protecting - the majority of those habitats remain unmapped.
- That Department has also failed to explain which threats they are protecting these ecosystems from and also exactly how that protection will be afforded from simply establishing lines on the water.
- The waters included in the sanctuary zones around Kangaroo Island are some of the most productive commercial rock lobster fishing grounds in the State (also for other commercial species like Abalone).
- This is reflective of the situation around the State where many of the best fishing grounds have now been locked up. So yes, there is plenty of water available in which to set a rock lobster pot, however last time we checked, you do not catch rock lobster on sand.
- At a time South Australia can least afford it, we have lost millions of dollars in sustainable premium seafood production, much of which is export focussed (China) and which generates a huge economic boost to regional coastal communities and economies, just like Kangaroo Island. The article fails to mention it is now these communities bearing the brunt of this economic loss.
- The price of whiting fillets for local consumers has increased by over \$10/kg this year - a direct result of marine park sanctuary zones impacting on the sustainable supply of this product being provided by commercial marine scale fishermen.
- The SA marine park network is aiming to protect marine ecosystems and habitats. In 2013, the SA Rock Lobster Fishery (the State's most valuable) was assessed under Commonwealth legislation by the Federal Department of Environment as having a "*negligible*" impact on marine ecosystems. The article fails to explain why, if the Fishery has no impact, we have locked up a highly valuable, renewable, sustainably harvested and well-managed export resource plus all of the economic and social benefits that resource brings to SA.
- The Federal Government has just negotiated a Free Trade Agreement with China which includes the eventual removal of tariffs paid on the importation of South Australian Rock Lobster (and Abalone) into mainland China. Unfortunately, South Australians will not fully realise the benefits and opportunities presented under these new trade arrangements because, with the implementation of sanctuary zones, we have just slashed the sustainable production of one of this State's most sought after food exports to China.

But, apparently, there will be new opportunities for the fishing industry in SA. The Rock Lobster Industry has been advised we will soon realise a significant 'marketing edge' to result from establishment of the SA marine parks network. I think it best not to hold your breath.

Also, as promised by those in Government, displaced commercial fishers and those remaining who have incurred increased costs of production and significant reductions in efficiency can now take heart in the abundance of eco-tourism opportunities that will no doubt soon materialise. Is this really expected to subsidise the annual loss in export trade? And all for no real environmental gain.

If the continuing political spin around the marine park issue in SA is to be believed, it is no wonder we are in economic ruin. Surely we must address the reality.

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