

**Assessing the social acceptability of Marine Protected Areas
(MPAs) – a comparison between Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine
Park (PSGLMP) and Batemans Marine Park (BMP) in NSW**

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*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy (C02031)*

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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*This thesis is dedicated to my loving and supportive family –
my husband Deon and my beautiful boys Cameron and Jonathon, as well as my parents,
Helen and Michael.*

*Also in loving memory of Meredith Hall who demonstrated in her work and life that
conservation and compassion need not be mutually exclusive. Her passion, kindness, insight
and sense of humour are sorely missed.*

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to acknowledge the unwavering support, wise guidance and challenging advice of my fantastic supervisors Professor Bill Gladstone and Professor Heather Goodall, and the moral and intellectual support of Dr Tanja Dreher from the University of Wollongong. Their feedback and advice and their own inspiring scholarship opened my eyes to new ways of seeing the world and challenged me to think about how this new knowledge could be applied to the world of marine conservation. They each contributed in unique, but complementary ways to the body of work contained in this thesis and I am enormously grateful to each of them.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the contribution of each of the research participants who contributed to this research by participating in interviews and providing feedback on its findings. Without their involvement this research would not have been possible.

Thanks to Robyn Maddern for her training and assistance with Nvivo 9 qualitative research software. I would also like to acknowledge the following people (in no particular order) who contributed to this research in various ways – by commenting on drafts, providing advice on potential interview participants, or by just being available for discussion and advice: Jodi Frawley, Kathleen Schilling, Brendan Kelaher, Max Haste, David Harasti, Andrew Read, Janet Hunt, Oliver Costello, Carla Sbrocchi, Nicholas Gill, Meera Oommen, Alison McLean, Josephine Belcher and Stephan Schnierer. In addition I would like to thank the reviewers of the papers that have come out of this research and the examiners of this thesis who have enriched its outcomes with their comments and questions.

Thanks also to the NSW branch of the Australian Marine Sciences Association (AMSA) and Sydney Aquarium Conservation Fund for funding support provided through the 2011 student award. Ongoing funding support for this project was also provided by the UTS Faculty of Science. Conference support was provided by the Faculty of Science conference fund, the Vice Chancellors Conference Fund and the AMSA Allen Award.

My parents, Helen and Michael Belcher, first planted the seed that a PhD was an attainable and worthwhile aspiration and then helped it grow in countless ways – including proof reading, emotional support, academic advice, sustenance and babysitting! I cannot thank them enough for the role they played in bringing this project together.

Last but by no means least, I would like to thank my patient, loving husband Deon who supported our family emotionally and financially throughout this process. He worked his life in around fieldwork, conferences and other PhD commitments with minimal complaints and a sympathetic attitude. He provided encouragement in times of uncertainty and motivation in times of complacency. There is no doubt that without his support this project would never

have been accomplished. And of course thanks also goes to my forgiving, resilient and beautiful children Cameron and Jonathon, who were amazingly understanding of their constantly distracted mother!

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List of Acronyms

APB	Aboriginal Protection Board
BMP	Batemans Marine Park
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
eNGOs	Environmental Non-Government Organisations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GBRMPA	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
GBRMP	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JBMP	Jervis Bay Marine Park
LGA	Local Government Area
MPA	Marine Protected Area
NSW	New South Wales
NRSMPA	National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas
PSGLMP	Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park
RAP	Representative Areas Program
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SIMP	Solitary Islands Marine Park

Definitions

Cultural fishing	“Fishing activities and practices carried out by Aboriginal persons for the purpose of satisfying their personal, domestic or communal needs, or for educational or ceremonial purposes or other traditional purposes, and which do not have a commercial purpose” (Department of Primary Industries 2012a)
Marine protected area	“An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means”(International Union for Conservation of Nature 1994)
No take zones	Also often referred to as ‘marine reserves’, ‘highly protected area’ or marine ‘sanctuaries’, no take zones refer to areas in which any extraction of marine resources (living or non-living) is prohibited.
Precautionary Principle	“The absence of scientific certainty should not be a reason for postponing measures to establish MPAs to protect representative ecosystems”(Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council 1998)
Representativeness	The National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas aims to include a reasonable reflection of the “biotic diversity of the marine ecosystems from which they derive”.(Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council 1998)
Sea country	“For coastal Aboriginal people, there is no distinction between land and sea: ‘Country’ extends offshore to include the sea and its resources. This holistic view ‘of continuous land and sea Country “as far as the eye can see”’ means that Aboriginal people conceptualise the coast very differently to non-Indigenous Australians, and to the worldview which underpins the Australian legal system...‘Sea Country’ (is) a term which includes the land and waters in the coastal zone of NSW, including the ocean, bays, shores, dunal environment and coastal estuaries and

their shores.” (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage 2012 p.2)

Social impacts

“..the consequences to human populations of any public or private actions that alter the ways in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organise to meet their needs and generally cope as members of society. The term also includes cultural impacts involving changes to the norms, values and beliefs that guide and rationalise their cognition of themselves and their society.”

(Interorganisational Committee on Guidelines and Principles 2003)

Social impact assessment

“..the process of analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions. Its primary purpose is to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment.” (Vanclay 2003b)

Abstract

The biological success of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) depends to a large extent on their social acceptability. Considerable efforts are increasingly being expended on public participation processes and socio-economic assessments during MPA planning exercises, yet local opposition remains a largely consistent response to MPA proposals around the world. This resistance has slowed international progress towards a global network of MPAs. Two case studies in New South Wales, Australia were used to examine some of the factors that may influence community attitudes towards MPAs using a multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating media studies, social impact assessment, social research and oral history traditions. The Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park (PSGLMP) and Batemans Marine Park (BMP) were established in December 2005 and April 2006 respectively. Both underwent virtually identical and concurrent planning processes. However resistance to the BMP was more intense and sustained and continues to this day. This thesis is unique in that the virtually identical and simultaneous planning processes conducted in the two study areas provides a valuable opportunity to look beyond governance processes and examine a wide array of influences on community responses to these MPAs. Key variables were compared to examine what may have contributed to this differential community response. These were:

- demographics and history;
- local media coverage and the role of influential media spokespeople; and
- the social impacts of the parks.

The results found that the BMP demonstrated the 'perfect storm' of opposition triggers – a community struggling in the transition away from a primary production economy, a highly politicised media dominated by powerful elites with ideological objections to the park, and social impacts sufficiently profound to motivate local citizens to support an active campaign against the park. Opposition to MPAs, however, cannot be explained by impact alone. All the marine park opponents interviewed represented themselves as 'knowledge holders' about their local marine area. This knowledge – predominately 'fish' knowledge – appears to have conflicted with a policy position which places biodiversity conservation as the primary objective of MPAs. This has led to a perception that the practical knowledge of users was not valued in the planning of each marine park.

This research points to the importance of looking beyond a 'one size fits all' approach to MPA planning. Planning efforts require a deeper understanding of the social, cultural and political landscape of the communities in which MPAs are proposed. In particular the study identified three main areas in which the better integration of socio-cultural considerations is critical. They are communication and community engagement, social assessment and public policy.

