



MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia sets world standard for marine parks

Today's announcement of a national system of marine parks represents the world's biggest system of marine protected areas and will give Australia's ocean wildlife crucial protection from harm.

"This announcement represents a major advance in marine conservation in Australia and sets an important example to the world," said WWF marine conservation spokesperson, Paul Gamblin.

WWF welcomed the sanctuaries that have been created in places like the reefs of the Coral Sea, parts of the Kimberley, the Diamantina fracture zone off the southwest (Australia's biggest mountain range) and Houtman Canyon off WA, areas off Cape York near the Wellesley Islands and some of the seamounts off NSW.

However, some of Australia's important ocean environments providing homes for whales, dolphins, turtles, dolphins, sharks and other wildlife have been excluded and remain vulnerable to oil spills and destructive fishing practices.

"While parks are protecting some areas, oil and gas rigs are still moving ever closer to places like the stunning Rowley Shoals and Ningaloo Reef off Western Australia. These are among the jewels in the crown for Australia's marine environment and surrounding waters have not been protected under this plan."

Other important areas left out of the plan that need full protection include Limmen Bight in the Gulf of Carpentaria, the Eastern Norfolk seamounts off the east coast, and many of the near-shore areas loved by Australians around the country.

"Marine sanctuaries provide areas where wildlife can feed and breed undisturbed," Mr Gamblin said.

"The government has responded to huge public support for greater protection of our marine environment from growing industrial pressures but this national network still needs to be further refined to effectively protect Australia's world-class marine life.

"Today's announcement lays a good foundation but all parties must now commit to building on this so we have an even better protected area system for Australia's marine wildlife."

Photographs and footage available on request.

WWF-Australia contacts:

Daniel Rockett
Senior Media Officer
0432 206 592, drockett@wwf.org.au
wwf.org.au