

## **AFAC feedback on the Temperate East Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network and Bioregional Plan**

The AFAC has expressed concern that the Temperate East Commonwealth Marine Reserves Network Proposal contains no specific reference to the potential impacts on Aboriginal cultural fishing, or impacts on the cultural connection our people have with those areas.

The *Fisheries Management Act 1994* (the Act) has now articulated Aboriginal cultural fishing as distinct and separate from recreational and commercial fishing. The objects of the Act include ensuring the spiritual, social and customary significance of the fisheries resource to Aboriginal people is recognised and the continuation of Aboriginal cultural fishing is promoted.

Traditional ways of fishing have been adapted to the contemporary context with the use of new materials, methods and fishing vessels being used but with the same traditional purpose. Therefore, access to fish resources outside of 3 nautical miles for cultural fishing purposes has and continues to take place. Indeed, a recent research project looking at Aboriginal catch, cultural significance of species and traditional fishing knowledge needs within the Tweed Brunswick region of NSW indicated that 5 percent of participants fished further than 5 kilometres from shore (Schnierer, S. 2011)<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, commercial fishing has offered, and continues to offer, economic opportunity and an appealing source of employment for Aboriginal communities. The NSW Government and AFAC are keen to ensure Aboriginal peoples' commercial association with the fisheries resource is maintained and developed. Any reduction in fishing ground for commercial fishing activity would therefore impact future commercial fishing opportunities to the Indigenous community.

Given this, AFAC recommends that the socioeconomic impact assessment being conducted by the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics and Sciences include an assessment on the impacts of the marine reserves on Aboriginal cultural fishing. AFAC would welcome being engaged in any such assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> Schnierer, S. 2011, *Aboriginal fisheries in NSW: determining catch, cultural significance of species and traditional fishing knowledge needs*, Fisheries Research & Development Corporation, Australia. 89 p