Autumn Newsletter, 2009

South Durras Crown Land Portions 92-95

Enquiries by the Friends of Durras to the NSW Department of Lands indicate that it will be some years before the Aboriginal land claim is decided for these crown land portions.

These crown land portions contain forests of high habitat value. Surveys have documented (i) the occurrence of several threatened animal species and (ii) the presence of swamp sclerophyll forest, an endangered ecological community for which there is a very high risk of extinction and which in NSW is registered under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. The large old growth trees present in the Spotted Gum - Blackbutt tall forest appear to be uncommon in the surrounding Murrarang National Park and the endangered Bangalay - Paperbark Forest/Scrubland present in the Crown Land is not represented at all within the Murrarang National Park.

Friends of Durras will continue lobbying for conservation protection for these crown land portions.

Campfires in Murrarang National Park

Murrarang National Park visitation rates are growing and increasing numbers of people are walking and camping along the Murrarang National Park coastline, including large school groups. Friends of Durras members have been monitoring the impacts of campfires in the Park for some years now. A good data base has been established documenting campfire sites, unsightly fire places, litter and the felling of trees for firewood. With declining rainfall and hotter and longer lasting summers, the risks of escaped campfires causing bushfires is considerable.
With this in mind there seems to be considerable merit in lobbying the National Parks & Wildlife Service to declare all of Murramarang National Park a fuel stove only area. This means a ban on the use of wood fires. The Friends of Durras would welcome comment from members on this proposal.

The Sea Acres Property – illegal incursions into Murramarang National Park

Over the past 12-18 months Friends of Durras has been in regular contact with the owners of the Sea Acres property to raise concerns about unauthorised vehicles crossing Sea Acres land and accessing formerly closed off areas of Murramarang National Park. As a result of this vehicle access trees have been ring barked and felled in Murramarang National Park and burrawangs have been pushed over in the process. This area of southern Murramarang is of high importance to FOD. FoD successfully opposed proposals to log this area in 1996 (when it was managed by Forests NSW). Then a further four years of Friends of Durras lobbying was undertaken which culminated in persuading both the Federal and State Governments to add this area to Murramarang National Park.

Despite frequent written and verbal assurances from Sea Acres representatives that entry points along the Sea Acres boundary with the Park will be gated to prevent illegal incursions, Sea Acres has taken no action on this issue. Given the failure of our attempts to protect this area of Murramarang National Park from vandalism, we are looking at ways of ramping up our lobbying effort.

Improvement to the Discovery Trail adjacent to Durras Lake

The Parks Service has conducted recent work upgrading the Discovery Trail adjacent to Durras Lake. This work has entailed new track surfaces, including boardwalking and the construction of a new bridge. All up, labour and materials costs are in the order of approximately $30,000. The Discovery trail area contains magnificent old growth forest,
including rainforest, and is well worthy of a visit. Access is from the road to North Durras
and Depot beach, and the turn off is well sign posted.

Rubbish Dumping in Murramarang National Park

Unfortunately rubbish dumping is still occurring in Murramarang National Park; this includes
bulk household rubbish as well as green waste. The methods of detection of the perpetrators
of these dumpings have improved considerably, and as a result two offenders have recently
been fined. One of these fines was in the order of $750 for dumping about half a trailer load
of green waste at the powerline easement on Skid Ridge, and a clean up order was also
issued. Failure to comply with such an order results in further fines. There were exotic plants
growing amongst this dumping, posing a real threat of introduction of these plants into the
Murramarang National Park. Given the excellent Council ‘green waste’ service it is difficult
to understand the attitude of some people in dumping their rubbish in our National Parks.

Soil Dumpsites in Murramarang National Park

During 2008 Eurobodalla Shire employees dumped tip truck loads
of soil at three locations in Murramarang National Park
without permission. These soil
dumpsites were discovered by
Friends of Durras secretary John
Perkins. Eurobodalla Shire Council
have now given assurances that this
incident will never be repeated
again, and have also provided a
guarantee to regularly inspect these
sites for weed invasions as well as
undertaking maintenance of
sediment control.

Clean up Australia Day at South Durras

A big cleanup effort was undertaken in
South Durras and the adjoining
Murramarang National Park on Sunday, 1
March 2009. Volunteers scoured headlands
and beaches and both sides of the South
Durras road from the highway to the
blackboard area were given a good clean
up. Many large Clean Up Australia Day
bags were filled with a variety of rubbish,
including bottles, cans, takeaway food
containers and plastic. This annual clean up
event every March is a rewarding time to
remove accumulated rubbish from over the
busy summer period. A special thank you to the two South Durras local surfers who attend every clean up Australia event and scour the bushland adjacent to the Lake road and manage to fill numerous large bags of rubbish - their effort is very impressive.

Shorebirds

The Durras resident pair of Pied Oystercatchers nested again north of Lakesea Caravan Park in late November. Friends of Durras members moved the existing fence slightly south to protect this new nesting site, and the eggs hatched around Boxing day - during the peak holiday season! The Pied Oystercatchers parents were somewhat "new age" in their parenting skills, as the Pied Oystercatcher hatchlings could be observed mixing with holiday makers on the sand bars of Durras Lake between North and South Durras. Unfortunately, during this busy period, a Pied Oystercatcher hatchling went missing to an unknown cause. The remaining Pied Oystercatcher hatchling survived and is now fully fledged.

Keep a look out for the Double-banded Plover in the shorebird area north of Lakesea Caravan Park. This bird undertakes a long distance migration to south-east Australia from New Zealand. Movements to Australia are often preceded by movements of up to 200km to staging areas, mainly on the east and south coast of the South Island of New Zealand.

The Friends of Durras are enormously appreciative to the NPWS Shorebird officer Jodie Dunn for her tireless efforts in enhancing shorebird conservation here on the South Coast. And a big thank you to Eurobodalla Shire Rangers who regularly walk this area north of Lakesea Caravan Park as well.
Powerline Easements in Murramarang National Park

After lobbying by the Friends of Durras, Country Energy has provided funding for soil stabilisation work along the Skid Ridge powerline easement. The Friends of Durras are very impressed with this work. We are of the opinion that, for this important work to be enduring, that there is merit for the powerline easement to be fenced and gated with only authorised vehicles allowed access. All views on this are welcome!

Durras fire breaks (also known as Asset Protection zones) are in good order

A few South Durras residents made comments to the Bay Post claiming that the NPWS had not properly maintained fire breaks adjacent to South Durras village, the heading to this article was "Fed up with living in danger zones"

Alistair Henchman, Southern Director of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, wrote a letter to the Editor of the BayPost in response. The text of this letter is reproduced below:

‘In response to Fed up with living in danger zones (fire management Eurobodalla and Murramarang National Parks, BayPost Feb 20), an exceptional amount of thought, planning and resources is invested by the National Parks and Wildlife Service into managing the fire risk in these areas.

All major decisions about fire management in these areas are thoroughly considered, discussed with community members and ultimately approved by each council's district bushfire management committee.

These committees include all agencies with a fire management responsibility such as RFS, NPWS, council and State Forests. The NPWS is not working independently and making arbitrary decisions without the concurrence of other agencies.

Once a plan is approved every effort is made to ensure that the plans are implemented. This will include consideration about which areas should be hazard reduced by either clearing of burning, which fire trails need maintenance work and how often as well detailed planning for
responding to an actual bushfire should it threaten a local village such as South Durras or Potato Point.

For both places the NPWS has been implementing an agreed plan of rotational burning to protect life and property in conjunction with local RFS teams.

Landholders must also play their part by ensuring that their properties are well prepared for the event of fire and they need to have seriously considered their own fire plan. In most normal circumstances landholders, if they have undertaken the appropriate planning and have worked cooperatively with local fire fighting authorities will have every chance of protecting their properties against fire.

Under the extreme conditions experienced in Victoria, this will be very difficult. It's important that everyone realise that hazard reduction is not a silver bullet that will prevent fires when temperatures are in the 40s and powered by 100k/m winds.

At both South Durras and Potato Point the NPWS and local brigades have worked together over a number of years to ensure that each village is as well protected from fire as can be practically be achieved.

Living adjacent to bushland is not risk-free, and everyone has to work together to limit those risks. NPWS actively and professionally works in the community to support this goal.’

Further information on fire planning issues for the Durras/ Murrumbarang area can be found at [http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/firemanagement/MurrumbarangFMSdraft.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/firemanagement/MurrumbarangFMSdraft.htm)

Documenting yellow-bellied gliders in South Durras

South Durras is most fortunate to have yellow-bellied gliders frequenting the residential area. Eurobodalla Shire Council’s Environment section has put in considerable effort in protecting the village habitat for these remarkable nocturnal animals. This has included identifying sap feeding trees and protecting the links so that Yellow-bellied gliders are able to move around the village. Keep a look out for the tell tale signs of yellow-bellied gliders around, examples are the scar or sap feeding trees that these gliding possums use to feed on.
As these rare trees are the prime feeding sites for Yellow-bellied gliders it is very important that they are protected. Yellow-bellied gliders are the most vocal of all the gliding possum species, with a unique and very distinctive call - something like a cappuccino machine!

Ecologists seek new approach on parks (Canberra Times 30-3-09)

National parks will fail to protect Australia's wildlife if they are set aside as "isolated islands" marooned in an over cleared and urbanised landscape, leading ecologists say.

Australian National University ecologist Professor David Lindenmayer said, "we need a new approach to conservation, that's not based on a system of land apartheid that sets aside parcels of land for different uses"

The author of environmental best seller On Borrowed Time has also called for state and federal governments to "reinvigorate Landcare", which was "slowly dying from bureaucratic indifference and continual churnover in government departments."

In a new research paper co-written with University forest ecologist Professor Jerry Franklin - a senior policy advisor to former US president Bill Clinton - he argues for an end to the "black-and white view of habitat suitability that shapes government conservation policies across the world."

"We've had decades of simplistic policy that's assumed the land around national parks is a biological desert or a no go zone for biodiversity," the paper states.

Unfortunately, wildlife don't read park management plans. They don't recognise park borders or automatically stick to the designed wildlife corridors we've created for them.

In the paper, Professor Franklin and Professor Lindenmayer argue formal reserve systems such as national parks and World Heritage areas "will never cover more than a small fraction" of the planet.
Plant and animals species cannot be conserved by conservation departments "modifying management on 10 or 20 per cent of their landscape."

If the world's biodiversity is to be retained, managing "every acre of land" must be considered in conservation plans.

"We have to look more deeply at how we manage the landscape, not allocate our way out of the problem by dividing up chunks of land exclusively for production, urban development and national parks," Professor Lindenmayer said.

"That blinkered mentality has to go if we are going to get serious about conservation in the 21st century." He has also called for an overhaul of the environmental impact assessment system that underpins scrutiny of development approvals under state and federal environmental protection laws.

Current systems favoured development over conservation, with environmental assessments carried out by client consultants hired by developers "to play down environmental impacts and give a benign picture of what's going to happen when a development goes ahead."

Professor Lindenmayer also wants a national accreditation system to improve environmental impact assessment reporting.

"Most reports are written by consultants who aren't well qualified, and our biodiversity is disappearing as a result of greed and incompetence's he said.

"It's a problem I know all too well because lot's of these so-called consultants ring me up for advice. They ask the most ridiculous questions - stuff that just gobsmacks you in terms of their basic ignorance of how environmental systems work - yet these are the people being trusted with the future of our woodlands, rivers and other ecosystems.

**Help stop the commercialisation of National Parks: a request from the National Parks Association**

‘The NSW Government has adopted pro-tourism industry recommendations of the Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks that now puts our national parks at risk. Weaker national park protection laws are being developed to encourage damaging private accommodation, such as cabins, lodges and "eco-resorts in our national parks.

Environment groups want a stronger nature tourism industry in NSW and more people enjoying our parks. This must and can be achieved without park development.

Take action:

A. Get the message out! Tell your friends and colleagues who are passionate about national parks;

B. Volunteer! Help get involved in the campaign, contact notforsale@npansw.org.au or phone NPA on 02 9299 000; and

C. Lobby! Email Environment Minister, Carmel Tebbut dp.office@tebbut.minister.nsw.gov.au or the Premier Nathan Rees thepremier@www.nsw.gov.au and say you don't want national park laws weakened to permit private developments.

National Park visitor growth will easily exceed the State Plan Target, outperforming all other sectors of the tourist industry. Domestic overnight visitors visiting national parks will increase by 100 per cent by 2016, and the State Plan visitor target is for 20 per cent growth. So why push private development into national parks.
It is inappropriate to remove protection from national parks and to offer sites within them to the tourism industry, in an "investor ready" condition - these public lands are set aside for nature.’

Landmark Court outcome at Partridge Creek. (Reproduced from the newsletter of the Threatened Bird Network, March 2009)

Wildlife in northern New South Wales can breathe a little easier after a recent decision by the Land and Environment Court.

In a deliberation that should set alarm bells ringing for reckless municipal councils throughout Australia, the court found that the Port Macquarie - Hastings Council and one of it's former directors were guilty of the deliberate and intentional illegal destruction of core habitat inhabited by a small population of Eastern Grass Owls, the Eastern Chestnut Mouse and the Wallum Froglet all classified as vulnerable in NSW.

This needless damage resulted from their building of a road through the wetlands of Partridge creek, near Port Macquarie, and removal of the surrounding healthy vegetation. The decision to send in the heavy machinery was made even though intensive surveys had recorded a population of Eastern Grass Owls there. It was apparently made worse when, after being warned of the problem and being asked to minimise the impact of the road, the Council simply added extra gravel. The punishment: fines totalling nearly $500,000, in addition to the cost of removing the road and ongoing remedial actions.

The Court decision provides encouragement to all environmental campaigners out there to keep at it. It also sends a message to local councils: stop, listen and think.

New study indicates dog walking displaces native birds

Land managers in several countries, including the UK and Australia, have responded to birder's worries that dogs may be scaring local wildlife by banning the animals from sensitive shorebird areas. But dog-owners maintain there is little hard evidence to support this view.

So Peter Banks and Jessica Bryant at the University of NSW in Sydney tested the effect of dogs on bird sightings at 90 different sites in both regional parks where dogs are allowed on a leash and in neighbouring National Parks, where dogs are banned. They used two "treatments" - a person walking alone and a person with a dog.

After each treatment group walked past, the researchers counted the number of birds they saw or heard within 50 metres. Walking a dog was followed by an immediate exodus of nearby birds, leaving 41 per cent fewer individuals birds on average.

MARINE PARK UPDATES

1 - National Parks Association Marine Park Launch.

The world-renowned conservationist Valerie Taylor has launched new Marine Park proposals developed by the National Parks Association. This event was hailed as a landmark day for marine conservation in NSW.

"The proposed Sydney Marine Park will provide protection for the area's diverse habitats including rocky reefs and sponge gardens, which are home to hundreds of marine species including seahorses and snapper," said Nicky Hammond, NPA Marine Program Manager.
"The multiple-use nature of marine parks means that we get a better balance between fishing pressures and long-term conservation in this much used part of the Australian coastline. Whilst commercial and recreational fishing continues in marine parks, fully protected sanctuary zones within the park will help boost the numbers, size and productivity of our fish, help protect endangered species and provide valuable tourism and economic benefits."

"The unveiling of the Sydney Marine Park proposal is just the part of the biggest NSW marine protection plan ever to be released," continued Ms Hammond. "The marine park is part of a state-wide proposal for an intricate network of marine protection from Tweed Heads in the north to Cape Howe in the south. In total, it will offer complete protection for over 222,000ha of NSW oceans."

"The Sydney Marine Park needs to be complemented by the creation of the Twofold Marine Park on the NSW South Coast. Currently habitats such as seagrasses and mangroves in this area are completely unprotected. Approximately 65% of this coastline already is within land National Parks, offering a great opportunity to link marine and terrestrial conservation efforts."

"The full range of recommendations, if implemented, will lead to a transformation in our ocean and estuaries. A transformation that your children and grandchildren will thank you for," said Valerie Taylor at the launch.

"Now is the time for the State Government to provide the NSW community with a world-class network of marine sanctuaries to benefit us all now and for the future," concluded Ms Hammond.

2 - Marine Parks: the debate continues

There has been continual claims by both anti-marine park groups as well as individuals that implementation of Marine Parks is not based on science.

The statement released by the Australian Marine Sciences Association supporting the implementation of marine parks in Australia is printed in full at the end of this newsletter.

3 - Batemans Marine Park – sanctuary zones

All marine park users are urged to refresh their knowledge on sanctuary zone boundaries. This reminder comes in the wake of a man from the North Coast recently being fined a total of $1300 for fishing in a sanctuary zone in the Solitary Islands Marine Park.
Sanctuary zones or ‘no take’ areas provide the highest level of protection to habitat, animals and plants by prohibiting all forms of fishing and collecting.

A Marine Park Authority spokesman said while some anglers were occasionally found in sanctuary zones, by far the majority of fishers are aware of sanctuary zoning and adhered to it.

NSW marine parks aim to conserve marine biodiversity and maintain ecological processes.

4 - Customs patrol Marine Park (Narooma News 5-11-09)

The Marine Parks Authority and Australian Customs conducted a joint surveillance operation in November in the Batemans Marine Park.

Senior marine park officer Julian Brown said the operation with customs was conducted at night using sophisticated equipment to target illegal fish trawling.

"Trawlers are only allowed to pass through the park with all nets on board. Any trailer found fishing within the park will face prosecution"

"This night time joint operation with Customs covered a large section of the southern end of the Park."

Mr Brown said the MPA was happy the majority of park users were doing the right thing and abiding by the marine park's zoning plan while fishing in the park.

5 - Marine group wins grant

The Eurobodalla's Nature Coast Marine Group has been awarded a Caring for Our Country Community Coastcare Grant to work with the Batemans Marine Park. This will allow the marine group to continue working with Batemans Marine Park researcher Dr Melinda Coleman to assess the effect of the park's zoning on shallow sub-tidal flora and fauna. The program has been running for a year and has already provided valuable information about fish, invertebrates and seaweeds living on very shallow rocky reefs that are rarely studied.

Dr Melinda Coleman and Dr Brendan Kelaher from the Batemans Marine park designed the scientifically rigorous monitoring program for the Nature Coast Marine Group snorkelling volunteers.
A FINAL WORD ...

The Friends of Durras committee would like to thank members for their continual support over the past year. Issues of an environmental nature associated with Durras and Murrumaramg require input from the Friends of Durras committee on an almost daily basis. A lot of the time these issues are of a "housekeeping nature", such as arranging for the spraying of invasive weed species like cassia, liaising with the Regional Illegal Dumping Squad with regards to rubbish dumping in Murraramang, or organising volunteers to remove Sea Spurge from beaches.

In the next few years there will be some major issues to consider as well, including - for example - the development of a new plan of management for Murrumaramg National Park. The last management plan dates back to 1998, when Murrumaramg National Park was only 2,200ha; now it is 12,600ha. It is vitally important that the Friends of Durras have input into this plan so that we can help prepare Murrumaramg National Park to cope with the predicted increased visitation to this popular coastal park in the decades to come without compromising environmental values.

In the years ahead there will be a review of the Batemans Marine Park. This review process will offer an important opportunity to use the science and lessons learnt during the first five years of the implementation of this marine park to ensure our amazing marine life is sustainably managed. This review process means we can improve sanctuary zones for key habitats, such as those for the critically endangered grey nurse shark, and also lobby for the prohibition of collecting in the intertidal zone along the Murrumaramg coastline. It is worth revisiting the Friends of Durras Batemans Marine Park submission on the FOD website for more information.

The Friends of Durras would like to extend an enormous thank you to the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, who work diligently in looking after Murrumaramg National Park. The popularity of this coastal national park is in part a testament to their hard work.
NSW AMSA Position Statement on Marine Protected Areas and No-take Marine Sanctuaries
MAY 2008

1. Purpose

The Australian Marine Sciences Association (AMSA) is Australia’s largest professional association of marine scientists with over 900 members nationally and 122 members of the New South Wales’ branch.

This Position Statement has been produced to state the views of the New South Wales branch of AMSA about:

- the future of Marine Parks in New South Wales
- the need for no-take Marine Sanctuaries to be an essential component of all Marine Parks in New South Wales
- the weight of scientific evidence that justifies the use of Marine Parks and no-take Marine Sanctuaries as a management tool for biodiversity conservation

The New South Wales branch of AMSA is concerned about the lack of progress in fully implementing a State-wide system of Marine Parks in New South Wales and the lack of scientific rigour in recent public debates about the merit of Marine Parks in New South Wales.

The views expressed in this Position Statement are consistent with the position of the national body of AMSA in its Position Statement on Marine Protected Areas (2002)¹, and the position statements delivered by organizations of marine scientists throughout the world, including the American Association for the Advancement of the Sciences Scientific Consensus Statement on Marine Reserves and Marine Protected Areas (2001)², the Scientific Consensus Statement on Marine Ecosystem-Based Management (2005)³ and the European Scientists’ Consensus Statements on Marine Reserves (2007)⁴.

The New South Wales branch of AMSA believes that marine scientists have an important role to play in conservation and sustainable use, by providing the much needed data and rigorous advice required for planning and management.

2. Background

New South Wales covers a breadth of latitudes from sub-tropical, warm temperate to cool temperate. The coastal, estuarine and marine waters of the State include many different habitats such as saltmarsh, mangroves, seagrass, soft-sediment, beaches, rocky reefs, kelp forests, sponge gardens, and coral-dominated reefs. A great diversity of species occur in these habitats. These environments provide great enjoyment to the people of New South Wales and visitors, as well as being a source of income and a treasured way of life for many.

The estuarine and coastal environments of New South Wales are at risk from a range of human activities such as:

- alteration of catchments – resulting in changes to the quality and quantity of water flowing to the sea
- disposal of sewage and other wastes
- commercial and recreational fishing
- coastal development
- port construction
• shipping and recreational boating
• activities leading to the introduction of exotic marine species, and
• activities causing human-induced climate change

3. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

MPAs are areas of the sea, estuaries, or coastal waters in which human uses are managed. MPAs vary from large areas zoned for a range of uses (called Marine Parks in New South Wales) to small areas established for a specific purpose (e.g. Aquatic Reserves). Marine Parks include some area zoned as no-take reserves (called Sanctuary Zones in New South Wales) where no extractive activities are permitted. In New South Wales the total area of Sanctuary Zones represents 6.5% of coastal and estuarine waters.

Over 30 years of quantitative research and hundreds of published studies have critically evaluated the effectiveness of no-take marine sanctuaries as a conservation tool. The general consensus from this immense body of work throughout the world is that no-take marine sanctuaries can facilitate long-term conservation of biodiversity, protection for threatened species and improved natural resource management. This body of evidence indicates that the same outcomes will occur in New South Wales.

Establishment of marine sanctuaries is typically accompanied by an increase in the abundance and size of exploited species, increased fecundity of some target species, alteration of ecological processes and marine community structure and increases in catch rates of exploited species in the waters adjacent to the marine sanctuary. Marine sanctuaries also provide:

• opportunities for education and research in natural, undisturbed settings
• improved scientific understanding of marine ecosystems
• the enriched opportunities for non-extractive human recreational activities
• enhanced eco-tourism activity that benefits regional communities

4. Our Position

We, the undersigned marine scientists of New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia, believe that

1. MPAs (and associated sanctuary zones) are an essential management tool for conserving biodiversity and managing human uses of marine and estuarine environments.
2. A complete State-wide system of marine parks is needed in New South Wales to comprehensively represent the marine and estuarine biodiversity of each bioregion;
3. In view of our limited ability to predict changes in human activities and global climate, MPAs are the most suitable means of precautionary conservation of marine and estuarine biodiversity;
4. Critiques of the necessity of MPAs and in particular of sanctuary zones should include rigorous peer-reviewed evidence or empirical data testing null hypotheses, as well as a full consideration of the scientific literature;
5. MPAs should be large enough to meet their conservation objectives;
6. MPAs must be adequately resourced from the start to ensure they are properly managed and to protect them from illegal harvesting;
7. MPAs should include well-designed scientific monitoring programmes that can document ecosystem changes following protection to inform managers and the wider community on their performance.
5. Signatories

The following scientists have approved this Position Statement:

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<th>Name</th>
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Additional signatories

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<td>2 Graham Edgar</td>
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This Position Statement has been prepared and proposed, after extensive consultation with NSW AMSA, by: Dr William Gladstone President, NSW Branch Australian Marine Sciences Association (AMSA) William.Gladstone@newcastle.edu.au Professor David Booth Chief Scientist Sydney Institute of Marine Science University of Technology, Sydney Councillor, NSW AMSA David.Booth@uts.edu.au

If you wish to add your name to the list of signatories, please email Dr William Gladstone.


