

# Report of the Director of National Parks



The Director's views on the public comments received on draft management plans for Christmas Island Marine Park and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Park

December 2024

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## 1. Introduction

This report has been prepared in accordance with section 370(2)(b) of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) for consideration by the Minister for the Environment and Water in deciding whether to approve the management plans for Christmas Island (CI) Marine Park and Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI) Marine Park.

CI and CKI marine parks were proclaimed as Commonwealth Reserves under section 344 of the EPBC Act in March 2022. Section 366 of the EPBC Act requires management plans to be prepared for Commonwealth reserves as soon as practicable after they are declared. Under the EPBC Act, two public comment opportunities are required to support the preparation of management plans: the first inviting comments on the proposal to prepare draft plans and the second inviting comments on draft plans.

This report relates to the second of these public comment opportunities, which, in accordance with 368(5) of the EPBC Act:

- Was advertised in the Australian Government Gazette and a daily newspaper circulating in each state and territory – it was published in both *The Australian* and *The West Australian*.
- Was open for at least 30 days – it was open from 9 August to 19 September 2024.
- The draft plans were made available (online and in hardcopy).

The public comment opportunity was also advertised through a range of other avenues, including local newsletters on CI and CKI, direct emails to stakeholders, and social media. Comments were able to be submitted online via the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) 'Have Your Say' web address (<https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/>), or via hand delivery to Parks Australia offices on CI and CKI.

This report:

- Summarises the comments received.
- Provides the views of the Director on the comments received, in accordance with section 370(2)(b) of the EPBC Act.

Detailed background information on the design and establishment of the marine parks during 2021 and 2022, and the development of the draft management plans for the marine parks is available at <https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/consultations-reviews/indian-ocean-territories-science-consultation/>.

## 2. Number and types of submissions received

A total of 8555 submissions were received in response to the public comment opportunity. Of these:

- 8497 were 'campaign' submissions. 'Campaign' refers to those submissions that were generated by individuals through a third-party website and providing identical or very similar comments. There were two campaigns identified, with 6027 campaign submissions provided via the Save Our Marine Life alliance and 2470 provided via the Australian Marine Conservation Society.
- 58 were 'unique' submissions. 'Unique' refers to submissions that were not provided via a campaign. The unique submissions were from a range of stakeholders, including Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) organisations and community members, commercial fishers, local fishing

groups, researchers, the tourism industry, conservation organisations and mainland-based individuals.

**Table 1: Summary of total submissions**

<i>Submission</i>	<i>Number</i>
<i>Campaign submissions</i>	8497
<i>Unique submissions</i>	58
<b>Total submissions</b>	<b>8555</b>

Notes in relation to the counting of submissions:

- Two submissions received online did not have any comments in them and have not been included in the count.
- Every submission with comments has been included in the count. This includes a small number of submissions that appeared to be from the same individuals.

**Table 2: Summary of campaign submissions**

<i>Submission</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<i>Standardised word</i>	8015	<i>There were two different campaigns, respectively generating 6020 and 1995 submissions using standardised words</i>
<i>Modified submissions</i>	482	<i>There were 482 submissions where the standardised words had been edited or added to.</i>
<i>Total campaign submissions</i>	8497	

## 2.1 A note on modified campaign submissions

All campaign submissions were strongly supportive of the draft management plans, and as noted above, most were identical. Where individuals had modified or added to the standardised words of the campaigns, the following themes were identified among the additional comments:

- Additional sentiments in line with the supportive nature of the standardised text
- General comments in support of increased environmental protections
- General comments in support of preventing illegal fishing, over-fishing and foreign fishing
- Support for strong compliance measures in the marine parks, or generally
- Statements in favour of recreational fishing access in the marine parks, including as a tourist attraction

These comment themes are addressed within the main body of this report.

There was also a range of additional comments within the campaign submissions that were not directly relevant to the management plans or the marine parks, including for example: thank you messages; comments on other environmental policy issues; general comments about government; and details of personal experiences or circumstances of the commenter.

None of the campaign submissions were modified to an extent that the Director considered they should be counted as 'unique'.

**Table 3: Summary of unique submissions by sector**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Number of submissions</b>
<i>IOT organisations and community groups/associations</i>	8
<i>Tourism industry</i>	5
<i>IOT local government</i>	1
<i>Commonwealth government</i>	1
<i>Commercial fishing concession holders/fishers (mainland-based)</i>	2*
<i>Commercial fishers (IOT-based)</i>	1
<i>IOT local businesses</i>	1
<i>Conservation organisations</i>	4
<i>Research organisations/researchers/consultants</i>	12
<i>Individuals – not clearly part of a particular sector</i>	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>

\* These 2 submissions appeared to be from the same individual.

## 2.2 Relating comments to the plans

For many of the comments received, it was not clear if they related directly to the draft management plan(s) or how the commenter hoped their comment would be incorporated into the plan(s). For all comments, the Director has endeavoured to identify if and how they related to the plan(s), and how they could be given effect in the plan(s). This included applying comments made about a single plan, but equally applicable to the other plan, to both plans.

Some comments were clearly not related to the management plans and/or there was no way they could be given effect in the management plans – such comments included for example:

- the additional comments in some of the campaign submissions that described personal experiences or were about another area of the Government's environment policy.
- background information about an organisation or individual contained within their submission to support the reader's contextual understanding.
- that sections of a plan were not scientifically accurate, without any indication of what was considered to be inaccurate.

The Director's view on such comments is that they should be broadly acknowledged – as noted here – but not otherwise summarised or addressed in this report.

## 3. Comments given effect in the management plans and Director's views on these comments

Chapter 3 summarises the comments received that have been given effect in the management plans – those considered to have already been given effect in the draft plans or those which have been given

effect through updates made to the management plans in response to comments. The Director's views on these comments are also provided.

### 3.1 Comments relating to the entire plan(s)

#### Generally supportive comments:

All 8497 campaign submissions and a number of unique submissions indicated support for the proposed management plans as drafted. Some specific comments of this nature included:

- *I strongly support the draft management plans for the globally significant Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Parks in Australia's Indian Ocean Territories.*
- *The draft management plans are demonstrative of Australia's global leadership in marine conservation outcomes, and ensuring the central role of the island communities in both management plans creates confidence that the objectives of the plans can be met.*
- *I personally support the [CI] marine management plan and look forward to its implementation.*
- *I ... express my support for the draft management plan proposed for the [CKI] Marine Park.*

Many of the unique submissions also made generally supportive comments about the management plans, but went on to qualify these with specific feedback about how they could be improved. Specific feedback is considered in the sections below.

#### Specific comments applicable across the whole of the plan(s):

Some comments were supportive of particular aspects of the draft plans in their entirety. Such comments included:

- Support for how the draft plans incorporated local languages (Malay, Cocos Malay and Chinese).

#### *Views of the Director*

The Director welcomes the supportive comments for the draft management plans. While the draft plans have been updated in response to some comments as detailed in this report, the form and content of the draft plans has been largely retained. The use of local languages remains unchanged.

### 3.2 Comments relating to opening sections of the plans – vision, objectives, foreword, acknowledgements

#### Vision statements:

Comments on the vision statements included:

- The Vision Statement does not define its goals.
- The Vision Statement is a reflection of the community consultation and co-design process of the IOT marine parks.

#### *Views of the Director*

The Director notes that vision statements are given further definition through the objectives, management programs, goals, outcomes and actions as set out in Chapter 3 of the plans. The Director agrees that the vision statements are reflective of community consultation in the development of the plans and note that the intent of these is to provide community context for management of the marine parks.

### 3.3 Comments relating to Chapter 1 of the Plans – *Introduction*

Just one comment was received in relation to Chapter 1.

#### Context for management

- The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) should be listed with the responsible agencies for IOT.

#### *Views of the Director*

The Director notes the responsibilities of DAFF in relation to marine biosecurity at CI and CKI and has added DAFF to this list of agencies.

### 3.4 Comments relating to Chapter 2 of the Plans – *Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Islands Marine Park*

Many comments related to Chapter 2 of one or both draft management plans – the sections on values and pressures were a particular focus. The comments on Chapter 2 are summarised by section as follows:

#### About Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Park

- A request for more information about the original design of the CKI Marine Park – in particular, why some areas of inshore waters were not incorporated into the marine park.

#### People and Community:

- Suggestions for the CI plan to:
  - include additional content on how Chinese and Malay cemeteries relate to the ocean.
  - more accurately describe Taoist temples.
  - include more social and economic history, including the historical role of phosphate mining on Christmas Island in supporting the local economy.

#### Natural values:

- Support for the natural values listed and their descriptions.
- Suggestions relating to the CKI plan to include:
  - more information about marine turtles at CKI, such as international significance, diet and genetic distinctiveness/isolation of CKI green and hawksbill turtles, and also to list the other species of turtle sighted at CKI.
  - reference to the *Recovery plan for marine turtles in Australia*.
  - more detail about the loss of seagrass at CKI.
- A query about the image of Muirfield Seamount
- Suggestions relating to both plans to better recognise:
  - Cetaceans (whales and dolphins)
  - finfish
  - benthic organisms like algae beds and sponges.

#### Cultural Values:

- Fishing as a cultural practice is well supported in both management plans.
- Open ocean and lagoon fishing and Red-footed Booby harvesting are important parts of Cocos-Malay culture and tradition and should be enabled in the CKI plan.

- Support for inclusion of cultural values in the CI plan – especially the inclusion of the Taoist Ma Chor Nui Nui temple.
- Suggestions relating to the CKI plan to:
  - Provide additional specific details on the use of Jukung (traditional Cocos Malay boats).
  - Recognise that Hari Raya celebrations can last longer than a day.

#### Social and economic values:

- Social and economic values depend on healthy and protected marine environment including recreation, tourism, local employment and the local economy.
- Management should keep the park accessible for local sustainable use – balance between sustainable use and conservation is important.
- Suggestion for both plans to make the link/dependency between natural values, and social and economic values clearer.

#### Pressures and drivers:

- Both plans adequately cover pressures and drivers.
- Support for how pressures and drivers have been covered in the CI plan.
- More research is needed into pressures and drivers.
- Suggestions to recognise that pressures can be non-human and specifically that overgrazing by marine turtles should be recognised as a pressure the CKI plan.

#### Fishing pressure:

- Suggestions relating to both plans to include more information about fishing pressure including:
  - details of how fishing pressure will be managed through long term monitoring of keystone species and inshore enforcement.
  - it might impact on key biodiversity values.
  - Fisheries management, regulation and governance.
  - more recognition of local fishing as a pressure.
- For the CI plan, a suggestion to directly acknowledging the co-managed Fisheries Program and directly recognise the role of the Fisheries Advisory Committee.

#### Marine and invasive pest species:

- Suggestions relating to both plans to:
  - note the potential for the introduction of invasive marine animal disease, including via commercial aquaculture on the island.
  - acknowledge the threat of disease, as well as invasive species.
  - acknowledge potential impacts for marine industry and social amenity.
  - note that there is marine pest monitoring program currently in place.
  - mention 'biosecurity' within the management plans.
  - refer to 'invasive *marine* species' rather than just 'invasive species' for clarity.
  - Acknowledge both Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands as Australian First Point of Entry locations for biosecurity purposes.
  - explain how shipping practices are managed to prevent invasive species entering the marine parks.



### Marine debris and other pollution:

- Suggestions relating to both plans to:
  - recognise a greater range of pollutants and debris such as fish aggregation devices, micro/nano plastics and local litter.
  - acknowledge local efforts to reduce marine debris via source reduction programs and education and awareness campaigns.
  - emphasize the utility of data on marine debris to support local and global efforts to monitor and manage debris.
  - reference the *Threat abatement plan for the impacts of marine debris on the vertebrate wildlife of Australia's coasts and oceans*.

### Climate and environmental change:

- There is an adequate level of engagement with climate and environmental change.
- Suggestions relating to both plans to:
  - acknowledge that, due to the isolation of the Indian Ocean Territories, species that can no longer survive in the warmer conditions are likely to become locally extinct.
  - provide more detail on climatic and environmental pressures, such as the impacts of ocean warming, hydrological and wind regime changes, lagoon die off events and ecosystem key stone species.

### Water quality (CKI plan only):

- Suggestions for a range of detailed text edits for this section of the CKI plan.

### Recreational and tourism activities:

- Safety and accessibility mean the impact of tourism and recreation is concentrated in specific parts of Christmas Island. This requires balanced management.

### Christmas Island National Park:

- Coordination with Christmas Island National Park is Important to managing interconnected ecosystems.
- Coordination with Christmas Island National Park is Important to managing linked ecosystems.

### Views of the Director

#### About Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Park

The Director agrees that information about the design of the inner boundary of CKI Marine Park should be included in the CKI plan and has made additions to this effect.

#### People and Community

The Director welcomes the additional insights into aspects of CI's people and community and has incorporated additional and updated information into the CI plan in relation to cemeteries and Taoist temples, and better recognition of phosphate mining as a key CI industry.

#### Natural values

The Director acknowledges and welcomes comments in support of the natural values descriptions provided in the draft plans and those comments that suggested improvements. The Director agrees with a number of the suggested improvements and has made the following updates to the management plans:

- More information has been included in the description of marine turtles in the CKI plan
- More information about the pressures acting on seagrass and its decline in the CKI lagoon has been included – turtle grazing has been acknowledged as a pressure on the seagrass
  - o Information has also been included about current efforts to restore seagrass in the lagoon – in the boxed text within Chapter 3 of the CKI plan.
- Reef fish communities have been added as a standalone natural value, and better recognition of cetaceans and benthic organisms has been provided under other relevant natural values.

The Director has also clarified that the straight borders within the Muirfield Seamount represent the extent of the fine-scale bathymetry (seafloor) mapping carried out by CSIRO Research Vessel *Investigator* in 2022.

### Cultural Values

The Director understands that activities, histories and locations within or associated with the marine parks are culturally important for the communities of CI and CKI. The co-design process for the marine parks and ongoing close consultation with local communities to develop the draft management plans helped to ensure cultural considerations are understood and appropriately accounted for in the management plans. The plans incorporate information designed to highlight the cultural importance of fishing and the zoning and prescriptions provide for the continuation of recreational and subsistence fishing in line with established practices. The CKI plan also allows for the reinstatement of sustainable cultural harvest of red-footed booby birds should the appropriate environmental approvals be obtained.

The Director is grateful for the contribution of the drawing of Ma Chor Nui Nui temple by the Shire of Christmas Island and to all others who provide images, quotes, stories or other contributions to the management plans to help with highlighting cultural and other values.

The Director agreed with a number of suggestions relevant to cultural values and made the following updates to the management plans:

- Recognising Hari Raya as a time of celebration, not a single day.
- Recognising that historically, Jukung sailings to North Keeling Island was a frequent occurrence.

### Social and economic values

The Director agrees that the social and economic values of parks are largely dependent on the environment and natural values that the parks protect and has updated this section of the management plan to be more explicit about this connection.

The Director also agrees that balancing conservation and sustainable use in parks is important – both management plans seek to achieve this by supporting local sustainable use through yellow Habitat Protection zoning in inshore waters, and green National Park zoning in offshore waters.

Pressures and drivers

The Director acknowledges and welcomes the comments which supported the content on pressures and drivers contained in the draft plans and agrees that more research to understand pressures and drivers will assist management of the marine parks. Research and monitoring to improve understanding of pressures is a focus of the science, monitoring and management effectiveness program outlined in chapter 3 of the plans.

The Director agrees that pressures are not always human driven and both plans have been updated to reflect this.

Fishing pressure

The Director agrees that more information about the management of fisheries in the Indian Ocean Territories would be helpful for park user and stakeholder understanding, and has made the following updates to the management plans in response to comments suggesting this:

- More detail about local fisheries management arrangements has been added into the 'Fishing' section under cultural values.
- The CI plan now includes boxed text outlining the role of the Fisheries Management Committee in the development of the local fishing rules and ongoing advisory role.

The Director also agrees that long-term monitoring of fish species will be important for the marine parks as well as for fisheries management and notes the intention to work closely with fisheries managers to implement complementary monitoring arrangements. The Director has updated both management plans to include 'reef fish communities' as a natural value and monitoring priority.

Compliance and enforcement in both inshore and offshore waters will be an important aspect of marine park management, and one that requires the Director to work with other government agencies. This is recognised in the fishing pressure section of the plan in relation to the offshore areas of the marine park and the Director has updated Table 3.1 to also recognise this as part of the surveillance and compliance action. The Director will conduct their own inshore compliance operations from time to time and also liaise with other relevant agencies such as the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts and the Australian Federal Police to consider how joint inshore compliance operations may be conducted.

Marine and invasive pest species

The Director agrees that a number of suggestions for additional content in relation to marine invasive species and related matters should be incorporated and has made the following updates to the management plans:

- The threat of disease, including via the introduction of new species, is now discussed.
- The possible impacts on industry and amenity are acknowledged.
- CI and CKI have been acknowledged as 'First Points of Entry' under Australian biosecurity legislation.
- Using the term 'invasive marine species' rather than 'invasive species' for clarity.

The Director considers that a number of the suggestions were already sufficiently covered in the draft management plans, including:

- How commercial shipping is managed with respect to marine invasive species.
- Noting a marine invasives monitoring program is in currently in place.

#### Marine debris and other pollution

The Director agreed with a number of the suggestions to add additional content to the plans in relation to marine debris, and has made the following updates:

- Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) have been recognised as a standalone and significant source of marine debris.
- Local efforts to manage waste produced on island are better acknowledged.
- Making the link between the management plans and the *Threat Abatement Plan for the impacts of marine debris on the vertebrate wildlife of Australia's coasts and oceans (2018)*, which covers broader considerations in relation to marine debris beyond the marine parks.

#### Climate and environmental change

The Director agreed with some of the suggestions to expand and/or edit this section of the management plans and has made the following updates:

- Recognition that the isolation of CI and CKI will limit species ability to move ranges.
- Clarifying language in relation to storm and cyclone patterns and their impacts.
- Providing more detail about 'die off' events in the CKI lagoon.

#### Recreational and tourism activities pressure

The Director acknowledges that marine tourism activity is concentrated in specific parts of CI and has updated this part of the CI plan to recognise this. The Director also notes that:

- management actions can be targeted to areas of high use during the implementation of the management plans as appropriate.
- overall, the management plans do seek to balance conservation and sustainable use of the marine environment.

#### Water quality (CKI plan only)

Comments were received suggesting detailed edits to this section to highlight the interrelationship between water quality, seagrass loss and impacts on turtles. These suggestions have been addressed through minor updates to the water quality section of the plan and more extensive updates to the natural values section in relation to seagrass.

#### Christmas Island National Park

The Director notes comments about the importance of the link between the CI Marine Park and CI National Park. This linkage is addressed through the original design of the CI marine park to ensure strong and direct connection with the national park, and the commitment in the CI plan to integrate management across the two parks.

### 3.5 Comments about Chapter 3 of the Plans – *Management programs and actions*

While it is a short chapter within the management plans, Chapter 3 (Table 3.1 in particular) details the priority areas for management action under the management plan and was a focus for many commenters. The comments on Chapter 3 are summarised as follows:

#### Table 3.1 Goals:

- Support for the management goals and actions involving protecting and monitoring the natural environment, enhancing visitor understanding and appreciation, and supporting sustainable practices, including high-quality and safe tourism experiences.
- A suggestion relevant to both plans to add resilience to the first goal and to include the reduction of pressures (as well as the impact of pressures) to the second goal.

#### Table 3.1 Desired outcomes:

- Support for the desired outcomes as set out in the draft management plans, including:
  - The desired outcomes seem well thought out and cover a range of topics and interests.
  - The goal, desired outcomes and actions framework is generally appropriate.
  - Support the desired outcomes which are aimed at improving natural values and are quantifiable.
- Suggestions to improve the desired outcomes, including:
  - Addition of desired outcomes focusing on fish stocks particularly those subject to extractive activities and vulnerable to environmental changes.
  - Demersal fish, fish stocks targeted by fishers, recreational fishing (on Christmas Island) and invertebrate and benthic species should be desired outcomes.
  - Change desired outcome on improving fishing experiences within the marine park to maintain the current high satisfaction with fishing.
  - Rephrase desired outcomes to focus on what is being achieved. For example, changing the outcome to the number of incursions of foreign fishing vessels remains steady or decreases.
  - The desired outcome for pelagic species should focus on recovery rather than persistence, which could be interpreted as persisting at lower population levels, as persists is not defined.

#### Table 3.1 Actions:

- Support for actions to:
  - build and maintain collaborative and cost-effective partnerships to deliver quality science.
  - conduct surveillance and compliance operations particularly in the offshore green zones to detect and deter illegal fishing.
- Suggestions to include management programs and actions:
  - focusing on the recovery of seagrass habitat in the lagoon.
  - to ensure the preservation of natural biodiversity, sustainable management of resources and management of interactions with wildlife.
- Comments that:
  - Methods for monitoring the marine parks should be cost-effective.
  - Research and knowledge gained from research grant projects should be shared with local communities and made publicly available.

- Priority values and pressures to be monitored are not mentioned in the plans and that such priority values should include pelagic fishes and sharks.
- A suggestion to expand the management action on conducting surveillance and compliance operations to include collaboration with local Fisheries Rangers and fisheries compliance partners.

#### Boxed text – ‘Context for management outcomes’:

- Suggestion that the term ‘threshold’ should be used with caution as there is no mention of monitoring programs that have thresholds incorporated.

#### Monitoring, evaluation and reporting:

- The emphasis on marine research, monitoring and data collection, and the inclusion of an adaptive management framework is positive.
- There should be robust and well-funded monitoring programs that are effective for remote and large marine parks.
- Baseline data should be collected at the establishment of the marine park to assist with determining management effectiveness over time.

#### Community advisory committee:

- Support for the establishment of the Community Advisory Committee to involve local residents in the management of the marine park.
- Comment noting the importance of ensuring the local communities have a centralised role in decision-making for park management.
- A suggestion to expand the Community Advisory Committee’s responsibilities to include providing advice on businesses views, knowledge and needs and on the social and economic impacts of proposed actions or interventions, in relation to a changing environment in the marine park
- A suggestion to expand the criteria for the community advisory committee membership to include ‘representatives of the Island’s diverse multicultural community, local businesses, and those with relevant knowledge and expertise’.

#### *Views of the Director*

##### Table 3.1 - Management goals, desired outcomes and actions

The content of Table 3.1 in the draft management plans was a focus of community consultation and discussion during the development of the draft plans. It is designed to provide an appropriate level of detail to guide management and monitor performance of the marine parks over a 10 year period.

The Director welcomes the supportive comments received in relation to aspects of Table 3.1 and has made a number of updates in response to comments that suggested additions or changes. These changes include:

- Adding the concept of resilience – a key consideration in the context of climate and other environmental change – to the first goal.
- Adjusting the second goal to include ‘reduction of pressures’ as well as the impacts of pressures.
- Adding an outcome in relation to reef fish communities
- Rephrased the outcomes in relation to foreign fishing vessels and fishing experiences
- Adjusted the outcome in relation to pelagic fishing to focus on maintaining or increasing pelagic species diversity and abundance within the marine parks.

- 'Biodiversity' has been more explicitly recognised as a focus of management actions.
- Being clearer that surveillance and compliance operations will be in partnership with other agencies – which would include working with local fisheries rangers where appropriate.

The Director agreed with a number of comments or suggestions, but did not consider that changes were required to the management plans to give effect to them. In relation to these comments and suggestions, the Director's views are that:

- The CKI plan already provides sufficient focus on seagrass in the CKI southern atoll lagoon, without adjustments to Table 3.1
- Section 4.3.10 (Research, monitoring and restoration) of the management plans already details appropriate requirements consultation and sharing of knowledge with stakeholders, local communities and the public.
- Cost-effective monitoring is crucial and will be a focus for the Director, for example by looking to partner with other agencies and organisations.
- Section 3.1 as written in the draft management plans makes it clear that the desired outcomes in Table 3.1 are the focus of the Director's monitoring and management priorities – and these include pelagic fish.

#### Boxed text – context for management outcomes

The Director agreed with the comment that the term 'threshold' should be used with caution and decided to remove it from this section of the plan.

#### Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The Director welcomes the positive comments about the adaptive management approach set out in this section of the plan. The Director agrees in principle with the other comments in relation to this section of the plans and will continue to work to obtain baseline data for the marine parks and to establish effective monitoring programs.

#### Community advisory committee

The Director considers community engagement and advice to be a key priority and support function for management of CI and CKI marine parks. The advice provided by local advisory committees on the preparation of the draft management plans for CI and CKI marine parks was invaluable and such advice will continue to be invaluable throughout the implementation of this plan. In this context, the Director welcomes the positive comments about the management plans' commitment to establishing community advisory committees.

The Director acknowledges the comment that referring to community members with 'relevant knowledge and expertise' could be read as limiting when selecting members for the committees. The Director did not intend this reference to be limiting, as all local community members will have some level of knowledge and expertise relevant to the marine parks by virtue of their being part of the community. To help ensure potential members do not self-select out of opportunities to join the committee, the Director has removed the reference to knowledge and expertise.

In relation to the comment suggesting an additional point to expand the committees' role to advising on broader social and economic impacts of marine park management, the Director considers that providing advice on such matters is already within the scope of the committee's role as set out in the draft management plans.

### 3.6 Comments about Chapter 4 - *Management of activities*

Chapter 4 sets out the zoning and prescriptions for activities in the marine parks, and details about further authorisations and decision making. Many comments received expressed general views about different activities in the marine parks and zoning arrangements – those general comments as well as comments specifically directed to this chapter are summarised as follows:

#### Zoning:

- Extensive support for the zoning of the marine parks, including:
  - Support for the large offshore green zones which provide essential protection for pelagic species and does not allow fishing.
  - Biggest and best protected Marine Areas in the world with a large size and high levels of protection.
  - Support for IUCN Category II and IV zones to emphasise ecosystem services.
  - Support for zoning that enables continuation of sustainable local fishing practices, cultural traditions, sustenance etc.
  - Despite the management plan not being fully representative for all features with inshore areas largely excluded from the full protection - these zoning plans are currently the best possible and most appropriate for the IOTs to follow the co-design principles, meet local community aspirations, ensure recognition of cultural practises and provide significant benefits of community endorsement of the plans.
  - The extent of the National Park Zones and inclusion of important unique and threatened marine features demonstrate Australia's commitment to the goals of the NRSMPA.
  - The marine park exceeds the minimum goal of full protection of at least 30% of each provincial bioregion.
  - Demonstrates Australia's global leadership in marine conservation outcomes.
  - The extensive offshore green zones make a substantial contribution to highly protected waters globally.
  - Supports the management plans contribution to the 30 by 30 target (Convention on biological Diversity global biodiversity framework target 3).

#### Commercial shipping:

- A query about whether the plans should have specific prescriptions for waste disposal and ballast water discharge for non-commercial vessels including defence and research vessels.
- There should be a reference to Australian biofouling management requirements.

#### Mining:

- Extensive support for the prohibition of oil and gas exploration and extraction in the marine parks.

#### Structures and works:

- There should be a prohibition on the use of fish aggregating devices (FADs) within all zones of the marine park.



- The community advisory committee should be consulted when considering authorising the use of FADs within the marine park.

#### Commercial fishing and Aquaculture:

- Support for the use of class approvals to enable the continuation of traditional cultural fishing and local commercial fishing that is small scale and low impact.
- Opposition to large scale fishing within the marine parks.
- Opposition to commercial aquaculture in the marine parks, especially large scale aquaculture.
- Allowing new and large-scale commercial fishing with intensive fishing methods threatens cultural fishing practise and marine park values.
- Request for clearer guidelines on ensuring fisheries and tourism do not harm the marine environment.
- Request to include reference to local commercial fishing licences.
- Include specific reference to biosecurity regulations when mentioning marine resource management laws.

#### Commercial tourism:

- The management plans should not create unnecessary restrictions on tourism operations in the marine park and support for a streamlined approach to obtaining authorisations for commercial tourism operations.

#### Recreational fishing:

- Request for further information in the plan on the interaction between fishing rules and marine parks.

#### Waste management:

- Requirement for ships to notify in advance when undertaking ballast water and waste disposal.

#### Red-footed booby harvest:

- Support for enabling the cultural tradition of harvesting of Red-footed Booby birds for local consumption in accordance with an approval under the EPBC Act.

#### EPBC regs:

- A suggested correction to ensure the appropriate EBPC Regulation is referenced in relation to burials within the marine parks.

#### Making decisions about activities:

- Support for the involvement of island communities in decision making and management of the marine park to fulfill the objectives of the marine park.

#### *Views of the Director*

##### Zoning

The Director notes that the design and zoning CI and CKI marine parks were the subject of significant consultation and a co-design process with local communities during 2021, prior to the parks being proclaimed. The zoning in the draft management plans is the same as the proclaimed zoning and it retains strong support among local communities and many other stakeholders, as evidenced by the comments

received on the draft management plans and through previous public comment opportunities. While there continue to be criticisms of the zoning in some of the comments received, which are covered in detail in later sections of this report, the Director considers that the proclamation zoning should be retained in the management plans.

#### Commercial shipping

The Director notes that the waste management prescriptions in the management plan apply to non-commercial vessels as well as commercial vessels. The management plans have been updated to include reference to the Australian Biofouling Management Requirements.

#### Mining

The complete prohibition on mining in the CI and CKI marine parks has been strongly supported throughout consultation and public comment opportunities on the design of the parks and was implemented under their proclamation. The Director considers that this prohibition should be retained and the management plan prescriptions on mining reflect this.

#### Structures and works

The Director notes that fish aggregating devices (FADs) released into the high seas of the Indian Ocean can be hazardous to marine life and vessels. These FADs are free-floating, and often made up of large volumes of hazardous material such as polystyrene, bamboo and rope. FADS of this nature regularly enter the inshore waters of CI and CKI and can wash up on the shoreline. These FADs have negative environmental and social impacts. In this context it is understandable that commenters have suggested that the installation of FADs should be prohibited in the CI and CKI marine parks.

However, the Director considers that well designed and managed FADs could potentially be deployed to enhance fishing experiences in the CI and/or CKI marine parks without negative environmental or social impacts. FADs of this kind are successfully deployed and managed in other jurisdictions in Australia and the Director does not want to create a blanket prohibition on FADs in the CI or CKI marine park. The Director notes that the installation and management of a FAD within the marine parks would require assessment and authorisation by the Director and that any FAD proposal would need to align with the views and aspirations of island communities (as per the objectives of the yellow Habitat Protection Zones set out in section 4.1 of the plans). The Director agrees, however, that additional assurance that any FAD proposal would be appropriate in the local context should be provided through the management plans by adding a new prescription requiring the Director to consult with the community advisory committee as part of their assessment of any FAD proposals.

#### Commercial fishing and aquaculture

The Director agrees that establishing a class approval to enable the continuation of existing commercial fishing operations within the yellow Habitat Protection Zones of the marine parks is appropriate and has committed to this in the draft management plans.

The Director notes that fishing and aquaculture of any kind is prohibited in the offshore waters of both marine parks. New commercial fishing or aquaculture ventures are potentially allowable within the yellow

zones, including operations of relatively large scale compared to existing operations. The Director has made these allowances to ensure that local communities' aspirations for increased self-sufficiency and economic development – potentially through locally based commercial fishing or aquaculture – can be supported by the marine parks under the right circumstances. To help ensure any significant new commercial fishing in the marine parks is appropriate in the local context, there are safeguards in place:

- Commercial fishing gear types considered most harmful to the marine environment (bottom trawling for example) are prohibited.
- Assessment and approval will be required under fisheries management arrangements, informed by the locally-based Fisheries Advisory Committee.
- The marine park management plans require the fisheries management authorities to consult with the marine park community advisory committee.
- The management plans include an objective for the marine parks' yellow zones that activities in this zone are to align with the views and aspirations of the CI/CKI community.

The Director is confident that these safeguards will work to effectively balance concerns about industrial scale fishing within the parks' yellow zones with local communities' aspirations for local food security and economic development.

Regarding the request for clearer guidelines on ensuring fisheries don't harm the marine environment, the Director notes the provisions in the management plans that set out:

- What gear types can be used commercially and that any significant new commercial fishing operations must be considered by the community advisory committee.
- That all fishing – recreational and commercial – must be in accordance with locally applicable fishing rules.
- That a class approval will be developed for existing commercial fishing operations, and this may provide additional guidelines if appropriate.

The Director considers that this guidance is sufficient and appropriate for the management plans.

The management plans use the term 'commercial fishing concession', rather than licence – as this term is broader and would cover licencing and any other requirements for a commercial fisher to operate under fisheries management arrangements.

### Commercial tourism

The Director agrees that streamlining arrangements for commercial tourism authorisations to operate in the marine parks is appropriate and has committed through the management plans to do this via:

- A locally fit-for-purpose class approval covering existing CKI operations – this arrangement will be unique among Australian Marine Parks.
- Ensuring CI operators can obtain a single permit covering both CI Marine Park and CI National Park waters.

### Recreational fishing

The recreational fishing prescriptions in the management plan are clear that recreational fishing in the marine park must be in accordance with local fishing rules and the Director does not consider that this can be further clarified. Additional information on fisheries management arrangements for the IOT has been included in the plans.

#### Waste management

The director considers that requirements for ships to notify authorities in relation to ballast water and waste disposal is covered by references in the management plans to the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and associated ballast water management requirements.

#### Red-footed booby harvest

As noted above in relation to cultural values, the CKI plan allows for the reinstatement of sustainable cultural harvest of red-footed booby birds should the appropriate environmental approvals be obtained. The Director considers this to be an appropriate provision in the historical and cultural context of CKI, while also ensuring that the environmental impacts of any harvesting proposal are fully assessed.

#### EPBC regs

The Director is grateful to those who highlighted drafting errors in the management plans and has amended this section to cross reference the correct EPBC Regulation in relation to burials.

#### Making decisions about activities

The Director agrees that community advice is important to inform marine park decision making and has committed to ensuring this through the creation of community advisory committees as set out in the management plans.

### 3.7 Comments about the Schedules and Glossary

A small number of comments was received that related to the schedules and glossary and these are summarised as follows:

- Insert definitions for biofouling, biosecurity and invasive species
- Disease is included in the glossary but nowhere else in the management plan
- A list of relevant literature including species identifications and scientific papers should be included in the management plans.

#### *Views of the Director*

The Director agrees that the inclusion of a definition for marine invasive species should be included in the management plans and has added this to their glossaries. The Director notes that biofouling is not a key concept within the management plans and does not consider that it requires definition in the management plan glossaries. A definition of biofouling can be found within the *Australian biofouling management requirements* and a reference to these requirements has been added to the management plans in response to other comments. The Director considers that biosecurity is a very broad concept and does not require a specific definition for the purposes of the management plans. The Director has incorporated discussion about the threat of disease into the management plans as outlined earlier in this report.

The management plans provide a list of select references that informed the drafting of the plans. Several of these are reports that draw together key information from relevant scientific literature. These reports are freely available online for any readers of the management plans who wish to access more comprehensive lists of original source material.

## 4. Comments not given effect in the management plans and Director's views on these comments

Chapter 4 summarises the comments received that have not been given effect in the management plans and the Director's views on these comments. The tabular format for this chapter of the report is adopted to:

- enable commenters can see directly if their comment(s) were not given effect and why.
- assist with ensuring EPBC Act requirements are met – section 371(3) requires copies of any comments not given effect in a management plan to be tabled in the Parliament.

Row	Plan(s) to which comment applicable	Section of plan(s) comment(s) most relevant to	Comments	Views of the Director
01	Both	2.1 About CKI Marine Park	Criticism of the statement that yellow habitat protection zoning 'provides a high level of protection'. Suggestion to instead state that this zone supports cultural and socio-economic values.	The Director considers that IOT yellow zones provide a high level of protection for the marine environment (for example, mining is now prohibited in these zones) and also supports cultural, social and economic values.
02	CKI	2.2 People and community	Recognise the wider diversity of the settlers of CKI (e.g. descendants brought to the islands from Africa?)	The plan is intended to provide a broad account of CKI history to assist reader context, not a detailed history.
03	CKI	2.3.1 Natural Values	There should be photos of Muirfield Seamount	The plan includes a bathymetry image and textbox dedicated to Muirfield Seamount – sufficient to describe this feature.

04	Both		Suggestion to group natural values by Habitat and Key Performance Indicators to ensure that all key features are recognised and to avoid misinterpretation. It would also align with other shallow/nearshore marine parks.	<p>A number of comments suggested different approaches (for example with respect to layout, categorisation and language) be used in the plans in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- natural values</li> <li>- pressures and drivers</li> <li>- goals and desired outcomes</li> </ul> <p>Other comments supported the approach taken in the draft plans.</p> <p>The Director acknowledges that organisations vary in their approach to documenting or categorising these concepts and on balance did not consider a change was warranted to avoid misinterpretation. The detail provided in the management plans is considered sufficient to enable comparison and practical cooperation with other agencies and organisations.</p>
05	Both		Biodiversity should be a natural value.	Biodiversity is a broad concept and referenced in the overarching objectives of the management plans. The natural values set out in the plan are aspects of biodiversity and will help focus management underneath the overarching objectives. In this context, the Director does not consider that listing biodiversity as a standalone natural value would help to enhance management of the marine parks.
06	Both	2.3.2 Cultural Values	There is interest in how, cultural knowledge will be supported by Parks to maintain marine cultural knowledge.	<p>Parks Australia will have an ongoing dialogue with local communities about how it can support cultural knowledge of the marine environment – in line with the broad commitment in Table 3.1. The Director considers that this broad commitment is appropriate for a 10-year management plan. Recent examples of Parks Australia support for the maintenance of cultural knowledge in line with this commitment include funding for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CI Stories to create videos highlighting aspects of CI marine culture, including sampan building.</li> <li>- Cocos Marine Care to document Cocos-Malay knowledge about the CKI lagoon’s blue holes.</li> </ul>
07		2.3.3 Social and economic values	Include a quote from a recreational fisher (flyfisher?)	The importance of fishing at CKI is already well-acknowledged in the plan – including as a recreational activity.



<b>08</b>	Both	2.4.1 Pressures and drivers	Include a table to illustrate the relationship between drivers, pressures, state, impacts and response	Refer to views provided at <b>row 04</b> , above.
<b>09</b>	Both	2.4.4 Marine and Invasive Pest Species	Suggest including a protocol for contacting the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) when invasive marine species detected/sighted	Such protocols and prioritisation of species should be developed and maintained separately to the 10-year management plans as flexibility over this timeframe is likely to be required – both for the Director and other relevant agencies such as DAFF.
<b>10</b>	Both		Consider including information about previous incursions of pest species and how prioritised species are chosen and monitored.	
<b>11</b>	Both		Suggest adding "Parks Australia are responsible for biosecurity within Marine Parks"	
<b>12</b>	Both	2.4.5 Coastal development and infrastructure	Parks Australia should assess proposed developments adjacent to marine parks, as well as those within them	The Director does not have authority to formally assess developments adjacent to marine parks but acknowledges that adjacent developments can affect them. The CKI management plan recognises that Parks Australia will need to liaise with other agencies and authorities to help ensure impacts from outside are minimised.
<b>13</b>	CKI		There should be explicit mention of the forthcoming Rumah Baru jetty and extension of the Airfield on CKI	The Department of Defence (Defence) airfield project is one of many potential developments that could occur during the 10-year life of the management plan. At the time the CKI management plan was finalised, timing and details of the project remained uncertain and, aside from the proposed removal of Defence legacy waste from the lagoon to the east of the runway, the Director understood the associated works were planned to occur entirely outside the marine park. In that context, any reference to the project in the management plan may have become quickly outdated. Consistent with the views provided at <b>row 12</b> above, the Director has engaged with Defence to encourage them to use best environmental practices, provide transparency in relation to environmental

				assessments and potential impacts, and to support positive social and environmental outcomes more broadly at CKI.
<b>14</b>	Both		There should be greater protection when development occurs	Any development within the marine parks will require assessment by the Director and through this process additional protections for park values and other conditions can be applied.
<b>15</b>	Both	2.4.6 Fishing pressure	There needs to be more protection from illegal foreign fishing  There should be greater protection from IUU fishing.	IOT waters are subject to significant patrol effort from Maritime Border Command (MBC) assets, helping to protect CI and CKI marine parks from illegal foreign fishing. The management plans refer to the Director’s partnerships with other government agencies that help to manage the risk of illegal foreign fishing. The Director will maintain these partnerships through MBC to maintain and, where possible, enhance protections against this threat.
<b>16</b>	Both		Fishing should be recognised as the major manageable human pressure affecting biodiversity	The management plans provide appropriate recognition of fishing as a pressure.
<b>17</b>	Both		Long term data on extraction rates (bag surveys) or sampling of key indicator species to assess impacts of fishing pressure	Obtaining data on fish catch rates is something ordinarily undertaken by fisheries managers and is inherently focussed on species targeted by fishers. Catch survey arrangements are currently in place under the new community-led fisheries management arrangements in the IOT. Reef fish communities are now recognised in the management plans as a natural value and marine park managers will work with fisheries managers to share information where relevant to management of this value.
<b>18</b>	CKI		Request to acknowledge trade of marine species from Cocos to mainland.	The CKI plan acknowledges the importance of fishing and the sharing of food for local people generally.
<b>19</b>	CKI		Request to acknowledge the absence of impartial fisheries regulation.	The plans include acknowledgement of the relatively new fisheries management arrangements at CI and CKI overseen by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (DITRDCA) and the Director welcomes these arrangements. Questions or concerns about perceived impartiality or other aspects of these arrangements should be directed to DITRDCA.

20	CI	2.5 Christmas Island National Park	Request for clarification of Spearfishing rules in the waters of Christmas Island National Park.	With the Christmas Island National Park (CINP) Management Plan due to be renewed in 2025, any reference to the management arrangements for CINP in the CI Marine Park plan could become quickly outdated. Once the new CINP plan is in place, the Director will ensure materials are available that clarify rules and management arrangements across the two parks.
21	Both	Table 3.1 Desired outcomes	Suggested rewording for invasive species desired outcome to "biosecurity risks are managed, and introductions of marine invasive species and exotic aquatic animal diseases are reduced"	DNP acknowledges that it may not be possible to prevent the introduction of marine invasive species to the marine parks. However, in environments where no marine invasives are known to be established, the Director considers that it is appropriate to aim for maintaining this status.
22	Both		<p>Suggestions for more measurable, precise and ambitious outcomes should be included – particularly for coral reefs (CI and CKI), seagrass habitat, and turtles (CKI only).</p> <p>Comment that the desired outcomes are ineffective and too vague as useful management targets – the plans should identify specific indicators/targets (e.g. percent of desired seagrass cover)</p> <p>Recommendation that turtle health should be clearly defined – e.g. through measures of growth, body condition and breeding ratios</p>	<p>The desired outcomes are intended to balance the need to guide management and have meaningful goals with the need to be flexible and adaptive over the 10-year implementation of the management plans. The Director will develop more details for monitoring against the desired outcomes separate to the management plans so that this balance can be maintained. This will include, where appropriate, more specific indicators and targets.</p> <p>Maintaining flexibility and adaptability is not only a consideration for the Director, but for the agencies, research organisations and community groups that the Director will seek to partner with and/or involve in the development of monitoring arrangements.</p> <p>The values and pressures highlighted in the management plans will be a focus of monitoring.</p> <p>The specific suggestions for measuring turtle health will be useful in developing more detailed monitoring in relation to this natural value at CKI.</p>

23	Both		<p>Suggestions to include an additional outcome(s) and/or specific measures in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- invertebrate species diversity and abundance</li> <li>- benthic habitats, specifically algae beds, sponges and other benthic organisms</li> </ul>	<p>Invertebrate species and benthic habitats are very broad categories with high levels of variability within them across the marine parks. Specific outcomes or measures in relation to invertebrates and benthic organisms has not been added to the plans, but the natural values sections have been updated to better recognise their importance in this context. This will support their prioritisation in the development of operational monitoring arrangements during the life of the plans.</p>
24	Both		<p>The meaning of healthy in the vision statement is not defined in order to frame the desired outcomes</p>	<p>The content of Table 3.1 sets out the objectives, goals, programs, desired outcomes and actions that are designed to support progress towards achieving the vision statement, and support understanding of what a healthy marine environment looks like.</p>
25	Both	Table 3.1 Actions	<p>Suggestion to include a point on monitoring levels of ballast water discharge and exchange in Australian waters Question about whether vessels inspected for biofouling and inclusion of this in Table 3.1</p>	<p>The management plans note that commercial shipping must continue to comply with other relevant laws, policies and procedures including the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> and the associated <i>Australian ballast water management requirements</i> and <i>Australian biofouling management requirements</i>, which are administered by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.</p>
26	Both		<p>The educational programs and engagement actions in the plan should involve educational activities that promote awareness of marine debris and detailed advice on the design of these activities</p>	<p>Table 3.1 provides for collaborative management of marine debris and building on educational programs, so there is scope for this to occur. Detailed design of such activities would be more appropriately developed separate to the management plans in the context of specific projects. The Director already provides significant support for marine debris management, including education and awareness activities at CI and CKI via grants to Tangaroa Blue, and operational support for Sea Shepherd's volunteer driven clean-up activities.</p>
27	CKI		<p>Suggestion to endorse and encourage the use of the Researchers Code of Conduct developed by Cocos Marine Care as an action under the community</p>	<p>The CKI plan acknowledges the work and importance of Cocos Marine Care (CMC) and will continue to encourage researchers to engage with CMC and other relevant local stakeholders during all phases of their research.</p>

			and stakeholder benefits and engagement program.	
28	CKI		Comment that actions supporting the maintenance of biodiversity and natural ecosystems are insufficient.	A range of submissions included general criticisms of the plans or sections of the plans. Where such criticisms did not provide reasoning or specific suggestions for changes, there was no basis for the Director to make changes to the plans. Management programs and actions will be reviewed and adapted over time to help ensure their effectiveness.
29	Both		More detailed information on the school's involvement in management of the marine park	The community and stakeholder benefits and engagement program provides for the involvement of local schools in management. Parks Australia will consult further with local schools during the implementation of the management plans on opportunities for school involvement, and the schools' preferences/capacity in relation to this.
30	CI		Recommendations for research on the interaction of the Indonesian Throughflow current with whale shark and cetacean migration.	Many comments made suggestions to include specific research and other management priorities in the management plans. Where there were a number of comments making similar suggestions and the Director agreed there was a significant management gap to be addressed, the plans have been updated – for example in relation to reef fish communities and invertebrates. In other cases, the Director did not consider the suggestion(s) to be a significant gap and has not updated the plans. In this instance, better recognition of cetaceans has been provided in the natural values section of the plans but the Indonesian throughflow current is not considered a marine park management priority that requires inclusion in the plan. The Director notes that significant funding has been provided to Murdoch university through a grant to research whale shark activity at CI.

<b>31</b>	Both		Inclusion of long-term ongoing surveys of key target fish species catches and abundances of key indicator species analysed with oceanic and climate data, to determine fishing pressure and impacts for fish stocks and biodiversity.	Refer to views provided at <b>row 17</b> , above.
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32	Both		<p>Suggestions to include specific management actions/commitments in the plan(s), such as for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mooring installation (mentioned for CI only)</li> <li>- source reduction programs for marine debris</li> <li>- installation of zoning signage on island</li> <li>- employment of a marine parks officer on Christmas Island.</li> <li>- employment and training in park management</li> <li>- a long-term monitoring program for each value and pressure</li> <li>- procurement of a dedicated patrol vessel</li> <li>- rescue and release program for green turtles on CI</li> <li>- establishment of a facility for endemic coral breeding</li> </ul>	<p>The Director notes that many comments included suggestions about specific management activities that should be funded/implemented. Some of these suggestions follow discussions held between stakeholders and Parks Australia staff.</p> <p>The management plans generally include goals or actions under which these suggestions could be implemented, but not a commitment to the specific suggestions. This is generally because the management plans need to provide guidance on management over a 10-year period while allowing flexibility to change and adapt. Funding and resourcing within Parks Australia is also a consideration, with budgets generally provided on an annual basis. In this context, specific resourcing and funding commitments generally need to be kept separate to the management plans. Stakeholders, management partners and the community advisory committee will be consulted regularly in the context of decision making about annual and other shorter term specific priorities for management.</p> <p>The Director notes that at the time this report is drafted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- zoning signage to be installed at Direction Island on CKI is being constructed in Perth and further signage is being prepared for both CKI and CI</li> <li>- two additional staff members have been employed at CKI to support management of the CKI marine park and Pulu Keeling National Park</li> <li>- funding has been obtained to employ a marine park officer at CI and the recruitment process is nearing completion</li> <li>- monitoring programs for some values and pressures are underway through a variety of funding mechanisms including marine park grants, direct procurement and partnerships with other agencies.</li> </ul>
33	CKI		Request for information on actions being taken to monitor illegal and unreported fishing	Refer to the views provided at <b>row 15</b> , above.

34	CKI		Include a monitoring and management approach for the resident sea turtle population in the plan	Refer to the views provided at <b>row 22</b> , above.
35	Both	3.2 Monitoring, evaluation and reporting	Provide more detail on monitoring of the marine park including how the data will be incorporated into the adaptive management framework.	Refer to the views provided at <b>row 22</b> , above.
36	CI		Inquiry into whether there are contingency plans for responding to coral bleach events and other climate related threats	There are cross agency arrangements in place that Parks Australia is involved in that can assist with predicting significant climate-related events – for example the Western Australian Coral Bleaching Group, coordinated by the Australian Institute for Marine Science. Responses to specific events can be formulated case by case through linkages to other agencies and research organisations through groups such as this one. Arrangements are likely to vary from event to event and over the life of the management plans.
37	Both		General request for further information on the involvement of the community in monitoring and research activities.	Community involvement underpins the approach to management of the parks, including through community advisory committees. The Director will seek to engage and build the capacity of community groups and organisations. Details of how this may occur this will be the subject of shorter term planning and consultation with relevant groups.  Refer also to the views provided at <b>row 22</b> , above.
38	Both	Zoning	There should be higher levels of protection in inshore areas of the marine parks – more national park zoning for example.	This comment, or similar, was made in a number of submissions for reasons such as meeting 30% targets in relation to ocean protection and to protect against recreational fishing pressure.  There were also many submissions indicating strong support for the zoning in the draft management plans and/or the co-design process behind the design of the marine parks.  The Director notes that the draft management plans’ zoning is identical to the zoning established under the proclamation of the



				<p>parks in 2022. A key objective in the original design of the parks was to put the views and aspirations of marine users – especially the CI and CKI communities – at the forefront of the design process.</p> <p>Local communities have consistently expressed that continued access to inshore waters for subsistence and recreational fishing (including spearfishing), and locally based commercial fishing is very important. Opportunities to create community-supported green zones in inshore waters were explored at both CI and CKI, resulting in green zones at The Rip and Trannies Beach at CKI.</p> <p>The Director considers that strong local community support for the CI and CKI marine parks will be crucial to their success over time. Arguments for increased inshore green zoning, while well-made, are not as compelling as remaining true to the original design objectives and co-design processes undertaken with local communities and the consistently expressed strong support for retaining the co-designed zoning.</p> <p>More information on the design process for the CI and CKI marine parks, including community and stakeholder comments, and the Director’s views is available from <a href="https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/consultations-reviews/indian-ocean-territories-science-consultation/">https://australianmarineparks.gov.au/management/consultations-reviews/indian-ocean-territories-science-consultation/</a> - in particular, the Director’s December 2021 report <i>Establishing Australian Marine Parks in the Indian Ocean Territories</i> – available online at: <a href="https://api.parksaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/document/amp-document-AMP-IOT-DNP-Report.pdf">https://api.parksaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/document/amp-document-AMP-IOT-DNP-Report.pdf</a></p>
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39	CKI	4.3.1 General use and access	Suggestion to extend prohibition on touching, standing on and generally disturbing corals to stony coral in the yellow Habitat Protection Zone.	Such a prohibition was considered during development of the CKI management plan for the yellow zone area, in addition to the green zones at The Rip and Trannies Beach. The Director acknowledges that the extensive intertidal areas in the yellow zone heighten the risk of inadvertent trampling of corals and other marine life by users of the marine park. However, implementing a full prohibition of this nature in the yellow zone was considered impractical from a compliance perspective when balanced against the needs of the local community and visitors to access this zone for recreation and other purposes. Educational materials, including signage for sensitive locations, will be developed to encourage users of the marine park to minimise disturbance to corals and other marine life.
40	Both	4.3.2 Commercial shipping	Suggest inclusion of vessel in-water cleaning as a prescription	Parks Australia is not in a position to directly require or enforce such a prescription. The management plans note that there is a range of national laws, policies and procedures relevant to commercial shipping that continue to apply within the marine park, including the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> and the associated <i>Australian ballast water management requirements</i> . In response to comments, the <i>Australian biofouling management requirements</i> are now also referenced in this section of the management plans.
41	Both	4.3.3. Commercial fishing	Allowing industrial-scale fishing in yellow Habitat Protection Zones is incompatible with the IUCN guidelines for Marine Protected Areas.	Management of Australian Marine Parks requires a balance between protecting our marine environment and providing opportunities for sustainable use and enjoyment of these special places. Yellow Habitat Protection Zones in Australian Marine Parks allow commercial fishing gear types to be used where this is consistent with the objectives of the zone (generally for yellow zones, this means only allowing gear types that do not harm the seafloor). The scale of fishing operations are not determined by the marine park rules, but by fisheries management agencies. In the context of CI and CKI, where there is currently no commercial fishing that could be considered 'industrial scale' the management plans seek to balance concerns about such fishing (or aquaculture) occurring with local communities' aspirations for local food security and economic development. To help achieve this balance in relation to any future proposals for significant new fishing operations at CI or

				<p>CKI, the management plans provide two provisions that are unique among Australian Marine Parks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the inclusion of an objective for the yellow zones to support cultural, social and economic activity that aligns with the views and aspirations of the local community,</li> <li>- community advisory committee consultation on significant new commercial fishing and aquaculture proposals.</li> </ul> <p>These provisions will help ensure that any new commercial fishing or aquaculture activities in the marine parks are in line with community expectations around scale, impact and sustainability – as well as potential benefit to the community.</p>
42	Both		<p>Comments in support of fisheries management in line with ecosystem-based fisheries management for managing fisheries resources that focuses on the entire ecosystem rather than singular species.</p>	<p>Parks Australia works closely with fisheries management authorities but does not manage fisheries directly. This would be a matter for direct consideration by the relevant fisheries management authority at CI and CKI – the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.</p>
43	Both		<p>The commercial fishing methods including longlines, purse seine (and associated Fish Aggregating Devices), pelagic nets, and midwater trawling are not currently being used on Christmas Island and should not be allowable in any zones within either marine park.</p>	<p>Refer to the views provided at <b>row 41</b>, above.</p>
44	Both		<p>Australia is now importing fish under far less strict production standards compared to the West Coast Tuna Fishery.</p>	<p>This is not an issue the management plans can address.</p>

45	Both		<p>Concern that the mainland-based commercial fishing industry representatives / stakeholders were not genuinely consulted on the establishment of the marine park.</p>	<p>There was extensive stakeholder consultation on the establishment of the parks and during development of the management plans. The Director considers this consultation was genuine and fair but acknowledges there were divergent views on some matters.</p> <p>Director's report <i>Establishing Australian Marine Parks in the Indian Ocean Territories</i> – provides a detailed account of the comments provided in the lead up to the establishment of the marine parks and detailed views from the Director. This report is available online at: <a href="https://api.parksaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/document/amp-document-AMP-IOT-DNP-Report.pdf">https://api.parksaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/document/amp-document-AMP-IOT-DNP-Report.pdf</a></p> <p>This comment is not able to be addressed directly in the management plans.</p>
46	Both		<p>Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery representatives have previously argued that with operations limited to the top 400m of the water column that their operations do not harm benthic habitats, which the marine park was ostensibly designed to protect. Target species are also pelagic, so they move in and out of the Australian Fishing Zone.</p> <p>Foreign fishing vessels are now taking advantage of the fisheries left unexploited by Australian fisheries as result of the establishment of the offshore green zones and this is a disservice to Australia which imports over 70 per cent of its seafood.</p>	<p>The Director notes the ongoing concerns of Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery representatives in relation to the establishment and zoning of the CI and CKI marine parks.</p> <p>The concerns raised in the comments reflect the concerns raised during consultation on the establishment of the parks, although the Director notes a number of additional specific concerns were also raised by industry representatives at that time.</p> <p>The Director's views in relation to these concerns have not changed and can be accessed in full in the Director's report <i>Establishing Australian Marine Parks in the Indian Ocean Territories</i> – available online at: <a href="https://api.parksaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/document/amp-document-AMP-IOT-DNP-Report.pdf">https://api.parksaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/document/amp-document-AMP-IOT-DNP-Report.pdf</a></p> <p>In brief, the director notes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- while seafloor features are often a focus of marine protection measures, marine parks also seek to protect and conserve biodiversity in the pelagic environment.</li> <li>- Foreign Fishing Vessels have always been able to fish the high seas surrounding IOT waters and that Australian commercial</li> </ul>

		<p>The management plans should enable Australian commercial fishing industries to apply for access to the marine park.</p> <p>AFMA adequately manages Southern Bluefin Tuna and other species such as dolphins and sharks.</p> <p>The scientific basis for establishing marine parks is questionable.</p>	<p>fishers had only accessed offshore IOT waters on one occasion in the 20 years leading up to the establishment of CI and CKI marine parks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no fishing or extractive activities will be allowed in the parks' green zones – consistent with all other green zones in Australian Marine Parks.</li> <li>- Australia's fisheries management under AFMA is world class, but fisheries management objectives differ from those of marine parks. Complementary and spatially overlapping fisheries management and marine parks are a feature across all of Australia's marine regions.</li> <li>- The CI and CKI marine parks were established to fill a significant gap in the national representative system of marine protected areas, in line with the goals and principles for this system.</li> </ul>
47	Both	<p>Concern for the risks associated with commercial aquaculture and recommendations to make the activity not allowed within all zones of the marine park.</p> <p>Recommendation to keep commercial aquaculture small scale, low-impact and sustainable.</p> <p>Recommendation to prohibit all extractive industrial scale activities within the marine park including aquaculture and commercial fisheries.</p>	<p>Refer to the views provided at <b>row 41</b>, above.</p>

48	CI		A statement should be included for clarification on inshore areas outside of the marine park where spearfishing is prohibited (in accordance with Christmas Island National Park and the Christmas Island Applied Laws Amendment (Fish Resource Management) Ordinance 2022).	<p>Refer to the views provided at <b>row 20</b>, above in relation to Christmas Island National Park. Similarly, with respect to fishing rules under relevant ordinances, and other regulatory overlays that may apply both inside and outside the marine park, it is not appropriate to include details of these in the management plans as they may change during the life of the management plans.</p> <p>The Director acknowledges that multiple regulatory regimes dealing with similar issues can be confusing for users of the marine environment and will work other relevant authorities to improve the clarity and accessibility of information separate to the management plans – including in relation to spearfishing.</p>
49	Both		Spearfishing should be limited within the marine park.	Refer to the views provided at <b>row 38</b> , above.
50	Both	4.3.11 National security and emergency response	Suggestion that biosecurity could be included as one of the activities not requiring a permit or class approval in this section.	Biosecurity-related activities (monitoring for marine invasive species for example) would generally be considered a research or monitoring activity under the management plans and need to be authorised in accordance with the relevant activity prescriptions.
51	CKI	4.3.12 Waste management	Suggestion to replace prescription 4.3.12.4(b) with a reference to the <i>Australian Ballast Water Management Requirements</i>	The existing prescription is deliberately broad to ensure all relevant requirements are captured. <i>The Biosecurity Act 2015</i> is directly referenced at 4.3.12.4(a) and the Director understands that the <i>Australian Ballast Water Management Requirements</i> provide guidance to assist vessel operators to comply with the Biosecurity Act 2015.
52	Both		Suggestion that the plans should prohibit ballast exchange within 12 nautical miles of the islands, in line with biosecurity provisions.	The Director understands that there are allowances under biosecurity regulations for ballast water exchange within 12 nautical miles in some circumstances, so it would not be appropriate to create a full prohibition under the management plans.
53	Both		Suggestion that the plans should mention the Ballast Water Management Convention in the	The Director considers that this section sufficiently covers relevant ballast water requirements.

			introductory content for waste management	
54	CKI	4.3.14 Red-footed booby harvest	Suggestion to include information on equipment authorised within the marine park to harvest Red-footed Booby birds.	The CKI plan provides for a red-footed booby harvest to occur only if approved under environmental legislation and other relevant laws. Any provisions in relation to authorised equipment would need to be considered as part of these other assessment arrangements – not by the Director.
55	CKI		Comments opposing red-footed booby harvest in the marine park	The Director considers that, in the historical and cultural context of the CKI, the provision relating to red-footed booby harvest in the CKI marine park is appropriate. The plan provides for such a harvest only if it is first approved under the EPBC Act and/or other relevant laws.
56	Both	4.5 Authorisation of allowable activities	<p>Comment that the assessment process to authorise allowable activities within the marine park is not clearly stated in the management plans.</p> <p>Request for further information on how to apply for local authorisations and how they will be granted. Including whether impacts to coral will be considered on a case-by-case basis.</p>	Parts 4.4 and 4.5 of the plans provide significant detail about how allowable activities may be authorised, including the types of authorisations that can be issued and the conditions that may apply. Further details about how to apply for an authorisation will be made available separate to the management plans. The potential impacts of activities on values and pressures will be part of all assessments.
57	Both		Suggestion to change text in plans making allowable activities not allowed subject to a permit to reflect a more precautionary approach.	Allowable activities are subject to assessment by the director. This suggested change would not have any practical effect and would create unnecessary inconsistency with the approach/language used in management plans for other Australian Marine Parks.

58	CKI		Include details on how compliance with the marine park zoning will be enforced.	<p>Refer to the views provided at <b>row 15</b>, above in relation to offshore compliance arrangements.</p> <p>Details for inshore surveillance and compliance activities will be developed as part of operational planning in consultation with other agencies who have marine compliance responsibilities at CI and CKI. Ongoing consultation with stakeholders, management partners and the community advisory committee will also inform compliance planning.</p>
59	CKI	Schedule 2 - References and maps	Comment that the <i>Conservation Action Plan for the southern atoll of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands</i> and the report <i>Natural values of inshore waters of Australia's Indian Ocean Territories – Christmas &amp; the Cocos (Keeling) Islands</i> are referenced incorrectly and the CKI plan is poorly linked to these documents.	A consistent referencing style has been applied to all of the listed references.
60	Both		Include a comprehensive document list for species identifications and relevant scientific papers.	<p>The select references include key documents that informed the development of the management plans. Some of these are reports that were commissioned by Parks Australia to compile relevant information from available sources. These reports can be accessed online by anyone who wishes to access a more extensive reference list relevant to the management plans. Of particular relevance is the James Cook University Report on the inshore natural values of CI and CKI – available at:</p> <p><a href="https://api.parksaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/document/amp-document-iot-natural-values-report-final-jan-2022.pdf">https://api.parksaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/document/amp-document-iot-natural-values-report-final-jan-2022.pdf</a></p>
61	Both		Suggestion to include hyperlinks to relevant guidelines (e.g. biosecurity guidelines) throughout the plans	There are many guidelines, policies and other documents potentially relevant to the management of the marine parks. It would not be feasible to develop a complete list. Where appropriate, the management plans take the approach of identifying, and in some



			and/or as a list at the end of the plans.	<p>instances incorporating, the legislation and/or high level agreements that guidelines, policies and other documents are generally created to support.</p> <p>The Director also notes that guidelines, policies and other documents are likely to change during the life of the plan and that hyperlinks are very likely to become outdated.</p>
<b>62</b>	Both	References Schedule/Dual naming	Suggest including a glossary of translations and the addition of scientific names for educational purposes and to avoid possible confusion.	<p>The plans take the approach of including local language translations for species and other text in the body of the plans that is of significance for local people whose primary language is Bahasa Malay, Chinese or Cocos Malay. This approach was decided and implemented through island-based consultation with local speakers of these languages. In the absence of an opportunity to consult similarly on adjustments to this approach, the Director does not wish to alter it.</p> <p>The Director acknowledges that the inclusion of scientific names may be beneficial for some readers of the management plans, but considers that the addition of these to the body of the plans would detract from their readability.</p>
<b>63</b>	Both	No specific section identified	Request for further information on the outcomes of the \$3million funding provided to the Indian Ocean Territories Marine Parks grants program.	Basic information about the grants is available on the Parks Australia website and key outputs and outcomes from the project will be made available online when completed. Parks Australia also encourages grantees to share information about their projects with local communities and other stakeholders.

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