

MARINE RESERVES

The TCT's commitment to marine protected areas goes as far back as 1967. During discussions leading to the formation of the TCT, the inaugural committee sought advice from Dr Eric Guiler about the creation of marine national parks in Tasmania.



The first active campaign for a marine reserve was a proposal in 1973 from a northwest dive club for a marine reserve at Rocky Cape National Park. As far as the TCT is aware, this is the oldest unfulfilled reserve proposal in existence in the state.

In the early 1980s Dr Graham Edgar was funded by the Australian National Parks & Wildlife Service to conduct a series of surveys for suitable marine reserves sites in Tasmania. In 1984, the TCT newsletter outlined the report's favoured locations for the reserves. The Gray Liberal government had no desire to proceed with such proposals and the recommendations were suppressed.

By the late 1980s, as part of its party platform, Labor supported the creation of a marine reserve at the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. In 1989, when the Field government came to power, the TCT successfully lobbied the government to create the state's first four marine reserves, located at Tinderbox, Ninepin Point, Governor Island (near Bicheno) and Maria Island.

At the time it was mooted that further marine reserves in the Kent Group and Macquarie Island might be created. In the early 1990s the TCT commenced lobbying for these new reserves; but no further reserves were created during the '90s, despite an apparent consensus by all parties in the Tasmanian parliament.

In 2000, the TCT, with other relevant stakeholders, drafted a new policy on marine protected areas at the behest of the fisheries minister of the time. A core element of this consensus policy was that the RPDC (Resource Planning and Development Commission) should assess new reserve proposals. The first proposal referred to the RPDC was for marine reserves at the Kent Group and Port Davey, which were created in 2005.

Independently of the RPDC process, a new marine reserve was created at Macquarie Island by the Bacon government in 2000. In 2005, consistent with the Tasmanian Marine Protected Areas Strategy, the Minister responsible for the RPDC, Judy Jackson, issued a reference for new marine reserves within the Bruny marine bioregion, an area that stretches from a point south of Maria Island to Dover. The final report of the RPDC was delivered in 2008.

The TCT has strongly lobbied for creation of new marine reserves within the Bruny bioregion, despite fierce opposition in some quarters. It hosts a range of threatened marine species and is regarded as the most ecologically significant of Tasmania's nine marine bioregions.

The RPDC states:

...the Bruny bioregion stands out as being the most complex and diverse in terms of ecosystems and human activities and uses. This bioregion is unique within the Australian context with respect to the high number of species endemic in such a small area. The only other two Australian bioregions that might have a comparable level of endemism are not nearly as vulnerable to threatening processes.

