

7 September 2015

To Whom It May Concern

My name is Brad Smith and I am a born and bred fifth generation Gold Coast local that upon hearing about the potential of the region from Burleigh Heads to Snapper Rocks becoming a world recognized surfing reserve felt compelled to write this letter of support to your committee.

To be honest I do not have an academic background in coastal management or marine science but I can justifiably present this letter on the basis that I have spent my entire life making my living in the area from the fishing, diving and surfing industry.

My hands on approach and the time that I have spent in and out of the waters of the Gold Coast has also provided me with media employment with television, journalism and radio presentations. My honest and personal observations and statements on the management of our local rivers, beaches and offshore reefs has been highly recognized for its transparency and accuracy. The result of my observations and knowledge of the local marine ecology has been recognized and rewarded with the opportunity to be long term consultant to our local council and state government when my services are required.

The aim of this letter as mentioned is not based on being an academic scientific report but rather an accurate observation and awareness of our local marine environment.

To begin with the coastline area that your committee is trying to protect is also guarded by a number of near and offshore rocky reefs with the most well-known being Mermaid, Palm Beach and Kirra reefs as well as a smaller but still very important reef known as Point Reef located just off the tip of Snapper Rocks.

The term rocky reef is the applicable term for our area rather than a coral reef that are found to the north with the most famous being the Great Barrier Reef. Whereas coral reefs are formed by the corals spawning and growing our rocky reefs are volcanic rock and are underwater extensions of the points and headlands that you are trying to protect. It is highly documented about the abundance of life that our more well-known coral reefs support but I think it is often overlooked at the amount of marine life our local reefs support.

The geography of our local area situates us in a temperate climate zone which means that we are on the cusp of both warm waters from the north and cooler waters from the south that combined create a unique marine environment for encrusting and mobile organisms. Some of the large list of encrusting organisms that our reefs support are soft and hard corals, sea sponges, hydro- ids, worms and anemones which help to support mobile animals like shells, sea slugs, crabs, crayfish and sea stars.

Our local coastline and reefs are also a mecca for a huge list of both local and migrating fish species in fact around 470 localized fish species have been documented in our area which combined with around 30 different pelagic migrating species makes the area contain a very

healthy bio mass of diversity.

Our local coastline is also an important part of the annual migration route for the humpback whales with the months from June to November being the time when our area is graced with the presence of this majestic creature. Our local area also supports a population of both resident and migrating groups of sharks, dolphins, rays and turtle species.

It is not often mentioned and continually overlooked but this area is also part of the migration path of millions of small baitfish the likes of blue and white pilchards which are the predominate food that provides the sustainability of most large fish species. These small baitfish are also part of the valuable food chain for the migratory sea birds like albatrosses, gulls, terns and the mutton birds that travel for thousands of miles to our local shores. At this stage I feel it is time to let you know just how fragile this environment is without trying to identify all of the scientific names for thousands of marine creatures both big and small in our area. The threats to this temperamental environment could be caused by factors such as beach nourishment as well as alterations to the coastline habitat and urbanization and coastal development.

Other factors that could destroy this finely balanced ecosystem could be a result of domestic and agricultural pollution. It is for this reason that I have been compelled to write this letter as these potentially man-made destructive situations could quite easily destroy a valuable natural marine resource. This resource is a vital part of nature and a gift for all the community both recreationally and commercially as well as being a drawcard for tourism with the result bringing vital economic value to the region.

In my opinion your committee the GCWSR should be applauded and supported for the work, time and commitment that you have already completed and for the effort required in the future to make this reserve become a reality. To conclude I hope that this small letter will give you a brief outline of the richness of marine life we have along our small coastline and how much a recognized surfing reserve will contribute in protecting it for future generations.

Brad Smith