

TRANSCRIPT

**Radio interview – Hon Chris Magri MLA
Radio Norfolk – Darlene Buffett
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East Marine Bioregion Plan and Fishery Management Policy

CHRIS MAGRI: I just want to bring to the attention of the community who might not be aware, a process that is being undertaken by the Australian Government at the moment. The Australian Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, which is the Department that has carriage of the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* – it's a huge Act and it's designed to protect the national environment. What they are doing is in relation to the marine ecosystems in the waters around Australia. They have divided those waters into five bioregions of which we are part of the East Bioregion. Within that East Bioregion there are 14 provinces and we have our own province called the Norfolk Province.

The main objective of what they are looking for is to create a Marine Park somewhere in our Norfolk Province. And ideally for them, they will have a Marine Park within each of the provinces within the East Bioregion and all the other bioregions around Australia. We've been lucky enough to have a visit in the last few days by Phillip Boxall, who is a Director in the Department, and we've had some pretty valuable discussions on how Norfolk Island could work with Phillip and his Department to have a win/win for the environment around Norfolk.

I can imagine anybody that might be listening who might be a little sceptical about a Marine Park. I've told Phillip about my concerns in relation to some scepticisms that I have too. One of the concerns that I've had for a long time in particular relating to our fishery is that AFMA might some time in the future allow for full-scale commercial fishing directly adjacent to the Box, which would have a catastrophic effect on the fish that migrate in and out of our Box and on the fish stocks that we've protected for all of these years.

So I'm going to be developing a submission to Phillip and his Department to try to prevent that type of fishing happening at any time in the future, so it might be a way that we can work together for a win/win situation. I'll explain to the community over the next few months about how this process will unfold. It's about a four year process, so there's no dying urgency on this, but it's really important that we play a significant part.

DARLENE BUFFETT: With the Marine Park - can you explain a little bit more of what it does actually mean and who is responsible for the funding should it proceed?

CHRIS MAGRI: All of the waters up to the high tide mark around Norfolk Island are Commonwealth waters and the Commonwealth are responsible for those waters. I'll just diverge for a minute to say that Norfolk Island has an area 40 nautical miles wide east/west and 67 nautical miles high north/south and we are given that area as an exclusive area for the Norfolk Island community to develop and manage. And the Norfolk Island Government has just yesterday signed off an agreement with the Norfolk Island Fishing Association on a new management policy for that area. So that's a tremendous step forward for the Fishing Association, and I thank Borry and his boys for embracing that process.

Getting back to what a Marine Park means, what this particular Department is looking for is to have a representative area of all of the different marine ecosystems contained within a Marine Protected Park area. That includes the foreshore, it includes the steep banks along the side of the Norfolk Ridge, it includes the different waters beyond the shelf. We believe that there is a way that it can be achieved without necessarily locking up the Box as part of a Marine Park. We believe that the Norfolk Island people have looked after the marine environment probably better than our peers in the Commonwealth. There are a number of reasons – it might be weather that we can't go out there and fish or whatever it is – but we have a symbiotic relationship with the ocean, and I think that the more that the different environment departments and fisheries departments come over here and actually see what we do, they're really starting to be impressed at what we have achieved.

We don't go out there with huge nets and pull in hundreds of fish at a time, we just use our reels and our muscles to roll up the fish and we just get what we basically need for our daily wants. I think we are the only sustainable fishery that I'm aware of and I'm pretty proud of it.

Four years is the timeframe for this process to continue and the Norfolk Island Government will be playing an active role in that. If Phillip Boxall, the Director of the Department, is listening, I just want to pass on my thanks for involving the Norfolk Island Government and the Norfolk Island Fishing Association to allow them to be part of this process.

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