

**Seventh meeting of the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process
on Oceans and the Law of the Sea**

Discussion Panel “Ecosystem approaches and oceans”

Panel Segment 3 – Lessons learned from implementation of ecosystem approaches at the national level in developed States

Lessons from implementation of Ecosystem-based management of the ocean uses in Australia

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This paper has two principal aims. Firstly, to provide an overview of Australian examples of implementation of ecosystem-based management (EBM) across a broad spectrum of marine/ocean environments and institutional contexts. Early examples include the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the North West Shelf multiple use study. Australia’s Oceans Policy and significant revision to environmental legislation (the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act) have been the major drivers of wider implementation of EBM in Australia over the past decade. A major whole of government initiative towards multiple-use EBM has been the development and implementation of bioregional marine plans for the Australian EEZ and the associated institutional arrangements for inter-governmental, stakeholder and science consultation and decision making. The National Marine Bioregionalisation for the Australian EEZ is a practical example of a key science product that underpins a range of cross-sectoral planning and management activities. Practical examples of sectoral initiatives include the development and implementation of an Ecological Risk Assessments (ERA) for assessing the impacts of fishing on the broader marine environment and Ecologically Sustainable Development Framework for fisheries at a national level, and the ongoing implementation of the National system of Representative Marine Protected Areas. It is hoped that this necessarily brief overview will provide an entry point for policy makers, managers, researchers and stakeholders to initiate dialogue with the practitioners involved and explore for themselves operational issues that have arisen, the particular lessons learned and the solutions developed to that the next step in the transition to EBM.

The second aim is to proffer some considered views on general issues for advancing the implementation of ecosystems-based management in the oceans, gained from this experience, to stimulate debate and focus discussion on practical next steps in broader implementation of the approach. While the particular details vary among case studies, key ingredients to successful implementation include: i) Sustained political and institutional will to act, including the willingness to make the first practical steps and recognise the need to do so without full knowledge or certainty of outcomes, ii) Clarity of vision and demarcation of responsibilities for strategic policy direction and operational planning and management, particularly at a sectoral level, iii) Recognising and respecting competing objectives among sectors and looking for creative solutions, iv) A focus on outcome-based performance, v) The importance of an ecological

spatial framework that has scientific credibility and a strong conceptual foundation to provide a direct translation from science to planning and management, vi) The need to balance the strong influence of “iconic” places, features, species with the broader requirement for representativeness and assessment of ecological impacts, and vii) The persuasiveness of binding instruments. Each of these issues will be important, to differing degrees, in the continued implementation of EBM in Australia and elsewhere. However, it is contended that i) and vii) have been the determining factors in the progress that has been made in Australia.