



Hon Gail Gago MLC

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Mr Philip Hall  
President  
Marine Life Society of South Australia Inc  
120 Wakefield Street  
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Dear Mr Hall

Thank you for forwarding me a copy of your letter to Hon Rory McEwen MP, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, concerning the protection of the Western Blue Groper and the Harlequin Fish. I apologise for the delay in my response.

The South Australian Government is committed to a 'No Species Loss Strategy' for South Australia and to improve protection of threatened and rare species. This strategy includes marine species as well as estuarine and freshwater species. The statute that supports this strategy is the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. Threatened species recovery plans are envisaged for any species listed as endangered. The recovery plans will set objectives for, and identify actions to achieve, species recovery.

DEH (the Department for Environment and Heritage) has been working with other partners to better understand the conservation status of coastal, estuarine and marine fish, sharks and rays in South Australia. A comprehensive study, currently underway, has already highlighted many of the issues and concerns that MLSSA (Marine Life Society of South Australia) raises. Once the study is finalised, initiatives for the protection of potential threatened species and their habitats (such as legislative listing), will be discussed.

DEH has recently employed a marine ecologist to focus on conservation planning, policy and action for threatened marine species and I have asked the Department to invite MLSSA to be a partner on this important initiative.

The work mentioned above will also inform the development of marine parks in South Australia's coastal waters. It is likely that some significant habitats for both species will be afforded protection under the proposed marine parks zoning system.

Dr Scoresby Shepherd, whose findings you refer to in your letter, is a member of the Government's

Scientific Working Group, which provides me with independent advice on technical and scientific matters relating to the marine environment, and will also assist with the process of identifying and selecting candidate marine park areas. Therefore, I am confident that his scientific findings will directly inform the marine parks process and other marine conservation initiatives.

I encourage MLSSA to take part in the marine parks process during both formal and informal opportunities for public and stakeholder involvement. I also look forward to your involvement in establishing the necessary measures to better protect threatened marine species in South Australia.

Thank you for drawing this matter to my attention. Yours

sincerely



**HON GAIL GAGO MLC**

4/3/2008