

# AFANT



## AFANT's submission on the Casuarina Coastal Reserve Draft Management Plan

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*Representing recreational fishing in the NT and ensuring the quality of our sport*

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## **AFANT submission on the Draft Management Plan**

AFANT welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Casuarina Coastal Reserve Draft Management Plan. We recognise that the Casuarina Coastal Reserve is an important local community asset for visitors who wish to use the reserve for the variety of recreational activities available including fishing and boating. AFANT recognises the protection the Casuarina Coastal Reserve provides towards the significant natural habitat contained within the reserve including coastal beaches and foreshores, mangroves, salt marshes, monsoon vines forests, woodlands and the extensive seagrass beds; an important estuarine habitat for fish and marine mammals.

### **Increase in Infrastructure**

While AFANT welcomes the \$10.6m increased funding towards park infrastructure we believe this should be accompanied by an increase in funding for staff and necessary equipment. Maintaining toilets, BBQ's, litter removal, mowing, scientific research, weed management and public education all require adequate staff resources. Funding infrastructure without increasing staff and necessary equipment will only increase staff workloads without increasing the value of the reserve to the public. A dedicated visitor station with rangers should also be considered by Parks and Wildlife as this would be an excellent multi-purpose facility, providing a visible permanent ranger presence and allowing information about the reserve to be easily sourced by the public as well as allowing rangers to effectively and quickly respond to management issues within the park.

### **Casuarina Coastal Reserve Advisory Committee**

AFANT notes that the area of the Casuarina Coastal Reserve takes in a portion of the marine environment including popular fishing locations for recreational fishermen but the committee does not have any representation from recreational fishermen or similar stakeholder groups interested in the marine habitat. AFANT believes this should be rectified by the Parks and Wildlife Commission as there may be protection or management issues that impact on recreational fishermen and other water users that are not recognised by the present committee as it is structured.

### **Beach and Water Activities**

The beaches, creek and rocky headlands contained within the Casuarina Coastal Reserve are productive fishing areas for both boat and land based recreational fishermen, all within a short drive of residential areas in the surrounding suburbs of Darwin. As such AFANT has a strong interest in ensuring the best outcomes for recreational fishing are delivered in the

management plan. In addition the Buffalo Creek Boat Ramp contained within the Casuarina Coastal Reserve is an important access point to the iconic fishing waters of Shoal Bay.

AFANT notes that the draft management plan states “Size and possession limits exist for some aquatic species in the Northern Territory and this is enforced by Fisheries Officers of the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries”(2.1 Visitor Use and Activities, Beach and Water Activities). This statement is in error. Fisheries and marine boating regulations are enforced by the marine branch of the NT Police Force and it is disappointing that Parks and Wildlife are ignorant of this.

There is a lack of information and signage concerning recreational fishing, rules and regulations within the park and AFANT believes that it is in the best interest of the community to ensure information signs are erected at popular fishing spots. Ideal locations would include Buffalo, Sandy and Rapid Creek, Casuarina and Lee Point Beach. These signs should include the contact details of the NT Police Marine Branch to report fisheries offences.

### **Buffalo Creek Boat Ramp**

The Buffalo Creek boat ramp and management area is both a popular launching location to access the offshore reef systems from Lee Point and the iconic fishing locations within Shoal Bay and also a popular fishing location in its own right for land based fishermen looking to fish the waters of Buffalo Creek.

AFANT welcomed the announcement by the CLP Government in April this year of the \$790,000 to ensure Buffalo Creek boat ramp is safer and more secure for recreational fishermen including the expansion of the free parking space for boats and trailers and CCTV cameras to prevent theft and vandalism. While AFANT welcomes the funds to improve the Buffalo Creek boat ramp we note with concern the draft management plan recommends a future management action to review the future of the secure compound and investigate alternative options (2.4 Visitor Sites, Buffalo Creek Area).

AFANT has long recognised the importance of the secure compound at Buffalo Creek boat ramp and the role the caretaker has in preventing incidents of crime to vehicles and trailers left by recreational fishermen. The improvement of boating infrastructure, access and security was a 2012 election commitment by the current CLP government and AFANT believes the presence of the caretaker is a significant deterrent to thieves even for vehicles parked outside the secure compound. AFANT vigorously opposes any change to the current

arrangement as it is not in the best interest of recreational fishermen or the general community who use both the boat ramp and the Buffalo Creek management area.

AFANT believes that due to the popular nature of the Buffalo Creek boat ramp and the large numbers of recreational fishermen who use the ramp, Parks and Wildlife should allocate funding towards a fish cleaning table, carcass disposal bins and a boat wash facility. These amenities would significantly reduce the amount of litter and waste from recreational fishermen cleaning fish and disposing of bait and fishing tackle. In addition it would improve visitor safety and reduce the risk of crocodile attack as fishermen would be more inclined to dispose of fish carcasses and bait responsibly away from the water's edge thus reducing the risk of attracting crocodiles and crocodile attacks.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide additional information or to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission.

Yours sincerely

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