



Navigating through the zoning debate

Last month found me sailing to the coral sea reefs.

I was in the middle of nowhere, not a care in the world; one kilometre of water underneath, no land or reefs for many miles and a fair wind giving life to the sails. As usual my thoughts drifted across the horizon as I settled into the rhythmic pattern of this ocean world.

I glanced at the plotter and realised I could be in trouble. I raced back to the stern and

began frantically pulling in my trawling line. The empty lure clanged on the cockpit floor as I watched the yacht cross the invisible line into the 'green' no fishing zone.

As a cruising sailor I now have to carefully watch what I do in all parts of Australian waters thanks to a major effort to preserve our marine world.

Is this imposition on the cruising lifestyle reasonable? Should we support or

fight these administrative restrictions?

The Federal Minister for the Environment Tony Burke announced recently that "Australia's marine reserves will increase from 27 to 60 under the new scheme, covering more than three million square kilometres, or one third of the country's waters," (Reuters, 14th June, 2012).

In one swift move the government has

implemented the "biggest step the globe has ever seen" in terms of ocean conservation. Few of us would argue that we don't want our wonderful ocean to decline. So why is this so controversial at the moment?

Are our fish in such trouble that we need to allocate one third of the area as no take? I asked Doctor Elizabeth Fulton, leader of the CSIRO Marine Ecosystem Modelling group, who is an expert in