



ACMAsphere

Australia's regulator for broadcasting, the internet, radiocommunications and telecommunications

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Protection zones proposed for submarine cables off NSW coast

ACMA recently invited public submissions about its proposals to declare protection zones for two key submarine telecommunications cables off the New South Wales coast.

About 99 per cent of Australia's international voice and data traffic is carried via submarine cable. ACMA is consulting with parties affected by the protection zones and will consider all views before making a final decision on the new zones.

Submarine telecommunications cables are the underwater

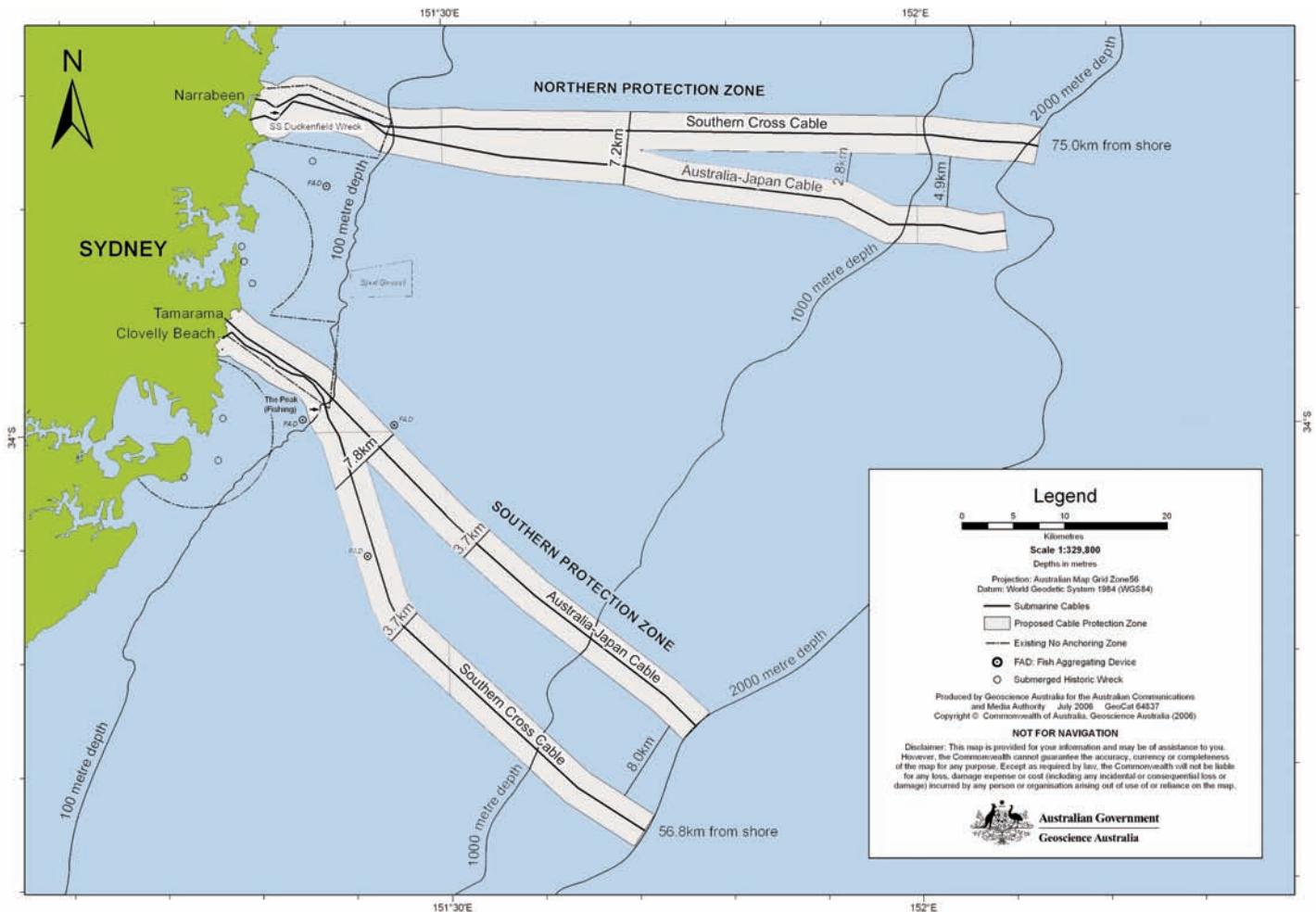
infrastructure that links Australia with other countries. Disruption or damage to major submarine cables can have serious consequences, for example, a sustained outage slows information flow, which can cause lost data, significant delays and severe financial loss, not only to cable owners but also to people and businesses that rely on

communication links outside Australia.

Optical fibre submarine cables are susceptible to damage and breakage from external impact. Repairing a broken or damaged cable is an expensive and time-consuming exercise. While the locations of existing cables are well-known, and are marked on most maritime maps,

accidental damage of cables has occurred several times in recent years in Australian waters. Activities that pose the greatest threat to undersea cables are sea-bottom trawl fishing, anchoring, sand-dredging and dumping.

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ACMA cannot declare a protection zone unless it is satisfied that the cables concerned are or will be cables of national significance—generally high capacity cables that link Australia to global communications systems and are vital to the national interest’.

The Australia Japan Cable and Southern Cross Cable are considered by ACMA to be nationally significant.

Following the passage of legislation late last year, the proposed zones are to protect submarine cables of national significance. Within the protection zones, activities that could damage the cables will be either prohibited or restricted and serious criminal penalties will apply for breaches of the legislation. The proposed protection zones are:

- a northern protection zone extending from Narrabeen beach to 40 nautical miles offshore covering the northern branches of the Australia Japan Cable and Southern Cross Cable, and

- a southern protection zone extending from Tamarama and Clovelly beaches and extending 30 nautical miles offshore, covering the southern branches of the Australia Japan Cable and Southern Cross Cable.

The Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment (Protection of Submarine Cables and Other Measures) Act 2005 came into effect in September 2005. The relevant provisions comprise a new Schedule 3A to the *Telecommunications Act 1997* and set out a comprehensive regime for the protection of submarine cables in Australian waters. Under Schedule 3A, ACMA is responsible for:

- declaring protection zones over cables of 'national significance'
- issuing permits to install submarine cables in Australian waters (both in and outside protection zones).

Activities within protection zones that are likely to cause damage to cables will be either prohibited or

restricted, and be subject to serious criminal penalties. This will affect offshore activities that contact the seabed, such as dredging, anchoring trawling and other types of fishing operations. ACMA is contacting related sectors to encourage broad comment on the protection zone proposals.

Before formally declaring a protection zone, ACMA is required to develop a proposal for the protection zone, consult about the proposal and undertake the following:

- establish an advisory committee
- seek and consider the advisory committee's advice on the proposal
- consult with the Commonwealth's Environment Secretary and
- consider all submissions.

ACMA may then formally declare protection zones over cables of national significance and detail the activities that are prohibited or restricted within each protection zone.

When deciding about the final

protection zones, ACMA will seek to maintain an appropriate level of protection for the cables while minimising the impact on affected marine users.

A discussion paper explaining the two New South Wales protection zone proposals (including detailed maps showing the locations and dimensions of the proposed protection zones, and proposed prohibited and restricted activities) is on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au/subcables. The closing date for comments is 10 November 2006.

Background information about the new protection zone regime is also available through the website or from ACMA's Submarine Cable Protection Project Section on telephone 1300 856 337 or email subcablesenquiries@acma.gov.au.

New South Wales protection zone proposals

ACMA's approach in prohibiting certain activities and placing restrictions on the conduct of certain activities within one nautical mile either side of the cables ensures an appropriate level of protection for the cables.

NORTHERN PROTECTION ZONE

The proposed northern protection zone is a Y-shaped area that extends from the low-water mark at Narrabeen beach to an outermost limit of 2,000 metres water depth 40 nautical miles offshore. The zone extends one nautical mile either side of each cable and the area between the two northern cables will continue to be available for unrestricted use.

SOUTHERN PROTECTION ZONE

The proposed southern protection zone is also a Y-shaped area, extending from the low-water mark at Tamarama and Clovelly beaches to an outermost point of 2,000 metres water depth 30 nautical miles offshore. The southern protection zone extends one nautical mile either side of each cable and the area between will continue to be available for unrestricted use.

Children's and preschool programs

Programs granted classification, August 2006

Program title	Series	Episode description	Program style	Program type	Country of origin	New/renewal	Class	Decision date	Applicant
I Got a Rocket!	2	27-52	Animation	Drama – Series	Australia	New	CD	31/8/06	SLR Productions Pty Ltd
Quest	1	1-26	Live Action	Drama – Series	Australia	New	PRC	23/8/06	Muskoka Australia Pty

Class – Classification, C – C Classification, CD – C Drama, P – P Classification, PRC – Provisional C
A classification expires five years after the date it was granted or renewed.