
From: Stan Konstantaras
Sent: Thursday, 18 August 2022 6:02 PM
To: Portfolio Committee 4
Subject: RE: Inquiry into the commencement of the Fisheries Management Amendment Act - witness confirmation and arrival instructions - Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW{HIGH RISK}

Hi Sarah,
My opening statement below for your records.
Thanks
Stan Konstantaras

The inquiry and its outcome are of interest to recreational fishers. We all share the same principles around fishing to feed our families and that we all pass this culture down from generation to generation.

The RFA's position on cultural fishing remains unchanged since 2015, and we still firmly believe it should occur if "the rules and regulations surrounding fishing can be relaxed without harming the general health and sustainability of the fishery".

We all need to acknowledge that the fishery is under stress and that the impacts we have all had over the past 50 years means we are not fishing the once pristine waters we often speak about. We are faced with a fishery that is under immense stress from habitat degradation, poor water quality, over population, poor land and water management practices and pollution.

It is with this in mind that we need to approach fishing into the future.

The RFA is generally supportive of cultural fishing, for example the process to allow such activities in the Botany Bay Recreational Fishing Haven during the annual mullet run. That activity was supported by the local fishing club and meetings were held between all the stakeholders.

The RFA prides itself on being conversant and familiar with these important issues. However the lack of any updates makes this responsibility difficult at times, and we still hold a view that an active role for groups like the RFA is needed to help develop Statewide policies, strategies and action plans for all activities in NSW that involve cultural fishing.

The RFA has attempted detail the amount of cultural fishing that occurs in NSW and where, however the information has not been made available at the time our submission was written. The lack of transparency should be of concern to all stakeholders.

It is the view of the RFA of NSW that unless all fishers are engaged as part of any process to progress cultural fishing beyond a Section 37 permit, to a Local Management Plan or ultimately the commencement of Section 21AA, the outside perception of Aboriginal cultural fishing will continue to be that of a negative view of the process.

Both indigenous and non-indigenous fishers share similar values around the social and health benefits that fishing provides. What some non-indigenous fishers might lack is the understanding of fishing in terms of connection to ancestors and country, and how it is central to indigenous culture and identity. We have missed the chance to share these values in a community discussion.

There is a lack of a strategy or available information that would help us better understand the process and assist in better managing the activity. At this point we cannot help manage any concerns that local fishers might have, due to a lack of detailed information or assessment of the existing processes.

If we proceed to that commencement of Section 21AA of the Fisheries Management Act that has the power to create cultural fishing regulations we will need a robust and inclusive engagement policy that needs to be developed with a mechanism for meaningful community stakeholder consultation that could potentially look at particular rules that are specifically prescribed in a cultural fishing regulation that deal with the sustainability of a fishery that is under immense stress in 2022 and beyond.

The RFA of NSW thanks the inquiry for the opportunity to share our views and welcomes the chance to share these values and that recreational fishing in NSW is used as an opportunity for promoting reconciliation in Australia.