

Submission  
No 863

## INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

**Organisation:** Sea Bees Boating Club Inc  
**Name:** Mr Eddie Schmidt  
**Position:** President  
**Date received:** 18/03/2010

---

# Sea Bees Boating Club Inc

*Affiliated with A.N.S.A.*

[www.seabeesboating.com](http://www.seabeesboating.com)

---

15th March 2010

Director  
Select Committee on Recreational Fishing  
Parliament House  
Macquarie House  
Sydney 2000  
(Fax 9230 3416)

## **Parliamentary Inquiry into Recreational Fishing – March 2010**

Dear Director,

The Sea Bees Boating (and Fishing) Club wish to make the following comments in regard to the above Inquiry.

### **1. Introduction**

This submission is provided in response to the Government's Inquiry into recreational fishing and the specific Terms of Reference as specified.

#### ***1.1 Background about the Sea Bees Boating (and Fishing) Club***

The Sea Bees Boating Club is a non-profit social/fishing club which began in 1974 and currently has about 160 members consisting of men, women and children. The members mainly fish from boats. Club outings are held throughout the year at locations such as Sydney Harbour, the Hawkesbury River, Cowan, Berowra, and Botany Bay. Weekends away are organised to Wollongong, Nowra, Port Stephens, Swansea and Corrimal. Club outings are also arranged at freshwater locations such as Glenbawn Dam, Lake St Clair, Lostock, and Windermere Dams.

The Sea Bees Club is affiliated with the Australian National Sportfishing Association (ANSA) which is one of the leading peak bodies that make up the Recreational Fishing Alliance of NSW (RFA). Additional information about the Sea Bees can be found on the Club web site [www.seabeesboating.com](http://www.seabeesboating.com)

A general meeting was held at the Sea Bees Club room on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010 to discuss and record the comments of members and they are contained herein for consideration at the Government's Inquiry into recreational fishing.

## 2. Terms of Reference:

**Current regulations, policy, decisions in management for recreational fishers include creation of New Marine Protected Areas and efficacy to existing Marine Parks.**

### *2.1 Regulations and Management of recreational fishing*

The NSW Government Agency responsible for the management of recreational and commercial fishing in NSW is NSW Fisheries (NSWF) which was incorporated into Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

Recreational fishing is mainly controlled through a bag, size and possession limit management system which is reviewed frequently by NSWF. When new sizes for fish are introduced agreement is also required from the commercial sector and frequently that sector does not support increasing fish sizes and we find the recreational sector is unfairly criticized.

Although not popular when first introduced the recreational fishing fee is now largely accepted by most recreational fishers however the question is still being asked, "What is happening to the funds?" It seems that the revenue generated by this fee is largely used towards funding the salaries of about 30 staff due to insufficient funding by the NSW Treasury budget. No other group in the community contributes to such a financial level as recreational fishers.

NSW Fishers are generally poorly represented in NSW as there is no formal peak body that can perform an advocacy role. The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) has filled this void in the last 10 years however only in a voluntary capacity.

There is an urgent need for the creation of a formal peak body with a secretariat funded by Government which should consist of fishers who are elected by fishers. Apart from advising Government it is considered that such a peak body should have responsibilities which are not considered core business of NSW Fisheries and Marine Parks.

On many occasions it has been the recreational fishers who have requested reductions in bag and possession limits to ensure stocks are retained and protected. NSWF goes through a reasonable and fair consultative process considering many issues including scientific advice, as part of the bag, size and possession limits. Although this may not be considered a perfect system -- it works.

In late 2009 an Access Workshop was held by the RFA over a period of two days. One of the noted speakers was the Director General of Lands (Mr Warwick Watkins). It is understood that a number of recommendations were made at that forum however formal decisions and outcomes are still awaited. Those recommendations included:

- \* Securing and enhancing access to salt and freshwater for recreational fishing
- \* Immediate recognition of a Peak Recreational Fishing Body to secure and hold management responsibilities for public lands relevant to recreational fishing access as trustee
- \* The Recreational Fishing Alliance is best placed to assume this role, and with an expanded and inclusive charter to seek Ministerial recognition as a NSW Peak Recreational Fishing Body
- \* The Recreational Fishing Alliance should make immediate application to the Recreational Fishing Trusts for funding to facilitate the securing of access for all recreational fishers in NSW
- \* The Recreational Fishing Alliance to work with Industry and Investment NSW to expedite the process of securing recreational fishing access
- \* The Recreational Fishing Alliance to produce a business plan identifying its role as a service delivery and advocacy entity, and clarifying the separation of these activities from the statutory responsibilities of ACoRF
- \* The Recreational Fishing Alliance to work with the NSW Government to strengthen the rights of recreational fishers through legislative amendment and the dedication of relevant Crown Lands.

One method of implementing the recommendations of the Access Forum could be to consider a similar model that is working well, such as the Game Council. The suggested model could be:

A Statutory Authority is created which would incorporate the roles and functions of the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing and the Saltwater and Freshwater Trust Funds. This would enable their roles and functions to be combined. This body would be a representative group of elected recreational fishers which form the peak advocacy recreational body such as a Fishing Council.

Compliance is considered as a core business and preferably would remain with NSWF however considering recreational fishers currently pay the salaries and overheads for some 18 compliance officers the option would exist for this staff to be incorporated into the Fishing Council if Government is not prepared to cover their salaries. Income from fines is returned to Treasury. Considering recreational fishers are funding a significant number of compliance officers it is reasonable that income from these officers' fines is returned to the Trust Funds.

Any NSWF staff whose position is currently funded from the recreational fishing fee could be considered for inclusion in the Fishing Council model. Recently funded projects such as Gaden Hatchery would also need to be considered. This activity has been a long term function of NSWF and is considered to be core business, so it should be funded by NSWF.

The Fishing Council could be made up of representatives from the peak recreational fishing organisations and a chairman elected by that group. The current arrangement of sitting fees and out of pocket expenses for Council members would apply.

The current web based licence system utilised by the Game Council could be explored as an alternative way of collecting fishing licence fees as administrative costs are likely to be lower than the current system.

A Memo of Understanding (MoU) would be established between the Fishing Council and NSWF to address roles, responsibilities and project funding.

### **Recommendation**

1. The Sea Bees club requests that the Inquiry support the above management model.
2. That funds received from fines be returned to the Fishing Trusts.

### ***2.2 New Marine Protected Areas***

It is our understanding that NSW has achieved the desired or recommended level of marine parks as recommended by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). On that basis why are we seeking to create more?

No new Marine Park or Marine Protected Area such as sanctuary zones or aquatic reserves should be created until a more balanced, open and transparent process is established which involves better communications with recreational fishers with the view of achieving outcomes without closures.

There needs to be agreement on the science. This has not occurred.

There needs to be a cost benefit analysis prepared advising the cost to the community before more marine parks are created. Our club is of the view that there are more important issues that need to be funded within NSW.

The website of the National Parks Association (NPA) is calling for an additional 300% increase in sanctuary zones this year. This request is considered extreme. When a marine park is reviewed it appears the objective is to justify closing more and more fishing areas.

These areas consist of reefs and it is well known that these are the areas that attract fish. Marine Parks Authority is indicating that sanctuary zones only occupy a small area within the total marine park but it is not the total park that fishers target. The reality is that fish are found on or close to reefs, rocky outcrops and canyons. There is a large percentage of the ocean that has no structure and seldom holds

fish so to compare the percentages of sanctuary zones against the total area of a marine park is misleading.

There are some inconsistent fishing rules between various Marine Parks. This is leading to community uncertainty, confusion and inconsistent compliances requirements. Recent requirements do not allow

a game swivel and clip to be left attached to a rod and line in a sanctuary zone. This is just an example of the Marine Parks Authority going overboard.

It is pleasing to see on the National Parks Association (NPA) website that they have at last agreed with the concerns expressed by recreational fishers, that is, there needs to be easier identification of marking Sanctuary Zones (SZ).

Further clarification and public education is necessary regarding penalties incurred if fishing and/or accidentally drifting into a sanctuary zone.

There is confusion as to which infringements attract a criminal conviction which could have serious implications on employment, obtaining a passport and the like. This seems a little overzealous except in extreme circumstances and needs to be reviewed and clarified.

Where existing marine parks have been established numerous sanctuary zones have been created adjacent to many of the national parks. There is concern that a significant portion of water adjacent to the existing national parks and nature reserves listed below may be potentially zoned as sanctuary zones if a Sydney Marine Park is created.

National Parks and Reserves that would be included in a Sydney Marine Park are:

Ku-ring-gai National Park	Marramarra National Park
Brisbane Water National Park	Bouddi National Park
Lion Island Nature Reserve	Long Island Nature Reserve
Spectacle Island Nature Reserve	Barrenjoey Head Reserve
Muogamarra Nature Reserve	

For many years National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has been seeking to control the bed of the Cowan River system. Should this occur it could restrict or eliminate fishing in that river system which is part of the Ku-ring-gai National Park. It is also well known that large fishing areas such as Long Reef have been a target for fishing closure. It can be assumed that intermediate reefs would also be targeted as they have been in other marine parks.

In recent years there has been six marine parks introduced. The Marine Parks Authority is moving towards the management of recreational fishing. Why is the NSW Government allowing this to occur? This creates a duplication of services and increases costs. It is difficult not to form the view that the Marine Parks Authority's objective is to discourage fishing and make the activity as expensive as possible. For example it is very noticeable how recreational fishing is poorly promoted in National Parks.

## Recommendations

1. No further marine parks need to be created if NSW has achieved the level of the IUCN. Specifically the recommendations contained in the Executive summary of The Torn Blue Fringe (NCC web site) paper prepared by the National Parks Association NOT be supported. (Includes a Sydney Marine Park plus others)
2. Any further process associated with marine parks need to look at alternative ways of retaining access rather than the "lock up" approach which is a flow over from National Parks management approach.
3. There needs to be agreement on the science.
4. There needs to be a cost benefit analysis prepared advising the cost to the community before more marine parks are created.

### *2.3 Existing Marine Parks*

The transparency associated with cost, social and economic benefits needs to be determined following the creation of the six marine parks established in NSW. There is no information provided. There is no report card on their cost effectiveness or performance.

The issue regarding adequate science is highly questionable and Professor Bob Kearney has severely criticised the science behind justifying sanctuary zones.

Considering the scientific community has opposing views it makes it impossible for the average fisher to understand how such science can be accepted. We can only go by local knowledge and experience and the day to day issues we see on the water – none of this experience is taken into consideration, accepted or acted upon.

There has been no report provided on the efficacy or cost benefits of marine parks nor has there been any advice provided on the cost of establishing and maintaining marine parks. We request the Inquiry recommend some form of balance be returned to the community with access not being denied.

There seems to be no reason why surface trolling for pelagic fish should not be allowed at all times in all sanctuary zones. These fish generally follow the warmer currents from the north and migrate up and down the coast at various times of the year.

Fishers believe that more sanctuary zones are proposed within existing marine parks. The targeted areas are the intermediate reefs between 20m to 60m in depth which are popular locations for recreational fishing.

Fishers are conservation minded and attitudes have changed significantly over the last 30 years. For many years fishers have been the instigators for the protection of fish stocks.

As part of the planning process fishers made initial suggestions in regard to the establishment of Marine Parks. During the short Marine Park consultation process numerous suggestions were made by recreational fishers which included reduced bag limits, closed seasons at river mouths during spawning periods, catch and release estuaries, rotating sanctuary zones. None of these suggestions were accepted.

Marine protected areas have been created by NSW Fisheries when considered warranted and have been in place for many years as have many section 8 (Fisheries Act) closures. Many of these closures were initiated by recreational fishers.

In some Marine Parks (Port Stephens) conservation groups are trying to take the high ground in regard to conservation issues effectively stealing the significant achievements recreational fishers have delivered to date. Their expectation was that with the introduction of a marine park the result should have been a reduction in fish caught within the park. So again we see the objective was to reduce fishing. These groups offer no science or supportive data only promoting emotional outcries and alienating the local communities. At the same time we see many fishing clubs self regulating their activities through reducing bag limits or catch and release or tagging outings but receive no recognition for these initiatives.

Club members are concerned that the marine parks authority are seeking control of fishing activities in marine parks by the use of the permit system. The management of fish stocks including the activity of fishing should continue to be managed by one Agency – NSW Fisheries. There is no need for expensive duplication of Agency activities.

Notwithstanding the above recreational fishers is hopeful of seeing some benefits within Marine Parks. In the Batemans Bay Marine Park, for example, commercial netting has been removed from some rivers and commercial trawling of nets within some offshore areas of the park has been removed. These actions would seem to be good initiatives but the outcomes are yet to be researched and conclusions made.

### **Recommendation**

1. The cost, social and economic impacts of the creation of NSW marine parks needs to be made public.
2. The issue regarding adequate science is highly questionable and Professor Bob Kearney has severely criticised the existing science behind justifying the six marine park and the associated sanctuary zones that have been created. Agreement on science is needed.
3. That a review be undertaken of existing Marine Parks to establish alternative ways of protecting the biodiversity without the creation of sanctuary zones unless there is scientific agreement by all parties that a closure or sanctuary zone is the only option.
4. That improved identification markers be provided to indicate sanctuary zones, particularly those at sea.  
Straight lines should be introduced to sanctuary zone boundaries to enable greater use of line of sight or electronic equipment such as GPS equipment.
5. Our members are of the understanding that a criminal record is the outcome of receiving an infringement notice from a marine parks office. We would appreciate if this issue could be clarified and made more public. We accept this could be reasonable if the person is a repeated offender.
6. That consistent fishing rules particularly in regard to fish species and fishing gear apply to all marine parks.
7. That a swivel and clip be permitted on fishing lines within a sanctuary zone.
8. That NPWS in conjunction with NSW Tourism promote recreational fishing in national parks for the general health and benefit of the community rather than discouraging fishing.
- 9 That trolling be permitted in sanctuary zones at all times.

## ***2.4 Effectiveness and Efficiency of current representational trust and advisory committee that advise Government Departments and Statutory Authorities.***

NSW Fisheries incorporates an Advisory Council for Recreational Fishing (ACoRF) which makes recommendations to the DII Minister on funding initiatives and other fishing related issues.

ACoRF is supported by two Trust Funds, one for saltwater related issues and the second for freshwater related issues. Funding is provided by the recreational fishing fee which was about \$13.5m in 2008/9.

The members of ACoRF and the Trust Funds are appointed by the DII Minister. There is no formal peak advocacy recreational fishing body for NSW although the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) has made significant steps forward in being identified as a group capable of fulfilling that role. The RFA has credibility, is well regarded and has performed on a voluntary basis since its inception about 10 years ago. NSW is ready for a formal recreational fishing peak body.

Some of the disadvantages being experienced under the current management structure are:

- \* Restriction on consultation with stakeholders because ACoRF performs an advisory role.
- \* There is no formally appointed group to perform the role of advocacy for recreational fishers in NSW.
- \* Delays in publicising committee minutes/outcomes results in loss of interest as issues are not current.
- \* Poor consultation between the Trust Funds and ACoRF members.
- \* Insufficient meetings considering the quantity of business.

A new management model would be preferred if it was:

- \* Transparent
- \* Allowed broad consultation to stakeholders
- \* Is totally independent
- \* Is truly representative of recreational fishers
- \* A peak advocacy body is funded by Government
- \* Can demonstrate the ability to manage

### **Recommendation**

That a Statutory Peak Recreational Fishing Body be established within NSW along similar lines to the Game Council or the New Zealand Fish and Game Council to represent recreational fishers and administer the recreational fishing licence.

## **3. Value of recreational fishing to the economy of NSW.**

### ***3.1 Requirement for a social and economic study***

It has been recognised in recent years that recreational fishing was previously a relatively cheap activity. Estimates prepared some 6 years ago in Western Australia indicated that recreational fishers are paying about \$200 per kilo to catch a fresh meal of fish so fishing must make a significant contribution to the financial income of Governments.

Cost of living has significantly increased over the last decade and this is particularly noticeable with boats. Regulations have increased and additional safety equipment is now mandatory. Recreational fishing is no longer a cheap sport and rising increases in insurance premiums have the potential to see a further decline in fishing clubs which are the educational grounds for future advocacy leaders. The tax paid on boat fuel is not returned to boating or fishing activities.



In 2001 NSWF prepared an "issues paper" on the fishing regions within NSW. Although this data is 10 years old it can be seen even at that time the value of recreational fishing to the community was considerable. Ten years on and the figures would be significantly greater. Data is provided for some regions as not all information was retained by the Sea Bees but is likely to still be available from NSWF.

REGION	Extent of Area	Estimated Fishers	Estimated Value per year
Region 1	Q'land border to Evans Head	200,000	\$15.0m - \$23m
Region 2	Evans Hd to Woolgoolga	-	-
Region 3	Woolgoolga to Port Macquarie	-	-
Region 4	Port Macquarie to Seal Rocks	-	\$23.0m
Region 5	Seal Rocks to the Entrance	193,000	\$15.3m - \$23m
Region 6	The Entrance to Wollongong	-	\$134.0m
	Port Jackson (Sydney Harbour)	182,000	\$14.5m - \$21.7m
	Hawkesbury River	44,000	\$ 3.5m - \$5.2m
Region 7	Wollongong to Narooma	538,000	\$43.0m - \$64m
Region 8	Narooma to Vic Border	-	\$ 25.0m
			\$173.3 MILLION

Even with data missing for some regions it can be seen the recreational fishing estimated value is very significant to the economy – this figure now would well exceed \$200m to \$250m per year.

In addition to the above figures an economic survey was undertaken on the Snowy Mountains Region a number of years ago which revealed recreational fishers spent around \$70 million per year in that area.

The Boating Industry Association advises that 70% of boats sold are for recreational fishing.

### **Recommendation**

1. That Government fund a survey to establish the social, health, business, tourists and financial benefits and impacts of recreational fishing in NSW.

### **3.2 Value of retaining access to locations such as Lake Lyell**

Over recent years the NSW Government has proposed selling off the power stations in NSW. Many of these locations provide an opportunity for recreational fishing, camping and other community water activities which all adds to the health and well being of the general community.

The Sea Bees Club holds a fishing ANSA Convention each year at Lake Lyell (Lithgow) and last year attracted 85 participants. The convention is focused on catch and release, even though the lake is considered to be a "Put and Take" fishery as fishers funds are used to stock Lake Lyell.

Lake Lyell is linked to Delta Electricity. If this power station is sold off we have grave concerns that access could be denied as public liability could be seen as an issue for a private company.

### **Recommendation**

We request the Inquiry ensures access to Lake Lyell and other similar dams (where power is produced) is maintained for recreational fishing. The loss of such facilities would be having significant financial and social impact, especially to local towns, such as Lithgow.

#### **4.0 Gaps in existing recreational fishing programmes including number and location of recreational fishing havens.**

##### ***4.1 Gaps in recreational fishing programmes***

Income from the Recreational Fishing Fee can only be spent on specific items associated with improving recreational fishing and these conditions are covered in the Regulations. In recent years there has been some projects raised where funding would have been sought from the Trust Funds but due to the Regulations funding could not be utilised.

A specific example was the Grey Nurse Shark court case which was taken on board by Recfish Australia and Australian National Sportfishing Association which produced a win by the recreational sector. This was yet another example of extreme groups trying to close down areas and restrict access using the legal and Court process to achieve their own aims. Recent research indicates that GNS numbers initially put forward by the NCC were incorrect and understated.

As challenges for access is likely to continue into the future it is requested that the use of Trust Fund income be reviewed to allow the funds to be used in such extreme cases.

Currently there are numerous challenges relating to access issues and although it would be disappointing to use fisher's funds for court challenges it may come to that in the future.

##### **Recommendation**

That the use of fund collected from the Fishing Fee be reviewed.

##### ***4.2 Existing Recreational Fishing Havens***

There are currently 30 Recreational Fishing Havens (RFHs). In the Sydney Region the closest south is Botany Bay and the closest north is Lake Macquarie. The majority of RFHs are located in the south of NSW where many small lakes are located, some of which are frequently closed to the ocean.

These RFHs were previously fished by commercial fishers and there was considerable conflict between recreational and commercial fishers and local business that supported tourists. Recreational fisher's funds were used to buy out the commercial effort to create areas now known as RFHs. These areas are now fished only by recreational fishers although some commercial activities do exist in some RFHs. Why there were so many commercial licences issued to access such small lakes and lagoons is a real concern and in hindsight even NSW Fisheries would have to admit that too many licences were initially issued.

To remove the commercial effort funding was needed so the recreational fisher was hit up with a fishing fee. This fee was introduced after significant community objections at the time mainly due to uncertainty and lack of trust as it was considered the funding would be largely lost to Government.

A significant loan was arranged through NSW Treasury and to this day recreational fishers are still paying off the loan. Our club understands there was some \$20m paid out to remove commercial effort in the creation of RFHs and after 10 years of repayments this figure has increased, with interest, in the order of \$35m.

The commercial netting in RFHs was significant in some rivers and lakes and recreational and commercial fishers were in dispute creating community unrest and concerns about resource sharing and most of these areas were focused on tourism especially fishing.

The potential loss of some RFHs through access restrictions is an issue now being confronted and is a concern to recreational fishers considering their financial investment. Recreational fishers have become very passionate about their RFHs because it has provided some form of identity and unofficial ownership. It has also created a totally different attitude within fishers who are now seeking consultation, supporting conservation to a greater level and are seeking more involvement and ownership of their investment.

In recent years Plan of Managements have been developed by some National Parks and Wildlife managers to close off access to two RFHs. NPWS have the ability to control the vehicular access to the water thus preventing boats being launched. Lake Meroo on the south coast is a perfect example where discussion has been occurring for many years and still the matter is not resolved.

Last year a similar issue arose at Nelsons Lagoon in Mimosas National Park on the far south coast. Thankfully NPWS staff in that park arranged for an alternative plan of management. To date this is not resolved but it is hoped access will continue. Recreational fishers have offered financial assistance towards conservation improvements as a sign of ongoing commitment to the National Park.

Over recent years significant infrastructure works have occurred in Botany Bay. The Sea Bees Club fish this location frequently as it is our closest RFH however the Bay is still not acknowledged for its recreational worth to the community. Recreational fishers are well aware that the Fisheries Act was thrown away when the Desal project was proposed and it is interesting to note that there have been no comments by the NCC or NPA on this project or the impacts the deposited salt will have on the close inshore reefs. It is also interesting that it is these areas that the NPA is calling to protect along the coast on NSW with the creation of sanctuary zones.

When infrastructure works occur within a RFH there should be acknowledgement that there is a "loss" and some form of appropriate compensation is needed considering the financial contribution made by recreational fishers. It is requested that the Inquiry recommend that this principal is incorporated into existing and proposed RFH.

Since the creation of RFHs NSW Fisheries has undertaken surveys which were funded by recreational fishers to establish the status of fish stocks. All surveys have indicated increases in fish stocks and sizes. The National Parks Association is still seeking the introduction of sanctuary zones in RFHs. Unless there is a specific issue identified and there is supporting science which is agreed by all stakeholders then sanctuary zones as a general rule should not be needed or included in RFHs.

The creation of "recreational guardians" for RFHs has been mooted on the NSW south coast with plans to expand this concept to all existing RFHs. The Sea Bees Club requests the Inquiry formalise these positions and supports the formation of a "Trust" over such waters.

### **Recommendation**

1. That all existing RFHs be formally recognised and placed in an appropriate Land Trust and managed by a peak recreational fishing body to ensure their long term protection and access for future generations
2. That recreational fishers are appointed as Guardians of existing RFHs.
3. That when infrastructure works occur within a RFH that appropriate compensation be provided to recreational fishers for loss of access or damage to fishable areas.
4. That access to existing RFHs like Meroo Lake, which is in a National Park, be protected to ensure an access road is maintained to the water edge (boat ramp) for the purpose of launching boats.

### ***4.3 Proposed additional Recreational Fishing Havens***

It can be established over the last ten years that RFHs work well.

If additional RFHs were to be created it is recommended that funding should be provided from Government rather than the Trust Funds.

Recreational fishers are still paying for the first 30 RFHs and it would be a sign of recognition from the Government that recreational fishing does have a significant impact on the economy and that such an investment could be seen as a stimulus package to other areas within NSW to enhance their local economy.

This would enable funds from the Trust Funds to be used to address significant habitat and conservation works together with infrastructure projects to be undertaken in any proposed RFHs.

#### **Recommendation**

1. That Government fund the next commercial buyout of commercial fishers to create more RFHs.
2. That these RFHs be placed in some form of "Land Trust" which could be managed by a peak recreational fishing body to ensure their long term protection and access for future generations.
3. That recreational fishers are appointed as Guardians of any proposed RFHs.

### ***4.4 Freshwater Opportunities State Wide***

There are numerous freshwater impoundments which are currently available for recreational fishing. This activity attracts significant income to rural towns.

There is an opportunity for some of these dams and impoundments to be placed into a "Land Trust" which could be managed by recreational fishers. A presentation was made to Minister Costa – Minister for Water buy the RFA last year but to date no response has been received.

#### **Recommendation**

1. That greater access is provided to dams and impoundments within NSW for recreational fishing and boating.

### ***4.5 A Sydney Based Freshwater Fishing Opportunity***

The supply of drinking water to Sydney has changed considerably over the years. Prospect Reservoir was once a significant storage and supply of Sydney water. However with the Desal plant now operating in Sydney it is considered that the Reservoir and its associated infrastructure could be used for recreational purposes like fishing. If the Sydney Catchment Authority and Sydney Water are not supportive of using the Reservoir for recreational fishing then consideration should now be given to taking the Reservoir off line because of its insignificant contribution as a water supply facility.

This would provide Sydney west who have been long term supporters of the current Government with a significant fishing opportunity. Each year a local Council fills a swimming pool with fish so they can provide an interest for children and to encourage fishing rather than roaming the streets.

Representations have been made to Minister Costa – (Minister for Water) regarding Prospect but to date no response has been received.

**Recommendation**

1. That the Inquiry team visit the Prospect Reservoir
2. That Prospect Reservoir is declared a recreational fishing and boating (limited) reservoir

***4.6 Sydney Harbour and Estuaries – Recreational Fishing Only***

Due to warnings issued by the NSW Dept of Health commercial fishing was removed from Sydney Harbour and Parramatta River some years ago. Health warnings still exist for finfish with limited quantities recommended for consumption. A lot of catch and release fishing is practised in the Parramatta River which still provides an enjoyable fishing opportunity within the heart of Sydney.

The Sea Bees Club is not aware of any Government commitment to remove contamination from the Parramatta River and perhaps any removal could actually create increased level of toxicity. Should that be the case these areas should be declared recreational fishing areas.

Due to the specific nature of this fishery there should be no reason why any financial payment should be made to commercial fishers by recreational fishers as it was not the recreational fishers who polluted the Parramatta River.

**Recommendation**

1. That Sydney Harbour and connecting estuaries are retained for recreational fishing only, this includes fishing access to its public wharves and jetties.

***4.7 Boat Ramp and pontoon facilities***

Recently there has been money spent on upgrading some boat ramps by NSW Maritime within the Parramatta River. These works which were greatly appreciated were funded by the boating licence and boating registrations. These facilities generally service the smaller trailable boat that uses the Parramatta River or the middle zone of Sydney Harbour.

For larger trailable boats heading to sea the available of boat ramps are in poor supply or there is limited parking which create a significant problem during school holidays, public holidays and weekends. Boats heading to sea through Sydney Heads need to launch as close as possible to the heads particularly if they are travelling long distances such as the 12mile and further. This provides a safe separation factor deleting the need for these boats to travel though passive boating areas (sailing and smaller craft). It also reduces the quantity of fuel needed within the river or harbour as that fuel could be needed for the return trip from sea if sea conditions deteriorate. Those travelling from the northern or north/west side of Sydney only have the choice of Tunks Park, at Northbridge (which does not attract a fee) or Roseville (which does attract a fee).

Tunks Park has recently been upgraded with an additional ramp and shortly will be further improved with a better pontoon however to our knowledge there in no additional parking proposed. It is considered that the provision of extra parking for trailable boats should be provided at this location or another site established that will provide a significant launching facility, with adequate parking and easy access to Sydney Heads, with a suggested time frame of 3-5 years.

Parsley Bay on the Hawkesbury is a main regional boat ramp however it is in need of upgrading. Being on the northern fringe of Sydney again it caters for a significant number of trailable boats accessing the Hawkesbury River and provides good access to sea out past Lion Island.

This ramp has not qualified for the 100% better boating funding that applies to Sydney Harbour. Hornsby Council is expected to contribute 50% and this has not occurred. The facility is used extensively and is in need of an extensive upgrade.

**Recommendation**

1. That action be taken to either expand the boat ramp facilities and especially the car park and provide adjacent toilets at Tunks Park and/or an alternative site is obtained for the medium to long term for larger, recreational fishing trailer boats.
2. That support is given to improving the boat ramp and facilities at Parsley Bay on the Hawkesbury River.

**5.0 Ecologically sustainable development issues relating to improving recreational fisheries.**

One of the most important issues is to address the key threatening processes. Most recreational fishers are of the view that pollution is one of the key issues threatening fish stocks. With residential, commercial and rural development established along the foreshores of the rivers, lakes and streams the impacts of these developments are not addressed.

There has been serious destruction of oyster farms resulting from sewerage disposal. We are aware of pollution from turf farms, factory fallouts, road and drainage issues, which have in the past and still do use estuaries and rivers as drains. This is then deposited into the sea and has an impact on our intermediate reefs.

Research needs to be undertaken to address the pollution that is occurring in these areas rather than undertaking research into intermediate reefs with the sole intention of providing enough information to suggest closure.

**Recommendation**

1. That more research is undertaken into the health of rivers and streams to determine if they can sustain the current pollution and to identify the damage being done to the estuaries and close intermediate coastal reefs from pollution flowing from the estuaries.

In conclusion I would like to request that a representative of the Sea Bees Club be invited to attend the Inquiry to comment on submissions presented and provide information relevant to the Inquiry. The Sea Bees Club representative will be Max Castle who can be contacted on 0412468375. (email [cnmcastle@optusnet.com.au](mailto:cnmcastle@optusnet.com.au))

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the NSW Government Fishing Inquiry.

Yours Faithfully

Eddie Schmidt  
President

