

**Submission
No 661**

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: Coastal Rights Association Inc
Name: Mr Len Tompkins
Position: Hon. Secretary
Date received: 10/03/2010

COASTAL RIGHTS ASSOCIATION INC.

Wednesday 10th. March 2010

The Director,
Select Committee on Recreational Fishing,
Legislative Council,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street,
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Sir,

Inquiry into Recreational Fishing

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this Select Committee.

You would be aware that NSW Government created the Batemans Marine Park in 2006 and subsequently gazetted a total of approximately 20% of the area of that park as Sanctuary Zones where no fish or any other marine organisms may be removed or damaged in any way. It is our view that this Marine Park fails in many different ways to meet its objectives of protecting marine diversity, and also misses a great opportunity to protect fish stocks in this area. The implementation of seasonal closures in certain areas at various times of the year to protect fish breeding and nursery areas could be of great benefit to improving fish stocks and would be much more effective than the current system of Sanctuary Zones. However, none of these issues were even considered when the Sanctuary Zones were set up in the Batemans Marine Park, despite the considerable amount of effort put in by this Association in identifying suitable areas for seasonal closure. We would be more than happy to provide further information on this aspect if your Committee wishes. We are well aware that the Advisory Committee set up to assist in the setting up of the Sanctuary Zones in the Batemans Marine Park did not give any consideration whatsoever to any of the wealth of marine science that was available, nor did they consider any of the facts presented to them in regard to fish breeding zones or habits. This was clearly born out in the minutes of all their meetings which we obtained from the Department of the Environment and Climate Change under Freedom of Information. In our view the processes used to set up the Batemans Marine Park were an absolute disgrace.

We also believe that the economic benefits of the Batemans Marine Park have been grossly misrepresented. It is true that in recent times this area has experienced a boom in tourist numbers over the holiday season, but to attribute this tourist boom to the creation of the Marine Park is totally without any foundation in fact. People visit the coast for many different reasons and recreational fishing is only one small aspect. In fact our figures, obtained from the Batemans Bay Marine Rescue Service, show that there has been a drop of some 27% in the number of fishing vessels logging on to their service over the holiday period (3831 in 2009/2010 compared to 5358 in 2006/2007). Fishing tackle shops in Eurobodalla Shire also report a similar drop in sales figures since the introduction of the Batemans Marine Park, despite the record number of visitors to the area over the

summer holidays. Paradoxically, fishing tackle shops in both Ulladulla and Eden (where there is no marine park) report bumper sales over the holiday periods since the creation of the Batemans Marine Park.

It is our view that all matters pertaining to fishing, both recreational and commercial, should be managed solely by the NSW Fisheries Department, and they should be provided with sufficient staff and resources to effectively carry out these duties. Currently it seems that Fisheries Compliance Officers are rarely seen on the water, and then only at holiday times and usually too late in the day to have any effect. To be effective Fisheries Officers need to be active on jetties, beaches, rock platforms and all areas where recreational fishers are operating, and at times when the fishers are there. They also need to have a greater presence at boat launching ramps at appropriate times, not just holiday times.

With regard to the policy and decision making processes in the management of recreational fisheries in NSW we would like to know who actually makes the decisions and if it is not I & I Fisheries, then why not? They make fish bag and size limits by which we must abide, and they also manage the patrolling officers. We would like to know exactly what their role is in the decision making process.

We consider that some commercial fishing activities should be allowed to continue in the Marine Park areas so that people who do not wish to go fishing, or are unable to, can still purchase locally caught fish. However, commercial fishing should be limited to long-line fishing only – trawling should definitely not be permitted due to the excessive damage that this causes to the marine environment. If the times and areas open to commercial fishing are properly managed, **and policed**, then this need not have a detrimental effect on fish stocks. If Recreational Fishing Havens are retained, and commercial fishing in rivers and estuaries is not permitted, then recreational fishing should not be unduly affected.

One issue that urgently need to be addressed is the fact that many ethnic migrants to Australia still carry on the cultural activities that they practiced in their own countries to the detriment of our marine environment. These people frequently go along our beaches, estuaries and rock platforms and remove almost every living thing including all types of shellfish, marine animals and plants that they consider to be edible. If these activities are allowed to continue then it will ultimately destroy the entire marine environment.

To our knowledge the Trust and Advisory Committees on recreational fishing have been doing a great job as evidenced by their achievements in the provision of facilities for fishers, and in research activities. However, consideration needs to be given to the provision of some permanent staff to assist in lobbying the Government. We also believe that there needs to be a full and proper study into the economic benefits of recreational fishing to a community, including travel, accommodation, fuel (boats & vehicles), bait and tackle, takeaway food etc. etc.

We consider that a proper peer review of all the appropriate, local marine science available should be carried out before any more protected areas are considered, and the results of that review must be used as the basis for determining the areas to be protected. We would also like to see community forums set up to ensure that the views of all affected groups are able to be aired and resolved before decisions are made. In that way we could

expect that community ownership of the project would go a long way to ensuring its ultimate success.

We would also like to know who exactly is the Marine Park Authority of NSW, who are the Board Members, who is in charge, to whom do they report, and who do they appoint as Advisory Committee members. This is information that we have sought from both the Marine Park Authority and the Department of the Environment and Climate Change one year ago and to date we have not received an answer.

Finally, we understand that that the Select Committee intends to hold a series of public hearings following the closing date for submissions, and that one of these hearings will be held in Batemans Bay. We would ask that our Association be given the opportunity to speak at that hearing. We trust that you will find our submission to be of interest to your Committee.

Yours faithfully,

Len Tompkins
Hon. Secretary