

## **INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING**

**Organisation:** Australian Fishing Trade Association and Boating Industry  
Association of NSW

**Name:** Mr Doug Joyner and Mr Ron Privett

**Telephone:** 02 9944 6210 and 02 9438 2077

**Date received:** 18/03/2010

---

To the Select Committee Members on Recreational Fishing

On behalf of the Australian Fishing Trade Association (contact Doug Joyner Ph. 02/99446210 email address: tackletrade@optusnet.com.au and the Boating Industry Association of NSW we attach our joint submission and 85 recommendations for action.

AFTA and BIA represent the vast majority of business operators in our respective industries.

If you experience any difficulties in downloading this submission or require hard copies please advise.

<<Submission Rec. Fishing Inquiry NSW mARCH 2010.pdf>>

**Roy Privett**

**General Manager**

*The Boating Industry Association of NSW Ltd*

*Post : PO Box 1204 CROWS NEST NSW 1585*

*Phone : (02) 9438 2077 - Fax : (02) 9439 3983*

*Mobile: 0414 382 077*

*E-mail : [privett@bia.org.au](mailto:privett@bia.org.au)*

*[www.bia.org.au](http://www.bia.org.au)*

*[www.sydneymboatshow.com.au](http://www.sydneymboatshow.com.au)*



**Australian Fishing Trade  
Association**

**&**

**Boating Industry  
Association of NSW**

**Submission  
to**

**• Select Committee on  
Recreational Fishing**

**Inquiry into Recreational  
Fishing**

**March 2010**



Boating Industry Association  
of New South Wales Ltd

## CONTACT DETAILS

### **Australian Fishing Trade Association**

Doug Joyner

PO Box 5117

Elanora Heights NSW, 2101

Telephone: 02 99446210

### **Boating Industry Association of New South Wales Ltd.**

Roy Privett

PO Box 1204

CROWS NEST NSW 1585 Australia

Telephone: 02 9438 2077



## CONTENTS

Contact Details .....	2
Contents .....	3
Submission Overview .....	4
Executive Summary .....	5
Summary of Recommendations .....	6
Policy and Processes .....	12
Decision Making and the Licence .....	18
Value and Access .....	23
Marine Parks & Marine Protected Areas .....	34
Consultation and Governance .....	39
The Environment and sharing the fish .....	46
Opportunities for the future .....	59

## SUBMISSION OVERVIEW

This submission from the Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) and the Boating Industry Association of New South Wales (BIA) addresses the Inquiry Terms of Reference (ToR) in accord with the Legislative Council's directives to provide the Inquiry with facts, balanced and considered opinion, well reasoned arguments and, where appropriate, recommendations for action. Recommendations are provided under each heading, and benefits and opportunities are addressed separately.

In particular, this submission highlights where change is needed and focuses on opportunities for improving recreational fisheries and their management to enhance the benefits to the fishing licence holders and other fishers of this state.

AFTA is an Australian trade association dedicating itself to the promotion of public angling and of its members. AFTA members are often the first point of contact for anglers wanting information on fishing and the local rules and regulations. AFTA also promotes sustainable angling and public education.

BIA members embody over 90% of commercial activity in the recreational and light commercial boating industry in NSW. With more than half of all NSW registered vessels used for fishing<sup>1</sup>, the BIA regards the sound management of recreational fishing as essential to protect the interests of its stakeholders, and to ensure the viability of the boating industry in NSW.

---

<sup>1</sup> G.W. Henry and J.M. Lyle (Eds), 2003. The National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey. NSW Fisheries Final Report Series No. 48, p58.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This submission focuses on the key issues affecting recreational fishers in NSW including the confusing fishing gear regulations, the timeliness of reviews and consistency in rules across the fishing sectors. The loss of identity for Fisheries and the consequences of the merger with DPI and I&I are examined, and recommendations made to redress the resulting deficiencies.

One of the most galling issues is the cost shifting of core government responsibilities on the recreational fishing trusts. Acceptance of the recreational fishing licence was predicated on the agreement that the government would maintain its level of service to recreational fishing. Cost shifting must stop, and the trust funds must revert to funding enhancements to recreational fishing as originally intended.

Recreational fishing is extremely valuable to regional NSW and the state, but this is not reflected in the financial contributions made by the government, or in the way fishers are treated.

There is a glaring discrepancy between the property rights of commercial and recreational fishers. Access for recreational fishers is being constantly eroded and secure access and fishing rights must be urgently addressed through legislative change. A moratorium must be placed on Marine Parks.

The consultative processes need to be overhauled, and a new peak body and modern governance arrangements for improved service delivery are required.

ESD and responsible fishing are explored and recommendations for closing gaps in programs and opportunities for improvement are also provided.



## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The regulations governing recreational fishing should be reviewed and simplified to provide easily remembered rules appropriate for casual fishers.
2. Recreational fishing regulations should be reviewed whenever necessary, but at least every 5 years.
3. The snapper minimum legal length be increased to 32 cm immediately.
4. Wobbegong sharks should be protected from all fishing immediately.
5. Size limits, including slot limits, must apply equally to commercial and recreational fishers.
6. The gear rules must be made consistent for freshwater, estuaries, inshore and offshore waters.
7. Temporary area closures should be implemented to protect all spawning aggregations of fish from all forms of fishing.
8. The rules governing recreational fishing gear usage should be consistent between similar locations e.g. all estuaries where recreational fishing is permitted should be open to the use of all permitted gears.
9. The use of electric fishing reels by recreational fishers should not be banned.
10. The roles of Boating Safety Officers and Fisheries Officers be combined for on-water and adjacent-to-water activities.
11. Consultation on regulatory reform or policy change be broadened to include major stakeholders such as the tackle industry and boating industry peak bodies.
12. All senior fishery management staff have appropriate tertiary qualifications and fisheries management experience at a senior level.
13. The administration of fisheries be removed from Industry and Investment NSW and reconstituted as a stand-alone department with an appropriately qualified and experienced Director of Fisheries reporting to a Minister for Fisheries.
14. A new high level joint body comprised of commercial, recreational and conservation stakeholders be formed to promote genuine consultation and consensus on issues of mutual interest.
15. Cost shifting from the Department to the Trust Funds must cease, including funding for compliance and law enforcement, fisheries conservation, stock assessment and other basic research required to manage jointly fished stocks.
16. An independent body, such as IPART, should be commissioned to determine the government's community service obligations to recreational fishing.

17. The cost of running all hatcheries including the Gaden Trout Hatchery be sourced from Consolidated Revenue.
18. A voluntary recreational fisher registration system operated through tackle shops and boating and marine suppliers be investigated.
19. Value adding to licences be investigated as a priority by recreational management.
20. An annual licence-free fishing day be implemented to promote participation.
21. The value of recreational fishing be explicitly recognized in all resource sharing and access decisions by government.
22. Biennial economic surveys be conducted to determine changes in the value of recreational fisheries state-wide and at key locations including RFHs and areas impacted by Marine Parks.
23. The government contribution to the management of recreational fishing should be restored (adjusted to today's dollars) to that agreed in 2001 when the general fishing licence was introduced.
24. Boating fishers be regularly surveyed to determine expenditure on boating related activities.
25. The Fisheries Management Act 1994 must be amended to explicitly provide for compensatable fishing rights for recreational fishers
26. All Recreational Fishing Havens be made Dedicated Crown Reserves for the purpose of recreational fishing.
27. The National Parks and Wildlife Act, the Marine Parks Act and other relevant legislation be amended to require all Plans of Management and Zoning Plans be required to explicitly address access for recreational fishing, and to not remove or reduce access for recreational fishers without providing satisfactory alternatives.
28. Legislation be changed to facilitate recreational fishing access to Sydney Catchment Authority and Sydney Water impoundments using a risk management approach.
29. An additional \$20 million loan, to be repaid from the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust, be secured to buy out commercial fishing effort to create more RFHs.
30. The size of existing RFHs in estuaries that are only partly closed to commercial fishing be expanded to improve their effectiveness.
31. The previous consultation process for RFHs be repeated.
32. The Shoalhaven River system, Lake Illawarra, the Macleay River and Wallis Lake be identified as the next Recreational Fishing Havens.
33. Suitable lagoons on the south coast be made RFHs and enhanced to improve recreational fishing.



34. A moratorium be placed on the creation of any more Marine Parks until there is comprehensive scientific evidence that all existing Marine Parks have met their objectives, and will continue to do so under the impacts of climate change.
35. The Marine Parks Act and the Fisheries Management Act 1994 be amended to require adequate consultation in terms of duration and participation on all proposed Marine Parks and Marine Protected areas.
36. The Marine Parks zoning system should be reviewed and simplified.
37. Thorough biological, social and economic studies be conducted prior to the implementation of any new Marine Parks or Marine Protected areas to allow the impacts to be accurately assessed.
38. Compensation be provided to all those adversely affected by any new Marine Parks or Marine Protected areas including recreational fishers, commercial fishers, charter fishing boat operators and fishing tackle and bait suppliers.
39. Compensation for recreational fishers may be in the form of fisheries enhancement such as artificial reefs, the provision of alternate equivalent areas dedicated exclusively to recreational fishing, or direct cash contribution to the Recreational Fishing Trusts.
40. The Trust Expenditure Committees be combined to form a new more streamlined body funded from the Recreational Fishing Trusts.
41. The new Trust Expenditure Committee have a majority of members nominated by the Recreational Fishing Peak Body (see below).
42. A dedicated Recreational Fishing Peak Body be funded from the Recreational Fishing Trusts to provide for an Executive Officer, an Administrative Officer and adequate operating costs for a period of 5 years.
43. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be constituted to provide advice to the Department and Minister on all matters relating to recreational fishing including expenditure of trust funds through representation on the reconstituted Trust Expenditure Committee (see above).
44. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be constituted to provide advocacy on behalf of all recreational fishers.
45. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be constituted to deliver services and functions currently provided by government and others (excluding compliance and enforcement) to be phased in as capacity is demonstrated.
46. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be empowered to promote the involvement of recreational fishers in research and monitoring projects.
47. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be inclusive, not exclusive, with membership including representatives broad based recreational fishing umbrella groups, the Australian Fishing Trade Association and the Boating Industry Association of NSW.
48. Intergenerational equity in access to quality recreational fishing be protected by increasing the number of Recreational Fishing Havens.

49. Biodiversity be conserved and enhanced through improvements to marine habitat by the installation of more artificial reefs.
50. The *optimal*<sup>2</sup> use of fish resources be recognized as the primary goal of fisheries management.
51. Resource re-allocation be provided through a user pays system that provides fair compensation for those adversely affected.
52. All latent commercial fishing effort be cancelled before any restructuring or resource re-allocation occurs.
53. A new buy-back loan, to be repaid by from the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust, be secured to immediately create RFHs on the north and south coasts.
54. An annual allocation be provided from the Saltwater Trust to fund ongoing buy-outs of active commercial fishing effort to, over time, transform all NSW estuarine waters into Recreational Fishing Havens (i.e. free of commercial fishing).
55. No resource allocation be made until an independent stock assessment has been conducted on each species.
56. No resource allocation be made until an independent assessment of the social and economic benefits derived from the species.
57. The level of sustainability must be defined before resource allocation.
58. Allocations be made to maximize the social and economic benefits to NSW.
59. Allocations be made in accord with ESD Principles (particularly intergenerational equity) to rebuild fish stocks by decreasing fishing mortality.
60. Where a species is overfished, or stock status is uncertain, the Precautionary Principle will apply and allocation should favour the sector that can minimize fishing mortality.
61. Catch history will not be the basis for allocation between sectors.
62. The government formulate clear rules for resource sharing based on ESD
63. The government not move to output (quota) controls until clear rules for sharing the fish resources between commercial, recreational and other users are agreed.
64. An independent body, such as IPART, should be commissioned to determine appropriate resource rents for commercial fishing.
65. Input –output tradability in SMF be scrapped.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Optimal* here means that which maximises the social and economic benefits while ensuring the requirements of ESD are met.



66. A substantial annual allocation be made from the trusts for fisheries enhancement.
67. A state-wide survey of estuaries and ocean waters be conducted to identify suitable sites for artificial reefs.
68. A state-wide survey of estuaries be conducted to determine suitable sites for stocking with prawns and fish to enhance recreational fishing.
69. A thorough state-wide investigation of the health and family benefits of recreational fishing be undertaken immediately, and repeated every 5 years.
70. A broad based advertising campaign be implemented to promote recreational fishing.
71. The promotion of recreational fishing to under-represented sectors of the community be expanded through the schools education program into high schools and with new programs for disadvantaged groups and the disabled.
72. Funding from the Recreational Fishing Trusts for compliance be redirected into education programs such as the Schools Education Program, Fishcare Volunteer Program and educational publications.
73. Participation in recreational fishing be increased by education campaigns and selectively targeting fishing licence renewals to maximize the social, economic, health and family cohesion benefits.
74. More Recreational Fishing Havens be created through targeted buyouts of commercial fishing with fair compensation to boost regional economies
75. Fish stocks be improved by decreased commercial fishing effort, stocking and habitat enhancement.
76. Enhanced biodiversity through habitat improvement in saltwater by artificial reefs and in freshwater by resnagging and improved water quality.
77. Improved conservation outcomes from education on environmental responsibility and more catch and release.
78. New fisheries be created through stocking, improved habitat and better management e.g. Wallagoot Lake prawn fishery
79. Enhanced fishing tourism by interstate and overseas visitors through targeted advertising campaigns
80. Value adding to fishing licences to move from impost to valued commodity.
81. Increased efficiencies in licence sales and distribution to deliver more revenue for enhancement projects.
82. The contribution to improved fisheries and conservation of biodiversity achieved through fishing licence expenditure be better promoted.
83. The contribution to rural and coastal economies from recreational fishing be marketed to state and local government, tourism bodies and stakeholder groups.
84. Recognition of the social, health and family cohesion benefits of fishing be better documented and promoted.



85. Economic benefits for regional areas through enhanced fishing tourism be better promoted.

## POLICY AND PROCESSES

### Regulatory Processes

Fish are managed on a stock wide basis and the primary tools for controlling the impact of recreational fishing are bag and size limits, gear restrictions and temporal and area closures.

Recreational fishers have demonstrated strong support and willing compliance with restraints on access and catch possession that are sensible, equitable, based on sound science, and are properly explained.

However, the regulations currently governing recreational fishing are too complicated, discouraging participation and diminishing the social and economic benefits derived from recreational fishing. This also leads to inadvertent and unnecessary breaches and exposure to fines or the justice system.

Most recreational fishers only fish a few times each year (2/3rds of those who fished only fished 5 or less days per annum<sup>3</sup>) and it is unrealistic to expect them to be familiar with overly complex rules. The lack of consistency in fishing gear rules between locations adds another layer of confusion and invites unwitting compliance failures.

The confusing suite of often local rules and regulations for recreational fishing has little relevance to the overall management of the state's fishstocks and must be rationalised.

---

<sup>3</sup> The National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey Eds G.W. Henry and J.M. Lyle NSW Fisheries Final Report Series No. 48 2003, p58.

Recreational fishers should be able to move from one fishing location to another confident that a consistent set of rules will apply.

Although the government is committed to reviewing bag and size limits every 5 years this timetable is never met. The interval between reviews often drags out to 7 years or more, meaning that the effectiveness of this major tool in constraining both recreational and commercial fishing (through size limits) is diminished. The interval between reviews should be flexible, and they should be conducted when required. This should be at least every 5 years to ensure the risk assessments underpinning these rules are regularly revisited, and that action is taken when it is needed. For a fishery, or species requiring urgent action, waiting 5 years or even more for the next review could be disastrous.

### **Bag and Size Limits**

The current minimum size limits are in part intended to provide some protection for small fish to allow sufficient fish to reach the minimum size at first maturity. Where large females are believed to make a disproportionate contribution to the stock, or are particularly vulnerable to fishing (e.g. dusky flathead), restrictions on the number of large fish that can be kept are applied. Maximum size restrictions are also applied to better share the catch (e.g. mahimahi and large tunas) and prevent overharvesting. However, in many jurisdictions there has been recognition that the impact of fishing is best managed through slot limits, where all fish smaller or larger than the slot size must be released. This is most useful where release survival is well understood and minimal.

The important snapper fishery in NSW is growth overfished<sup>4</sup> and on biological evidence the minimum legal size should be increased to at least 32 cm. Despite a comprehensive Department of Industry and Investment

---

<sup>4</sup>[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/.../areas/systems-research/wild-fisheries/outputs/2008/972/status\\_short/Snapper.pdf](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/.../areas/systems-research/wild-fisheries/outputs/2008/972/status_short/Snapper.pdf)



(I&I) analysis of the economic and biological consequences of the previous size increase showing no adverse effects on the commercial fishery, the increase has not been implemented.

There is a lack of consistency in size limits between commercial and recreational fishers e.g. dusky flathead, where recreational fishers are limited to one fish over 70 cm, but commercial fishers can target and market as many fish of this size as they can catch. This is inequitable and undermines compliance.

Wobbeong sharks are protected from recreational fishing, but are subject to a destructive targeted commercial shark fishery that operates in the same waters frequented by grey nurse sharks. The commercial shark fishery is the most likely fishery to catch grey nurse sharks, the fishery most likely be negatively impacted by this interaction and to benefit most by the destruction of this critically endangered species.

### **Seasonal closures**

Almost all fisheries collapses, both here and overseas, are a result of targeting spawning aggregations (e.g. orange roughy, southern bluefin tuna, gemfish etc). While protection of spawning stocks is widely applied and well accepted by recreational fishers for freshwater fish (e.g. Murray cod, trout and Australian bass), pressure from commercial fishing interests has prevented these sensible measures being applied in saltwater. The precautionary principle should be invoked to protect all fish species where spawning aggregations are targeted, from all forms of fishing. This could be easily achieved by scientifically monitoring the reproductive condition of the fish and applying appropriate temporary area closures to all fishing methods where and when required.

### **Gear Restrictions**

Gear restrictions should be minimized wherever possible. The current suite of recreational gear rules is confusing and inconsistent, and the bases for

many are accidents of history relating to antiquated or outdated commercial fishing rules. While the amount of gear that can be used is reasonably straightforward, where it can be used is not. For example witches' hats (5 per person) may be used in Botany Bay but not in the adjacent Port Hacking, and the areas open to nipper pumping in Botany Bay are fragmented and unclear. The rules relating to the use of recreational prawn nets and crab traps in various locations are similarly inconsistent. Given that there are very strict constraints on the numbers of the target species that can be taken in the way of bag limits, the area closures to all recreational fishing gear should be simplified and made consistent across the state in similar waters.

The restrictions on recreational fishing gear should recognize that bag and size limits, and seasonal closures are the primary tools to constrain the recreational catch, and these can be adjusted as required. Electric reels should not be banned as they provide the only access to deepwater fish for many anglers who cannot use manual line retrieval for these species. A ban on these reels is an unwarranted *de facto* resource allocation of deepwater species to the commercial sector. Electric reels are also used by physically incapacitated fishers and for teaser retrieval on many vessels. A ban would unfairly discriminate against these users.

### **Enforcement and Compliance**

Fisheries compliance and enforcement, like other law enforcement in this state, is the core business of government and should be fully funded by Treasury. The cost shifting of enforcement onto the recreational fishing trusts should be reversed as it reduces their capacity to fund fisheries enhancement projects.

Most recreational fishers complain they have never seen a Fisheries Officer. There is a pervasive view that, despite significant funding coming from the recreational fishing trusts, Fisheries Officers direct much of their attention to duties unrelated to recreational fishing. Contrast this situation with law enforcement in Marine Parks, where all costs are borne by government, and



the proponents and supporters Marine Parks make little, if any, direct financial contribution.

Given that around 50% of boats are used for fishing, there is a significant overlap in operations between Fisheries Officers and Boating Safety Officers (BSO) from NSW Maritime. There are obvious cost savings to be made through combining the on-water and adjacent-to-water activities of these officers with fishing licence and catch inspections undertaken at the same time as boat licence and safety checks are conducted, and *vice versa*. This would minimize disruption to fishers' activities and maximize the overall compliance coverage. It would also increase the number of interactions between recreational fishers and compliance officers.

### ***Recommendations***

1. The regulations governing recreational fishing should be reviewed and simplified to provide easily remembered rules appropriate for casual fishers.
2. Recreational fishing regulations should be reviewed whenever necessary, but at least every 5 years.
3. The snapper minimum legal length be increased to 32 cm immediately.
4. Wobbegong sharks should be protected from all fishing immediately.
5. Size limits, including slot limits, must apply equally to commercial and recreational fishers.
6. The gear rules must be made consistent for freshwater, estuaries, inshore and offshore waters.
7. Temporary area closures should be implemented to protect all spawning aggregations of fish from all forms of fishing.
8. The rules governing recreational fishing gear usage should be consistent between similar locations e.g. all estuaries where recreational fishing is permitted should be open to the use of all permitted gears.

9. The use of electric fishing reels by recreational fishers should not be banned.
10. The roles of Boating Safety Officers and Fisheries Officers be combined for on-water and adjacent-to-water activities.

## DECISION MAKING AND THE LICENCE

### Decisions

The processes for making decisions about the management of recreational fishing and the expenditure of trust funds lack transparency generating distrust between stakeholders and reducing grassroots support for the administration of the sector. The roles of ACoRF and the Expenditure Committees are unclear to the average fisher and the relationship between these bodies, including the overlap of chairman and members, is seen as incestuous and contrary to the required standards of openness and accountability.

The Department is seen as distant, disengaged and uncaring. The Minister responsible has been uncommunicative, and unwilling to consider reasonable proposals from the recreational sector. The focus of both Minister and Department on commercial fisheries for the past decade has resulted in little benefit to either sector and represents a devaluing of the importance of recreational fishing to the NSW economy.

The submerging of NSW Fisheries into the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the loss of a Minister for Fisheries meant that fisheries issues were relegated to the bottom of the DPI priority list, and were, by and large, removed from the government's agenda. The move brought with it the bureaucratic inertia typical of large departments, and prevented the timely consultation and liaison, and nimble management needed to handle volatile stakeholders in a fast changing environment. These problems were further exacerbated when DPI was subsumed into the Department of Industry & Investment. This review presents a rare opportunity to air these problems and seek redress.

Most particularly DPI and I&I have failed to understand the unique and complex nature of fisheries management in addressing widely differing and



often competing interests. The fisheries condition brings together not only commercial and recreational fishers targeting the same resources, but complex habitat and threatened species issues. DPI bureaucrats familiar with the finer points of stone fruit cultivation were immediately out of their depth in this new and challenging environment, and consequently fisheries matters were all too often relegated to the "too hard" basket.

DPI has recently lost a number of key management personnel. The current lack of fisheries management experience and relevant fisheries qualifications mean that senior staff are incapable of providing leadership or dealing with complex issues such as resource allocation, industry development and restructuring or governance issues.

For many years there has been a consultation void between the bureaucracy and industry, with no overarching body to address significant issues of mutual interest. Several promising attempts to bring commercial and recreational fishers together for high level discussions foundered due to lack of Ministerial and departmental commitment.

### **Fishing Licence**

The main objection to buying a fishing licence appears to be the use of funds to pay for the government's core commitments. Recreational fishers want the money not only corralled in the trusts, but dedicated to improving their fishing through direct and transparent projects. The diversion of trust funds to replace core government responsibilities will, over time, reduce support for the licence.

Since the introduction of the licence in 2001 there has been a gradual increase in cost shifting with the funding of compliance officers and conservation staff whose costs should be fully met by government.

Since 2000/01 the recreational fishing licence has raised more than \$84 million (see Table 1).

Table 1. Total Trust Fund Revenue (\$'000)<sup>5</sup>

2000/ 1	2001/ 2	2002/ 3	2003/ 4	2004/ 5	2005/ 6	2006/ 7	2007/ 8	2008/ 9	Total
2,822	8,104	8,394	8,999	10,032	10,897	10,647	10,766	13,413	84,074

I&I declined to provide the detailed breakdown of trust fund disbursements requested for detailed analysis, and only preliminary figures for 2 years were supplied<sup>6</sup>. These showed that in 2004/05 and 2008/09 only 4% of the trust funds went to external programs, with the rest directed to the government. If this paltry share is representative of the other years, the estimated disbursement to external projects amounts to less than \$3.4 million in total. Clearly the government is the major beneficiary of the recreational licence trusts in what appears to be a “closed shop” for allocation.

Blatant cost shifting, such as moving the costs of running of the Gaden Trout Hatchery onto the freshwater trust seriously undermine support for the licensing process. As was agreed when the licence was introduced, the trust funds should be used to improve recreational fishing, not replace ongoing government responsibilities.

An independent body, such as IPART, should be commissioned to determine the government's community service obligations for fisheries compliance, research and conservation with respect to recreational fisheries taking into account the direct (licence fees) and indirect (taxation) contributions made by recreational fishers, and how these obligations are met for Marine Parks and Marine Protected Areas.

<sup>5</sup> B. van der Walt I&I pers. com. 15 March 2010

<sup>6</sup> P. Turnell I&I pers. com. 12 March 2010.



The main strengths of the recreational licensing system in NSW reflect a maturation of the system after 10 years, with general acceptance by the fishing community and industry of the need to contribute to improving their fishing. However revenue is constrained by the large number of exemptions. It is estimated that about 50% of the recreational fishers in NSW are exempt from the licence. Additionally, as the personal details of those exempt and short term licence holders do not appear on the recreational fishing licence database they cannot be readily surveyed or contacted with educational material. This deficiency could be improved through a voluntary registration system operated through tackle shops and boating and marine suppliers.

The administration of the licensing system has improved with the availability of plastic licences on-line, but a more easily accessible delivery system for plastic licences, particularly at the point of sale is desirable.

Opportunities exist for adding value to the recreational fishing licence. The licence administrators should explore the possibility of adding features to the licence such as credit card or discount card services to change the status of the card from a perceived impost to a desirable item. This would enhance licence revenue, and possibly entice some of those currently exempt to purchase a licence.

There is a perception amongst many fishers that the recreational fishing licence discourages participation. This perception could be countered with a licence-free fishing day, or festival conducted in concert with industry.

### ***Recommendations***

11. Consultation on regulatory reform or policy change be broadened to include major stakeholders such as the tackle industry and boating industry peak bodies.
12. All senior fishery management staff have appropriate tertiary qualifications and fisheries management experience at a senior level.

13. The administration of fisheries be removed from Industry and Investment NSW and reconstituted as a stand-alone department with an appropriately qualified and experienced Director of Fisheries reporting to a Minister for Fisheries.
14. A new high level joint body comprised of commercial, recreational and conservation stakeholders be formed to promote genuine consultation and consensus on issues of mutual interest.
15. Cost shifting from the Department to the Trust Funds must cease, including funding for compliance and law enforcement, fisheries conservation, stock assessment and other basic research required to manage jointly fished stocks.
16. An independent body, such as IPART, should be commissioned to determine the government's community service obligations to recreational fishing.
17. The cost of running all hatcheries including the Gaden Trout Hatchery be sourced from Consolidated Revenue.
18. A voluntary recreational fisher registration system operated through tackle shops and boating and marine suppliers be investigated.
19. Value adding to licences be investigated as a priority by recreational management.
20. An annual licence-free fishing day be implemented to promote participation.



## VALUE AND ACCESS

### Value of Fishing

The recreational fishing trusts have funded a number of studies to estimate the value of recreational fishing including in the Snowy Mountains<sup>7</sup>, at a national and state level<sup>8</sup>, in metropolitan Sydney<sup>9</sup>, for the striped marlin component of the game fishery<sup>10</sup> and in two important coastal towns<sup>11</sup>. While differing methodologies make direct comparisons difficult, these studies all show that recreational fishing makes an important contribution to regional economies and the state.

In the Snowy Mountains a decade ago expenditure on the trout fishery was estimated at \$70 million per annum. This is likely to have increased significantly.

---

<sup>7</sup> An Economic Survey of the Snowy Mountains Recreational Trout Fishery. A Report to the Recreational Trust Fund, NSW Fisheries. Dominion Consulting Pty Ltd 2001, 49pp.

<sup>8</sup> The National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey Eds G.W. Henry and J.M. Lyle NSW Fisheries Final Report Series No. 48 2003, p58.

<sup>9</sup> Identifying the recreational fishing expenditure of Sydney's recreational fishers and its economic and social importance in regional communities of NSW. A Report to the Recreational Fishing Trust Fund. Dominion Consulting Pty Ltd, 2003 44pp.

<sup>10</sup> Economic Impact of the NSW Striped Marlin Fishery, Ernest & Young 2004, 124pp.

<sup>11</sup> The Importance of Recreational Fishing Expenditure to the Economies of Two Coastal Towns in northern and southern New South Wales: Port Macquarie and Narooma/Bermagui. A Report to NSW Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust. Dominion Consulting Pty Ltd 2005, 53pp.

The National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey estimated attributable expenditure in this state to be more than \$554 million dollars in the study year. The methodology used however was questionable due to poor avidity in the sample group, and subsequent studies show this figure to be significantly underestimated. The 2003 Dominion Consulting Study examining expenditure by Sydney anglers in regional NSW calculated that state-wide annual expenditure was approximately \$818 million, although it could be as high as \$1,058 million for recreational fishing licence holders alone.

AFTA estimated retail fishing tackle sales to be approximately \$580 million per year, casting further doubt on the National Survey estimate and confirming the overall magnitude of the contribution of recreational fishing to the state's economy.

The Ernst & Young Striped Marlin study showed the economic contribution from this species alone to the NSW economy in 2002-2003 exceeded \$112 million dollars, more than 24 times that of the commercial fishery. Despite this, Minister Macdonald refused to take any steps to protect striped marlin from longlining, such as preventing longliners catching bait in NSW waters.

The examination of the importance of recreational fishing expenditure in coastal towns by Dominion Consulting in 2005 showed that annual expenditure on recreational fishing in Port Macquarie was \$22.8 million with a total economic impact of \$34 million. Expenditure on recreational fishing in Bermagui - Narooma was estimated at \$25 million with a total economic impact of \$36.5 million.

While there are no up to date statistics for NSW, the most recent comparable study was conducted in Victoria by Ernst & Young<sup>12</sup> in 2008/2009. This study estimated that 721,000 Victorians fished in that year

---

<sup>12</sup> Ernst & Young. 2009.VRFish Economic Study of Recreational Fishing in Victoria. 92pp.

and their direct expenditure was \$2.3 billion. This produced a total Gross State Product (GSP) of \$825 million which constituted 0.3% of state's GSP. The recreational fishery generated 5,200 jobs in Victoria in the study year. With more than 1,000,000 fishers in NSW the direct expenditure by this methodology could reasonably be expected to exceed \$3 billion per annum in this state.

This evidence show recreational fishing to be a significant contributor to the state economy, and of major important to the economies of rural and coastal NSW.

Given the demonstrated economic importance of recreational fishing, the contribution by government to the management and enhancement of recreational fishing is meager. Direct attributable funding from the Consolidated Fund was estimated at \$3.2 million when the general recreational fishing licence was introduced in 2001. This contribution has been eroded over time through cost shifting e.g. compliance staff, research, and the Gaden Trout Hatchery, and staff attrition. The contribution by government that was negotiated during the introduction of the general licence should at least be restored to its initial level and adjusted according to CPI increases to present day dollar values.

### **Value of Boating**

The 2007 Economic Impact Report on the Recreational Boating Industry found that approximately 50% of boating respondents listed fishing as a major interest. Nationally the boating industry is a major contributor to the country through tourism, employment and contribution to GDP. The industry generated \$5,522 million (05/06) in expenditure on holidays and day trips within Australia, making it a significant contributor to the tourism market. Boating accounts for 7.4% of total Australian tourism spending. The boating industry generates direct industry revenue of \$7.68 billion (excluding tourism revenue), including \$1,268 million in export sales. It contributes \$4,066



million to the economy and supports 74,196 jobs both directly and indirectly. More than 28,000 people are directly employed in the sector.

In NSW recreational boaters account for 9.7% of NSW's overnight stays and a 4.3% share of the NSW total day trip market generating \$1,380 million (05/06) in expenditure on holidays and day trips. The industry generates \$3,380 million in spending attributable to NSW operations (including industry turnover and net additional tourism spending). The industry generates direct industry revenue of \$2,000 million in NSW including \$100 million in export sales. It contributes \$1,167 million annually to the NSW economy and directly employing more than 7,000 people directly and just over 20,000 (directly and indirectly) in the sector.

There are over 1800 small to medium businesses in NSW which represents over 35% of the industry nationally and provide over 70 different types of retail and technical services to consumers. There are in excess of 700,000 combined boat owners and boat licence holders in NSW, while unregistered boat ownership exceeds 140,000. Registered boat ownership has increased 25.3% over the last 10 years. Boat licence holders have increased 62.4% over the last 10 years. Nationally about 90% of registered boats are less than 6 metres in length and trailerable with a significant number of these dedicated to recreational fishing.

### ***Recommendations***

21. The value of recreational fishing be explicitly recognized in all resource sharing and access decisions by government.
22. Biennial economic surveys be conducted to determine changes in the value of recreational fisheries state-wide and at key locations including RFHs and areas impacted by Marine Parks.
23. The government contribution to the management of recreational fishing should be restored (adjusted to today's dollars) to that agreed in 2001 when the general fishing licence was introduced.



24. Boating fishers be regularly surveyed to determine expenditure on boating related activities.

## Access

At a time when recreational fishers are increasingly contributing to, and taking responsibility for their fishery, they are seeing their opportunities to fish diminishing through new closures, reduced access and increased regulation.

Reduction in access is accelerating through the closure of crown lands and roads in National Parks, the imposition of Sanctuary Zones in Marine Parks and Marine Protected Areas, pollution and major infrastructure projects. In some instances this is intentional, in others incidental or even accidental. But this ongoing erosion of access highlights the lack of long term security for recreational fishers to continue their activities into the future. It also reflects a failure of government to protect the rights of this numerically significant and valuable sector. The rights of recreational fishers must be secured in legislation with the Fisheries Management Act 1994 amended to explicitly provide for compensatable fishing rights for recreational fishers.

The Plans of Management for National Parks should not be allowed to reduce or remove access for recreational fishers. All Plans of Management should be explicitly required to address access for recreational fishers, to consult with recreational fishers, and provide and maintain ongoing access (including for physically disadvantaged fishers) in all National Parks. The Marine Parks Act and the National Parks and Wildlife Act should be amended to ensure that access rights for recreational fishers are maintained and enhanced.

There needs to be a comprehensive review of access points for recreational fishers in freshwater and saltwater to provide the basis for a sweeping new system of Crown Reserves, and Dedicated Crown Reserves for iconic locations.

## **Impoundments**

In most states of Australia, and in fact most other countries, recreational fishing is permitted in drinking water storages and catchments<sup>13</sup>. Many of Australia's premier sport fisheries are found in managed fisheries in impoundments that provide drinking water. The economic benefits are well recognized, and recreational fishing is actively promoted in these areas. There are numerous examples in Queensland.

Sydney is the exception to the rule, and the water management agencies have fought hard to maintain the *status quo*. Sydney's water is treated to the highest standards, and there is no danger to public health from recreational fishing that could not be addressed through a comprehensive risk assessment process, as done in other places. Note that water from Tallowa Dam on the Shoalhaven River, where recreational fishing is allowed, made a significant contribution to Sydney's water supply during the recent drought with no adverse effects on public health.

The NSW government must recognize the paucity of fishing opportunities particularly in western Sydney, and the growing demand for quality freshwater fishing areas by amending the relevant legislation to ensure the Sydney Catchment Authority and Sydney Water provide appropriately managed access to the Sydney water supply impoundments for recreational fishers.

## **Recommendations**

25. The Fisheries Management Act 1994 must be amended to explicitly provide for compensatable fishing rights for recreational fishers

---

<sup>13</sup> Australian Fishing Tackle Association. 1997. The recreational use of water storages in New South Wales with emphasis on recreational fishing - a submission to Sydney Water on plans of management for water catchment special areas. 41pp.

26. All Recreational Fishing Havens be made Dedicated Crown Reserves for the purpose of recreational fishing.
27. The National Parks and Wildlife Act, the Marine Parks Act and other relevant legislation be amended to require all Plans of Management and Zoning Plans be required to explicitly address access for recreational fishing, and to not remove or reduce access for recreational fishers without providing satisfactory alternatives.
28. Legislation be changed to facilitate recreational fishing access to Sydney Catchment Authority and Sydney Water impoundments using a risk management approach.



## **Recreational Fishing Havens**

The creation of Recreational Fishing Havens (RFHs) was a key platform underpinning support for the general recreational fishing licence in 2001. The buy-outs were funded from a \$20 million loan secured by Treasury at commercial rates. Approximately \$1.3 million of the loan remained unspent because of Minister Macdonald's refusal to complete the buy-out process. This sum was eventually repaid off the principal in 2007 thereby decreasing the term of the loan. The loan repayments come from the Saltwater Trust at a rate of \$2 million per year.

The effectiveness of the RFH closures to commercial fishing was rapid. In Lake Macquarie a study examining the recreational fishery had been serendipitously completed before the closure allowing the short term benefits to be quantified<sup>14</sup>. This report demonstrated unequivocally that recreational fishing had improved. There is no doubt that the removal of commercial fishing benefits recreational fishing. These benefits are also reflected in the anecdotal reports for Sydney Harbour following the dioxin closure to commercial fishing. Studies on the Recreational Fishing Havens need to be repeated at regular intervals.

It is likely, however, that the effects of scale may be important in the creation of RFHs. A number of RFHs on the north coast appear too small to be as effective as they could be, being impacted by concentrated commercial fishing on either side. Future consideration should go towards expanding these havens to increase their effectiveness, and ensuring that new havens are sufficiently large to deliver the maximum benefits.

---

<sup>14</sup> A. Steffe et al. 2005. An assessment of changes in the daytime recreational fishery of Lake Macquarie following the establishment of a 'Recreational Fishing Haven. NSW Dept. of Primary Industries, Fisheries Final Report Series No. 79, 98 pp.

The best options for new RFHs include the Shoalhaven River system, Lake Illawarra, the Macleay River and Wallis Lake. All are sufficiently large to be effective. The first two estuaries are located close to the major population centres of Wollongong and Nowra. Wallis Lake and the Macleay River should also be considered due to their size and proximity to Newcastle, Taree and the rapidly growing mid-north coast. There are also many intermittently opening lagoons on the south coast, which if protected from commercial fishing as RFHs, could be stocked and managed to produce excellent recreational fisheries.

A new RFH program could be funded from a new \$20 million loan repaid from the saltwater trust using savings made by the refinancing of core functions from the Consolidated Fund.

In contrast to the Marine Parks consultative process, public consultation for the creation of the RFHs was comprehensive. There were comprehensive regional community meetings with independent chairmen, allowing all parties including local councils and tourism bodies to have a say. The numerous submissions were thoroughly reviewed and detailed reports of the submissions and consultation were published. This inclusive process provided a sound basis for the government's subsequent decisions.

### ***Recommendations***

29. An additional \$20 million loan, to be repaid from the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust, be secured to buy out commercial fishing effort to create more RFHs.
30. The size of existing RFHs in estuaries that are only partly closed to commercial fishing be expanded to improve their effectiveness.
31. The previous consultation process for RFHs be repeated.
32. The Shoalhaven River system, Lake Illawarra, the Macleay River and Wallis Lake be identified as the next Recreational Fishing Havens.

33. Suitable lagoons on the south coast be made RFHs and enhanced to improve recreational fishing.



## MARINE PARKS & MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

AFTA and BIA support Marine Parks and Marine Protected Areas that:

- are scientifically justified and well managed,
- are based on excellent research,
- can demonstrably achieve their conservation and biodiversity objectives
- fully compensate all those affected for loss of access, amenity or business and
- are the result of thorough and genuine community engagement and consultation.

However, the roll out of Marine Parks in NSW has demonstrated none of these. The process was driven by political expediency and characterized by disingenuous consultation with affected stakeholders, unseemly haste to meet short term political agendas and a wanton disregard for due process. The justification for sanctuary zones, in particular for the management of migratory or highly mobile species, lacked scientific credibility. The management rules for recreational fishing in sanctuary zones do not reflect appropriate risk based assessment of likely impacts.

The policy framework underpinning Marine Parks in NSW is flawed with evidence to suggest inappropriate application of the 'precautionary principle'<sup>15</sup>, in declaring marine areas to be no take 'sanctuary zones', even when there is little or no evidence that recreational fishing in those areas poses a threat of serious or irreversible damage to the marine environment in those areas. Such a practice is inconsistent with Australia's environmental protection legislation and has the potential to impose a net cost on the

---

<sup>15</sup> Ernst & Young, 2006. Australia's Marine Protected Areas: Challenging Times Ahead 173pp.



community by preventing activities that would generate net benefits for the community as a whole.

The dogma demanding sanctuary zones to be some preordained percentage of the Marine Park area ignores the commitment to representative areas only, and demonstrates the lack of scientific foundation to the zoning process. What is required is a review of sanctuary zones to ensure that fishing activities that do no damage to the resident biota, such as trolling for pelagic, are permitted. Some common sense is needed here.

The science and the logic underpinning the claims for more Marine Parks in NSW made in the "Torn Blue Fringe"<sup>16</sup> were effectively demolished by Professor Bob Kearney<sup>17</sup>. The myopic and wrongheaded focus on reducing fishing in Marine Parks and Marine Protected Areas fails to deal with the real threats to the conservation of biodiversity such as pollution, introduced species and climate change.

The so called "evidence" used to justify Marine Protected Areas has been independently scrutinized and found wanting. A comprehensive and objective review<sup>18</sup> of the literature used by DEWHA to underpin the declaration of the Coral Sea Conservation Zone found much of the "scientific" literature relied on to be have been discredited by expert scientists. The review concluded that "the available scientific evidence from the Coral Sea region suggests that any threats to coral reef resilience posed by current human use patterns in the Coral Sea pale into insignificance in comparison with those posed by natural processes, and existing MPAs in

---

<sup>16</sup> Winn, P. 2008. The Torn Blue Fringe: Marine Conservation in NSW. National Parks Association of New South Wales, Sydney.

<sup>17</sup> Kearney, R. 2009. Response to the Torn Blue Fringe: Marine Conservation in NSW (Winn 2008).

<sup>18</sup> Diggles, B. 2010. Review of the Literature used by DEWHA to Underpin the Declaration of the Coral Sea Conservation Zone 30pp.

the region covering over 60% of the coral reef and bank area since 1982 have done nothing to improve the ability of the “protected” reefs in the region to recover from natural environmental perturbations”. By demonising fishing, the proponents of MPAs are allowing the real threats to the marine environment to go unchallenged.

The rush to implement Marine Parks meant that the basic social, biological and economic “before the event” studies were not conducted, thereby preventing any real and independent assessment of whether they can achieve their stated objectives. There has also been a failure to properly and independently monitor ongoing impacts that has undermined stakeholder faith in the management processes.

The process is also structurally flawed as the lack of independent socio-economic modeling means that the level and extent of displaced activity cannot be quantified, and consequently will not be addressed.

In all the Marine Parks there has been a failure to properly compensate all those impacted by the zoning plans. While commercial fishers received compensation, others adversely affected, such as fishing charter boat operators, did not. The impacts on fishing tackle and bait sales, and on boating and marine suppliers were ignored.

In rezoning the Moreton Bay Marine Park the Queensland government recognized the adverse impact of new and expanded sanctuary zones on recreational fishers by providing compensation in the form of artificial reefs. Approximately \$3 million has been committed from Treasury to build a suite of reefs in consultation with recreational fishers within the Marine Park.

With the completion of the Environmental Impact Assessment for NSW Offshore Artificial Reefs in March 2010, this model of compensation for displacement of recreational fishing from prime fishing areas included in sanctuary zones should be adopted in NSW.

The complex rules governing recreational fishing in Marine Parks are a deterrent to recreational fishing. The intricate zoning requires either skillful navigation or a sophisticated GPS system to ensure that the many rules are not inadvertently broken. This overly complex and burdensome zoning system should be reviewed and simplified.

Overall, the implementation of Marine Parks in NSW lacks scientific rigour and reflects the pervasive but unjustified view that if something is done with good intentions then it must be right.

There are better ways deliver a more efficient, effective and sustainable system of Marine Protected Areas. A comprehensive study for AFTA and the BIA in 2006<sup>19</sup> recommended:

- development of a National Marine Habitat Protection Strategy;
- development of a better understanding of marine biodiversity and the impact of recreational fishing on that biodiversity;
- development of guidelines to assist officials with the application of the 'precautionary principle';
- creation of new 'special habitat protection zones';
- consideration of protecting biodiversity in popular recreational fishing areas through the use of 'special habitat protection zones' as an alternative to 'sanctuary zones' in certain circumstances; and
- regular review of existing no-take 'sanctuary zones'.

---

<sup>19</sup> Ernst & Young, 2006. Australia's Marine Protected Areas: Challenging Times Ahead 173pp.



***Recommendations***

34. A moratorium be placed on the creation of any more Marine Parks until there is comprehensive scientific evidence that all existing Marine Parks have met their objectives, and will continue to do so under the impacts of climate change.
35. The Marine Parks Act and the Fisheries Management Act 1994 be amended to require adequate consultation in terms of duration and participation on all proposed Marine Parks and Marine Protected areas.
36. The Marine Parks zoning system should be reviewed and simplified.
37. Thorough biological, social and economic studies be conducted prior to the implementation of any new Marine Parks or Marine Protected areas to allow the impacts to be accurately assessed.
38. Compensation be provided to all those adversely affected by any new Marine Parks or Marine Protected areas including recreational fishers, commercial fishers, charter fishing boat operators and fishing tackle and bait suppliers.
39. Compensation for recreational fishers may be in the form of fisheries enhancement such as artificial reefs, the provision of alternate equivalent areas dedicated exclusively to recreational fishing, or direct cash contribution to the Recreational Fishing Trusts.

## CONSULTATION AND GOVERNANCE

### Advisory Councils and Committees

The current suite of consultative arrangements arose from a very public debate in the mid 1990s about the way fisheries consultation should be conducted following the sacking of the Commercial Fishing Advisory Council, and an investigation conducted by the Standing Committee on State Development in 1996-1997<sup>20</sup>. Although the inquiry did not focus on consultation processes for recreational fishing, and not all recommendations of the Standing Committee were implemented, the debate and inquiry provided an opportunity for the many options for consultation to be aired. Changes to the Fisheries Management Act 1994 provided for the establishment of the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (ACoRF) in its current form as an expertise based body. While ACoRF may be considered successful in its longevity when compared to the sorry plight of commercial fishing consultative bodies, it is very much a creature of the pre-licence period and is deficient in scope and empowerment. It is time to reinvigorate the consultative processes to reflect innovations developed over the past decade and the changed regulatory environment.

The functions of ACoRF are very limited. It is purely an advisory body and its functions are constrained by statute to the provision of advice to the Minister. ACoRF cannot advocate on behalf of recreational fishers or fishing boaters. It is not an incorporated body and cannot own property or act as trustee for Crown Lands.

---

<sup>20</sup> Standing Committee on State Development Report on The Fisheries Management Amendment (Advisory Bodies) Act 1996. Parliament of NSW Legislative Council Report No.16 July 1997, 96pp.



As an expertise-based body entirely comprised of Ministerial appointees ACoRF has been criticized as unrepresentative and beholden to government. ACoRF has no regional sub-structure, and no process for obtaining broad based regional input on policy issues. ACoRF relies, through the Trust funding process, on I&I and external service providers to deliver programs sought by recreational fishers as it has no ability to commission or execute projects in its own right.

The status of ACoRF has also been diminished in recent years through Ministerial appointment of members who do not enjoy the widespread support of their fishing peers, and whose agendas appears to be more about commercial than recreational fishing.

There is clearly a need for a recreational fishing entity that can provide effective and efficient services to the sector, and advocate on behalf of all recreational fishers. This is explored further in the next section.

The Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFSTEC) and the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC) are non-statutory sub-committees of ACoRF. Their role is to provide advice on expenditure from the trusts and to monitor trust funded project implementation. The Expenditure Committee members, while expected to have a sound knowledge of recreational fishing, are selected from prescribed regions across the state. Regional representation was intended to ensure a fair geographic distribution of expenditure around the state and prevent trust funded projects being concentrated around the major population centres. The size of the committees and the need for regional representation reflect the initial wide-spread uncertainty about how the trust funds would be allocated, and a mistrust of government to manage the process fairly. The Expenditure Committees, as Ministerial appointees, suffer the same criticisms as ACoRF.



Since 2001 there have been many significant changes in the relationship between the recreational licence-buying public and the government. In response to persistent pressure from stakeholders, government procedures and administrative processes concerning the trusts have been tightened, reporting and accountability is better and transparency has improved markedly. Consequently the initial skepticism about trust expenditure has subsided and the relationship between government and licenced recreational fishers has matured. Unfortunately the unwieldy committee structures remain.

There is considerable overlap between the Expenditure Committees requiring joint sittings on a regular basis to resolve. A more streamlined and responsive Ministerial advisory body is needed.

***Recommendations***

40. The Trust Expenditure Committees be combined to form a new more streamlined body funded from the Recreational Fishing Trusts.
41. The new Trust Expenditure Committee have a majority of members nominated by the Recreational Fishing Peak Body (see below).

## **Peak Body and Alternate Governance Models**

Around Australia, recreational representative bodies are increasingly assuming responsibility for the delivery of services to their sector. In Western Australia RecfishWest has successfully undertaken a number of stand-alone projects and has taken on several tasks previously performed by government including regional consultation and education programs. In Victoria, the Future Fish Foundation and VRFish have similarly provided service delivery functions. The attraction is cost effective service delivery through reduced overheads and efficient operations.

Peak body status requires recognition by stakeholders and government. The Peak body must be inclusive, with representation from all key stakeholder groups. While some fishing umbrella organizations have aspired to peak body status in NSW, this mantle can only be assumed by an organization that genuinely represents the associated fishing trades and boating interests as well as recreational fishers.

The functions of ACoRF and the peak body must be clearly defined and separated to avoid duplication and overlap.

Peak bodies have a legitimate role as advocates for their sector, and a united and independent voice on matters affecting stakeholders is essential. To date, in NSW advocacy has been fragmented to the detriment of genuine communication, particularly between the recreational sector and government on important issues such as Marine Parks and Marine Protected Areas. This has, in many cases, thwarted the necessary negotiations and reduced the opportunity for compromise. A strong peak body will facilitate consultation with government and other stakeholders on issues affecting the recreational sector by providing a single point-of-contact. It should also provide effective regional communication and liaison with stakeholders.

The Marine Park's zoning process and the need for increased security of tenure for RFHs highlights the disparity between the rights of commercial and recreational fishers. Recreational fishers have no statutory right to compensation when access is removed, and at present have no collective way of buying or owning property rights. This is exemplified by the roll out of the Share Management Fisheries (SMF) scheme in 2007 with fully compensatable property rights for all commercial fisheries. SMF impede further area closures to commercial fishing such as Recreational Fishing Havens (RFHs) by triggering wholesale compensation if an affected SMF has to be redefined.

The effectiveness of the removal of commercial fishing in improving recreational fishing has lead to growing public pressure for more closures, particularly in estuaries. However, the blanket rejection of any more RFHs by the previous Minister and the impact of SMFs prompted consideration of possible market based mechanisms to accomplish the removal of commercial fishing effort.

As neither the Expenditure Committees nor ACoRF are capable of buying, holding, owning or trading in SMF shares, an alternate governance model is required that could engage in market based transactions to improve recreational fishing. This could be achieved using funds from the recreational trusts or borrowed for that purpose.

The new governance entity must be capable of owning and trading fishing rights, real property and water rights to improve recreational fishing. It must also be able to act as trustee for Crown Lands. It could be part of a peak body or act entirely separately.

The options for an entity of this kind were recently explored for Fisheries Victoria<sup>21</sup> which has taken the lead in this process. Unfortunately the NSW

---

<sup>21</sup> Deloitte. February 2010. Department of Primary Industries - Recreational fishing program delivery governance project: concept exploration. 64pp.



governance project funded from the trusts in 2007 to explore similar options has become mired in the I&I bureaucracy, and once again NSW has lost the initiative.

The options for co-management, primarily in the context of commonwealth commercial fisheries were explored recently<sup>22</sup>. This study identified some of the benefits to be gained from a co-operative approach between government and stakeholders in the management of fisheries resources. A new recreational peak body would contribute to this process.

The new recreational fishing peak body should be a separate entity with a clear mission to represent the interests of recreational fishers alone, but with the capacity to work with other bodies with similar interests to their mutual advantage.

### ***Recommendations***

42. A dedicated Recreational Fishing Peak Body be funded from the Recreational Fishing Trusts to provide for an Executive Officer, an Administrative Officer and adequate operating costs for a period of 5 years.
43. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be constituted to provide advice to the Department and Minister on all matters relating to recreational fishing including expenditure of trust funds through representation on the reconstituted Trust Expenditure Committee (see above).
44. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be constituted to provide advocacy on behalf of all recreational fishers.

---

<sup>22</sup> Co-Management: Managing Australia's fisheries through partnership and delegation. Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. Project 2006/068 2006 34pp.

45. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be constituted to deliver services and functions currently provided by government and others (excluding compliance and enforcement) to be phased in as capacity is demonstrated.
46. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be empowered to promote the involvement of recreational fishers in research and monitoring projects.
47. The Recreational Fishing Peak Body be inclusive, not exclusive, with membership including representatives broad based recreational fishing umbrella groups, the Australian Fishing Trade Association and the Boating Industry Association of NSW.



## THE ENVIRONMENT AND SHARING THE FISH

### Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)

The meaning of ESD in the Fisheries Management Act 1994 is the same as that under section 6 (2) of the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991. The latter specifies that “ecologically sustainable development requires the effective integration of economic and environmental considerations in decision-making processes” and stipulates that ecologically sustainable development can be achieved through the implementation of the following principles and programs:

- (a) the precautionary principle—namely, that if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:

- (i) careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment, and
  - (ii) an assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options,
- (b) inter-generational equity—namely, that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations,
- (c) conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity—namely, that conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration,
- (d) improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms—namely, that environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services, such as:
  - (i) polluter pays—that is, those who generate pollution and waste should bear the cost of containment, avoidance or abatement,
  - (ii) the users of goods and services should pay prices based on the full life cycle of costs of providing goods and services, including the use of natural resources and assets and the ultimate disposal of any waste,
  - (iii) environmental goals, having been established, should be pursued in the most cost effective way, by establishing incentive structures, including market mechanisms, that enable those best placed to maximise benefits or minimise costs to develop their own solutions and responses to environmental problems.



The key element of ESD most often neglected is (b) the commitment to inter-generational equity and the enhancement of the health, diversity and productivity of the environment for the benefit of future generations. While lip service is given to (c), to conserve biological diversity and ecological integrity through passive measures such as the regulation of recreational activities in Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks little, if any, effort is made to enhance these properties, and no funding is provided directly by the non-fishing interest groups for this purpose.

Conversely, recreational fisheries have made valuable contributions to the enhancement of biodiversity to deliver better environmental outcomes and improved fishing for future generations. Dedicated funding from the recreational trust funds for more than a decade has been directed to fish habitat improvement projects. Re-snagging projects have restored vital aquatic habitat to rivers and impoundments. Artificial reefs have transformed areas of low biodiversity into ecologically rich new habitats for fish and a host of non-target species of invertebrates, and marine vegetation. The recreational trusts have also funded research and restocking of threatened species.

### **Environmental Assessment and Responsibility**

Recreational fishers have behaved responsibly in identifying and addressing the environmental impact of their activities. The Australian Fishing Trade Association has, on behalf of recreational fishers, commissioned a detailed environmental review to improve the environmental impact of the sector. The boating industry has also been proactive in addressing its environmental impact<sup>23</sup>, with obvious implications to recreational fishers.

---

<sup>23</sup> Nautical Activities:What Impact on the Environment? A Life Cycle Approach for "Clear Blue" Boating. Rachel Moreau (ed). European Confederation of Nautical Industries – ECNI. June 2009 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 66pp.

When stocking in freshwater was challenged as possibly detrimental to threatened species the Freshwater Trust funded a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment which now forms the blueprint for all freshwater fish stocking throughout the state. Similar comprehensive and expensive Environment Impact Assessments are being undertaken for stocking in saltwater, and for the deployment of artificial reefs in ocean waters.

This could be contrasted with the sinking of the decommissioned HMAS Adelaide as a dive site off Avoca Beach on the Central Coast. It would appear a double standard is being applied whereby 3,000 tons of waste steel can be dumped close to a vulnerable beach without an Environmental Impact Assessment, while several hundred tons of purpose built, removable fish habitat in the form of an artificial reef off a rocky foreshore required a full blown assessment.

The success of the Recreational Fishing Havens, and the recovery of fish stocks in Sydney Harbour show that rehabilitation after commercial fishing is rapid and sustainable. These improvements represent significant contributions to intergenerational equity through the creation of large protected areas that will continue to provide benefits to fish stocks into the future.

It is worth remembering that recreational fishing is highly selective and has less impact than indiscriminate commercial fishing methods such as trawling, seining or longlining. These commercial methods adversely impact non-target species, destroy fish and other habitat and may kill threatened species. The impacts of recreational fishing are continually being addressed though sound research and ongoing education campaigns funded from the trusts.

Recreational fishers have also been proactive in improving fish habitat to the benefit of the environment. For example, artificial reefs are designed to transform areas of low biodiversity and productivity into the opposite. In doing so they create new habitat for many kinds of marine life not targeted by recreational fishers. The result is a net gain to the environment.



### **Recommendations**

48. Intergenerational equity in access to quality recreational fishing be protected by increasing the number of Recreational Fishing Havens.
49. Biodiversity be conserved and enhanced through improvements to marine habitat by the installation of more artificial reefs.

### **Resource Sharing**

The primary driver for resource allocation should be to optimize the social and economic benefits that are derived from utilization of the stock cognizant of the responsibilities under ESD for the long term future.

Effective bag and size limits, together with the adoption of catch and release fishing and improvements in handling released fish to ensure survival will, over time, reduce the impact of recreational fishing on fish stocks. This, together with a growing recognition of the benefits accruing from recreational fishing, is driving demands for improved recreational fishing opportunities. The real expectation is that the quality of recreational fishing will not only be maintained, but will be improved.

Delivering improved recreational fishing includes better sharing of the resources between competing groups. The starkest demonstrations of improved recreational fishing have come about through the removal of commercial fishing. In freshwater, stocks of Murray cod and golden perch responded quickly to the removal of the inland commercial fishery. Recreational fishers in the RFHs and Sydney Harbour have noted the outstanding improvements with increases in the size of fish, the catch rates and the diversity of species caught. The rapidity of the improvements in the quality of fishing in these places has been surprising. Clearly the model of transforming large, productive water bodies to recreational-only use has been shown to be effective in improving the quality of the fishing and should be replicated in other places.



However, resource sharing may take other forms and requires recognition of the often conflicting stock management objectives of the competing sectors. There is general agreement that one descriptor of a good recreational fishery is a high strike rate (interaction with many fish) and the presence of trophy fish (large specimens). To achieve this outcome requires particular management intervention to decrease mortality across different age groups, with tools such as slot limits to conserve bigger fish. A commercial fishery, like that for snapper, where the best prices are obtained for small, "plate sized" fish might favour a management regime that fishes the stock down to maximize the take of small fish. It can be seen that these management objectives are often incompatible where both sectors target the same stock. In this instance, where the impacts of exploitation are seen across the entire stock, resource sharing might be better achieved on a per species basis.

Historically, major resource sharing decisions have been relatively infrequent, typically of high impact to affected individuals, and usually with some undesirable consequences. The dimension of fishing closures to create Recreational Fishing Havens reflected the pressure for change generated over many decades of governments ignoring the need to provide recreational fishers with a fairer share of the resource. But many of the commercial fishers forced away from grounds their families had worked for generations were extremely disaffected, and those that moved to other areas to continue fishing caused increased competition and often friction in those places.

While more RFHs is a desirable short term objective, a longer term, incremental approach to sharing the resource could complement this goal. The Recreational Trusts provide the means to establish a rolling fund to remove commercial fishing effort gradually over time, focusing on estuarine and inshore waters where competition with recreational fishers is most intense, with the eventual goal of removing all commercial fishing from these waters.

The major obstacle to the success of the incremental approach is that of latent commercial fishing effort. Latent effort represents unused entitlements

that could at some time in the future be activated. Purchasing latent effort is a poor use of recreational funds as there is no return in terms of more fish being made available. The funds for the removal of latent effort should come from the commercial fishing industry, who are the real beneficiaries of removing future competition.

### ***Recommendations***

50. The *optimal*<sup>24</sup> use of fish resources be recognized as the primary goal of fisheries management.
51. Resource re-allocation be provided through a user pays system that provides fair compensation for those adversely affected.
52. All latent commercial fishing effort be cancelled before any restructuring or resource re-allocation occurs.
53. A new buy-back loan, to be repaid by from the Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust, be secured to immediately create RFHs on the north and south coasts.
54. An annual allocation be provided from the Saltwater Trust to fund ongoing buy-outs of active commercial fishing effort to, over time, transform all NSW estuarine waters into Recreational Fishing Havens (i.e. free of commercial fishing).
55. No resource allocation be made until an independent stock assessment has been conducted on each species.
56. No resource allocation be made until an independent assessment of the social and economic benefits derived from the species.
57. The level of sustainability must be defined before resource allocation.
58. Allocations be made to maximize the social and economic benefits to NSW.
59. Allocations be made in accord with ESD Principles (particularly intergenerational equity) to rebuild fish stocks by decreasing fishing mortality.

---

<sup>24</sup> *Optimal* here means that which maximises the social and economic benefits while ensuring the requirements of ESD are met.



60. Where a species is overfished, or stock status is uncertain, the Precautionary Principle will apply and allocation should favour the sector that can minimize fishing mortality.

61. Catch history will not be the basis for allocation between sectors.



## **Interactions with Commercial Fishing**

AFTA and the BIA support profitable and sustainable commercial fisheries, and believe there is a place for well managed commercial fisheries in selected NSW waters targeting appropriate species. However, destructive fishing methods require further control.

Historically the management of commercial fisheries has consumed a disproportionate share of fisheries management resources and budget, and the result has not delivered either profitable fisheries or fair sharing of the resources between user groups. Commercial fishers still do not pay full costs of the services and protection provided by the government. Contrast this with recreational fishing where the 50% of fishers who buy a licence contribute approximately \$13.5 million per annum, while the government, at its most favourable estimate, contributes about \$3.2 million to the management of recreational fishing. Commercial fishing is clearly being subsidized excessively, and is failing to pay its real share of the costs of management. Commercial fishing is also failing to contribute to the environmental amelioration and fisheries enhancement projects generously funded from the Recreational Trusts to improve fish stocks for everyone.

Although the funding disparity must be addressed to restore equity, the recently proposed changes to the management arrangements for commercial fishing have the potential to adversely impact recreational fishing and require urgent attention.

### *Share Management*

The Share Management Fisheries (SMF) scheme was introduced in the new Fisheries Management Act 1994, as a bold experiment with requirements for full cost recovery, resource rents and the compulsory surrender of shares to drive industry consolidation. It was based on an economic rationalist approach to resource management briefly popular in the 1980s that

mistakenly believed "market forces" operating within commercial fisheries could produce economically efficient businesses and good environmental outcomes. Needless to say, that did not happen, but the consequences have ongoing ramifications for recreational fishing.

SMFs were extensively explored by the Standing Committee on State Development in 1997<sup>25</sup>. Several Labor Ministers resisted the wide scale introduction of SMF but the Hon. Ian Macdonald adopted the idea as his own. He oversaw the gutting of the scheme with the removal of all the key equity elements. The result is an extravagant failure with more than 200 classes of shares for a fishery of less than a thousand people. It is an expensive, complex and unwieldy administrative nightmare. The implementation costs came entirely from the public purse and there have been no real benefits from this massive investment of public money that could not have been achieved in simpler and cheaper ways.

The removal of the requirement for paying a community contribution or resource rent in SMFs means they make no contribution to society for their privileged access. An independent body, such as IPART, should be commissioned to determine appropriate resource rents to apply in all commercial fisheries if SMFs continue.

In recognition of the failure of a decade of share management to achieve profitable commercial fisheries, the I&I is about to embark on an expensive restructure of the commercial fishery including a buy -out. This alone shows that share management has not been a success.

The laudable objectives of economically viable, environmentally sustainable commercial fisheries must be balanced with the need to deliver optimal social and economic benefits to the community. It's time for effective, simple,

---

<sup>25</sup> Standing Committee on State Development Report on Fisheries Management and Resource Allocation in New South Wales Report No. 17 November 1997.



cheap and practical management measures appropriate to the size of the industry, and which they can afford.

*The Move to Link Shares to Quota*

Industry & Investment are proceeding along a dangerous path to “provide industry with the opportunity to link a fisher’s financial investment in the industry to their proportional right to fish (or take fish)”<sup>26</sup>.

Output control (quota) management is usually applied to single species, single gear type, single sector fisheries where there is little or no by-catch. It is not appropriate for the multi-species, multi-gear type and multi-sector fisheries found in NSW. There are simply too many species, and there are too many fishing methods (note the number of share classes) for a quota scheme to be practical. Quota is also not a replacement for input controls<sup>27</sup>.

The move to output controls in the form of quotas for commercial fishers in NSW has implications for the recreational sector. Quota for a commercial species require the setting of a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) which can then be subdivided between the commercial fishers according to some formula, presumably related to shareholdings. Share allocations were based on catches taken about twenty years ago so issuing quota based on shares will result in allocations that will rarely reflect today’s fishing operations. Fishers whose quota allocations don’t match their current catches will reasonably expect to be topped up. This will lead to over-allocation. While over-allocation should be viewed with concern due to the likely impact on fish stocks, some commercial fishers may cynically welcome it. As we have seen with water, the only solution to government over-allocation is a buy-back. Over-allocation will financially benefit shareholders in the long run to the detriment of the resource and its other users.

---

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/commercial/reform>

<sup>27</sup> [www.fish.wa.gov.au/docs/events/ShareFish/.../MarkSoboil\\_TonyCraig.pdf](http://www.fish.wa.gov.au/docs/events/ShareFish/.../MarkSoboil_TonyCraig.pdf)



*Quota – the real costs*

Firstly, setting a TAC for a quota scheme requires knowing the total catch, and where recreational fishers are involved, their contribution must be considered. This poses several difficulties. The first is determining the size of the recreational catch accurately. To do this with the precision necessary to make the quota scheme work would be prohibitively expensive, with the potential to absorb all or most of the licence revenue.

A TAC is not necessary to effectively manage a fishery. It is but one of a suite of management tools available to constrain catches and protect fish stocks. Setting a TAC usually requires a level of knowledge about catch rates, and of the population dynamics of each species that is rarely available, especially in small and highly diverse fisheries such as ours. Note there are 92 key species identified in the commercial catch<sup>28</sup> and a similar number taken by recreational fishers.

This does not mean that recreational catches are unlimited, nor that they are uncontrollable, just imprecisely known due to the cost of extensive monitoring. When the status of the stock is known through e.g. from effective fisheries independent monitoring, then sustainability can be achieved by using the management tools at hand to reduce the overall harvest. The recovery of yellowtail kingfish is a good example where banning floating traps, and implementing larger size limits and smaller bag limits brought the fishery back from the brink of collapse. Precise knowledge of the respective sectoral catches was not necessary, swift and decisive management action was.

---

<sup>28</sup> Scandol, J, Rowling, K and Graham, K (eds) 2008, Status of fisheries resources in NSW 2006/07, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Cronulla, 334 pp

Secondly, there must be a process to ensure that the proportions of the TAC allocated to each sector are both fair and in the best interests of the community. **There is presently no agreed mechanism for sharing the resource between the sectors and no agreement that the present shares are fair or adequate.** Using catch history might make some sense for allocation within the commercial sector where fishers use the same gear and have the same objectives (the one who caused the most damage to the fish stock gets the biggest share?) but is certainly inappropriate for sharing between sectors where these factors differ.

**Agreement on the process for resource sharing must be achieved before contemplating output controls like quota.** Note that the Commonwealth government negotiated unsuccessfully for three years trying to broker a resource sharing deal between commercial and recreational fishers in the East Coast Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) where there is only one commercial gear type and a handful of species. This failure could, in part, be attributed to their unwillingness to recognize their statutory fisheries management objectives and to engage in good faith and use the social and economic value of recreational fishing as a basis for allocation. There is a lesson to be learnt here!

If a quota scheme is to work, there must be mechanisms to effectively constrain the recreational catch within its TAC allocation. For the suite of species proposed for the commercial fishery the compliance and monitoring costs to do this effectively would be enormous, and would far outweigh any benefits that might result.

#### *Input Output Tradability*

The proposed new tradability of input and output controls for commercial fisheries so that fishers can choose between the types of gear used and the types of limits and quotas is fisheries management nonsense. Not only will it prove unworkable, it has the capacity to render commercial fisheries unmanageable. Perhaps this is the intended consequence. This option must be rejected outright.

The move to quota shows all the hallmarks of a desperate last minute sop to the commercial fishers of NSW by a departing Minister who has overseen almost a decade of mismanagement of one of the State's most valuable resources. This proposal must be rejected now, before any more damage is done. Forget the unworkable quota scheme and concentrate on tried and proven catch and effort controls for commercial fishing. It's time to implement simple, workable and cost effective management arrangements that protect fish stocks for all user groups and allow the commercial fishing industry to fund its own restructure through levies and loans as it should.

### ***Recommendations***

62. The government formulate clear rules for resource sharing based on ESD
63. The government not move to output (quota) controls until clear rules for sharing the fish resources between commercial, recreational and other users are agreed.
64. An independent body, such as IPART, should be commissioned to determine appropriate resource rents for commercial fishing.
65. Input –output tradability in SMF be scrapped.



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

### Gaps in Existing Programs

#### *Fisheries Enhancement*

Fisheries enhancement is the most directly beneficial activity to be funded from the trust funds. However, the reliance on the trust funds for fisheries enhancement projects through the competitive bidding process has meant the response has been piecemeal and episodic. Apart from freshwater fish stocking, where long term annual commitments have been made, fisheries enhancement projects such as prawn and mullet stocking and artificial reefs have been poorly coordinated. This should be addressed by the allocation of a substantial sum from the trusts approved for 5 years for fisheries enhancement to allow long term enhancement projects to be implemented including the ongoing stocking of intermittently opening lagoons and the roll out of artificial reefs in ocean waters and in all new Recreational Fishing Havens.

To facilitate these enhancement projects, a detailed survey of appropriate sites for each is required.

#### *Social and Economic studies*

Many people pursue recreational fishing for relaxation, and fishing is seen by many as a healthy and family oriented activity. The health and welfare benefits of fishing, however, are not well understood. A better understanding of the importance of these factors would allow better targeted education programs to improve community wellbeing.

Similarly the health benefits from eating fish and other seafood are well known, but the synergies gained from recreational fishing and consuming the catch deserve further investigation.

### ***Promotion of fishing***

While some of the recent outreach programs such the Primary Schools Program conducted by I&I are commendable, there has been little research to identify segments of the community who are underrepresented as recreational fishers. This could be achieved by community surveys and would allow targeted programs to address the deficiency.

Fishing in general could be better promoted as a healthy and environmentally responsible family activity. A high profile advertising campaign, similar to that run by the Game Council with Treasury funding to promote hunting, could be effective.

### ***Refocusing of Funds***

The diversion of trust funds to support core business of the Department such as compliance and basic research has starved promotion and fisheries enhancement projects of funds. Trust funds should be redirected towards projects that directly benefit recreational fishing as originally intended.

### ***Recommendations***

66. A substantial annual allocation be made from the trusts for fisheries enhancement.
67. A state-wide survey of estuaries and ocean waters be conducted to identify suitable sites for artificial reefs.
68. A state-wide survey of estuaries be conducted to determine suitable sites for stocking with prawns and fish to enhance recreational fishing.
69. A thorough state-wide investigation of the health and family benefits of recreational fishing be undertaken immediately, and repeated every 5 years.
70. A broad based advertising campaign be implemented to promote recreational fishing .

71. The promotion of recreational fishing to under-represented sectors of the community be expanded through the schools education program into high schools and with new programs for disadvantaged groups and the disabled.
72. Funding from the Recreational Fishing Trusts for compliance be redirected into education programs such as the Schools Education Program, Fishcare Volunteer Program and educational publications.



## Opportunities

The introduction of the general recreational fishing licence in 2001 provided a revenue stream to improve recreational fishing, and while many good things have been achieved, much remains to be done.

The manifest social and economic benefits from recreational fishing can be best enhanced by improving participation rates. This could be achieved by education campaigns both within and outside NSW to attract non-fishers and tourists to enter the fishery, or through improving the fishing and encouraging increased avidity. Targeted campaigns to improve licence renewal rates would also assist by increasing the revenue stream.

More RFHs would provide areas not only attractive to new and experienced recreational fishers, but allow dedicated fisheries enhancement programs funded from the licence to be implemented for the benefit of those who have paid the fee. This could be achieved through targeted buyouts with fair compensation.

Fisheries enhancement projects such as re-snagging of rivers and artificial reefs in fresh and saltwater provide improved fish stocks and enhanced biodiversity. It is often forgotten by the opponents of fisheries enhancement that there are major ecological gains from enhanced habitat beyond improved fishing. While recreational fishers may be interested in the fish biota, the new complex environments created by these structures provide new ecological niches for a diversity of non-target species of overall benefit to the system.

Education on fishing in an environmentally responsible way, and improved handling and catch and release has the capacity to further reduce the impact of recreational fishing and improve fish stocks. There are also flow-on effects to improve conservation outcomes in other areas from increased environmental awareness.

New fisheries can be created through targeted stocking programs, together with improved habitat and better management e.g. the impoundment bass fisheries, and the Wallagoot Lake prawn fishery.

Licence sales could be improved through value-adding to fishing licences. Turning the fishing licence from an impost to a valued item would boost licence sales and renewals and consequently revenue to the trusts.

Increased efficiencies in licence sales and distribution would also mean more revenue for projects.

### ***Recommendations***

73. Participation in recreational fishing be increased by education campaigns and selectively targeting fishing licence renewals to maximize the social, economic, health and family cohesion benefits.
74. More Recreational Fishing Havens be created through targeted buyouts of commercial fishing with fair compensation to boost regional economies
75. Fish stocks be improved by decreased commercial fishing effort, stocking and habitat enhancement.
76. Enhanced biodiversity through habitat improvement in saltwater by artificial reefs and in freshwater by resnagging and improved water quality.
77. Improved conservation outcomes from education on environmental responsibility and more catch and release.
78. New fisheries be created through stocking, improved habitat and better management e.g. Wallagoot Lake prawn fishery
79. Enhanced fishing tourism by interstate and overseas visitors through targeted advertising campaigns

- 80. Value adding to fishing licences to move from impost to valued commodity.
- 81. Increased efficiencies in licence sales and distribution to deliver more revenue for enhancement projects.



## **Benefits**

The benefits from improved recreational fishing accrue to all fishers, not just fishing licence holders. Improved recreational fishing implies enhanced fish stocks, and a healthy environment from which the benefits flow to other resource users such as commercial fishers, and the community as a whole.

Wider recognition of the social, health and family cohesion benefits of fishing justify promotion of the activity in the knowledge that regional economies will benefit through tourism, individuals benefit through the contribution to well being and the community benefits from enhanced family cohesion.

Improved environmental awareness and more responsible fishing through better handling practices and environmentally friendly gear have broader spin offs in promoting responsible behavior more widely.

The introduction of the fishing licence brought with it a spirit of collective ownership and responsibility for management of the resource. This was characterized by a willingness to borrow money to secure access through the Recreational Fishing Haven buy-outs, and strong support for more conservative bag and size limits. There has also been an enhanced desire to improve fishing practices, fish stocks and the environment. The high licence compliance rate is evidence of ongoing support for the licensing scheme.

## **Recommendations**

82. The contribution to improved fisheries and conservation of biodiversity achieved through fishing licence expenditure be better promoted.
83. The contribution to rural and coastal economies from recreational fishing be marketed to state and local government, tourism bodies and stakeholder groups.
84. Recognition of the social, health and family cohesion benefits of fishing be better documented and promoted.

85. Economic benefits for regional areas through enhanced fishing tourism be better promoted.