

Submission
No 831

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: Ilawarra Flyfishing Club

Name: Mr Julian Watson

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The Recreational Fishing Inquiry Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

RE: Inquiry into recreational fishing

I note that a Parliamentary Inquiry has been set up, with terms of reference as outlined below, and that public submissions are being sought. Please find this as the submission of the Illawarra Flyfishers' Club. I am the newsletter editor, and have the authorisation of the executive committee for this submission.

1. That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on the benefits and opportunities that improved recreational fisheries may represent for fishing licence holders in New South Wales, and in particular:

(a) the current suite of existing regulatory, policy, and decision-making processes in relation to the management of recreational fisheries in New South Wales, including the process for the creation of Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks and the efficacy of existing Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks,

(b) the effectiveness and efficiency of the current representational system of trusts and advisory committees that advise government departments and statutory authorities,

(c) the value of recreational fisheries to the economy in New South Wales,

(d) the gaps in existing recreational fishery programs, including the number and location of Recreational Fishing Havens, and

(e) ecologically sustainable development issues related to improving recreational fisheries.

2. That the committee report by 25 November 2010.

The Illawarra Flyfishers' Club

The Illawarra Flyfishers' Club is a recreational flyfishing club based in Wollongong. We have a membership of approximately 80, with generally 40% turnout at our monthly meetings. Many social activities such as fishing trips are held, and our focus is on promoting flyfishing in a social setting. Members predominately fish in NSW for estuary, native freshwater fish (bass in particular) and in the Snowy Mountains region for trout and other salmonoids. As a prime example of licenholders in the recreational fishery in NSW we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the parliament's "Inquiry into recreational fishing". Thank you for the opportunity.

Recreational Fisheries Management

(a) the current suite of existing regulatory, policy, and decision-making processes in relation to the management of recreational fisheries in New South Wales, including the process for the creation of Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks and the efficacy of existing Marine Protected Areas and Marine Parks,

The Illawarra Flyfishers' Club (IFFC) considers that the majority of existing regulatory, policy and decision-making processes in relation to the management of recreational fisheries in NSW is sound. In particular, the current regulations for the management and consideration of bag limits, minimum sizing and other sizing class mechanisms we believe operates effectively to best allow for appropriate recreational fishing opportunities while managing fish stocks at appropriate levels.

The IFFC believes that the current size and bag limits process should be continued, with reference to good data and biological understanding of species' biology and the social and community benefits of angling. The IFFC supports a continuation of the way in this information is disseminated (eg stickers, brag mats, measuring devices, signage, etc.).

The IFFC notes that Marine Parks and Marine Protected Areas are a suitable and sensible addition to the conservation reserve system in NSW – with some caveats. In determining the extent of areas restricted for angling, the IFFC would notes:

- Restricting angling over all 'structure' which is known fish holding habitat, and allowing fishing in 'barren areas' between habitat areas is akin to restricting bushwalking in vegetated areas of the terrestrial reserve system, and allowing full access in areas of cleared farmland – it provides for opportunity, but not in a reasonable sense.
- Consideration should be given to allowing increased areas as designated catch and release zones, particularly for those species and fishing types which do not involve 'depth stress' (barotrauma) on swim bladders, etc (eg estuary species and the pelagic species).
- Improved and continued consultation and communications with fishers on the drafting and zoning of current and any future marine parks (or their freshwater equivalents).

Representation by Trusts and Advisory Boards

(b) the effectiveness and efficiency of the current representational system of trusts and advisory committees that advise government departments and statutory authorities,

Use of recreational Fishing Trust monies must show a clear and positive link to recreational fishing. While there is no direct opposition to funding research programs into endangered species, it is the view of the IFFC that the Recreational Fishing Trust funds should not fund general research into conservation or commercial fishery matters that remain within the general umbrella of Dept I&I (Fisheries). For example funding of research into Macquarie perch via the RFT, when Macquarie perch are not an eligible

recreational fishing target in NSW seems at odds with the priorities listed on the Dept I&I website:

- recreational fisheries enhancement;
- angler education and information;
- research on recreational fishing;
- recreational fisheries access and facilities; and
- recreational fisheries sustainability.

(source: <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/recreational/licence-fee/apply-for-funds>)

The further secondment of RFT funds to manage Dept I&I facilities should be resisted as now approximately 25% of the 'Recreational Fishing Enhancement Programs' RFT funds are allocated to the Gaden Hatchery and not available for freshwater recreational fishing enhancement. Dairy farmers' co-operatives are not being asked to directly fund similar Dept I&I facilities at Berry, which was a management change subject to similar issues at the time of the Gaden Hatchery negotiations. While the IFFC supports strongly the retention of the Gaden Hatchery and it's role in recreational fishing in NSW, future decisions along similar lines would see a very thin spread of RFT allocation to other 'on-the-river' recreational fishing activities.

A review of the minutes of the NSW Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust Expenditure Committee (RFFTEC) as available at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/recreational/licence-fee/trusts/rfftec>) gives a view that much freshwater expenditure is on projects which could largely be considered wither core I&I business, or related to Landcare-type river works, and not focussed tightly on promotion, improvement and facilitation of recreational angling. The RFT should not become a de-facto "Natural Heritage Trust".

Value of recreational fisheries to the economy in NSW

(c) the value of recreational fisheries to the economy in New South Wales,

IFFC believes that recreational fishing provides a substantial input to the economy in NSW. We understand that the Dept I&I's own previous research into this issue shows that the salmonoid recreational fishery in the Snowy Mountains to be worth many, many millions to the local economy. Undoubtable this is replicated elsewhere in the State. Our members regularly fish throughout the state and locally. Expenditure is typically on equipment, consumables, travel expenses (fuel, transport, accommodation, meals). One advantage of fishing is that the funds spread is regionally diverse rather than being centred in the capital area of Sydney. In this way relatively small, but regular, expenditure is able to be undertaken in smaller rural and semi-rural localities.

Gaps in the Programs

(d) the gaps in existing recreational fishery programs, including the number and location of Recreational Fishing Havens, and

The recreational Fishing Trusts Investment Plan (http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/309568/RFT-Investment-Plan-Nov-09.pdf) is broadly supported as it stands, particularly with regards to saltwater angling.

The IFFC would like to see an improvement of freshwater angler resources such as:

- Improved access to river systems in NSW for anglers fishing for salmonoid and native species via marking, mapping, fencing and promotion of angler access points,
- Negotiation for purchase of 'paper roads' and 'stock watering points' from Dept Lands and the Rural Lands Protection Boards for use as angler access,
- Use, installation and promotion of 'styles' and other fence accessing facilities particularly across public lands,
- 'freshwater reef' habitat research and installation (eg, re-snagging),
- Education of rural landowners regarding the rights of access along rivers for licensed anglers undertaking fishing as provided for by the Fisheries Management Act (eg, targeted advertising via stands at Field Days, notation on Dept I&I's Agfacts series of fact sheets, targeting CMA's and LandCare groups),
- Negotiation with landholders to minimise the 'fencing' of streams and waterways which restrict angler access upstream and downstream.

Ecologically Sustainable Development

(e) ecologically sustainable development issues related to improving recreational fisheries.

The IFFC broadly supports the principles of ESD in relation to improving recreational fisheries.

Functional and financial support of ESD issues by the RFT's should ensure that the focus remains on recreational angling, not on issue which should be core I&I or other departments' business.

Yours sincerely

Julian Watson
Newsletter Editor, Illawarra Flifishers' Club
On behalf of the Illawarra Flyfishers' Club
www.illawarraflyfishers.com.au

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