

Submission
No 80

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: Junction Inn Fishing Club Inc.
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The Director
Select Committee on Recreational Fishing
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
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Submission by the Junction Inn Fishing Club Inc.

Submitted by Peter Hughes

ANGLING STRUCTURE

Recreational Fishing is often quoted as having the highest participation rate of any sport in Australia. Many anglers are not competitive and do not see the need for organised representation and so traditionally there has been a very low percentage of anglers who join clubs or associations. This has resulted in a sport where participants have rules and regulations thrust upon them against their will and most are unaware of the most appropriate way to have their voice heard because they have no knowledge of the limited structure to their sport. And so they are forced to accept an ever increasing swag of restrictions with much grumbling amongst their peers but little organised response.

There are several peak bodies representing various angling disciplines e.g. fresh water anglers, spear fishers, fly fishers, fishing clubs association, sport fishers etc. but there is no peak body that represents ALL of the above or recreational anglers in general. ACoRF is a body who's members are appointed by the Minister and so cannot represent anglers without fear or favour.

Recommendation 1: Anglers need a peak body elected by anglers.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

It is difficult enough for anglers to stay abreast of the changes to bag limits, size restrictions, gear restrictions, licence fees, protected species, no take zones, seasonal closures, marine park boundaries, habitat protection zones and codes of conduct in their own State let alone the complete changes to laws when they cross the border into another State. Why, for example, is it a punishable offence to use a cast net to catch bait in NSW and completely legal and acceptable in QLD? Likewise, an angler can kill a female mud crab in NSW but not in QLD. Same species, different rules.

States have conflicting possession laws meaning that anglers can be driving down the road with a legal catch in their vehicle, cross a border and be in breach of a different State law.

Recommendation 2: The States need to have uniform gear restrictions and possession laws.

Recommendation 3: One fishing licence for all States.

ACCESS

The issue of diminishing access to waterways is perhaps the biggest challenge for recreational anglers. The modern trend is for elected governments to bend to pressure from environmental groups to lock up large areas, using the precautionary principal in favour of good scientific research. Australia has perhaps the largest ratio of coastline to population of any country in the world and yet we are subject to massive no-take zones in Marine Parks that have been pushed through based on politics rather than science.

On the back of the Green enforced marine parks is decreasing access for anglers in National Parks. Just one example of this in our local area is Mungo Beach in the Myall Lakes area. 4WD access is permitted from Mungo Brush, North, to the Big Gibber, a stretch of beach prone to erosion from southerly swells. Access is frequently suspended following erosion. The stretch of beach south of Mungo Brush is protected from southerly swells and erosion but is deemed to-go for 4WD at all times. National Parks have set up an access scheme that looks fair on paper but allows restricted access only.

Recommendation 4: During times when access between Mungo Brush, north to the Big Gibber is denied because of erosion, 4WD access should be allowed from Mungo Brush, south to Sandy Point.

In the region where our members regularly fish, beach driving, where it is allowed, is administered by local councils, Aboriginal groups and NPWS and that region covers Hastings, Great Lakes, Port Stephens and Lake Macquarie, meaning keen anglers are required to have a number of different beach driving permits.

Recommendation 5: One beach driving permit for all beaches.

The proposed Tillegra Dam in the Williams valley is well into the approval process, One of the pledges from Hunter Water Corp in their 'Statement of Commitment' is to allow recreational activities on the dam, including fishing. Why then, are local angling groups such as ours and Hunter Native Fish fighting to save angling access to Grahamstown Dam. Hunter Water Corp. have indicated to us in writing that their intent is to cease access for angling in the dam.

There is currently underway an Australia wide review of angling in drinking water storages.

Recommendation 6: Angling access to drinking water storages should be encouraged.

HABITAT

The most important factor in a healthy fishery is water quality and pristine habitat. J.I.F.C. support habitat restoration and the installation of fish ladders.

Recommendation 7: Water quality and aquatic habitat need to be protected.