

Submission
No 81

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: Hat Head Bowling and Recreational Fishing Club

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*HAT HEAD BOWLING & RECREATION CLUB
AMATEUR FISHING CLUB*

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Select Committee on Recreational Fishing
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000

SUBJECT: INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Introduction.

Hat Head is a coastal village situated on the Mid North Coast of NSW. Like many other Mid North Coast towns it is an iconic recreational fishing and ecotourism location.

Hat Head Bowling & Recreation Club Amateur Fishing Club has approximately 300 members, many from Sydney, Newcastle, NSW country areas and interstate.

The executive committee appreciates the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of the members and is based on their beliefs, opinions and facts.

Terms of Reference

(a) Marine parks and in particular sanctuary zones are not based on site/species specific scientific evidence and in fact do nothing to address the real threats to the aquatic/marine environment. If and when such evidence is presented there are many and varied ways of conservation and protection before total exclusion is used as a method. These “one size fits all” lockouts are seen as nothing more than government pandering to the Green lobby.

It must be noted NSW fisheries have stated in their publications that there are currently no species, targeted by recreational fishers, under threat. It is the opinion of recreational fishers that any protection or conservation of fish can be addressed under NSW Fisheries legislation.

In general recreational fishers are responsible in pursuing their traditional and democratic pastime and care more than most about the conservation and protection of aquatic ecosystems. No recreational angler fishes 24/7 and in fact nature also limits fishing times e.g. tides, sea conditions, access, currents, weather etc. and often fish just shut down or don't bite.

NSW waterways are regulated by at least 3 different government bureaucracies, NSW Fisheries, NSW Waterways and the Marine Parks Authority, each presumably having it's own hierarchy, support staff and operational overheads. It would seem feasible to combine these groups to alleviate some of the overheads and thus allow for more field operatives to educate, advise the public and check compliance.

Recommendation:

A moratorium on the establishment of any new marine parks.

A review on the economic value, conservation value and environmental protection effectiveness of current marine parks and sanctuaries.

Review systems and departments to allow for more public accessibility to Fisheries field staff.

(b) Appointed trust and advisory committees have little or no credibility with recreational fishers. They are sometimes seen as the puppets of appointers, e.g. the make up of this Select Committee on Recreational Fishing seems to favor the current parties in government. Are there any avid recreational fishers among them? This question is not meant to offend any member of this committee but to illustrate the point.

Recommendation:

That recreational fishers elect their representatives to all trusts, committees and advisory panels regarding recreational fishing.

(c) It has been estimated by independent consultants and reported that NSW recreational fishers spent more than \$550million, during the survey year, on fishing related items.

Dominion Consulting P/L Report 2003 – Identifying the Recreational Fishing Expenditure of Sydney’s Recreational Fishers and it’s Economic and Social Importance in Regional Communities of NSW, found in it’s conclusions that for 2002, “regional expenditure by Sydney anglers is estimated at \$134.8million. This expenditure in rural coastal communities is estimated to support 1213 jobs and has an estimated flow on economic benefit of 970 jobs”.

Note this report was for 2002 and only for Sydney based anglers. Given that it is now 2010 and recreational anglers visit regional areas from all over NSW as well as interstate it is reasonable to assume a much greater economic benefit to regional communities.

There are many more economic benefits provided by recreational fishing, fishers and their clubs which are difficult to estimate or quantify. They include fishing films, television shows, dvds, magazines, fundraising for volunteer groups, charities and rescue equipment, countless manhours educating/promoting responsible fishing, removing rubbish from waterways, headlands and estuary banks, re establishing fish habitat, water sampling, participating on aquatic management committees, conserving dunal areas, providing labour for boat ramps, cleaning tables and fishing platforms and providing vigilance for compliance or environmental events.

Most of these activities add to government infrastructure or save taxpayer dollars.

Conversely negative economic impacts have been reported in areas after the establishment of marine parks or sanctuary zones. These include business closures or downsizing and job losses. These in turn have major flow on effects to coastal communities including families relocating, loss of services, property devaluation and loss of financial support to volunteer groups. Negative impacts don't only occur in the marine park area. In a letter from Tweed Bait they state that they no longer deliver to areas with marine parks and it was likely to cause closures to their distribution outlets and job losses. Social impacts are also significant and need to be recognized and addressed.

Recommendation:

That an extensive study be conducted to accurately estimate the true economic value of recreational fishing to NSW.

(d) This group recognizes the success of the established recreational fishing havens and the affect it has had on fish numbers in those areas.

We also understand that commercial fishers need to earn a living and supply a necessary food source. If sustainable methods are practiced, monitored and/or adjusted as required, we have no problem. However some beach hauling practices such as out of area and interstate crews targeting migratory fish all the way up the NSW coast or the netting of smaller estuary mouths on incoming or outgoing tides needs to be addressed.

Recommendation:

That the size of zones that commercial beach haul crews can fish and the practice of interstate crews accessing NSW waters be investigated and regulations established.

That the netting of creek and small estuary mouths be prevented.

(e) This document previously mentioned the “real threats” to aquatic biodiversity. Some of these threats include but are not restricted to flood mitigation, land clearing, agricultural run off, erosion, siltation leading to shallowing of waterways , turbidity and thermal changes, acid sulfate soils, loss of habitat, untreated storm water and uncontrolled development.

Most aquatic life requires a reasonable water quality, oxygen, food and habitat. Much like humans.

There is no way in our lifetime that we as a club of responsible recreational fishers, could we catch the quantity of fish that are decimated in “fish kills” in most NSW aquatic systems by these real threats.

All aquatic biodiversity including fish would benefit if any development or practice took into account how and to what standard any runoff should be treated or managed.

Recommendation:

That the real threats to the aquatic environment be identified, and methods found to mitigate their impact.

Summary:

Recreational fishing is responsible for a major contribution to the economy of NSW. It is the reason for significant tourism, jobs, business ventures, property sales and development, and voluntary pursuits.

Recreational fishing provides its participants with a chance to be in an environment they love and cherish, a social opportunity to be with likeminded people, a natural and healthy food source, an outlet to relax and unwind, a sport for family participation and learning, a meaningful and pleasurable pastime for older Australians and a chance to be involved no matter what your activity capabilities are.

THESE VALUES AND FREEDOMS ARE PART OF WHO WE ARE AND WE WILL WORK TIRELESSLY AND VIGOROUSLY TO DEFEND THEM.

For and on behalf of the executive committee of the Hat Head Bowling & Recreation Club Amateur Fishing Club.