

**Submission
No 1014**

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Name: Mr Bob Penfold
Date received: 22/04/2010

Submission To The Parliamentary Recreational Fishing Inquiry

Problems with fishing in NSW

There are numerous problems with the way that the commercial fishing industry is run in NSW.

1. **Estuaries.** While there is commercial fishing in NSW estuaries both the fish breeding stocks and natural feed supply is being raped at the cost of NSW fish stocks.

While amateur fishermen have restrictive bag limits and size limits, commercial fishermen have none. They simply kill and throw away millions of undersize fish in both estuary and offshore commercial fishing operations.

Any amateur fisherman found in possession of one undersize fish is fined heavily. Amateur fishermen are required to stick to specific bag limits while professional fishermen have no bag limits while harvesting from estuaries.

Prawn trawlers scrape the bottom of rivers and estuaries eradicating structures, feeding and breeding grounds, catching and killing desirable species without limit calling the destruction by-catch. By-catch taken by commercial fishermen is not counted in the "stocks taken" records. They deprive the ocean of juvenile fish and the natural feed supply required to keep fish healthy and numerous.

A big percentage of commercially caught fish and prawns are sold on the lucrative black market.

Commercial fishermen add little to the economy while raping what is left of the estuary and river systems

Estuaries are commercially netted relentlessly with few or no closed seasons in critical areas. A big percentage of the fishermen have other jobs and fish commercially as a second job. Their contribution to local economies is far outweighed by their destruction of critical habitat and juvenile fish stocks.

2. **Beaches.** Coastal beaches are the migratory route for most desirable fish species.

Trawlers are allowed to trawl right in as close as they can to the surf line catching all of the migrating fish.

Land based haul netters are currently allowed to trawl the beaches from land based 4WD's and powered surf boats. They net every beach from the shoreline catching every fish that is migrating along the beach.

This does not allow any free migration of travelling fish along the NSW coast.

Pippies. Why are there still commercial licenses in place to harvest pippies from Stockton beach when there are "NO" pippies left on the beach? They are gone.

Myall lake prawns. There is no closed season on commercial harvesting of prawns from the Myall lakes system, only a staggered netting regulation that still catches almost every migrating prawn. No prawns are allowed to run to the ocean depriving fish of their natural feed.

3. Amateur fishermen. Sport fishermen are happy to keep within bag limits and size restrictions. They all pay \$25 each year for a licence so that they can fish.

How much income comes from amateur fishing licenses?

Where does this money go?

4. Before Lake Macquarie was closed to commercial fishing it was difficult for amateurs to catch a feed of any kind of fish. Now, 8 years after the closure there is an abundance of targeted sport fishing in Lake Macquarie. There are now sharks, dolphins, yellowtail kingfish, cobia, jewfish, flathead, bream and whiting in abundance. The Lake Macquarie tourist industry is booming due to the volume of fish that resides in the lake now.

It takes time, but if nature is given a chance it can correct itself. The closure of commercial fishing in Lake Macquarie has proved the argument beyond doubt.

What needs to be done

All commercial fishing and prawn trawling should be phased out as quickly as possible from every river and estuary system in NSW. This action should slowly reverse the destruction of the natural operation of the systems that are currently still being raped today.

There should be no harvesting of pippies or natural grown feed supply from any coastal beaches. Current licenses should be cancelled.

There should be no beach hauling from land based commercial fishermen.

There should be no trawling within 3 kilometres of coastal beaches.

Tourism from fishing will dramatically replace any lost commercial harvesting of these critical stocks.

Every tourist area on the coast would prosper if fishing was improved and when the areas become fully stocked, the fish will migrate wider offshore allowing offshore fisheries to reap a much more lucrative harvest.

Closing areas to amateur fishermen who take little from the massive environment available achieves nothing. They only take limited bag limits and only of mature fish.

Have you seen trawlers returning home after a day or night trawling? What do you think all of the following birds are eating that is thrown over the side of the boat dead? Undersize fish that were caught up in the netting operation. "By-catch".

Consideration of the benefits to the real economy should be considered if the fish stocks, natural feed supply and habitat that has been destroyed are restored to a natural balance with only excess stocks being taken by commercial fishing in the open ocean.

Nowhere in any advanced culture in the world are the rivers and estuary systems destroyed. They are protected from commercial harvesting and habitat destruction so that the breeding grounds and natural food supply chains are maintained for the benefit of the communities and the economy.