

Submission
No 985

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

Organisation: OceanWatch Australia

Name: Ms Lowri Pryce

Date received: 22/03/2010

Dear Director,

This letter sets out the comments of OceanWatch Australia in relation to the inquire into and report on the benefits and opportunities that improved recreational fisheries may represent for fishing license holders in New South Wales - TOR 1(e) ecologically sustainable development issues related to improving recreational fisheries.

OceanWatch Australia is a national, not-for-profit environmental organisation that works to advance sustainability in the Australian seafood industry. OceanWatch key activities involve:

- enhancing fish habitats and improving water quality in estuaries and coastal environments
- working with industry and local communities to minimise environmental impacts
- introducing industry and communities to sustainable technologies and behaviours.

To achieve these positive outcomes, OceanWatch Australia works in partnership with the Australian seafood industry, federal and state governments, natural resource managers, private enterprise and local communities.

Environmental Impacts & Assessments

OceanWatch Australia understands that commercial fishermen, recreational fishers and to a lesser extent, indigenous fishers place pressure on NSW's limited fisheries resources. However, after 20years of operating in this field, it is our belief that non-fishing impacts far exceed the pressures exerted by all fishing sectors combined.

A number of elements influence fish stocks, these include;

- environmental variables (water temperature, climatic conditions, nutrient availability, currents and habitat health)
- off-stream impacts (agricultural, industrial and urban pollution, land, water and effluent management and habitat modification)
- the different biological characteristics of the fish populations being targeted (age, growth rate, reproduction, mortality and behavioural characteristics)
- productivity which is influenced by water flow, food availability, natural predation and in some cases pollution
- migration patterns
- the commercial and recreational fishing impact on particular fish species.

OceanWatch Australia would argue that there is a great need for fisheries management to take into account and address all of the above issues in the process of fisheries management deliberations.

It is of concern to us that the impact of recreational fishing on particular fish species has not been collected on a regular or consistent basis by or for the recreational sector in NSW. This lack of knowledge needs to be addressed through a comprehensive process of collection and assessment of all necessary information.

Commercial fishing has been assessed for their ecological sustainability. All NSW commercial fisheries are required by law to undergo an environmental impact assessment. The first NSW fishery examined was the Estuary General fishery in 2001/02 whereby members of the public, stakeholders and other interested parties made submissions with respect to the EIS and the draft fishery management strategy (FMS). Subsequently all other commercial fisheries were assessed.

However, no comprehensive environmental assessment of recreational fishing has ever been conducted, as recreational fishing is no longer considered to be a "designated fishing activity" under the provisions of the relevant legislation.

OceanWatch Australia would recommend that the NSW Government address this gap as a matter of priority. Without an EIS for all fisheries, effective management of an ecosystem is

incredibly difficult and any claims that recreational fishing as a whole is sustainable in NSW will be hard to demonstrate.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on:

should you require further information.

Yours sincerely

Lowri Pryce
Executive Officer
OceanWatch Australia