

Submission
No 900

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

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CLARENCE RIVER FISHERMEN'S CO-OPERATIVE LTD

SUBMISSION

to the

SELECT COMMITTEE ENQUIRY

INTO

RECREATIONAL FISHING

NSW Legislative Council

The Clarence River Fishermen's Co-operative (CRFC) is located on the east coast of NSW and was incorporated in 1945. Currently there are approximately 130 members all of which are commercial fishermen. Since incorporation the CRFC has earned its reputation as one of Australia's most consistent suppliers of quality seafood products. Our retail outlets provide the local and tourism market with fresh seafood all year round. The CRFC is a registered Fish Receiver licenced by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and holds a Fish Receiver permit provided by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority. We also hold Australian Food Safety Accreditation and our export facilities are registered with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (AQIS).

The CRFC recognises that the Select Committee inquiry into recreational fishing has a recreational fishing focus however we are extremely aware of the flow-on effects and potential impact of any recommendations or findings made by the Select committee.

Whilst recognising the significance of recreational fishing as a pursuit by a number of NSW residents and tourists alike the CRFC also emphasizes the value of commercial fishing to the NSW and Australian economy. For good decision making the entire industry must be examined. In this case the "whole" seafood/fishing industry needs to be considered to give a balanced outcome to the enquiry. With this and the terms of reference in mind the CRFC would like to make the following comments:

There needs to be a shift in thinking that the imposition of marine parks or marine protected areas and recreational fishing havens will automatically alleviate, increase or maintain fish stocks. Studies have

shown this not to be the case. As a priority further investigation is required to identify alternatives to achieve the desired outcome of a sustainable fishery.

NSW has a recreational fishing advisory committee advising government on recreational fishing matters however the introduction of an effective consultative process to engage recreational and commercial fishing representatives in dialogue would improve this mechanism and bring balance to decision making.

It is acknowledged that recreational fishing contributes to the economy of NSW in regard to tourism and purchase of fishing merchandise and goods but should not be considered as the sole source of the economic benefit to communities. The connection between tourism and fishing is obviously more complex and no attempt should be made to try to calculate and compare this benefit with the value of commercial fishing and Gross Value of Production.

The current process in creating Recreational Fishing Havens has had unsatisfactory results providing little overall benefit to the infrequent /holiday angler. Recreational Fishing Havens have provided exclusivity of resources to one sector while excluding opportunities for the commercial sector to target species not otherwise sought by the recreational fisher. This exclusivity in the long term results in the depletion of stocks through specific species being over fished. Exclusivity at the expense of another sector is not the answer.

The CRFC strongly supports ecologically sustainable fishing by all sectors. For this to be achieved, first it will require recreational fishing to be subjected to rigorous data collection and targeted research on recreational fishing practices and the impacts on the entire fishing industry in NSW.

In conclusion the CRFC recognises the importance of recreational fishing for both tourism and as a leisure activity for individuals. This however cannot be given consideration at the expense of the commercial fishermen who play a huge role in the wild harvest fishery supplying fresh seafood to the Australian public and bait to the recreational industry. The ongoing need for seafood security must not be underestimated and can only be achieved with appropriate access to resources by the commercial fishing sector.

Of extreme importance is the need for management agencies to have accurate and up to date information on which to base decisions for resource management. To date only part of the data actually required is available; that provided by the commercial fishing sector. This position must be rectified to ensure ecologically sustainable fishing, by all sectors.

Lastly there is a huge impact both socially and economically for the individuals in the commercial fishing sector and their communities which rely on the 'flow-on' effect to survive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The CRFC recommends that:

- no new Recreational Fishing Havens or marine parks are established or existing areas extended in NSW

- existing Recreational Fishing Havens be made accessible to commercial fishers to catch those species not targeted by recreational fishers
- the committee considers the impact that Recreational Fishing Havens have on the seafood security
- that commercial fishers are not impacted either socially or economically by adding new Recreational Fishing Havens
- that a mechanism is established to improve consultation processes and communication between the commercial and recreational fishing sectors to provide a unified fishing industry approach to issues management.
- the introduction of systematic data collection from/by recreational fishers.

Prepared by John Robson

On behalf of the Board and its members

Clarence River Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd