

Submission  
No 86

## INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

**Organisation:** NSW EPTMAC, Hawkesbury River District Fishermens  
Co-operative

**Name:** Mr Rolf Norington

**Position:** Chair

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SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING BY NSW  
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL from: Rolf Norington , NSW EPTMAC(Hawkesbury),  
Chair, Hawkesbury River District Fisherman's Co-operative Ltd,  
1/3/2010

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this enquiry. As a commercial fisher and representative I wish to make comments which I believe have direct relevance to this enquiry and the future of fisheries access in NSW.

I have read the terms of reference for this enquiry, and this submission will make comments directly based on these.

It is important to note that many issues that affect and relate to the recreational fishing industry are exactly the same for the commercial fishing industry. The list includes but is not exhaustive to:

1. Improved water quality and understanding of water quality issues
2. Improved foreshore management
3. Prevention of barriers to fish passage
4. Increase in natural environmental flows and less restriction of flows eg floodgates
5. The need for a decrease in discharge of treated sewerage effluent into marine environments and estuaries rather than the increases we are facing
6. More compliance relating to pollution of tributaries and streams from private industrial discharges
7. More Government support for organisations promoting responsible landowner management and care, and volunteer and action groups participating in river health programs such as those run by some councils and CMAs
8. The need for more community awareness of the value of maintaining healthy freshwater, estuary and marine environments for the benefit of all.

Commercial and recreational fishers also are facing the same problems in the future. The Hawkesbury Estuary, from the freshwater zone to the ocean and beyond, is both an important commercial and recreational fishing resource. Upstream areas provide the nurseries for these fisheries, yet there are ongoing problems that surface in drier times when the Hawkesbury has not had adequate natural flows. These include:

1. Accumulation of Sewerage Treatment Plant effluent in low current areas
2. Growth of algae
3. Growth and further rapid spreading of aquatic weeds, eg Salvinia, Egeria
4. Accumulation of pollutants in creeks/streams from illegal industrial or private dumping

It is important also to note that in my belief there has been more recognition of these common issues from both sectors regarding our sharing of the resource and the need to combine our efforts to improve the situation for all. There has been some communication between the sectors, thanks to the presence of CMAs, Estuary Management Committees, NSW I&I/DPI MACs, some dedicated commercial representatives and some recreational fishing clubs. It is hoped that these relationships can continue and governments will continue to allow and assist in the process.

Regarding the regulatory, policy and decision making process in relation to the management of recreational fishing in NSW, it is essential that the recreational fishing sector have a Fisheries Management Strategy which has been based on an Environmental Impact Statement, as all the commercial fisheries do. The funding to complete this should be available through associated trusts as well as from the revenue generated by the recreational fishing license. At present the lack of this documentation stands out greatly and leaves the recreational sector open to speculation from opponents to the pastime and its associated industries.

Regarding the process for creation of Marine Protected areas, Marine Parks and those already in existence, the completion of the FMS and EIS on recreational fishing in NSW by NSW I&I/DPI would place recreational fishing in NSW in a better position to address and debate the issues as they arise, and eliminate speculation on its impacts.

Regarding trusts, it is important the right decisions are made when allocating funds to ensure the best benefit for the sector in general. The current MACs for the NSW commercial fishing sector contain a recreational fishing representative and it is considered important that the MACs and their current structure continue.

More incentives need to exist to promote recreational fishing representation within the recreational sector, so the same individuals are not doing the job for all over long periods. The amount of participants does not reflect the bigger sharing of representation that should exist.

The value of recreational fisheries to the economy of NSW cannot be underestimated, and it includes associated industries of which the commercial fishing industry is a major one. This is due to the fact that 100% of acceptable recreational fishing bait that is available for purchase is provided by the NSW commercial fishing sector. The Hawkesbury Estuary Prawn Trawl fishery is one of the most prominent and important suppliers of quality bait to the NSW recreational sector. Hawkesbury prawns have supplied not only many thousands of individual recreational fishers through the various bait outlets, but also are the main bait supply for the Charter boat industry off the Sydney coastline. Hawkesbury Squid are the most sought after and valued bait for recreational fishers targeting Mulloway. The importance of the quality of these valued bait species when being purchased is absolutely crucial, and the close proximity of the Hawkesbury EPT fishery to the city of Sydney and its daily supply of fresh product is linked directly with the recreational fishers of the greater Sydney region.

Recreational fishing contributes heavily to the economies of coastal communities and again the relationship with commercial fishing and other traditional coastal industries such as tourism and its related businesses cannot be overlooked.

Regarding the gaps in recreational fishing programs, it would be far better to concentrate on programs that reach a goal that is good for all in the community, as well as concentrating on programs which unite rather than divide. The concept of Recreational Fishing Havens is divisive in that it seeks to eliminate other activities, namely commercial fishing, and isolate an area for the purpose of recreational fishing alone. This does not bring communities together.

The previous exercise, where commercial fishers were removed from traditional fishing areas to make way for the formation of selected Recreational Fishing Havens failed in that it created unnecessary rifts between the sectors as well as bringing many personal tragedies for commercial fishers who were displaced from their traditional occupation and therefore place of residence and heritage. Some suicides occurred. Squabbles occurred between the sectors for years, which enabled those forming the blueprint for marine parks to go ahead without much awareness or opposition from the sectors until it was too late. The principle of "divide and conquer" is well demonstrated in this case, and to suggest the notion of creating new areas or filling the gaps in the number and location of Recreational Fishing Havens is completely counterproductive to any advancement in the capability and position the recreational fishing sector is in to address the marine park threat and many other issues, which require the understanding and support of the majority of the community.

My suggestion to the recreational fishing sector, if it intends to look ahead and move forward, is to completely do away with the concept of Recreational Fishing Havens in the future, and to instead concentrate on shared concerns with shared goals and outcomes.

The concept of ecologically sustainable development forms the basis for fisheries management and needs to be applied to the recreational fishing sector. The first point regarding the completion of the necessary documentation and certification is crucial.

The environmental impacts of recreational fishing are significant as opposed to commercial fishing when considering the numbers of small boats powered by petrol engines and their related discharges, and most of all the impacts of lost or discarded recreational fishing equipment and associated items. Monofilament fishing line takes many decades to deteriorate and thousands of kilometres of fishing lines, often tangled around marine plants or wildlife, are lost to our waterways on a regular basis. Plastic bait bags are found in their dozens after weekends and public holiday periods in waterways as well, along with personal items of rubbish which gives the impression that the recreational fishing sector needs to promote more environmental awareness and investigate issues of environmental compliance.

Regarding NSW laws for recreational fishing, compliance is restricted due to NSW I&I/DPI manpower and there is a tendency for many to break the laws by exceeding bag limits and using more than the permitted amount of fishing gear. This is particularly the case for recreational crab traps in estuaries such as the Hawkesbury.

Fishing Clubs are helpful because they promote good environmental practise, good fishing techniques and compliance of laws. Their position in the community in gaining recognition for the sector is also important. There should be more promotion by the NSW government of fishing clubs as an essential process in issuing recreational fishing licenses.

In improving recreational fisheries and their benefits and opportunities, it is hoped that a whole of community approach will endure and the outcomes of this enquiry return positive results which will ensure the healthy survival of all fisheries, recreational and commercial, to provide for the whole community of NSW.