

Submission
No 824

INQUIRY INTO RECREATIONAL FISHING

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The Director

Select Committee on Recreational Fishing

Legislative Council

Parliament House

Macquarie Street

Sydney NSW 2000

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Submission by Hunter Native Fishing Club Inc

The following is a submission to the Select Committee on Recreational Fishing from the members of the Hunter Native Fishing Club Inc. We are run by a dedicated group of anglers who frequent both Fresh and Saltwater fishing bodies throughout Australia. We have significant fishing experience amongst our members and would like to comment on the following,

NSW Fishing License

It is the opinion of our members that the current Licensing structure employed by the states is both complicated and confusing. We believe an Angler in Australia should pay for the right to fish in Australia and not in NSW only.

We would recommend an Australian wide license.

Fishing Bag Limit Differences between States

It is the opinion of our members that the various bag limits enforced throughout Australia are at times different and confusing for no apparent reason. Hunter Native Fish members believe there should be fishing bag limits in place to regulate recreational anglers, our concern regarding this issue is different bag limits for similar species in different states. For example, Australian Snapper is a common species along the entire east coast of Australia, yet there are different rules in each state with what can be kept.

We would recommend a review of current bag limits with the view of streamlining these for similar species across all states.

Differing Fishing Rules between Salt and Fresh Water fishing

It is the opinion of our members that some of the differences between Fresh and Saltwater fishing regulations are both unnecessarily complicated and confusing. We understand that there will inevitably be differences between the two given the different fishing environments, however, where possible both should mirror each other to simplify the regulations and understanding. As an example, the regulated number of rigged rods allowed per angler is different between Fresh and Saltwater. Current Fresh water regulations allow for a maximum of two rigged fishing rods regardless of whether they are attended or not (not including trout streams). Current Saltwater regulations allow for no more than four rods being used at any one time. It is the opinion of Hunter Native Fish that this Saltwater regulation is clear, to the point and reasonable. It is the opinion of Hunter Native Fish that this Freshwater regulation is confusing and unreasonable. Why can an angler be fined for illegal fishing by having three rigged rods in a boat rod locker when on a Freshwater impoundment and they are not even being used? When Fishing in

Freshwater, regardless of whether you are even fishing or not, if you are in possession of three rigged rods you are deemed to be fishing illegally and can be fined. For this example we would recommend the Freshwater regulations be changed to "no more than two rigged rods in use at any one time". It is not the number of rods that we question, it is the way the regulation is worded.

We would recommend standardisation between the Fresh and Saltwater Fishing guides with particular attention given to the restrictions on number of rods in the angler's possession

Marine Parks

It is the opinion of Hunter Native Fish members that the zoning and declaration of NSW coast and estuary Marine Parks are done at times without the appropriate consultation process and is considered by many to be more political favour based than science based selection. We believe that zoning plans for Marine Parks has put both the Marine Parks Authority and the current government offside with most recreational anglers. It is also our opinion that unreasonable laws have been put in place on recreational anglers when they enter these areas.

We would recommend that the MPA Regulations and zoning planes be simplified and made fairer to the recreational angler.

Inland River Access

It is the understanding of Hunter Native Fish members that Local councils across NSW are actively selling small corridors of land to local farmers to reduce their "un-wanted" land (i.e land that they dont have to maintain any more). Hunter Native Fish is of the opinion that this will further reduce public access to

rivers and create further tension between recreational fisherman and landowners. At present, obtaining landowner permission to enter his / her property for access to the river is very hard and the majority of anglers can only rely on public access points scattered along the river that he or she chooses to fish. At times seeking land owner permission can be very confrontational. If these corridors of land are sold off to the local landholders then our access is generally removed. It is also the experience of Hunter Native Fish members that corridors of land which previously were available for access to rivers and sold off, are now fenced and access is now no longer available. It is the opinion of Hunter Native Fish that rivers are a public resource that should be able to be accessed by the public along their length, not just in the few picnic areas that may or may not be present.

We would propose a Moratorium on the selling of this land until a proper impact and consultative process can be carried out.

Public Waterway Obstruction

It is the opinion of Hunter Native Fish members that more needs to be done to improve the understanding of local landowners of the rights of recreational fisherman on the rivers that pass through their land. It is also the opinion of Hunter Native Fish members that increased enforcement should be carried out to identify and punish landowners who continue to flaunt the laws. As an example, on a local river fished by many of our members, below one of the public access points to this river, the local land owner has erected an electric fence with the sole purpose of hindering access to recreational anglers to the river through his property. This landowner has been reported, however, this is just one of many continuing incidents which public users of the rivers encounter. We would also like the committee to be aware, as users of inland rivers, it is not uncommon for confrontation with local land owners, some at times involve the use of firearms (by the land owner). We have little confidence that there are adequate

laws and legislation is in place to suitably punish landowners who continue to perform illegal activities on public waterways.

We would recommend increase awareness for local landowners and harsher punishment for those landowners who continue to break the law.

Trout

It is the opinion of Hunter Native Fish members that the protection status and funding made available for trout is no longer in touch with modern times. Traditionally trout have been pursued as more a "upper class" fish, we believe that over time this has changed to the point where trout are now sought by all recreational anglers regardless of their social status. The restrictions that historically were placed on trout appear to still exist regardless of the increased fishing, we are of the opinion that they are perhaps to most aggressive and restrictive regulations placed on any fish within Australia. Given that Trout are an introduced species and considered a pest by many with the destructive power of carp in a river system, we believe the laws and regulations need rethinking. Native fish in NSW do not receive the protection, hype and funding made available for the introduced trout species.

We would recommend the the laws, regulations and funding for trout be reviewed with the view of relaxing some of these regulations and re-allocating some of the funding to native species.