

## INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially  
Confidential

I was born into a fishing family. My grandfather, my father, my brother, my sisters' husband – all fisherman. I am a third generation fisherman and my own son is a skipper on board my trawler making him a fourth generation fisherman; if we can keep this industry viable, his son too may be able to become a fisherman as well.

I started working in the fishing industry at the age of fourteen. Since that time I have owned 3 trawlers and fished many different fisheries. I have represented the industry through various MACs and fishery working communities.

I believe that this reform is the most positive step forward for the industry that has ever come from the DPI and I believe it is important for this to go ahead sooner than later.

All fishing business holders have been consulted and told that shares will be our input or output control to all fisheries .

The larger percentage of business holder have already invested in more shares and traded with other business holder to have the shares they will require to run their business .

The trouble is we have a small number of business holders that are make a lot of noise and making threats to other fishers that don't agree with them or support them .these people are also trading in shares on the quite .

My main fishery is ocean trawling in which I have licences for NSW ,QLD and The Torres Straits. NSW is the only state in the country that has NO control over the nights/days that boats can work (open slather fishery) NOT GOOD.

### **The history of commercial fishing in NSW, including reforms to the industry since 1994**

- Some fisheries are far more advanced than others in terms of adjustment and management generally. Abalone and Lobster went to SMF early and are quota managed. Security exists and value of shares has increased. Other fisheries, such as the EPT fishery have not had any restructure programs in place since access was first restricted in the late 1980's. The ocean prawn trawl fishery is somewhere in between.
- All fisheries were made Restricted Fisheries (1997) but this achieved little. They then became share management fisheries in 2007.
- Since 2007, the OPT has used minimum shareholdings to remove endorsements but there is still too many that are not used and we're yet to see any real increase in security or value of our businesses. Some fishers want to retire but can't sell or get anywhere near what they should for their businesses. It's been a buyers market in recent years, but why would you buy shares if they don't mean anything.
- The OPT was hit heavily in the early 2000s with high fuel prices and cheap imported prawn. Boats were tied up or sold, but the licences and shares remain. The management we've had in place hasn't been good enough to keep up with the times and many in the OPT have simply gone broke.

- Disappointing is that the reform has slowed the adjustment we were achieving in the OPT. We've had to sit tight while other fisheries catch up, and some of them just don't seem to get it. Every business owner, whether a baker or candle stick maker, needs to invest from time to time to keep their business profitable and one day retire with something to sell.
- I worry a bit about catch quotas for trawl fishery, mainly will I get enough quota, but otherwise think that the changes will really help. I also work in QLD where the same type of arrangement; day and nights were introduced many years ago. Those fisheries have survived, so why can't we.
- I'm also looking forward to day some of the out-dated controls we still have are removed. Why restrict engine power and I why can't I take a lobster or two home for the missus.

**(e) The NSW Government's Commercial Fisheries reform and it's aims.**

**ii) the implementation of the restructure to date**

- I've been involved on MACs for years and was on the Share Linkage Working Group that helped work out what may work for the OPT and what wouldn't.
- It's been a long road and like most members, I've copped a lot of abuse from other fishers.
- I guess DPI has been really good in that they listen, and I can see that they and the Minister have made changes along the way as issues come to light. You will not hear this from some others because for them they just don't want to see any change at all, whether it's good or not.
- In all my years, I've never seen Fisheries put so much money on the table. In the past, it been up to the fishers to fund the adjustment and there has never been anything like retraining money on the table. The OPT could have done with some of that a few years back when everyone was going to the wall.
- One of the problems with the industry I'm in is that there are many opinions and it's not easy to get people to agree. This is one of the reasons I'm currently working in QLD, where I know what I can do and that it won't change massively soon. The uncertainty has certainly been an issue and many are saying just lock something down and get on with it one way or another.
- Funny is that some of the main antagonists are also investing in shares. They say one thing but do another. These are the sorts of people you may

stumble across. For others waiting for the market, well, they will clean up and probably get their shares for free because I and some others have already invested in what I will need.

**iii) the impact on industry and regional communities to date**

- I know that nothing has changed in the town I live in (Coffs and that the Coffs Co-op is still going strong, not that I'm big on Co-ops anyway.
- Getting rid of some of the dead wood will not impact anything. It will be a good thing because they can finally get a payout and leave, instead of selling to someone who may compete with me. Catch rates in the OPT have been great for a few years now and if we keep our effort down hopefully it will stay that way. You don't make money when catches are down or fools flood the market.