

**INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 26 December 2016

Partially
Confidential

To the Legislative Council
General Purpose Standing Committee No5
Commercial Fishing in New South Wales

My letter speaks to Term of Reference, 1(e)(ii) - (iii).

I am writing on behalf of both myself and my Husband, _____ is
a Commercial Fisherman based out of Nelson Bay, just north of Newcastle.

I am his Wife, my name is _____, we have two young boys, _____ 4 and
_____ 2 years of age.

My Father is a Commercial Fisherman, and introduced my husband to the industry
when we moved to Nelson Bay in 2009.

My Husband's primary catch is

Garfish from	February - May
Travelling Mullet	May - June
Travelling Bream	June -July
Prawns	October - May
Meshing	year round

Garfish

My Husband and his fishing partner currently catch around 16,000 kilo's per year of
Garfish, so my Husband's share on of the catch is 8,000 kilo's per annum. He
currently has 40 shares in Garfish, and under the reform that amount of shares will
allow him to catch less than 500kg per year.

Garfish catch equates to around one third of our annual income.

If we buy no more shares, we will lose one third of our income if the reform proceeds
in its current incarnation.

We are willing to buy more shares, but there are no shares available to purchase.

We have heard anecdotally that a 125 share endorsement of Garfish is likely to sell
for around \$70,000.

If we found one endorsement to buy, then we would still be nowhere near our current
catch.

This impacts our ability to service loans to purchase more shares on other
endorsements.

This reform unfairly impacts on my Husband, and leaves us in a position where he is
quite incapable of buying back his job even if he wanted to.

Prawns

In accordance with the proposed reforms, we needed to lift our minimum shareholding in Prawns from 125 shares to 150 shares. We were lucky enough that my Husband's Prawning partner was willing to sell his shares. We purchased 25 shares for \$8,500.

The 150 shares gives the endorsement holder one prawn shot allocation per month or "marble in the draw". Pursuant to the reform, each additional 100 shares allows an extra marble. It our firm view that this is not a good idea. Every marble should be 150 shares, end of story.

Meshing

We are currently able to mesh each night of the year, under the reform we will only be able to Mesh 90 nights per year. Meshing is generally the fall back method of fishing, when there is seasonal downturn in other fisheries, we turn to Meshing to make ends meet. We purchased 125 shares of Meshing for about \$15,000 in around 2010. Meshing endorsements are now being sold for around \$50,000 but they are in very short supply.

Finance

We have already spent around \$90,000 on Fishing shares to reach our current access to the resource. We are yet to pay the loan off entirely.

We have been approved for the \$80,000 loan through the RAA. This loan can only be used on the "subsidised market". Off market purchases need to be financed privately.

The Reform has been sold on the premise that fisherman can meet their minimum shareholdings by accessing the loan, and buying shares on the subsidised market.

The reality is that the Fishermen with deeper pockets than ours have leveraged themselves to weather this reform by buying up shares, and this has led to whole scale price inflation.

Many Fishermen, including my Husband have made the decision to purchase shares an emotional decision rather than financial decisions. Fishermen are scared. Scared of loosing their income, scared of loosing a lifestyle, scared because they do not have anything else to fall back on.

The reality is that people are spending many hundreds of thousands of dollars, to buy their current jobs.

If my Husband wanted to secure his current access levels, we would be looking at an unsubsidised price tag of around \$200,000. My Husband's best financial year as a Fisherman he had a taxable income of around \$55,000. It is not good economic sense to invest that sort of money, given the return on the investment.

There is no way that we will be able to raise sufficient finance to purchase all the shares we want.

The reality is that finance aside, there are very few shares actually for sale, and it is forecast that the subsidised market will have nothing more than scraps for sale.

The fishermen who have planned to leave the industry have already tied up sales for the popular shares.

The DPI have been asked and have not been able to provide any comfort to us with regard to what happens if there is not enough shares to allow fishermen to meet their minimum shareholding levels.

We have in the past fished in the Hunter River, and that is affected by Contamination from PFOS and PFOA. We are now indirectly affected by the Hunter Fishermen being pushed into our open areas.

I am not really sure what the answer is, but this reform really worries me and a lot of other fishermen. It terrifies me to invest huge amounts of money into an industry in such upheaval. We do not want to become millionaires. My Husband just wants to earn a living doing a job that he loves and is good at.

We should not be forced to buy our job AGAIN.

We do not support the reform in current form particularly with regard to Garfish.

My Husband is an ethical Fisherman, and Honest to a fault. He is the type of Fisherman that you want accessing the resources of New South Wales.

Thanks for your time.

Your faithfully,