

INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mr Matthew Creek

Date received: 2 December 2016

Dear Standing Committee,

My name is Matt Creek and I own/operate a 48 foot vessel in the Ocean Trap & Line fishery, actively participating in the Line East sector since 1999 with this current vessel, FV Marcello.

I have sat on numerous Management Advisory Committees, Stakeholder Reference Groups and Share Linkage Working Groups before and throughout the Fisheries Reform process.

I was also involved in the Fisheries Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the OT&L fishery.

The recommendations put forward by the Structural Adjustment Review Committee did acknowledge the problems of share linkage in a fishery such as Line East. Where there was an initial misallocation of shares, for a fishery where there was/is such a distortion of effort.

The allocation process of catch quota in the form of new species shares remains a major concern for those currently actively involved in the Line East fishery. At least 70% of shareholders in this fishery remain inactive. And the majority of the total catch is caught by literally a handful of fulltime operators on the far south coast.

The concerns of the currently active and viable fishermen in this fishery are as follows;

The Independent Allocation Panel (IAP)

Who will it consist of?

Who will it ultimately answer to?

What allocation criteria will be used? (Proportion of catch history/shareholdings)

What years will it use to qualify?

With share transfers and trading already taken place, who is entitled to new species shares allocation?

To date none of these issues have been addressed or answered by DPI staff or managers in spite of numerous conversations and correspondence.

Adjustment Subsidy Program

The dilemma the LE operators face is given the current timeframes for allocation of new species shares and catch quota, will adjustment subsidy funds still be available if or when required?

Without knowing answers to the previously mentioned issues the purchase of additional shares at this stage would be purely speculation. The allocation associated with any additional shares is a total unknown; therefore it is impossible to put a value on them.

Line East shareholders that are currently active and wish to remain in the fishery are forced into a situation whereby they cannot participate in the DPI run subsidised share trading market as we do not have the information required to make even basic business decisions.

No representatives from DPI were available to address these important issues during the share trading training sessions, nor have they been able to answer before or since. The situation is ridiculous.

Not forgetting the initial intent of this whole reform process was "To ensure the ongoing economic viability of those choosing to remain in the industry"

This was the reason I and several other concerned fishermen got actively involved in the procedure. The entire program seems to have deviated so far away from that and is nothing short of astounding.

Previously active and viable fishermen ARE being forced to buy their jobs back multiple times over with no gain what so ever. The forced purchase of additional shares in this fishery, no matter how allocation process is carried out or what criteria is used, WILL have a devastating effect on the active and currently viable operators.

This fishery already requires a huge level of investment in the form of suitable vessels and gear used to access what is an offshore fishery. It is already restricted by weather, currents, tides and distances to fishing grounds. It already has management restrictions in the form of access shares and limited hook numbers.

The proposed Business Adjustment Program for the OT&L Line East fishery has the potential to be the classic case of 'killing the patient with the cure'

Yours sincerely

Matthew Creek

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