

INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

SUBMISSION

To the

NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STANDING COMMITTEE NUMBER 5

INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING

in

NEW SOUTH WALES

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Submission by an observer of Commercial Fishing in NSW over 50 years

I was born and raised on Smiths Lake, into a fishing family, and, as a person who observed first hand, the many changes and their effects on families; I feel my input into any fair and equitable inquiry, would be of value.

Firstly, successive governments have brought about many changes, particularly in the last 30 years - largely without seeking input from, or consideration of, the fishermen themselves.

I watched my brother (a fisherman for over 60 years) be victimised by incompetent and obviously without any practical knowledge at all, so-called "fish inspectors." Once, in a conversation with a Fisheries official, I suggested that my brother's invaluable knowledge of the lakes and estuaries, be collected by them and recorded before he left us. Naturally, they did not follow my suggestion, and now it is too late - he has passed. Another opportunity to gain real knowledge lost forever.

My point is - NO OTHER WORKER in Australia has their work conditions changed without consultation, without notice; and at the whim of a politician or bureaucrat, who has no real knowledge of the industry.

This lack of respect must stop

One example of disrespectful treatment, was to my nephew, Les, who has represented the local fishermen on many "government" meetings (called mostly after decisions had been made)

He was told "I'm a steam roller, Les, and I'm

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going to run right over the top of fishermen, so get on board"—by a Minister, no less. There are witnesses to this exchange.

Re-arranging the marine parks must also stop. People will respect a decision made under consultation with ALL stakeholders, especially if the government sticks to the decision.

Nobody should have to engage a solicitor to explain the ramifications of his occupation—fishermen do because bureaucrats and politicians run, rough shod, over them.

As a bystander, it almost looks to me, like somebody wants to destroy the industry for gain, not for conservation, as they would have us believe. My late father was a fisherman all his life, and a more natural conservationist you would never have met. After all, to them, it is only natural that you would protect your livelihood. The last thing fishermen need is unqualified and ill-informed people making life-changing decisions for them.

Recommendations

- no more changes without consultation
- regional representation must be by active fishermen, NOT self-appointed "experts"
- fair and equitable management of marine parks, buy-backs and license issuing must occur;
- inspectors and fisheries staff must be better trained, particularly in communication skills and actual knowledge of the industry.

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Conclusion

Fishermen just want to get on with their jobs with confidence that they are operating within the rules. That their licenses are issued fairly and realistically and that their efforts are recognised, if not appreciated.

I worked as a teacher with the NSW Department of Education for over 40 years - such treatment of us would not have happened, so why should it happen to fishermen.