

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

**Organisation:** Wild Caught Fisheries Coalition Region 1

**Date received:** 7 December 2016

---

## WCFC REGION 1

### Parliamentary Enquiry into Commercial Fishing in NSW

#### SUBMISSION

PRESENTED BY RICHARD BROWN ON BEHALF OF WCFC REGION 1

- REGION 1 IN THE NSW COMMERCIAL FISHERY REPRESENTS AN AREA FROM TWEED HEADS IN THE NORTH TO EVANS HEAD IN THE SOUTH. THE FISHERY SUPPORTS VARIOUS FACETS OF FISHING, INCLUDING OCEAN PRAWN TRAWLING, SPANNER AND MUD CRABBING AS WELL AS INSHORE AND ESTUARINE FISHING. IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONTRIBUTING MORE THAN \$23.6 MILLION IN REVENUE ANNUALLY, AND OVER 220 FULL TIME JOBS, TO THE NORTH COAST COMMUNITY.
- THE REMOVAL OF FISHERS FROM THIS AND EVERY REGION IN NSW WILL HAVE A DRAMATIC IMPACT ON THE SUPPLY OF FRESH NUTRITIOUS SEAFOOD TO LOCAL, STATE AND NATIONAL RESIDENTS, AS WELL AS THE TOURISTS WHO FLOCK TO OUR COUNTRY FOR A TASTE OF THE WONDERFUL SEAFOOD WE ARE RENOWNED FOR. A LONG TERM EXPORT MARKET ALSO RELIES HEAVILY ON SUPPLY FROM ALMOST EVERY REGION IN NSW.
- AT EVERY PORT MEETING I HAVE CONVENED SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THIS REFORM, REGION 1 FISHERS HAVE REMAINED UNANIMOUS IN DENOUNCING THE INTEGRITY OF THIS REFORM, AND IN THE MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WHO HAVE CREATED IT. THEY ARE ADAMANT THAT THEY DO NOT SUPPORT IT, AND WILL FIGHT IT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.
- FISHERS ARE EXTREMELY SCEPTICAL OF THE PROCESS THAT HAS BROUGHT THE REFORM TO REALITY, FEELING THAT SOME MEMBERS INVOLVED IN ORIGINAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES HAVE SOLD THEM, AND THEIR INDUSTRY OUT, PURELY FOR THEIR PERSONAL GAIN. FISHERS FELT THAT INFORMATION GARNERED AT THESE MEETINGS WITH REGARD TO A PROPOSED REFORM SHOULD HAVE BEEN PASSED ON TO ALL OF INDUSTRY, RATHER THAN BEING UTILISED BY A MINORITY TO PURCHASE FURTHER ENTITLEMENTS FOR EVENTUAL PROFITEERING.
- LONG TERM INDUSTRY MEMBERS AS WELL AS THOSE WHO PAID A PREMIUM PRICE TO PURCHASE HISTORICALLY FAVOURABLE LICENCES, ARE SHATTERED THAT THE INDUSTRY THEY HAVE SUPPORTED AND BUILT OVER MANY YEARS, IS BEING TAKEN FROM THEM THROUGH AN UNFAIR AND UNJUST PROCESS. THEIR HISTORICAL CATCH, A TOOL THAT GOVERNMENT AND MANAGEMENT HAVE CONTINUOUSLY USED TO REGULATE THE INDUSTRY, INCLUDING USING THAT VERY INFORMATION TO FORMULATE THIS REFORM THROUGH CATCH RETURNS, IS NOW BEING REMOVED

FROM THEM AND BEING UNFAIRLY DISTRIBUTED TO ALL LICENCE HOLDERS, BOTH ACTIVE AND INACTIVE. GOVERNMENT AND MANAGEMENT CONTINUE TO PUBLICLY DENY THIS FACT.

- FISHERS ARE UNITED IN THEIR BELIEF THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE FORCED TO PAY MORE MONEY, ONLY TO RETAIN THEIR CURRENT ENTITLEMENT. THEY FEEL THAT THIS PROCESS OF FORCING THEM TO PURCHASE MORE SHARES, IS PURELY TO BUY OUT LATENT EFFORT THAT MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT CREATED. THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT ONCE THIS IS DONE, THEY STILL WILL HOLD NO SECURITY AGAINST THIS SAME PROCESS HAPPENING AGAIN AND AGAIN. THEY DON'T WANT TO BE FORCED INTO BUYING BACK THEIR JOBS.
- THE REGION 1 COMMERCIAL FISHING SECTOR FULLY SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE FISHING, AND BELIEVE MANAGEMENT OF EACH AND EVERY SECTOR SHOULD BE BASED AROUND PEER REVIEWED SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO INTRODUCE CUTBACKS OR CLOSURES. THIS REFORM HAS NOT PRODUCED ANY SUCH EVIDENCE YET IS WHOLEHEARTEDLY FORCING REDUNDANCIES OR DEBT ONTO MEMBERS OF INDUSTRY FOR NO VALID REASON. TO SUGGEST IT IS TO MAKE US VIABLE IS A GROSS CONTRADICTION AND AN INSULT TO HARD WORKING FISHERS WHO PROVIDE HEALTHY FOOD FOR THE OWNERS OF THIS RESOURCE, THE NSW SEAFOOD CONSUMER. THIS FACT APPEARS LOST ON BOTH MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT.
- THE NSW COMMERCIAL FISHERIES HAVE FACED A BARRAGE OF CLOSURES DUE TO THE CREATION OF RECREATIONAL FISHING HAVENS, AND MARINE PARKS, LEAVING INDUSTRY WITH AS LITTLE AS 1000 COMMERCIAL FISHERS IN 2016. THERE HAS BEEN NO PROMOTION OF THE INDUSTRY BY MANAGEMENT OR GOVERNMENT, IN FACT THE GENERAL FEELING AMONGST INDUSTRY IS THAT MANAGEMENT CONSIDER COMMERCIAL FISHERS AS PARIAHS, AND WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE TO DEAL WITH THEM. THERE IS A GREAT DISCONNECT BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND MANAGEMENT DUE TO THEIR LACK OF PROMOTION AND SUPPORT, AND INDUSTRY VIEWS THE HUGE REDUCTION IN FISHER NUMBERS OVER THE PAST 3 DECADES AS THE FAULT OF MANAGEMENT. THEY DON'T TRUST MANAGEMENT AND FEEL THAT THE LONG TERM ROLES ENJOYED BY MANY IN NSW FISHERIES MANAGEMENT HAS LEAD TO A GREAT COMPLACENCY WITHIN THEIR RANKS. WHILST COMMERCIAL LICENCE FEES HAVE CONTINUED TO RISE, THE LACK OF SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO INDUSTRY HAS DRIVEN A WEDGE INTO THE RELATIONSHIP.
- REGION 1 FISHERS ARE ABSOLUTE IN THEIR DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE PROVIDING FRESH LOCAL SEAFOOD TO NSW CONSUMERS DESPITE THE IMMENSE STRESS THIS PROCESS HAS HAD ON THEIR LIVES. WE CONTINUALLY HEAR OF CONCERNS FOR FISHERS WELFARE THROUGHOUT THE STATE, AS PEOPLE FACE THE UNKNOWN, AND THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN. THIS NEEDLESS PRESSURE WILL REMAIN A BLIGHT ON GOVERNMENT GOING FORWARD, HAVING CREATED IMMENSE DISTRUST FOR BOTH THEMSELVES AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT.

Richard Brown  
WCFC REGION 1  
SECRETARY