

Submission
No 139

INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Mr Allan Broadhurst – Partially confidential

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PREFACE

I would like to take this opportunity to outline my circumstances and how this proposed Fisheries Reform package will disadvantage me.

I've been an active commercial fisherman for over 40 years. My package of fishing endorsements has been decreasing in value for the last 8 or 10 years and currently would be lucky to raise 50% of what I was offered by the Dept during the Batemans Marine Park buy back approx 10 years ago. My circumstance is unique in so far as I have created my own fishery as well as having some standard fishing endorsements.

I fish for shellfish, in particular Glycymeris (flame cockle), Callista (strawberry clam) and Eucrassatella (chocolate clam) in oceanic waters using a modified scallop dredge. I have been doing this fishing continuously since 1998 though not always exclusively. As the scallop dredge is not a recognised fishing method I rely on a section 37 permit, renewed annually, to carry out my activities.

I would now like to address your points of enquiry as set out on the circular that has been distributed to industry and how my fishery plays its part in this ;

(A) The history of commercial fishing in NSW, including reforms to the industry since 1994.....

I first started dredging for the above shellfish in the 1980's and when the industry was moving towards endorsements based on our fishing history during the years of 1986-89 inclusively, I had 60 tonnes of these shellfish as historical catch in this period. The use of a scallop dredge was a

legal method and based on today's prices this amount of product would have a value of over \$400,000. I applied for an endorsement to represent this history but I was told personally by the then director of NSW Fisheries,

that....." We are not going to make a fishery that only has one participant. You will be free to continue doing what you do and if there is any management issues in the future then we will have that discussion then".

So while all of my fellow fishers were granted endorsements, i.e. tradable property rights that represented their fishing history, I was given endorsements that only partially reflected my history.

(B) the value of the commercial fishing industry to the NSW economy...

As a single operator my fishing operation may not seem to be significant to the the NSW economy. The value of any industry, however, is always the sum of its many faceted parts. Last financial year this fishery grossed \$120,000.

This needs to be seen in the context that I'm a single operator, I'm 67 yrs old and still not on the " aged pension" and I only worked for 9 months to achieve this.

Furthermore I keep a tight control of my output to ensure the viability and thus the sustainability of this fishery. I sell to two agents, one in Melbourne and the other in Sydney , who in turn sell directly to top class seafood restaurants.

So once the multiplier effect is added on to this product, it's value would be more in the vicinity of \$500,000.

Apart from the monetary value, the real importance of this fishery is that it is innovative. I utilise a resource that is not part of any other fishery be that commercial or recreational

nor does it impact in any way on any existing usage. At a time in history when we, as a country, need to move into the 21st century and accept a new head space on recourse use instead of over exploiting historical practises, this fishery stands out as being of enormous importance.

(C) the scientific research underpinning fisheries management.

My following comments relate directly to my above activity but it is indicative of how far behind the NSW Fisheries Department is, and has been, behind the thrust and the needs of the commercial fishing industry.

In the year 2000 the Dept removed the "scallop dredge" as a legal means of fishing. Prior to this it was a prescribed method and had a set of rules that applied to its use.

Before being removed, industry was not given any information that this action was being contemplated nor were there any consultations with industry about it. I had been using the dredge for two years prior to the removal and ,in accordance with Fisheries compliance regulations, I had been sending in my monthly fish returns that clearly informed them that I was doing this and my resultant catches. I had no contact from the department either prior or post the closure on this method. To date I have neither seen nor heard of any scientific background as to why the department deemed it necessary to remove this fishing method. In fact in my ignorance, I continued to use the dredge for another two years, faithfully sending in my catch returns telling them I was using it, before I was finally informed that it was now no longer legal. Hence I was moved onto a section 37 permit but this had to be

renewed every year with no guarantee that it would be granted. In 2013 I was moved to be under the auspices of the "developing fisheries" programme with a 5 year permit tenure. I have now completed 4 years of this and not once have I been approached by any member of the Fisheries Research team for information. At my own expense and effort I worked with a masters degree student and through a tagging programme we gained some knowledge of age, growth rates, spawning etc of the three species that I harvest.

So in my case it's definitely the tail wagging the dog with regard to any understanding of these species or for that matter the effects of using a scallop dredge.

I'm going to leave the last two sections of your enquiry unanswered as I feel the above covers enough ground.

Summary.

The issue in my case of the proposed reforms is that while some operators will be recognised for their ongoing efforts in the industry and as such their shares will be categorised as active. This means that those shares will be of much greater value. The reforms don't recognise all of the efforts fishermen have made and those not recognised will be financially disadvantaged. In my case my share holdings will be devalued even though I have been an active industry member and my efforts won't be validated in any other form. I feel I am paying the price for trying to be innovative twice. Once when endorsements were given out and again now when value will be removed from my fishing business .

I hope this gives some insight into the frustrations that these proposed reforms deliver to many members of the fishing industry. I am more than willing to give further information or address any members of your panel that may seek further clarification of issues I have raised

Yours truly

Allan Broadhurst