

INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mr Geoff Blackburn

Date received: 7 December 2016

To whom it may concern

I started my commercial fishing career in 1977.

I have held and continue to hold many industry representative positions in my 40 odd years of service.

Positions.

Estuary General Management Advisory Committee member

New South Wales Seafood Industry Council Director

Federal Research Development Council Delegate

Catchers Trust Board Director (sitting)

NSW Fisherman's Co-operative Association Director (Past Chair)

Ocean Watch Australia (Chair, sitting)

Coffs Harbour Fisherman's Co-operative (Chair, sitting)

Professional Fisherman's Association Director (sitting)

I am fully supportive of restructuring the Commercial Fishing Industry of NSW.

Industry had been struggling with uncertainty and a lack of direction for 15 years plus.

Further delay is not an option.

I welcome the opportunity to sit before you and answer any questions you may have.

I hope to be of assistance in your deliberations

I present these documents to the panel, as back ground to some of the issues.

I also wish to tender a Flash Drive containing electronic copies of the Commercial Fisheries reform face book page that clearly demonstrates bullying tactics and lies used by the opponents of the reform. I ask that the committee provide the Australian Communications and Media Authority with this information.

I also urge the Committee to look at the correlation between the fishing industry and Social Security payments.

Sincerely

8/12/16

Geoff Blackburn



Parliament of
South Australia

REPORT

OF THE

SELECT COMMITTEE

ON CONDUCT OF PIRSA IN FISHING OF
MUD COCKLES IN MARINE SCALEFISH
AND LAKES AND COORONG PIPI
FISHERIES

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Council and ordered to be printed on 8 September 2009

Third Session, Fifty-First Parliament 2008-2009

CONTENTS

1. The Select Committee	3
1.2 Appointment	3
1.3 Meetings	3
1.4 Overview of evidence	4
2. Recommendations	5
3. Background	6
3.1 The introduction of the quota management system	7
4. The inquiry	12
4.1 Term of reference (a)	12
4.2 Term of reference (b)	15
4.3 Term of reference (c)	17
4.4 Term of reference (d)	19
4.5 Term of reference (e)	25
5. Acknowledgements	26
Appendix 1: List of witnesses	27
Appendix 2: List of submissions	28

1. Select Committee on Conduct of PIRSA in Fishing of Mud Cockles in Marine Scalefish and Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fisheries

1.1 Appointment

On 27 November 2008 Select Committee of the Legislative Council was established to inquire into and report upon the conduct of PIRSA in relation to issues that are affecting the livelihoods of those involved in the fishing of mud cockles in the Marine Scalefish Fishery and the Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery, in particular -

- (a) i. the licence fee structure;
- ii. cost recovery process for fishers; and
- iii. access to right of appeal process.
- (b) The scientific data provided to PIRSA to determine allocations to ensure resource sustainability for the 2008-2009 quotas for mud cockles in the Marine Scalefish Fishery and the Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery;
- (c) The validity and accuracy of catch and effort data and the impact that has on scientific stock assessment to guarantee resource allocation;
- (d) The rationale of determining allocation for season quota 2008-2009 and the impact that has had on individual licence holders and multiple licence holders; and
- (e) Any other relevant matter.

1.2 Membership

The Hon. J.S.L. Dawkins (Chairperson)

The Hon. A. M. Bressington

The Hon. I. K. Hunter

The Hon. C. V. Schaefer

The Hon. R. P. Wortley

Secretary

Mr G. Dickson

Research officer

Ms G. Sladden

1.3. Meetings

The Select Committee advertised for interested persons to provide written submissions or to register an interest in appearing before it. The Committee visited Port Lincoln on 6 and 7 May and heard evidence relating to the Marine Scalefish Fishery there, and made a site visit to Goolwa, Port Elliott and the Coorong on 8 May 2009. The Committee met on 13 other occasions to hear evidence. A list of people who appeared before the Committee is in Appendix 1. The Committee received 25 written submissions which are listed in Appendix 2.

1.4 Overview of evidence

The tensions between sustaining valuable fishing resources for present and future generations and preserving fishers' livelihoods were the focus of much of the evidence given to the Committee in this inquiry.

The Select Committee believes that the sustainable management of both the Marine Scalefish Fishery and the Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery is the critical issue in this investigation and indeed in all the decisions made for their management, and that this involves balancing a number of conflicting imperatives. The Committee's impression is that the majority of fishers who gave evidence believe that both fisheries must be managed to ensure their viability, but are divided about the way it should be done and the way in which quota has been allocated. The Committee shares the view about the need for regulation of the industry, and believes that the days of unregulated fisheries are well and truly over.

There were a number of allegations made about anomalies in the process leading up to the allocation and a great deal of dissatisfaction about the size of the quota allocated to individual fishers. While the Committee believes that the introduction of changes that affect people's income is unlikely to satisfy all parties involved, after hearing the evidence it concludes that the consultation process leading up to the introduction of the quota could have been handled more effectively.

The Committee noted the unfortunate split between the two groups representing the pipi fishers in the Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery, the Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association and the Southern Fishermen's Association, and believes that the impasse between them is not helping to foster the sustainable management of the pipi industry in the area. This is particularly disappointing in view of the significant effort from the combined fishing interests there which went into obtaining Marine Stewardship Council accreditation as a sustainable fishery in 2008: a world class achievement.

On the west coast, in the Marine Scalefish Fishery, there is no group representing the mud cockle fishers and the Committee also heard of some discord between individual fishers there. The Select Committee believes that it would be beneficial if they came together to form a peak body to work with PIRSA Fisheries to plan for the future development and management of this valuable resource.

During the course of this inquiry the Select Committee heard a great deal of conflicting evidence from witnesses. As this is largely anecdotal the Committee has no way of verifying much of it, but in line with its terms of reference it has examined the evidence placed before it and drawn its conclusions accordingly.

The evidence focused on the following main areas:

- inequities in quota allocation
- the consultation process, in particular the role of PIRSA Fisheries
- the impact of quota on fishers' livelihoods.

These issues are covered in the following sections. The two fisheries are dealt with separately throughout the report where this is appropriate.

2. Recommendations

After considering the evidence and submissions placed before it, the Select Committee has made the following recommendations:

- 1. That the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries reintroduces the regulations relating to quota allocation as soon as practicable.**
- 2. That PIRSA Fisheries reviews its consultation processes to ensure that they are transparent, comprehensive and effective.**
- 3. That PIRSA Fisheries takes a more proactive role in working with the mud cockle fishers in the Marine Scalefish Fishery to ensure that all interested parties are involved in future management decisions.**
- 4. That the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries explores simpler ways for fishers to appeal against decisions, such as via an advisory body or a Ministerial representative.**
- 5. That PIRSA Fisheries commissions research, funded from general revenue, to establish the scope of the mud cockle and pipi resources in the state.**
- 6. That in future, before any fishery goes to management, PIRSA Fisheries conducts a full audit to inform the accompanying process.**
- 7. That the Fisheries Management (Lakes and Coorong Fishery) regulations be amended to include a provision to prohibit off-beach grading.**

3. Background

The genesis of this inquiry is in the transformation of mud cockles and pipis in South Australia from a low value bait catch into a burgeoning high value human consumption industry over the last ten years, with accompanying pressures on both fisheries and an associated rise in market prices.

In the South Australian Lakes and Coorong Fishery, pipis (*Donax deltoides*) are taken from the Coorong beaches and the southern Fleurieu Peninsula. In order to comply with the seafood industry's standard, the common name changed from 'Goolwa cockle' to 'pipi' in 2007. Pipi fishers need to hold a Lakes and Coorong Fishery or Marine Scalefish Fishery licence with an endorsement to take pipis (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 28). The average total annual catch has increased substantially, from an average of 307 to 457 tonnes in the period from 1984-85 to 1989-90 to an average of 1100 tonnes per annum in the period 2000-01 to 2005-06 (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 34). Pipis need to be purged before they are consumed by humans.

The mud cockle (*Katelysia peroni*, *K. Rhytiphore* and *K. Scalarina*) fishery is part of the Marine Scalefish Fishery and is actively fished in three areas of South Australia: the Port River (Section Bank), Coffin Bay and the west coast (Venus Bay, Streaky Bay and Smoky Bay) of the state. Coffin Bay and the Section Bank account for 90 per cent of the stock. Since 2003, the catch for the west coast has averaged 50 tonnes per annum. Mud cockles are slow growing, taking about five years to reach maturity, and are susceptible to over-fishing (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, pages 3-8). Unlike Goolwa pipis, mud cockles do not need to be purged of sand before they are suitable for human consumption.

Every fisher who had a licence had a cockle entitlement, but some had not used this, and few fishers saw cockles as their major focus. As one witness said, referring to the situation of five years ago, 'There was no money in cockles, but people just did it because they like doing it' (D Backen, evidence, page 147).

The Select Committee was told that there are currently 32 licences which have endorsements for catching cockles or pipis in South Australia, 29 in the Lakes and Coorong Fisheries and three in the Marine Scalefish Fishery, and that these licences are held by 29 people (Report of Allocation Advisory Panel on Goolwa Cockles in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery, page 16).

Since people have started buying both pipis and mud cockles for human consumption, the value of the catch has risen significantly, reflecting this widening market. PIRSA Fisheries told the Committee that pipis '... are now the most important species in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery, in terms of value and production' and it estimates that about 50 per cent of the pipi catch is now sold for human consumption (submission, page 34). The mud cockle fishery has developed in a similar fashion.

In its role as the agency responsible for fisheries management and planning in South Australia, PIRSA Fisheries introduced a quota system for both the mud cockle and pipi fisheries in 2008. The Committee was told that the quota system is based on the determination of a total allowable commercial catch (TACC) each year which is set by the Director of Fisheries and based on historical catch and effort information. Licence holders receive '... individual transferable quota (ITQ) units endorsed on relevant fishery licences that are transferable to other licence holders with cockle access' (Factual Brief for the

Independent Allocation Advisory Council, page 26). In allocating quota to individual licence holders, PIRSA Fisheries and the Minister were guided by recommendations of an allocation advisory panel which consisted of three independent members (see section 4.4).

Following the introduction of the quota system in 2008, there was intensive lobbying of Members of Parliament by members of the fishing industry about the fairness of the allocation process and the role of PIRSA in the introduction of the quota. This Select Committee was set up in response to these concerns.

The regulations relating to the pipi allocation were gazetted in December 2007 and have since been disallowed by a motion in the Legislative Council. This has led to uncertainty in the industry, summarised by PIRSA Fisheries as follows, ‘The removal of the quota management arrangements through disallowance of the regulations, which were in operation for an entire fishing season, have placed the pipi fishing industry into complete economic and social disarray and have had significant impacts on licence holders’ (submission, page 68).

Finding

The Committee believes that the regulations should be reintroduced to enable the industry to move on and to allow fishers to prepare for the next fishing season, starting in November.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries reintroduces the regulations relating to quota allocation as soon as practicable.

3.1 The introduction of the quota management system

PIRSA Fisheries describes the quota management system as ‘... aimed primarily at protecting and improving the biological sustainability and economic productivity of the fishery’ (submission, page 66) and that its focus is to ‘... ensure that everyone with an interest in the fishery is treated in a fair and equitable way through a transparent process that provides for natural justice’ (submission, page 68).

When asked by the Committee whether the pipi industry in the Lakes and Coorong area was in serious trouble, the former Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, the Hon Rory McEwen MP, told the committee that fishers ‘... were being told for ten years that they were in serious trouble, and what’s more, that just input management would not resolve the issues’ (evidence, page 213).

Mr Zaccharin, executive director, PIRSA Fisheries, said:

... we were heading for unsustainable fishing and we really had to come up with the best method—with the industry, I should say—in relation to capping the current fishing effort that we had. In that respect, quota management systems are well proven in this state; they provide a good framework for the economic restructuring of the fishery and for putting a total cap on the amount of fish that are taken from the fishery, and they work very well (evidence, page 200).

In its briefing to the allocation advisory panel, PIRSA Fisheries said that the new quota management arrangements were guided by ‘... industry advice through the Goolwa Cockle Working Group, and in consultation with Lakes and Coorong Fishery and relevant Marine

Scalefish Fishery licence holders' (page 26). It described the consultation leading up the introduction of quotas as, '... a long, protracted, transparent and consultative process that the agency and industry groups have undertaken to develop management systems for both the Goolwa cockle (or pipi) fishery and the mud cockle fishery over many years' (W Zacharin, evidence, page 29). At the same time PIRSA Fisheries noted the difficulties working in this area, 'There are not good relationships between a number of the industry groups and the government for whatever reason—some of it is personality reasons—and it does not matter how many managers I have put in this fishery over the last five years—and it is a significant number—they have all found it incredibly frustrating and difficult working with some of the associations in this fishery' (W Zacharin, evidence, page 32).

PIRSA Fisheries and other witnesses provided evidence about the process for the introduction of quota management in each fishery and this is described in the following sections.

3.1.1 Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery

In 2003, PIRSA flagged the effect of the severe drought in southern Australia on the Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery, particularly in relation to 'mulloway and Goolwa cockles (pipi)' (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 40). In its submission to the Committee (pages 40-45), PIRSA Fisheries described the process which it then undertook to manage this threat and which led to the introduction of the quota system. The following steps were involved:

- In 2003, PIRSA Fisheries sent a communication to all licence holders in the fishery and other interested parties asking for comment and input on management and providing some options.
- The Southern Fishermen's Association wrote to the Minister rejecting the need for this.
- In 2005 PIRSA announced a review with a focus on sustainability.
- Meetings were held in 2005 and 2006 with the industry, PIRSA and the Minister and a number of options were discussed.
- In May 2006 all parties agreed to a suite of actions including a logbook review and the introduction of log books to define gear, including a medium size for cockle nets and rakes.
- In July 2006 a stock assessment suggested that the resource was at its weakest and under stress.
- As no management changes had been developed for the 2006-07 season, PIRSA Fisheries advised industry representatives and the inland Fisheries Management Council that it would take the lead in the future development of the pipi industry.
- In September 2006 SARDI gave its pipi stock assessment to fishers at a meeting in Wellington.
- In November 2006 PIRSA provided a timeline for the development of new management arrangements, supported by the Inland Fisheries Management Council.
- A two day workshop on 20 and 21 December 2006 resulted in 'general agreement that the fishery should move to a quota system after considering a number of other options'.
- In January 2007 PIRSA Fisheries issued an investment warning advising that catch and effort history would be the basis for the allocation of quota.
- The Minister invited fishers to be part of a working group, and the Goolwa Cockle Working Group met on three occasions in 2007.
- Following the second meeting PIRSA Fisheries distributed a discussion paper on the proposed new arrangements.

- In April 2007 the Minister established an independent allocation advisory panel, ‘... to provide advice ... on the most fair and equitable method for allocation of the pipi resource among licence holders ...’ (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 46).
- The Minister approved the allocation recommended by the panel, providing that each of the 32 licence holders would be allocated one per cent of the quota units endorsed with a cockle rake and the other 68 per cent would be allocated according to the licence holder’s catch history (PIRSA submission, page 47).
- An appeal process based on exceptional circumstances took place and more detail on this is provided in section 4.4 of this report.

Not surprisingly, the groups representing the fishers in the Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery have a different slant on the process which took place and their role in it. The Committee heard that fishers in the area are represented by two polarised groups: the Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association (GPHA) and the Southern Fishermen’s Association (SFA). The Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association told the Committee that it formed recently (2008), ‘... because of our frustration dealing with the SFA (Southern Fishermen’s Association) over a seven year period and the lack of cooperation with PIRSA in addressing the sustainability issue of the cockles’ (R Ayres, evidence, page 1). The SFA says that the GPHA broke away from the SFA during the allocation process after two industry meetings failed to get an agreed industry position before it went to the panel (G Hera-Singh, evidence, page 48).

The GPHA says that it represents nine of the 17 licence holders, and is made up of five members and nine licence holders. (R Edwards, evidence, page 1, 2, GPHA, submission page 1). While the association provided the Committee with a number of recommendations for modifications to the quota allocation system, it also told the Committee that, ‘Generally, the approach is fair, although our group would say that they have lost quite a lot’ (R Edwards, evidence, page 8). While there were a number of things they would like to change Mr Edwards summed up the position of the association in the following terms, ‘They are prepared to move forward because they want to get certainty into their businesses’ (evidence, page 9).

The other group representing the pipi fishers, the Southern Fishermen’s Association (SFA) told the committee that it represents 19 licence holders in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery (G Hera-Singh, evidence, page 44) which the Committee understands is about 60 per cent of the industry there. The SFA has serious concerns about most aspects of the new system (covered in the individual terms of reference later in this report) and claims to have been cut out of the consultation process by PIRSA and the Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association (G Hera-Singh, evidence, page 48). The association was scathing about the process, ‘The [workshop] sessions were rushed and fishers were bulldozed into agreeing to a particular model and that subsequently many are clearly unhappy with the outcomes’ and ‘... there was a distinct lack of detail in the meeting’s notice that did not emphasise the potential for major management changes that were discussed on the day’. The association claimed that many more fishers would have attended if they had known ‘... that quota was on the agenda’ (SFA, submission, page 7).

3.1.2 Marine Scalefish Fishery (mud cockles)

PIRSA told the Committee that the need for management of the mud cockle industry was evident in 2005 when the Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Committee noted that ‘three limit reference points had been triggered in the stock status report (2005) provided by SARDI Aquatic Sciences’ (submission, page 13). The process leading to the introduction of quota

was described in PIRSA Fisheries' submission to the Committee and can be summarised as follows:

- Following concerns raised on the sustainability of the industry a voluntary industry initiative was introduced to conserve cockles on the Section Bank in February 2006.
- A mud cockle working group was set up in 2006 to advise the Marine Scalefish Fishery Management Committee (MSFMC) on problems in the fishery. This group met in May 2006 and following this the MSFMC recommended that PIRSA should advise new entrants that 'future access was not guaranteed'.
- An investment warning was then issued to licence holders, including a warning that in the event of management changes catch history would not be recognised 'beyond 30 June 2006'.
- The working group met again in October 2006 and recommended that PIRSA Fisheries take the lead role in management of the resource.
- In considering the state of the mud cockles, the working group identified the key issues as: increases in catch; lack of biological information and increased demand.
- PIRSA Fisheries held four meetings with the industry in 2007, at which the majority of licence holders agreed that a quota system was the preferred management option.
- A new Mud Cockle Working Group was formed to consider a framework developed by PIRSA for the quota management system.
- The working group met in Port Lincoln in May 2007, considered submissions from fishers and agreed that the quota system proposed would be 'a suitable and sustainable system'.
- The Minister asked the independent allocation panel to provide recommendations for the allocation of the quota.
- Another meeting was held in July 2007, organised by a licence holder, indicating that the main concern was the allocation process.
- Licence holders were then advised by notice from PIRSA about the allocation process (PIRSA Fisheries submission, pages 13-15).

Evidence given to the Select Committee indicated that some fishers in the mud cockle industry were critical of this process, arguing that PIRSA Fisheries had already decided on quota before meetings with the fishers were held (J Holland, evidence, page 91, M Ricov, evidence, page 94, C Bald, evidence, page 104, C Kotsaris, evidence, page 127, D Richardson, evidence, page 142). A witness said that PIRSA had ignored other ideas for management put forward by fishers (evidence, page 125).

On the other hand, a witness acknowledged the difficulty of negotiating with fishers at meetings, 'I can tell you right now that fishermen don't get on at meetings. They just don't get on. It's never going to work' (M Ricov, evidence, page 95). And according to another, 'Basically, all the people who are doing the whingeing now were all for quota. Not one of them disagreed with quota' (D Backen, evidence, page 146).

Issues relating to the Committee's specific terms of reference are covered in the next sections of this report.

Findings

Evidence indicates that there was significant consultation between the industry and PIRSA Fisheries in the lead up to the introduction of the quota system. Nevertheless there are so many fishing groups and individual fishers who believe that their concerns were dismissed or not heard that clearly more work needs to be done to help stakeholders to understand the issues and to engage them in the management process.

The Committee concludes that in view of PIRSA Fisheries' policy of co-management with industry, the consultation process could have been more effective, perhaps involving independent negotiators to work with fishers.

The Committee notes the split between the two major pipi fishers in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery and believes that this has had a negative impact on the fishery. It also notes that there is some animosity among the mud cockle fishers in the Marinescale Fishery and that they are not represented by a peak body.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that PIRSA Fisheries reviews its consultation processes to ensure that they are transparent, comprehensive and effective.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that PIRSA Fisheries takes a more proactive role in working with the mud cockle fishers in the Marine Scalefish Fishery to ensure that all interested parties are involved in future management decisions.

4. The Inquiry

4.1 Term of reference (a)

The effects on the livelihood of those involved in terms of:

- i. *the licence fee structure;*
- ii. *cost recovery process for fishers; and*
- iii. *access to right of appeal process.*

PIRSA Fisheries advised the Select Committee that since 1995 the ‘South Australian Government has [had] a policy of full cost recovery for the management of commercial fisheries’ and that ‘... under this policy, licence holders pay through licence fees for the cost of managing their fisheries and are involved in determining the policy, compliance, research and other programs for the fishery’ (submission, page 27).

4.1.1 Licence fees and cost recovery

For the Marine Scale Fishery in 2007-08 the base fee for the pipi fishery was set at \$3870 and for 2008-09 it was \$3565 (PIRSA Fisheries submission, page 75). The pipi base fee for the Lakes and Coorong Fishery was set at \$3892 and the pipi quota unit fee was set at \$177.60 per unit and this was also required from the Marine Scalefish Fishery (PIRSA submission, page 65). Mr Will Zacharin, Executive Director Fisheries, said that the greater the number of units of quota held by a fisher, the larger the licence fee will be, reflecting, ‘... their access to a community resource and the benefits they enjoy from that’ (evidence, page 36).

PIRSA Fisheries told the Committee that it calculates cost recovery for its services by:

- working out the total services required in the fishery, including directorate, compliance and licensing services
- getting agreement on their scope and level
- costing them according to a charge-out model which has been favourably reviewed by Deloitte’s (W Zacharin, evidence, page 35).

The Committee was told that ‘... costs incurred for the management of the mud cockle fishery during the upcoming season will be recovered through licence fees for the 2009/10 financial year’ and that additional costs, such as new costs associated with landing reports, record, tags and compliance activity will be paid for by quota holders (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 27). PIRSA Fisheries said that it consistently subsidised the cost of managing the Lakes and Coorong Fishery. ‘... in recognition of the fishery’s capacity-to-pay and, more recently the impact of the drought’. In 2007-08 industry members refused to pay the cost of the pipi research program, which was then covered by SARDI and recovered from licence fees (submission, page 59). A number of other costs and charges were agreed between the industry, PIRSA and SARDI, and PIRSA Fisheries advised that it is currently in discussion with licence holders in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery on cost recovery for the 2009-10 season (submission, pages 60-65).

Not surprisingly, a number of fishers told the Committee that the licence fee is too high and recommended that it be reduced (for example, Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association submission, page 9, 10). The Southern Fishermen’s Association noted that the fee structure placed ‘... an unfair and unreasonable burden on the small quota holders’ (submission, page 12). This was supported by a mud cockle fisher who said, ‘... the structure and fees will force small people out of the fishery—it is already happening’ (I Searle, evidence, page 20).

The SFA also told the Committee that a number of services incorporated into the fee (for example, licensing, legislation and economics) should be charged directly (submission, page 9).

Another witness maintained that the licence fee ‘... reflects the wish of the present Government to exact an exorbitant fee from a small fishery that is yet unproved in its ability to sustain the high prices for product ...’ (M Jolly, submission). Yet another believes that the fees have been set to force people out of the industry (R Edwards, evidence, page 6) and this was supported by another fisher who said ‘... this huge fee is just strangling me’ (M Ricov, evidence, page 99). A reduction in the base fee for the pipi fishery is also supported by the Alexandrina Council on behalf of its constituents (K McHugh, letter, 29 April 2009).

Following discussions and representations from the fishing industry, PIRSA Fisheries is proposing to reduce the base fee to ‘... be more in line with the reduction in catch and therefore the reduction in our services for this year’ (W Zacharin, evidence, page 206).

Witnesses also had concerns about the cost recovery process, ‘There is no contestability between service providers. So, for example, for the research, which generally makes up 40 per cent of the cost of running the fishery you have to use SARDI, regardless of how they perform and their cost structure ...’ (R Edwards, evidence page 5). The same witnesses noted that there are limited performance measures and low accountability across service providers (evidence, page 5). Nevertheless Mr Edwards told the Committee that the choice in this area is consultation or confrontation and that there has been relative harmony in most sectors for the last ten years (evidence, page 5).

The Southern Fishermen’s Association described the cost recovery system in these terms: ‘PIRSA tells us how much it is going to cost to manage the fishery. The industry is asked to agree ... the fees are set and industry pays’ (submission, page 13).

Another witness said that there is ‘... very little you can do to get PIRSA to change any of its costings. It has a bottom line that it has to meet with its models. It has staff to pay so it charges out at a set rate for different processes’ (T Hill, evidence, page 53). Mrs Hill agreed with Mr Edwards on the issue of monopoly service provision by SARDI and Compliance and the lack of choice in this matter (evidence, page 54).

4.1.2 Appeals process

On the subject of appeals, PIRSA Fisheries told the Committee that, ‘All licence holders have appeal rights under sections 111 and 112 of the *Fisheries Management Act 2007*. Section 111 of the Act provides for an internal review process to be conducted. Section 112 of the Act provides for a person aggrieved by a decision imposing a condition on a licence to appeal to the District Court Administrative and Disciplinary Appeals Tribunal. Section 42F of the District Court Act empowers the court to substitute its own decision or send the matter back to the Director of Fisheries with directions as to how the decision should be made’ (submission, page 55).

The Southern Fishermen’s Association wrote that failing an appeal to the Minister ‘... there is no other course than court’ and described this as a burden on both the fishers and the taxpayers (submission, page 14).

PIRSA Fisheries advised the Committee that no appeals have been received following the introduction of the quota management system for pipi or mud cockles (submission, pages 24, 55).

Finding

The Committee finds it understandable that many small operators are reluctant to enter the legal system when they have a grievance and believes that simpler and less expensive avenues should be considered for this process.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries explores simpler ways for fishers to appeal against decisions, such as via an advisory body or a Ministerial representative.

4.2 Term of reference (b)

The scientific data provided to PIRSA to determine allocations to ensure resource sustainability for the 2008-09 quotas for mud cockles in the Marine Scalefish Fishery and the Lakes and Coorong Pigi Fishery.

Evidence given to the Committee suggests that there is a lack of scientific evidence on the status of both the Marine Scalefish Fishery and the Lakes and Coorong Pigi Fishery. PIRSA Fisheries told the Select Committee that the Fisheries Management Act takes a cautionary approach and that:

... where there are considered to be threats of serious or irreversible damage to the fisheries resource or the environment upon which they depend, a lack of full scientific certainty or insufficient information will not prevent the Government from making decisions. Where resource management decisions must be made in an environment of uncertainty, the Government in partnership with the fishing industry, will take a precautionary approach to the management of South Australia's fishing resources (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 2).

The allocation panel which was responsible for recommendations on the final quantum of allocation for each fisher noted in its report that, '... there is scientific support for the belief that over-fishing can cause a population of cockles to crash suddenly, and, potentially, permanently' (Report of Allocation Advisory Panel on Goolwa Cockles in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery, page 15). It did not provide the basis for this assertion.

Finding

While the Select Committee sees no reason not to accept these cautious assessments as a basis for management of the fisheries, it also believes that more scientific evidence should be developed to underpin their future decision-making. This could be a suitable project for a PhD student.

4.2.1 Lakes and Coorong Pigi Fishery

As noted above, the Committee was told that 'there is very little scientific information available on the pigi fishery'. Nevertheless, PIRSA Fisheries argued that '... the most recent fishery data suggest that the pigi fishery is over exploited and fishery managers hold serious concerns for the future sustainability of the fishery' and believes that the '... current protracted drought' is exacerbating the situation (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, pages 33, 37).

The Southern Fishermen's Association said that scientific evidence relies solely on catch and effort data and a sampling program by SARDI had been compromised because of failure to undertake a mid-season sample at the nominated time. The association claimed that this is an example of PIRSA '... not delivering on its service provision' (submission, page 14).

Critical to the quota management process is the setting of the total allowable commercial catch (TACC). The Committee heard that SARDI recommended that for the Lakes and Coorong Fishery this should be around 800 tonnes, on the grounds that '... we needed to have a conservative TACC which was a low risk strategy' (T Ward, evidence, pages 183, 184). In the event the TACC was set by PIRSA Fisheries at 1150 tonnes.

Finding

The Committee was surprised that the recommendation from SARDI on the size of the TACC was not taken up by PIRSA Fisheries, and sees this as another illustration of the difficulties in balancing the demands of industry with the protection of the resource.

4.2.2 Marine Scalefish Fishery (mud cockles)

Similarly, there seems to be a dearth of scientific data on mud cockles in the Marine Scalefish Fishery, ‘... limited biological research has been conducted on mud cockles in South Australia ... However, information available suggests that all three species have similar biological characteristics, such as slow growth rates and sporadic recruitment which makes them vulnerable to over-fishing’ (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 4).

The allocation advisory panel supported this view, ‘... it has become apparent that the mud cockle resource, viewed as a whole, is being exploited to a dangerous extent. Not much hard science is available, but that is the overwhelming consensus of the fishers who made submissions and of PIRSA’ (Report of Allocation Advisory Panel on Mud Cockles in the Marine Scalefish Fishery, page 1).

On the other hand, some fishers believe that the case has not been made, ‘At no stage during any of the meetings that I attended did fisheries produce any scientific data on the mud cockle. In fact they were quite ignorant of the growth rates of the cockle ... they have no data on it at all (I Searle, evidence, page 20). This concern was echoed by other witnesses (for example, C Bald, evidence, page 107). Yet another summed it up, ‘The fishery is in decline and it needs help but Fisheries don’t know because it does not know when a cockle spawns, it does not know how long it takes to grow, it does not know what the water supply is and what nutrients in that water keep it going, and there is no scientific research ...’ (I Searle, evidence, page 21).

The Committee also heard that there were a number of other areas of the state, including some beaches on Eyre Peninsula where there are mud cockles growing (C Bald, evidence, page 102). Another witness said that he knew ‘... where there are cockles outside of these quota areas’ ... (D Corston, evidence, page 153). The Committee was not provided with specific detail on any of these areas.

Finding

The Committee believes that all potential cockle and pipi areas in the state should be identified and scoped to inform future management decisions.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that PIRSA Fisheries commissions research, funded from general revenue, to establish the scope of the mud cockle and pipi resources in the state.

4.3 Term of reference (c)

The validity and accuracy of catch and effort data and the impact that has on scientific stock assessment to guarantee resource allocation.

The Committee understands that catch history played a significant role in the final allocation of quota in both of the fisheries.

Evidence revealed that it was also one of the most contentious issues in the process. The Committee heard allegations from witnesses that fishers had tampered with their catch and effort statistics in the years leading up to the introduction of quota in order to obtain larger allocations.

The rationale for using catch and effort data to inform the allocation process was described by PIRSA Fisheries in the following terms: 'It is recognised as fair to put significant weight on catch history in determining allocations as this is a good proxy for measuring economic reliance of that person on the resource' and '... where established resource users enjoy benefits of a public resource, the courts in Australia, the legislature and the executive branches of government have uniformly supported the claims of historic users when allocating fishing rights ...' (W Zacharin, evidence, page 30).

In response to a question from a member of the Committee about the accuracy of catch and effort data the Committee was told, '... in these input controlled fisheries, it is entirely up to the honesty and integrity of the fisherman who is filling out that record. However, it is a statutory declaration under the Act, and we have prosecuted people in the past for false and misleading information' (W Zacharin, evidence, page 34). One instance of a check by the authorities on the statistics of a fisher was described to the Committee (M Jolly, evidence, page 63).

One fishing body reported on the importance of catch and effort data in these terms: 'The SARDI catch and effort log is required by law to be an accurate reflection of catch landings taken under respective licences, and thus these returns should be viewed as an acceptable basis for determining historical catch in allocations which incorporate a component of historical catch' and 'Any person claiming catch and effort returns are inaccurate should provide evidence in order that relevant prosecutions under the Fisheries Act can be made. Otherwise their claims should be dismissed' (Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association, submission, page 11).

A representative from SARDI told the Committee that while they presented information in stock assessment and status reports about the declining state of the fishery, '... this was strongly disputed by the fishermen throughout' and they argued that '... what we were seeing was really a change in fishing practices and not a decline in abundance' (T Ward, evidence, page 189).

4.3.1 Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery

The Committee was told that pipis are now the most important species in this fishery in terms of both value and production. The most recent stock assessment showed that the catch per unit effort (CPUE) in kilograms per day increased from 1984-85 to 1985-86, decreased 'substantially' between 1985-86 to 1988-89 and then increased to the highest levels observed between 1992-93 and 1996-97. The mean CPUE has declined significantly since then and in

2004-05 was at its lowest level in 15 years. Trends suggest that the ‘... fishable biomass of pipis’ has declined over recent years (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 34).

A representative from SARDI told the committee that although limited data is available, what was available suggests that the ‘... resource was at its weakest position for at least several years’ (T Ward, evidence, page 182).

The Southern Fishermen’s Association (SFA) said that catch and effort data relies heavily on the individual fisher’s accuracy and consistency of reporting and that the data is compromised because of poor reporting (submission, page 14, evidence, page 55). This, it argued, led to misleading information being used as the basis for developing the total allowable catch (presentation to the Committee). In addition, a witness from SFA told the Committee that ‘... it is not possible to verify catch and effort data’ and that therefore ‘... it is not worth the piece of paper it is written on’ (S Alexander, evidence, page 51). Another fisher said that some harvesters had not been given new log books and he had managed his last year on ‘... an old Lakes and Coorong data book ... and never ever got asked where my Goolwa pipi one was. I know nothing about it. So we cannot move on those stats’ (R Brooks, evidence, page 56).

On the other hand the Committee was told that if everyone knew quota was coming they were all in the same position and ‘Everyone had a similar incentive to falsify records, if that is what happened. I don’t subscribe to that theory, but everyone had the same information over a three-year period; no one had inside information’ (R Ayres, evidence, page 71).

4.3.2 Marine Scalefish Fishery (mud cockles)

PIRSA Fisheries advised that commercial catch and effort records for this fishery date back to 1983-84. This data is provided by licence holders in the form of daily catch and effort returns as a condition of their licences and maintained by the Aquatic Sciences Division of the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI). PIRSA Fisheries reported that in 2007-08, ‘... the mud cockle catch was the 3rd highest recorded value, declining from the record catch taken in 2005/06. Fishery data for 2007/08 have triggered limit reference points for third largest total catch, greatest three-year decreasing catch trend and highest targeted effort ... These reference points are designed to trigger when the fishery is performing outside of its normal range’ (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 5).

Some fishers suggested that others had exploited the resource in order to boost their catch and effort data in anticipation of the introduction of quota (J Holland, evidence, page 97), and ‘... the people who ended up with the quota are those who did the damage ... they did the damage by overfishing it’ (I Searle, evidence, page 22). This was described as ‘... raping and pillaging’ by another witness (evidence, page 134). Another told the Committee of a fisher who worked 24-hour shifts with several people to build up the catch in preparation for quota (D Backen, evidence, page 153).

Finding

The Committee noted the information provided but was presented with no hard evidence to suggest that fishers were mis-representing their catch and effort data (see also section 5).

4.4 Term of reference (d)

The rationale of determining allocation for the season quota 2008-09 and the impact that has had on individual licence holders and multiple licence holders.

The Executive Director, Fisheries, told the Select Committee that a quota allocation system such as this one is governed by the principles of equity and fairness and by the premise that vested interests must not be able to manipulate a significant redistribution of wealth. Mr Zacharin said that most of the major fisheries in SA are managed under a limited entry policy and that governments have supported the claims of historic users when allocating fishing rights. He defended the role of catch history in measuring economic dependence on the resource and thus in the quota allocation process (evidence, page 30).

The Committee was told that the quota management system allows for a total allowable commercial catch (TACC), based on the weight of cockles and pipis harvested, to be set by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. Licence holders were then allocated 'individual transferable quota units', which are endorsed on fishery licences and transferable to other licence holders on a temporary or permanent basis, in accordance with the regulations. The process was informed by historical catch and effort data and an independent allocation advisory panel was set up to make recommendations to the Minister on quota allocation in both fisheries (PIRSA submission, pages 21, 54). Its role was also to ensure fairness, reduce conflict between management and the fishers involved, and bring expertise to the process (W Zacharin, evidence, pages 30, 31).

In making its recommendations the allocation advisory panel noted that '... no amount likely to be set as the TAC for the fishery will meet all the hopes and ambitions of the various fishers in the industry. The question is not so much how to satisfy the desires of all the fishers as how, fairly, to share any limitation' (Report of Allocation Advisory Panel on Goolwa Cockles in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery, page 1).

4.4.1 Allocation of quota

The three member allocation panel included a retired judge, a lecturer from the School of Economics, Adelaide University, and the deputy presiding member of the Fisheries Council of South Australia. It provided reports on both fisheries. The panel used the following process in deciding on its recommendations for the allocation of quota:

- consideration of a factual brief provided by PIRSA which contained an overview of the fisheries, a summary of the consultation process and a summary of relevant statistics
- communication with all licence holders inviting their input
- advertisements inviting submissions from fishers
- public meetings (for the Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery)
- deliberation leading to the reports to the Minister (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, pages 16, 46).

Following this process, the panel submitted a report on each fishery to the Minister. The reports contained specific recommendations for the allocation of quota to the various fishers involved. The Committee was told that it is PIRSA Fisheries' policy that catch history resides with the individual, not the licence, and that catch history was critical in allocating quota (evidence page 16, 17). When questioned on this issue, PIRSA told the Committee '... that is a longstanding policy in this jurisdiction ... I can't tell you why this came into effect there, because it came into effect in about 1972, well before my time and two fisheries acts ago' and

‘... the central tenet of the policy is that catch history should be subscribed to the person who actually puts in the effort to catch the fish’ (W Zacharin, evidence, page 199).

Finding

The Committee is somewhat mystified by this policy, and believes that it may be beneficial if PIRSA Fisheries revisits this issue.

The quota allocation process was different in the two fisheries and is described in more detail in the following sections.

4.4.2 Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery quota allocation

For this fishery, the panel recommended that the total allowable commercial catch (TACC) be divided into units of one per cent, that is, 100 units. The panel recommended that the TACC be allocated in two parts: an access entitlement of one unit to each licence and a catch history entitlement ‘... of units in proportion to each licence holder’s catch history based on catch from the 2003/04 season onwards’ (Report of Allocation Advisory Panel on Goolwa Cockles in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery, page 18).

The allocation for each fisher is then calculated by taking one per cent of the TACC and multiplying it by the number of units a person holds. The TACC (determined by the Minister) was set at 1150 tonnes for the 2007-08 season (PIRSA, submission, page 54). At present, the panel reported, a unit means ‘... something over 1000 kg of pipis and tenth of a unit to something over 100 kg’ (Report of the Independent Advisory Panel on Goolwa Cockles in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery, page 14). This allocation gives each of the 32 licence holders one per cent of the quota units and the other 68 per cent of units will be allocated based on the licence holder’s catch history over the last three and a half years (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 47).

The panel noted that there were not enough units to satisfy everyone and that ‘All will have their hopes and expectations reduced’. It argued that if the TACC is fixed, the most that is conferred by a fishing licence is ‘... the right to a fair share of that catch’ (Report of Allocation Advisory Panel on Goolwa Cockles in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery, page 15). With a total of 32 licences which currently entitle their users to catch pipis, there were a further 68 units to be issued and the panel decided that the most important factor in this should be the catch history, although it was not the only factor (Report, pages 13-16).

The Director of Fisheries allocated pipi quota according to the formula to all eligible licences through regulations on 1 July 2008. The regulations have since been disallowed in the Legislative Council.

The Southern Fishermen’s Association (SFA) claimed that its concerns about the introduction of quota were not seriously considered or were dismissed or ignored and that no other management models were discussed (evidence, page 47). The SFA told the Committee that PIRSA Fisheries had already decided what to do and ‘... manipulated the process to achieve its ends’ (evidence, page 47). It accused PIRSA of not giving fishers adequate notice to attend meetings and said that ‘... fishers were bulldozed into agreeing to a particular model and that subsequently many are clearly unhappy with the outcomes’ (submission, page 7).

4.4.3 Impact of quota on licence holders in the Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery

As has been noted early in this report, pipi fishers in this fishery are divided into two main groups: the Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association and the Southern Fishermen's Association. The two groups are deeply divided over the impact of quota.

A representative from Goolwa Pipi Harvesters Association (GPHA) told the Committee that 'Generally, the approach is viewed as fair; although our group would say that they have lost quite a lot. Some who have never raked a cockle have received an allocation' (R Edwards, evidence, page 8). The association recommended a period of adjustment, '... in which the low catch history people would be given the average and they would be brought back over three years to their final allocation, and the single unit holder would be brought up to their single unit over a three year period to give people a chance to adjust' (R Edwards, evidence, page 9).

The Southern Fishermen's Association (SFA) had strong reservations about the process. It was critical of the timing of the investment warning and of the allocation to one large operator (evidence, page 55). It argued that the PIRSA has been working with the rival group (GPHA) on management decisions. The SFA proposes an alternative 60:40 model, which would allocate 40 per cent of the TACC to all licence holders with endorsements for cockle rakes and the remaining 60 per cent to be allocated evenly across those '... deemed active as of 21 December 2006'. It said that the 60:40 model (rather than a 68:32 model) is seen as the '... fairest and most socially responsible model'. The SFA argues that the smaller harvesters are the hardest hit and may lose more if the TACC is lowered even further (SFA, response to a question on notice from the Committee, page 3). Nevertheless, the SFA did tell the Committee that as quota had now been in place for two years, '... it will be hard to now go back and introduce alternative management strategies' (SFA, response to a question on notice from the Committee, page 1).

An individual fisher submitted that quota was clearly made for the '... preservation of the resources' and that this was '... both necessary and prudent,' but was concerned that allocations had made millionaires of some and had, '... committed others to subsistence fishing far into the future ...' (M Jolly, submission, page 6). Another said that the whole process '... has been compromised from start to finish and it was designed to force out the smaller operators and create a pipi only fishery with a handful of operators (G Hill, submission, page 3).

Another effect of the quota related to the use of pipis for bait. The Committee heard that the daily bag limit of 10 kilograms which had been imposed was preventing some fishers from collecting a year's supply in one hit as they had been previously able to do, and that this was affecting their livelihood (T Bell, evidence, page 40).

4.4.4 Exceptional circumstances

After the allocation process and following a meeting between the Minister and licence holders from this fishery in October 2007, the then Minister agreed to establish an exceptional circumstances panel for the Lakes and Coorong Pipi Fishery (evidence, page 36).

To support this process the fishers from the area agreed that 75 tonnes of quota should be used for exceptional circumstances cases, the greatest proportion coming from fishers who were given the largest allocations (S Campbell, evidence, page 191). A witness told the

Committee that this was agreed because of ‘... a fair bit of grievance ... about people being significantly disadvantaged ...’ (G Hera-Singh, evidence, page 191).

The four criteria for exceptional circumstances consideration were: investment, health/domestic issues; administrative issues; and not enough quota to be viable (email from Executive Director Fisheries to Committee Secretary, 8 April 2009). Papers were provided with the details of each person's exceptional circumstances (A Fistr, evidence, page 194).

The exceptional circumstances panel was made up of the then Minister for Fisheries (the Hon. Rory McEwen), the Member for Hammond (Mr Adrian Pederick), the Member for Finniss, (Mr Michael Pengilly), and Mr Garry Hera-Singh and Mr Rodney Ayres, licence holders (evidence, page 191). Ms Alice Fistr, fisheries manager, and Mr Stephen Campbell, then chief of staff to the Minister, attended as observers. The exceptional circumstances meeting took place on 12 November 2007. Following deliberations by the panel one applicant received 36 quota units, one received 10, one received three, one received two, two received one unit each and the remainder of units were distributed among all licence holders on a proportional basis. Six applicants received nothing (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, pages 49, 50).

The Committee heard that some of the decisions made were unanimous and some by a majority (S Campbell, evidence, page 195) and that a number of fishers were unhappy about the exceptional circumstances decisions. In response to a question from a member the Committee was told, ‘There were not minutes kept, but at the meeting the minister asked the Director of Fisheries to write all the agreed outcomes on a board, and then those agreed outcomes were posted out to all the licence holders in the fishery straight after the meeting (A Fistr, evidence, page 193) and ‘... ‘It was a confidential discussion amongst the exceptional circumstances panel members’ (S Campbell, evidence, page 193).

Representatives of the Southern Fishermen’s Association told the committee that ‘... the exceptional circumstances was highly politicised...’ and that there ‘... were no guidelines or governing principles for those exceptional circumstances’ (G Hera-Singh, evidence, page 48). Another witness saw the process as a way for the Minister to give one participant a large extra allocation (M Jolly, evidence, page 62). A member of the SFA said that due consideration of his exceptional circumstances had not been given (S Alexander, affidavit submitted to the Committee, dated 27 April 2009).

Findings

The Committee was impressed by the fishers’ decision to give up part of their quota for exceptional circumstances re-allocation, and considers it a very generous gesture. The Committee commends the fishers for their commitment to a more equitable distribution of quota.

The Select Committee believes that as people’s livelihoods are affected, all decisions relating to them should be as transparent as possible and that this should include keeping proper records of negotiations which lead to significant decisions, without of course disclosing confidential business information. In addition, there should be clear guidelines for a redistribution of quota such as this one.

It is very difficult for the Committee to make an assessment of the merits of the exceptional circumstances process when this supporting documentation is not available.

4.4.5 Marine Scalefish Fishery quota allocation (mud cockles)

For this fishery the allocation advisory panel recommended that a combination of catch history and the time the fisher has been active in the industry should be the deciding factors in the allocation of quota, and it set the deciding period as 2002 to 2005. The panel then recommended that half a quota unit be allocated to each current fisher for every year of history over ten years from 1997 to 2006. In the Section Bank, 59.5 per cent of allocation went on catch history and 40.5 per cent on years of participation. In Coffin Bay and the west coast, the proportion was 31.5 per cent catch history to 16 per cent for years of participation. As in the Goolwa fishery, quota is shown as a percentage of TACC. Rounding the quota to the nearest 0.1 per cent represents about 70 kg (Report of Allocation Advisory Panel on Mud Cockles in the Marine Scalefish Fishery, pages 9, 10). If there was no catch history the panel did not recommend an allocation to licence holders, ‘... because the resource seemed as though it was much more under stress’ (Dr S McWhinnie, evidence, page 15). In response to a question from a Committee member, Dr McWhinnie said that while a background briefing was provided, the panel did not do an economic impact analysis, nor was it provided with any further scientific data (evidence, page 16).

The Committee was told that the Minister accepted the general principles of the panel’s report with some modifications. These included that every licence holder who had actively participated in the mud cockle fishery between January 1997 and June 2006 was allocated a one-off 0.5 per cent of the TACC and a catch history that ‘... reflected their proportion of the total harvest between 1 July 2001 and 30 June 2006’. This, it was argued, acknowledged those fishers who were economically dependent on the resource (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 17). There was a review process in which 30 submissions were received and this resulted in some minor adjustments to the allocations. Exceptional circumstances claims were considered but ‘no alterations were made on the basis of late entry to the fishery’ (PIRSA Fisheries, submission, page 18).

Following the panel report quota entitlements were endorsed on fishery licences in accordance with the regulations which were gazetted on 16 October 2008. These regulations were later disallowed.

4.4.6 Impact of quota on licence holders in the Marine Scalefish Fishery (mud cockles)

The Committee was told that ‘...quota was certainly not the preferred option ... because, historically, the fisheries used quota as a management tool and catch history goes with that ... we did not think we were listened to ...’ (J Holland, evidence, pages 90, 91). The witness said that no minutes taken at any of the meetings with PIRSA Fisheries, no economic or biological study done and the process was ‘... not very transparent’ but that in the end fishers accepted quota as a management tool (evidence, page 92, 93). Mr Holland gave evidence that his income for this year is down 40 per cent, but admitted that he had started cockling after the 2006 warning (evidence, page 97).

The Committee heard that the bulk of the quota went to nine people out of 52 who were given allocation and that four people in the Coffin Bay zone share 67.3 per cent of the quota (I Searle, evidence page 20). On this, one fisher said that ‘... to allocate the majority of the quota to a select few is wrong ... They have been basically given \$10 - 50 000 a year for nothing at the expense of all other marine scale fishers’ (T Custance, submission, page 3). Another agreed with this view, ‘The argument for the introduction of a management system in its current form benefits only those fishers with high allocation and effectively denies access to all other fishers...’ (C Bald, submission, page 1) and ‘... this 70 tonne TAC should

be equally shared amongst all fishermen who have shown an interest in this fishery' (J Hinks, submission, page 1). Another said that he had been forced out of the fishery and had to transfer his holding because of '... harassment at Port Lincoln' despite an allocation of 2387 kilograms (I Searle, submission, page 3). The same witness said, 'The people who ended up with the quota are the ones who did the damage ...' (evidence, page 22).

A witness told the Committee that he had received only a small amount of quota because he was '... out of action' for the qualifying period and his request for exceptional circumstances had not been successful (D Richardson, evidence, pages 138, 139).

On the other hand the Committee heard that 'Basically, all the people who are doing the whinging now were all for quota. Not one of them disagreed with quota; they all wanted quota' and '... we all had the same ratio of catch and allocation. Everyone got the same process' and 'We have all had massive reductions. We have all lost. There cannot be a winner. There are just people better off than others' (D Backen, evidence, page 146). Another witness arguing in support of quota said, '... we just want to protect the industry' (D Corsten, evidence, page 156). And two told the Committee that they had lost from a half to a third of what they had been catching but were prepared to accept this for the good of the stock (D Corston, K O'Brien, evidence, page 156). This was echoed by another who said, '... I lost two-thirds of my income by going to quota, but now I can see that the fishery is going to be managed I am very happy' (D Sherry, evidence, page 170).

Finding

While the Committee heard a great deal of evidence about the inequities of the quota allocation, it notes that the allocation was made by an independent and expert panel. It also notes that the nature of the process (that is, one designed to limit fishing activities in the interests of sustainability) is unlikely to satisfy all the players involved. The Committee hopes that the fishing industry will accept the new regime and focus on the future development of this important South Australian resource.

4.5 Term of reference (e)

Any other relevant matter

4.5.1 Audits

As has been noted earlier in this report, the Committee heard that catch history, which was the basis of the quota allocation, may not have been accurate in all cases. A number of witnesses argued that an audit would have been a better measurement on which to base the allocation. One witness said, 'I was surprised that we weren't audited, the last quota management in the state was shark and that was audited ... we begged the government to, because we've been getting a bit of flak from a lot of fishermen ...' (K O'Brien, evidence, page 152). The committee was told that an audit would have prevented people who weren't entitled getting quota (D Sherry, evidence, page 170). Another witness said that he couldn't recall anyone being fined for falsifying their logbook and that they never have audits '... to verify their catch history' (I Searle, evidence, page 20).

PIRSA Fisheries, however, strongly opposed the notion of an audit, citing privacy issues and legal problems. The Executive Director also told the Committee that '... we can't request people's tax returns; we don't have the power to do that' (W Zaccharin, evidence, page 205). PIRSA Fisheries maintains its faith in catch returns: 'We have not seen any evidence or had any formal allegations put to us of people falsifying catch returns' (A Fistr, evidence, page 205).

Finding

The Committee is not in a position to assess the allegations about whether fishers reported their catch accurately and believes that an audit would be a more persuasive way of informing this process.

Recommendation 6

The Select Committee recommends that in future, before any fishery goes to management, PIRSA Fisheries conducts a full audit to inform the accompanying process.

4.5.2 Grading of pipis

On its visit to Goolwa the Committee heard that some fishers were not grading pipis on the beach at Goolwa, but were taking some back to the factories for grading. While no solid evidence was received on this, the Committee understands that the industry as a whole does not support off-beach grading and agrees with this position, believing that it ensures transparency.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Fisheries Management (Lakes and Coorong Fishery) regulations be amended to include a provision to prohibit off-beach grading.

5. Acknowledgements

The Select Committee extends its thanks to those who provided information and evidence to its inquiry, including the former Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, government agencies, professional bodies and individual fishers.

Hon. JSL Dawkins MLC
Chairperson
8 September 2009

Appendix 1: Index to Witnesses

Public evidence was received from the following persons and organisations:

Allocation Advisory Panel

McWhinnie, Dr Stephanie

Pennington, Bob

Backen, David; Corston David; O'Brien, Kevin

Bell, Trevor

Goolwa Piri Harvesters Association

Edwards Roger, Acting Executive Officer

Ayres, Rod, Licence Holder

Higgins, Adrian; Sherry, David

Jolly, Mike

Jones, Robert; Searle, Ian

McEwen, Hon Rory, MP, Member for Mount Gambier, Former Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

Primary Industries and Resources SA (PIRSA)

Zacharin, Will, Executive Director Fisheries

Fistr, Alice, Fisheries Manager

South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) Aquatic Science Centre

Ward, Tim, Associate Professor, Principal Scientist Wild Fisheries Program

Ferguson, Greg, Senior Research Scientist

Knight, Malcolm, Manager Data Base Support

Southern Fishermen's Association

Hera-Singh, Garry, President

Hill, Tracy, Vice President

Alexander, Steve, Committee Member

Brooks, Robert, Committee Member

Appendix 2: List of Submissions

The following persons and organisations made written submissions to the Committee which were resolved to be published by the Committee:

Alexandrina Council
Backen, David
Bald, Chris
Bayly, Chris
Bell, Trevor
Corston, David
Custance, Tony
Dennis, Delan
Goolwa Piri Harvesters Association
Hill, Glen
Hinks, John
Holland, Sue
Jolley, Mike
Kotsaris, Con
Kurtin, Zdravko
McHugh, Kym
O'Brien, Kevin
Pengilly, Michael, M.P., Member for Finnis
Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA)
Richardson, Darren
Robinson, Tom
Schmucker, Neil
Searle, Ian
Sellen, Corey
Southern Fishermen's Association

**Commercial Fisheries
Review Committee
2/10/11**

Re costs

The cost associated with licenses

i.e.

Boat /net /business license transfers seem disproportionate to the time or the amount of service provided. For a boat license in the estuary general \$346.00 for a computer data change.

Re Past restructure efforts

I believe that the offer to buy back Fishing Business's failed or was not taken up with more enthusiasm as there was no linkage of shares to effort.

We do not have to have a complete plan with all the all facets in place.

We need to stimulate TRADE in shares first,

At this stage there is no incentive or benefit to acquire shares.

If the announcement is made Shares are to be linked every fisher that wants to be involved in a fishery or improve their access entitlement WILL by more shares, Human nature, if I have more I will get more when the details are worked out.

Also it will be easier to consult and develop a plan when you have the people in the fishery that are actively engaging in the share process They will be the new fisher's making financial decisions not solely lifestyle decisions.

A chance to link shares to effort

In this instance I am only commenting on Estuary general Trapping Endorsements it would also encompass recreational trapping as well.

I believe that this system would strengthen and enhance compliance as well.

Amalgamate the Fish and Crab trapping endorsements to a single trapping endorsement for the E G fishery

Expand the species list for retention by this method.

I e

Fish and Crabs.

125 shares = 10 traps therefore 12.5 shares=1 trap

Restrict trading to parcels of 25 shares minimum i.e. a 2-trap minimum.

Establish a maximum number of traps that can be used by a FB in each waterway.

Maintain a register that lists the trap numbers that are current and deactivated.

License, number and tag the traps individually to a Fishing Business.

I e

FB1234 has 250 trapping shares

The tag that is fixed to the traps read

FB 1234 T1 thru to FB1234 T20

Trap number tags to be renewed to new annually via a letter or colour scheme

I e

2011/2012 seasons

FB1234 T15 on a green tag

2012/2013 seasons

FB 1234 T15 on a white tag

Make it an offence for any person to operate a trap without that trap being **tagged** to the business or in the case of a rec fisher to their license.

If a trap is lost or stolen the fisher notifies the Dept. and a new number is activated and the lost trap number is flagged as not in use.

I e

FB1234 losses the trap/ tag FB1234 T15

The Dept. is contacted and Trap T15 is decommissioned and the next number in the sequence is activated in this case FB1234 T21. This means that the fisher still has their full complement of gear.

If a compliance officer observes a person using a trap and that person is not the registered operator, if it is trap number FB1234 T15, or if the trap doesn't have A tag, they then have an instant conviction, no excuses.

This can only help compliance officers and would address the issue of excess trap numbers in the fishery, commercial and recreational.

Also by enhancing the compliance effectiveness and certainty in the management of the industry this will encourage investment and fishers will see value in the future.

If FB1234 T15 is found it is still decommissioned and can't be used.

Arrangements can be made to remove FB1234 T15 with compliance to suit.

Regards G Blackburn

Commercial Fisheries
Review Committee

25/9/2011

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the management of our commercial fisheries

There are so many issues that I have seen over the last 30 years that I struggle to know how to proceed, be objective and provide positive comments for building a future.

The whole issue has been stalled and complicated over and over by personal opinion, prejudices and a lack of Governmental support for the continuation of a viable and sustainable industry.

I believe that some failures and faults are,

There are No time lines for delivery of initiatives.

There is No one person responsible for delivery or time lines.

There has been No clear pathway for industries position to reach the Minister without contamination.

Industry has been continually kept out of the final decision making process.

The Department has been starved of staff and funding to resource the management of Industry.

Closures or restrictions are implemented instantly, but anything that benefits industry never happens, the Dept. has NEVER acknowledged error on any issue, no decision is ever reversed or modified.

The taking of Australian salmon is a prime example.

Industry has worked towards sustainability (look at the EPBC act requirements and the work of Oceanwatch)

Yet there has been NO defense of our Fisheries in the public forum by the Department, they have not defended the fishers OR their management of the community resources.

A large section if not all of industry has lost faith, trust and hope in the dept.

The recreational sector have delegates on all the commercial MAC's, these delegates play no part in decision making as they have to refer all issues to ACORF, So in effect they are only information gathering (spying) and not trying to develop a consensus to progress issues, again look at the Australian Salmon issue.

There is no commercial presence on ACORF, having a commercial fisher in this group would aid in factual information on industry matters and save a lot of

time, because quite frankly they know nothing of industry and waste a lot of time on misinformation.

I wish to convey to the committee the deplorable state of the Co-operative system in NSW.

This is directly attributable to the mismanagement of Industry by the Fisheries Dept.

The accumulative effect of Recreational Fish Havens and Marine Parks has been and continues to be devastating to the Estuary General Fishery.

The premise that less fisher's will catch more fish if there are less fisher, combined with Marine Park Lockouts and Recreational Fish Havens has proven a disaster for the Co-op's as well.

The supply into SFM has decreased again this year.

This is not due to a lack of fish (industry is sustainable) but by a lack of access to seafood for fishers.

The other premise from the dept. is that less seafood will raise the price to fishers, it has been shown that when seafood rises to a high price level the consumers buy chicken or imports, also thru the past restructure (rec havens and Marine parks) and corresponding reduction of seafood into the market place the consumer has lost faith in a regular supply so back to chicken or imports.

The removal of fishers without the remainder being able to increase their production is a surefire disaster; the less fisher's means more costs per individual to maintain the infrastructure and an increase in freight costs. Many Co-op's are in severe financial crises

Re costs

The cost associated with licenses, are excessive
I.e.

Boat /net /business license transfers seem disproportionate to the time or the amount of service provided. A boat license in the estuary general fishery costs \$346.00 for a data change on a computer.

The cost of a fish receiver at state level is \$1000 to \$3500
The same license for the Commonwealth is under \$200.

Re Past restructure efforts

I believe that the offer to buy back Fishing Business's failed or was not taken up with more enthusiasm was there was no linkage of shares to effort.

We do not have to have a complete plan with all the all facets in place.
We need to stimulate TRADE in shares first,
At this stage there is no incentive or benefit to acquire shares.

If the announcement is made Shares are to be linked every fisher that wants to be involved in a fishery or improve their access entitlement WILL by more shares, Human nature, if I have more I will get more when the details are worked out.

Also it will be easier to consult and develop a plan when you have the people in the fishery that are actively engaging in the share process They will be the new fisher's making financial decisions not solely lifestyle decisions.

The following example is one example of how badly we need reform.

At the present a crab cannot be retained in a fish trap, a fish cannot be retained in a crab trap and a Blue swimmer crab cannot be retained in a crab trap it has to be taken in a fish trap.

The Mac has been after reform on this and other issues for **over 10 years**.

A chance to link shares to effort

In this instance I am only commenting on Estuary general Trapping Endorsements, it would also encompass recreational trapping as well.

I believe that this system would strengthen and enhance compliance as well.

Fish /Crabs trap endorsements

Amalgamate the Fish and Crab trapping endorsements to a single trapping endorsement for the E G fishery

Expand the species list for retention by this method all product caught to be retained.

125 shares = 10 traps therefor 12.5 shares=1 trap

Restrict trading to parcels of 25 shares minimum i.e. a 2-trap minimum trade.

Establish a maximum number of traps that can be used by a FB in each waterway.

Maintain a register that lists the trap numbers that are current and deactivated.

License, number and tag the traps individually to a Fishing Business.

I e

FB1234 has 250 trapping shares so can operate 20 traps.

The tag that is fixed to the traps read

FB 1234 T1 thru to FB1234 T20

Trap number tags to be renewed to new annually via a letter or colour scheme

I e

2011/2012 seasons

FB1234 T15 on a green tag

2012/2013 seasons

FB 1234 T15 on a white tag

Make it an offence for any person to operate a trap without that trap being **tagged** to the business or in the case of a rec fisher to their license.

If a trap is lost or stolen the fisher notifies the Dept. and a new number is activated and the lost trap number is flagged as not in use.

I e

FB1234 losses the trap/ tag FB1234 T15. The Dept. is contacted and Trap T15 is decommissioned and the next number in the sequence is activated in this case FB1234 T21. This means that the fisher still has their full complement of gear.

If a compliance officer observes a person using a trap and that person is not the registered operator, if it is trap number FB1234 T15, or if the trap doesn't have A tag, they then have an instant conviction, no excuses.

This can only help compliance officers and would address the potential for excess trap numbers in the fishery both commercial and recreational sectors. Also by enhancing the compliance effectiveness and certainty in the management of the industry this will encourage investment and fishers will see value in the future.

If FB1234 T15 is found it is still decommissioned and can't be used.

Arrangements can be made to remove to recovered trap (FB1234 T15) with compliance to suit.

Linking shares to effort Estuary General Meshing (zone 3)

Allow a fishing business that has 250 meshing shares to increase the net entitlement to 50 (not 64) lengths up from 32 lengths, and have an assistant. This would remove one operator from the fishery.

Black marketing

All recreational caught fish should be subject to a fin clipping procedure.

We need to establish ASAP a system that differentiates commercially caught fish from recreational caught fish.

This was identified in the Palmer report as matter urgency.

Commercial fishers have no security in the current share management system.

Under the present system we only have endorsement or method rights not access rights.

I believe there should be a contract of guaranteed access for fishers with an agreed \$ value if the terms of the contract are changed by Marine Parks, rec havens or government policy on commercial fishing. (There is a model in the timber industry I think)

Industry needs a fully funded representative body.

I strongly urge the model that is in place in the UK (Sea fish?) is looked at.

Basically it is a levee that is collected at the first point of sale and is audited by Government (tax office?)

Without some organized mandatory system we will never move to co-management.

Regards
Geoff Blackburn
FL 771159
Ocean Haul
Estuary General

Commercial Fisheries Review Committee

7/10/11

Geoff Blackburn Estuary, General Ocean Haul

FB 1389

FB 2692

Linking shares to effort Estuary General Meshing zone 3

Allow a fishing business that has 250 meshing shares to increase the net entitlement to 50 (not 64) lengths up from 32 lengths, and have an assistant. This would remove one operator from the fishery.

Compliance tool for Black market sales

All recreational caught fish should be subject to a fin clipping procedure.

We need to establish ASAP a system that differentiates commercially caught fish from recreational caught fish.

This was identified in the Palmer report as matter urgency.

Regards

Geoff Blackburn

Chairmen's Report

NSW FISHERMANS COOP Soc. ty 2012

This report period has seen a number of events that have been outside our members and Fisher's control.

The commencement of the Commonwealth Marine Park, the Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks in NSW, the review of operations within fisheries and the closure of several facilities together with establishment of new regional sites and the Steven's Review to name a few.

It has been a difficult and frustrating year, This would not be news to the majority of members and fishers.

The issue's around weather, catch and prices which are normal constraints have been exacerbated by the climate of uncertainty created by the Steven's Review (Independent Review of NSW Commercial Fisheries Policy, Management and Administration) and the Governments response.

The industry is alive with rumour and speculation that has not made it easy to maintain a united and structured approach.

The one certainty is that Co-operatives will only survive, if the Fishers that remain after restructure can maintain or increase the volume of fish that is caught now.

This is vital.

Co-operatives need through put to maintain their viability and any reduction in Fisher numbers must be balanced by immediate productivity increases for Fishermen.

We need now, more than ever to support each other, both large and small so that the orderly flow of seafood to our customers is maintained, enhanced and the Co-operative system survives.

I urge all Managers and Chairs to continue to be informed and bring any questions or thoughts to the Association so we can function as intended.

If there is no engagement from the members, the directors and officers can't act in support of members concerns.

As we all may or may not know we have lost a Co-operative from the North Coast, sad news and with a number of others considering their position we must remain united by offering support at every opportunity as a loss of members can only weaken our position in the industry.

Some of us also had the issue of our freight provider stopping operations, this was a great concern and I want to acknowledge the assistance from and thank Mr Brian Skepper and Sydney Fish Markets in resolving the issue and providing a seamless transition to a new carrier for the affected Co-op's.

Brian has just be instated as EO for SFM and hit the ground running with this and other issues, Congratulations Brian.

I also want to thank Mr G Turk who has retired from the SFM management team, for the unwavering support and friendship that he has shown to the Association of Co-operatives and wish him well in his new role as Chairman of the SFM board.

Best wishes and regards

Geoff Blackburn

17/11/2012

Stevens Review

The NSW fisherman's Co-operative Association is pleased to see the Government's response to the Stevens Report.

This restructure is aimed at viability in the fishing industry and is long overdue. The Fisherman's Co-operative system that spans the coast is a large employer in regional NSW and is reliant on a viable fishing industry.

The fishing industry in NSW is monitored and is environmentally sustainable.

The Co-operative System supplies local seafood via a quality assurance program to the people of NSW that is audited and accredited by the NSW Food Authority. So fisher's viability is the last segment that underpins an Industry that provides World-class local seafood that can be purchased with confidence by our customers.

The fishing industry also provides employment from the fishers all the way to the top chef's in Michelin Star restaurants.

This is a food security and employment issue.

The fishing industry and the people of NSW need a modern plan for a modern fishery that can take us all into the future with confidence and direction.

I thank the Government and Minister for recognizing the food security and employment issues and taking steps to protect our supply chain, employment and consumer's rights to have access to local NSW seafood by focusing on NSW fisherman's viability.

The Co-operative Association looks forward to engaging in the rounds of consultation that will follow.

Regards

Geoff Blackburn

6/8/15

SARC Chair and Committee

I want to thank you for the professionalism, respect and conduct the SARC committee displayed during the working groups that I attended this week, in Sydney (EG Netting, Ocean Haul and Estuary Trapping.)

I feel that all views from fishers were listened to, and I hope the groups were able to provide insight to assist in your task.

Some further comments from me concerning EG Meshing. As stated at the meeting the application of a days option Provides, in all cases a reduced allocation from what is available to fishers to work today.

Approx. working days

2014 excluding weekends and public holidays 250 days

For areas with no weekend and public holidays 365 days are available to work.

The proposed changes range from 51 days to 93 days available to work depending on the Zone worked in.

The reform is viability driven and my concern is this linkage Doesn't provide current or improved access to the resource and will not improve Fisher's viability.

I also hold grave and very real fears for the system of NSW Fisherman's Co-operatives.

If the Fishers that remain post reform cannot maintain the current catch or improve their catch. The reduction in product over the scales at the Co-ops could have dire consequences for the post the harvest infrastructure, regional employment and the supply of seafood to the public.

I believe that incorporating a net length linkage would give fishers the potential to access more product.

I state again that Industry needs to know the management arrangements around the options to make informed comment, without those we can all be thinking different scenarios and consequences for the options.

Regards Geoff Blackburn

Commercial Fisheries
Review Committee
26/9/2011

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the management of our commercial fisheries

There are so many issues that I have seen over the last 30 years that I struggle to know how to proceed, be objective and provide positive comments for building on.

The whole issue has been stalled and complicated over and over by personal opinion, prejudices and a lack of Governmental support for the continuation of a viable and sustainable industry.

I believe that some failures and faults are,

- No time lines for delivery of initiatives.
- No one person responsible for delivery.
- No clear pathway for industries position to reach the Minister without contamination.
- Industry has been continually kept out of the final decision making process.
- The Department has been starved of staff and funding to resource the management of Industry.
- Closures or restrictions are implemented overnight but anything that benefits industry never happens, the Depts. NEVER wrong on any issue, no decision is ever reversed or modified. The taking of Australian salmon is a prime example.
- Industry has worked towards sustainability (look at the EPBC act requirements and the work of Oceanwatch)
Yet there has been NO defense of our Fisheries in the public forum by the Department, they have not defended the fishers OR their management of the community resources.
- The recreational sector have delegates on all the commercial MAC's, these delegates play no part in decision making as they have to refer all issues to ACORF, So in effect they are only information gathering and not trying to develop a consensus to progress issues, Look at the Australian Salmon issue
- There is no commercial presence on ACORF, having a commercial fisher in this group would aid in factual information on industry matters and save a lot of time, because quite frankly they know nothing of industry and waste a lot of time on misinformation.

Regards
Geoff Blackburn
Blackburn Brinsley PTY LTD
FB 1389
FB 2692

Commercial Fisheries
Review Committee
26/9/2011

Richard

I wish to convey to the committee the deplorable state of the Co-operative system in NSW.

This is directly attributable to the mismanagement of Industry by the Fisheries Dept.

The premise that less fisher's will catch more fish combined with Marine Park Lockouts and Recreational Fish Havens has proven a disaster for the Co-op's.

The supply into SFM has decreased again this year;

This is not due to a lack of fish (industry is sustainable) but by a lack of access to seafood for fishers.

The other premise from the dept. is that less seafood will raise the price to fishers, it has been shown that when seafood rises to a high price level the consumer buy's chicken or imports, also thru the past restructure (rec havens and Marine parks) and corresponding reduction of seafood into the market place the consumer has lost faith in a regular supply so back to chicken or imports.

The removal of fishers without the remainder being able to increase their production is a surefire disaster; the less fisher's means more costs per individual to maintain the infostructure and an increase in freight costs.

These are my personal thoughts

Regards Geoff Blackburn

EG Fisher

OH Fisher

FB1389

FB2692

Coffs Co-op Vice Chair

Fisherman's Co-operative Association Chair

Catchers Trust Director

NSWSIC director

It has been another year of uncertainty and change for the fishing industry. We have had a change of government and with that, a fresh start that has been to date a very welcome change from the past.

The Fisherman's Co-operative Society (FCA) needs take full advantage of the opportunities that are being made available.

The importance of the co-operative system to the orderly sale of seafood for fishers and the benefits of sustainable employment for the staff of Co-op's and the ancillary industries that co-op's support has been the message from the FCA to all groups involved in the talks about restructuring industry and in the Marine Park's debate that threatens all of our member viability and existence.

We need a strong Association to continue to influence the debate. I look forward to the future.

Geoff Blackburn
Chair
New South Wales Fisherman's Co-operative Society

REVIEW PANNEL 6

Commercial fishers have no security in the current share management system.

Under the present system we only have endorsement or method rights not access rights.

I believe there should be a contract of guaranteed access for fishers with an agreed \$ value if the terms of the contract are changed by Marine Parks, rec havens or government policy on commercial fishing. (There is a model in the timber industry I think)

Industry needs a fully funded representative body.

I strongly urge the model that is in place in the UK (Sea fish?) is looked at.

Basically it is a levee that is collected at the first point of sale and is audited by Government (tax office?)

Without some organized mandatory system we are all wasting our time.