

INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mr Dean Elliott
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Dean Andrew ElliottSubmission to Parliamentary Inquiry

Region 4 has been greatly impacted by Recreational Fishing Havens. Introduced when buy outs of fisherman in those areas then bought back into the industry all cashed up from Government and moved their effort to region 4 Wallis lake .

Those licenses in many cases where "latent" in other parts of region 4 and then were put back into the system by way of leasing even though the individuals they were leasing to, only had a fishing license and had no catch history.

Weather in such a large area can be so different i.e. April 2015 season wiped out down central coast Tuggerah and Hunter. Had no real impact on Estuary general in Wallis lake. But under SARC recommendations the regional allocation is a one size fits all approach. Weather and other environmental impacts have not been considered from river system to river system. EG when we had the Hepatitis " A "scare in Wallis lake it was like someone had turned the lights off in the fish that came from Wallis lake catchment. It was not worth it to go to work and catch any fish or anything for that matter as you got nothing for your catch.

That situation lasted for a long time. The recovery from that crisis was beyond our control. We even had our local council put signs up along the river and lake saying do not swim or eat fish from the waters.

Question.. What would happen to your quota in this instance.??? Would it be carried over to the next year. There can be all sorts of unforeseen situations that impact on your ability to fish. The impact on your income is obvious. The ability to make up the loss of income in the next year will be impossible under the proposed recommendations.

The point I am making is that a regional approach with regards to each share class and fishery should be applied with regard for differences in each area, no of fishers and the various rules and ways that a particular method is allowed. Types and shape of traps i.e. Different traps used in nelson's bay to Wallis lake and in the manning.

I believe Quota will not work in estuary general in any fishery. It will be very time consuming expensive and i do not believe that the Quota given is fair and equitable to be able to sustain my viability. Ocean haul crews will be impacted on the 93 days .

I work in Ocean haul crew and the impact of 93 days could mean we lose the ability to chase the travelling mullet into the estuary because the beach is washed away due to

weather or the seas are just too high to work safely.

I work mostly Tuncurry beach. It can get very dangerous other areas like Nelson bay still in our region 4 catch travelling mullet in the bay which allows them the ability to work during bad weather. If the crew of 8 all have different quota of meshing days left then the ability to catch the travelling mullet which are caught for the export market and sent to the processors will also affect a great proportion of our income. This will also impact the Co-op

Again Weather here will be out of our control. We use a boat and motor to shoot the ocean net. In the bays they just use a row boat. Every region and river is different. The impact of this day limit could mean that shooting on the beach will be the preferred option so that you do not lose a day from your meshing . Safety then becomes an issue.

Also Our region and Tuggerah Lakes are the only lakes designated flathead set nets . You do this sunset to sunrise. This will also come from your meshing days. So as this is only 9 or so hours you will set a net then mesh all night then pick up flathead net, up at daylight then go splash netting during the day to maximise your 24 hour mesh day limit. This will create big problems with the public.

I would have to buy at least another 375 shares in Estuary trapping

If I have to purchase enough shares to do what I am doing now with the regional allocation given i.e. 673.8 KG mud crabs, 93 days meshing instead of the whole year having to more than double prawn shares to compete to only do what I am doing now and there is no increase in my income unless I buy even more shares to compete my ability to stay fishing is going to be severely compromised.

One Example. One fisherman in Wallis lake right now has over 1000 shares of traps. He has around 850 mud crab shares right now. Which means immediately he can put out around 82 traps for Mud crabs Region 4. He has already stated he will be looking to buy more . The concentration of wealth to him and a couple of other fisherman will see the smaller fisherman be wiped out of the Mud crabs in Wallis lake. This will impact the Wallis Lake Co-op which will be a disaster for all fisherman who rely on the co-op to sell their product.(refer to submission from the Wallis lake Fisherman's co-operative)

You will be creating winners and losers. The sense of injustice will increase conflict instead of the what the desired outcome is supposed to be.

There must be a system in place that caps the amount of shares any one person can own.

One mud crab owner in region 3 as of 1st July 2016 can catch 6.8 ton This situation would seem is hopeless for anyone trying to compete. Increase investment should give you more income . Before the structural adjustment starts there is no level playing field. And still no transparency on how many more these fisherman will have in this share class. I cannot see how as a single one fishing business owner I can compete against multiple business share holders who will bomb you out with e.g. Mud crabs/trapping with 50 to 100 traps or more when you only have 10 and will have to purchase minimum 5 to 9 more multiple of shares to even match them or compete. I will have to purchase at least another 6 lots of 125. It must be remembered we are not in the Ocean like the Lobster Fishery.

The SARC recommendations are taking 'The Will' to work out for hard working fisherman who have placed their trust in government time and time again. There is no justification to have that outcome. There has to be a better way.

I draw your attention to Concern no 1... Response to common concerns raised by Commerical fishers on DPI web site answered by SARC.

Options were discarded in response to constructive feedback and further analysis.. While I acknowledge that has been the case in some share classes it is not the case in the Mud crab and Blue swimmer trapping . SARC has combined catch effort and catch quota i.e. Option 2 and Option 3 when in 2014 the Option 3 catch quota was rejected outright by the majority in the first round of submissions.

It also states under the same question and answers Concern no 1 That an Economic Analysis survey was completed. I cannot for the life of me understand why this was not sent out to all fisherman by mail. But more importantly do not understand why this was not done before the first round of submissions last year. This failure I believe has set the tone for the lack of trust and confidence I feel to be able to make sound business decisions for my future.

The SARC has not included any limits on the amount of shares any one person can hold . This is unbelievable. The predictable outcome from the SARC recommendations is the concentration of wealth away from a single fishing business owner to the the already prepared multiple fishing business owners who have had inside, knowledge and information about how the workings and consolidation of this Reform structural adjustment program was designed to play out.

The leasing of businesses by armchair fisherman who have taken advantage is also clobbering the active fisher because we are now sharing our catch history with them in the SARC's recommendations. SARCS recommendations are going to create winners

and losers. For the loser this could mean not only the loss of a life long business but the loss of a future income by way of work because many fisherman know nothing else. The average age being 57. The flow on effect to family's and the wider community is obvious . This has the potential to destroy families. The uncertainty constant worry on the fisherman also effects their children. I already know of three marriage breakdowns because of the extreme pressure, sheer exhaustion and profound stress that we are all under..... There just has to be a better way.

Unless my Business remains diverse i.e. multi endorsed if I have all my eggs in one basket and two bad years in a row then after I have borrowed a substantial amount of money I would not be able to pay it back and I would be bankrupt. We are at the mercy of the weather and cannot control what product comes in from around Australia and imported product to the Sydney Fish Market. We cannot guarantee a price.

With the meshing if you are only allowed 93 days you will no longer be able to catch your own bait so bait expenses will increase and will be in short supply . Everyone will want to go meshing at the same time which will in turn bring the price down on the market floor so what is a good price today will be a very low price (if not get a bill for product) tomorrow. Once again we cannot control the product coming in from everywhere.

Also each fisherman will forced to catch as much product as they possibly can in a 24 hour period. As it stands at the moment you might go meshing and get enough fish in one shot and come home. 24 hours will cause major problems on the water with fisherman fighting with each other commercial and rec fisherman fighting with each other and oyster farmers and fisherman fighting when netting and trapping around the leases during the day time and holiday period.

At the moment the majority is done away from the public eye. They clearly have not read all the negative effects identified in other parts of the world. The job losses are going to be significant with no safeguards put in place regarding limit of shares. if a fisherman gets sick for any length of time is his catch effort going to be rolled over for the next calendar year. The consolidation that will be created by fisherman selling off getting rid of shares that may not be used every year because of weather price imports etc quantity in market will see disaster amongst the NSW Fishing industry. We do not deserve this.

Generous Taxation concession would need to be put in place if selling existing shares which attract Capital Gains. The ATO will not recognize the capital investment against the Capital Gains . So the situation is we get no tax advantage from purchasing shares that will not earn us anymore money in the short to medium term and we get clobbered again with a Capital gains tax from being forced to sell shares to continue to work in

your business. That would also depend on the future security that would need be put in place regarding fisheries management, cost recovery and guaranteed share of the pie etc.

What believe I will need to buy

In my business I would have to invest 6 lots of 125 mud crab shares to reach the equivalent income from that fishery. Cost will be extremely high and I believe the shares would not be there to buy.

2 to 3 Blue swimmers (Fish Trapping) 125 lot of shares

I more lot of prawning shares extra 125 shares but more to compete with those who have extra in the ballot process.

At least one more meshing shares at 125

1 to 2 more Eel trapping shares each 125

Just to get 20 days Hauling (cat 2 estuary Hauling) 125 shares I would need to buy 4 more share lots.

It is also uncertain about what is happening in the hand gathering industry. So may have to purchase more shares to stay in this fishery. This total lack of collaboration among key parties is adding to the immense stress I am under.

Conclusion

A diverse multi endorsed Fishing Business is the only way the industry will always remain sustainable. This allows everything to get a spell.

The SARC recommendation I believe will kill the Estuary General Fishery. it will no longer be viable as the quota's and effort/days are too low. It does not reflect my current fishing operations. The quota allocation is not fair and equitable. Nor is it Just.

Have not been provided with enough information to make a sound business decision.

A total lack of information regarding Economic Analysis, Exit Grant proposal and a whole range of documents has not been sent out for all to read. Sarc Final recommendations document. Not every fisher is computer literate and they have had to rely on others to gather the information like copying documents from DPI web site or

SARC. Nothing is sent in a timely manner.

Working out what to read what not to read. Hearsay information Short summary from SARC which was very careful to only express the positives of the new changes and left out the many negatives.

The whole process up till now as been in my view been inadequate and and ineffective.

The whole process of sharing allocation In Estuary general and Mud Crabs Blue Swimmers trapping with armchair fishermen is not fair . Active Fishers should not have their allocation reduced because of inactive fishers.

To ensure the Fishing Industry each fisherman that works the estuary “MUST” hold a minimum of 5 endorsements. This will stop overfishing when stocks are low.

If stocks are low and you have only a couple of endorsements you will further deplete the stocks.

This will reduce the numbers of fish crabs prawns etc ability to breed and spawn. This will have a profound impact on future stocks.

As outlined before re seasonal and weather .

Example

if you have a wet season there will not be a blue swimmer season they don't like the fresh water.

if you look at catches along with weather history you will see this is the case. refer to (Wallis LaKe c-op) submission Graph.

With the prawns financial year 2014/2015 there was no prawns . it wasn't because there was no prawns it was because Wallis lake was full of Jelly Blubber .(You could walk on water they were so thick.)So could not put the net in the water. then the lake filled up with Red weed once again could not put net in the water. All the above out of our control

So you can see the only way a fishing business and the industry can survive is to have a Multi Endorsed Fishery.

The recommendation with Meshing is going to destroy the industry in Wallis lake. Example. it has been suggested we only go when the price is high.

It is out of our control what price from one day to the next .

it is out of our control what goes to the Sydney market not only from around Australia but also what come in from overseas

*93 days on a 24 hour period will wipe out the lake river system.
meshing is Top Set which is Splash and Pick up and bottom set is catch Flathead which involves setting net from sunrise to sunset.*

*So when the price is good one day fisherman will mesh for there 24 hour period
In a 24 hour period i estimate 16-20 shots in that time because once you clock on you will be forced to work that 24 hours period.*

There is more than 20 Fisherman with meshing endorsements in Wallis lake. So if 20 fisherman decide to go meshing at the same time because the price is good 16-20 shots for that period with 725metre of net equals 11.6 km to 14.5 km of net per person in a 24 hour period.

This equates to approximately 232km to 290 km of net in wallis lake in a 24 hour period. this will wipe out the system in one 24 hour period. At the same time you have the Hauling covering several km of the lake.

This will reduce price and wipe out fish stocks in one 24 hour period.

It will also cause an uproar with Rec fisherman because they won't be able to catch anything and will create fights between fisherman and recs as well as fights with fisherman and oyster farmers and fight with fisherman and fisherman.

This will make the industry unsustainable.

I am 44 years of age and a 4th generational fisherman and have been in the industry all my working life .

As a Professionally skilled commercial fisherman I take great pride in the part I have played in contributing to providing on going full time employment to 14 to 17 people at the Wallis lake Fisherman's Co-operative.

I do not believe at this time that enough focus and consideration has been to given to the social impact that the SARC recommendations are going to have on the future of this community and fishing related infrastructure.

I also draw your attention to the answer of 'Concern no 4' of the latest Response to common concerns raised by Commercial fishers on DPI website.

The example used by SARC in the response states "The value of the NSW Lobster Fishery has increased. etc. It fails to state that the original Lobster quota was gifted to the Lobster fisherman based on catch history. Also I found this to be very misleading. Lobsters are outside in the Ocean. It is vastly different to the Mud crab or Blue swimmer crab fishery. Individuals do not go out in the Ocean at night and raid lobster traps. But unfortunately that is what happens in the Estuary trapping fisheries. Also it fails to state that you can hold shares in a Lobster Fishery without even being a fisherman.

Example one Lobster fisherman buys his extra quota needed from 2 Builders and a nurse.

Also same question states that experience from around Australia has shown profitability generally improves following structural adjustment. Answer did not mention any individual fishery just reference to the AgEcon Study. However that study from what I can see refers to only Commonwealth Fisheries. The word 'Generally improves' is not enough for me to have any faith in how this structural adjustment program is going to make me more viable when I am already viable.

Also Government Contribution question. Answered.... The government has committed around 25 % of the Annual GVP. to subsidize the adjustment. But it fails to state that the contribution from fisherman as stated by the DPI and told to NSW Local MP'S will amount to around \$11,300,000.00 dollars. That is \$13,500,000.00 from government and \$11,300,000.00 from fisherman.

I have no idea how SARC has made their estimates.

I believe there is a lack of balance of who is bearing the cost of this restructure. The over allocation of shares was done by past government and therefore the government should bear the cost of mismanagement past performance which has resulted in this situation.

I also believe that we are being engineered into thinking it will not be that bad and the cost to get to where we need to be to compete won't be very much. I also feel that this is what is being promoted to our local members of parliament.

If we are to have any faith in any restructure then there needs to be more money put forward by this Government to mitigate the mistakes of the past. The reform needs to be stopped pending the outcome of the Inquiry. The whole process needs to go back to the drawing board.

The whole process right up to the preview share trading market and after has been a total shambles. The unlimited unendorsed crew, extra traps in the water now has created much angst in the fishery.

I had trouble getting into the pre view share trading market. It took me around 3 hours. I went in in good faith as was told by PFA, Minister and the DPI that we would get information that will help us make more informed decisions. It was a complete waste of time. Still have no idea about anything whether will get the shares necessary to continue to work at my previous level. Have no idea about the cost whether would have been successful or not whether would have been able to sell shares to get other shares. Was told 3 rounds over 6 weeks . Only had one round. Did not receive anything , nothing zero. Then on the 8th December just before the submission final date for the Inquiry received an email which is impossible to understand.

I have attached the email received from the preview share trading. if you can work it out let me know.

Also attached some questions and answers and other documents from web site.

I have attached my share trading paper but want this to be confidential.

I am beginning to think this whole process is illegal. How can a government department be allowed to get away with continually saying one thing and then doing another.

Finally I cannot afford to buy back my business and do not believe that the government should be doing this to true active fisherman. I also do not believe that the shares will be available. The Stress is relentless and there never seems to be any wins for active fishermen just wins for the "Share Investor" who had inside knowledge long before the Minister made his announcement.

I am also a member of the PFA and Wild Caught Coalition and believe that they will also be putting in a submission .

*Regards
Dean Andrew Elliott*



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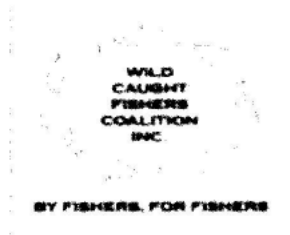
Email: admin@wildcaughtcoalition.com

Commercial Fisher Personal Comments to the Inquiry

Subsidised Trading:

(circle the answer you support)

- In Your opinion is it fair? Yes / No
- Has the process been adequately explained? Yes / No
- Can you access a computer? Yes / No
- Did the training answer your questions? Yes / No
- Can you have ease of trading your shares knowing that you will get
enough to continue what you did pre the reform? Yes / No
- Do you agree that you are trying to buy back your job? Yes / No
- Have you borrowed money? APPLIED FOR LOAN Yes / No
- How will the debt you have incurred affect your viability?
- It will be better? Yes / No
- Do you see that you will have more value in your business? Yes / No
- Do you agree to the need to linking shares with effort or quota? Yes / No
- Do you perceive that the process has made it impossible for you to
regain shares to reach the level of effort for your business viability? Yes / No
- Did you support the message to the Minister that inactive share
holders should be offered a buy-out first with a fair offer? Yes / No
- Did you support the message to the Minister that NO fisher should be
Forced to buy back their jobs to do what they do today? Yes / No
- Is paying even 5% or 10% for the shares taking you into too much debt? Yes / No
- Are you able to participate in the share trading? ONLY IF I BORROW MONEY Yes / No
- Do you support how this reform has been structured? Yes / No
- In the period 2007 to 2016 have you ever agreed to a Reform in this manner? ... Yes / No
- Did your Management Advisory Committee agree to a reform in this manner? ... Yes / No



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Commercial Fisher Personal Comments to the Inquiry

(Circle the answer you support)

Did you know about the 'Pymont Pact' and the decision by NSW Seafood Industry Advisory Committee? To remove 100% inactive effort and 50% active effort? ... Yes ☒ No

Do you support this to be a fair strategy for 2016? Yes ☒ No

Do you agree to the method selected by DPI to use the collective Catch History of the individual fisher, divide this with all fishers across the state in a pro rata distribution for some fisheries to develop quota and or effort? Yes ☒ No

If you disagreed with the Linkage options and the reform; were you welcome to sit at the working group meetings Yes ☒ No

Can you clearly make a business decision from the information that has been provided to you for this Business structural adjustment program at this stage? Yes ☒ No

Are you aware of any harvest strategy or cost benefit analysis? Yes ☒ No

Mock/Preview Share trading:

Did you participate in this? YES Yes / No

Did this resolve your questions? ABSOLUTELY NOT Yes / ☒ No

Please explain:

IT WAS A TOTAL MESS. FIRST
COULD NOT GET ON IT WHEN AFTER 3 HOURS
OF STRESS COULD NOT PUT IN PASSWORD
TOTAL CONFUSION. NO INFORMATION WAS
GIVEN THE WHOLE EXERCISE WAS
A WASTE OF TIME. COULD NOT PURCHASE
THE REQUIRED SHARE I NEEDED



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Commercial Fishers Personal Views

(Circle the answer you support)

Has DPI given you any information and analysis of the outcome of the trading?

Yes / ☒ No

Is it a satisfactory result?

Yes / ☒ No

Please explain:

NO BETTER OFF NOW
STILL CANNOT BE GIVEN ANY
CONFIDENCE ON OUTCOME

Is your current debt prohibiting you from borrowing for your business? Yes/No

Please verify did you utilize the grant for financial advisor? ☒ Yes / ☐ No

Did the advisor confidently recommend investment? Yes / ☒ No

Do you support the changes for unendorsed crew brought out in July? Yes / ☒ No

Why? ABSOLUTELY NOT. THIS IS ~~NOT~~
NON SENSIBLE GET RID OF EXPERIENCED
PROFESSIONAL FISHERMAN & GET SOMEONE
UNENDORSED. YOU WILL REDUCE US
DOWN TO WORKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE

Were you adequately advised of these changes? Yes / ☒ No

your views:

YOU NEVER RECEIVE ANYTHING
ABOUT THE REASON BEHIND A
CHANGE ONLY "IN RESPONSE TO INDUSTRY
FEED BACK"

Do you have the changes in writing that give you clear directions on what is permissible in your region?

Yes / ☒ No



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Personal Commercial Fishers views:

(Circle the answer you support)

Do you have issues in your region with the Prawn Draw?

Yes / No

Please explain

THE DPI HAVE LIEI
TO ALL THE PRAWN FISHERMAN
~~THEY~~ THE CARI ENDORSEMENTS
ARE NOT WHAT IS THE
CASE. THEY HAVE TOLD DIFFERENT
STORIES TO DIFFERENT FISHERMAN

Do you support the further culling of Active commercial fishers from the inshore waters estuaries and lakes in NSW?

Yes / No

Please explain:

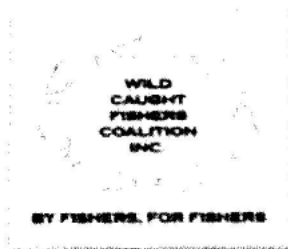
HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?
FOR 30 YEARS YOU HAVE CULLED
US LIKE MONGREAL DOGS
NOW YOU WANT TO KILL US OF
COMPLETELY. 50% REDUCTION OF ACTIVE
FISHERMAN 500 LEFT

Do you support the movement of Quota into other regions

Yes / No

Why?

BECAUSE IT WILL IMPACT ON
SUSTAINABILITY AND DESTROY
THE LAKE



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Personal Commercial Fishers views

(circle the answer your support)

Is there now a visible Increase of trap setting in your region that concerns you?

☒ Yes / No.

If you're an Indigenous Fisher:

Have you been informed of your future participation in the reform adequately?

Please explain:

Are you being ostracised by other fishers since the trapping and hauling net and prawn draw changes have occurredYes / NO

Please explain: _____

If you are a Line West or Line East Fisher please state which fishery and if you know what is proposed for your fishery..... Yes / No.

Please clarify: _____



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Personal Commercial Fishers views

(Circle the answer you support)

Given there is approximately 1% of the Australian Population allowed to commercially fish to provide seafood for approximately 78% of the population who do not fish recreationally do you agree that there is a major management issue in providing local seafood to local communities in NSW?Yes No

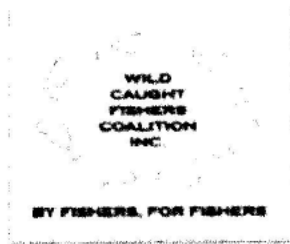
Your views:

IN 1893 THERE WAS AROUND
500 FISHERMAN THE POPULATION OF
NSW WAS 765,000 NOW WE HAVE
7.64 MILLION PEOPLE AND THIS YOU
WANTS TO REDUCE US DOWN TO 500.
THIS IS NOT RIGHT. WE IMPORT 86% OF
SEAFOOD IN THIS STATE ALREADY.

Further Comments.

THIS GOVERNMENT IS ABDICATING
ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TO ITS OWN
PEOPLE. THE SCIENTISTS STATE
WE MUST STOP EATING SEAFOOD THAT IS
PACKED FULL OF ANTIBIOTICS.
WHY IS OUR GOVERNMENTS NOT
LISTENING. WE HAVE A COUNTRY
SURROUNDED BY WATER. IN NSW
YOU HAVE LOCKED OUT ALMOST 30%
OF OUR RIVERS & ESTUARIES. WHEN WILL THIS

Remember to attach correspondence you have sent to DPI, or the Minister, STOP



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I AM A 4TH GENERATIONAL
FISHERMAN & I AM BEING
SQUEEZED OUT.
THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE
GOT THEMSELVES ON TO BOARDS
AND COMMITTEES ARE NOW
SET TO TAKE OVER
THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT
PUT ENOUGH MONEY ON THE
TABLE AND THEY KNOW IT.
NO ACTIVE HARD WORKING
FISHERMAN SHOULD BE BUYING
~~AND~~ THEIR JOBS BACK.
THAT REFORM IS WRONG.
NO IMPACT STUDIES DONE
NO COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS DONE
NO RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
NO FRAME WORK
NO COST RECOVERY
NO GUARANTEE OF GETTING
SHARES
IT IS AN ABSOLUTE TRAVESTY
AN ABOMINATION OF THE
RIGHTS OF COMMERCIAL
FISHERMAN

