

**Submission
No 97**

INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Name suppressed

Date received: 9 December 2016

Attention: Robert Brown

RE: Commercial Fishing Reforms-Parliamentary Inquiry

Dear Sir,

I am a Professional fisherman and owner of NSW Region 4 Estuary General Fishing Business number . My commercial fisher registration is . I am based in Port Stephens and commercially harvest wild caught seafood for sale within NSW.

I operate within the rules of the Fisheries Act and its Administration guide. The methods and gear that I use are regarded as "world's best practice". The fisheries I engage in are sustainable and not at risk of over fishing, as deemed by our current Environmental Impact Statement.

I am also a registered contractor of the Department of Primary Industry's Research Facility at Taylors Beach. I have worked with Fisheries Research over many projects,

I am also a Licenced Firearms Dealer and owner of Straight Shooter Firearms. I promote responsible firearms ownership and ethical hunting and vermin control. I have served firearms owners of Port Stephens and the greater Mid North Coast region since 2009. I am a registered provider and trainer of the Department of Primary Industry's Hunter Leap Education Program , providing R Licences and Safety Training to appropriate candidates.

I write to you regarding the proposed structural reform of the Commercial Fishing Industry. As you may be aware, there is strong opposition from within industry, particularly from the 20% of the industry that provides 80% of the catch.

Opposition to the reform is partly based on the proposed equal allocation of all catch history. While most business support "amalgamation" (buy more, get more), there is majority opposition to "equal allocation" (buy your catch history back of an in active business, to come back to current levels).

Further opposition comes from proposed "output controls" as a way of forcing fishers to trade, such as "days to fish" and "catch & species quotas". These output controls are mechanisms designed to manage at risk or overfished fisheries, which we are not. Fishers are concerned about "days" because

1. For their own safety having to fish in adverse weather conditions to use their days.
2. Having to use more net/gear than they normally would to capitalise on their days.
3. Upsetting the public by the use of additional gear/nets in shared areas, day and night.
4. An over concentration of commercial operators at peak time during the seasons, requiring commercial fishers to queue boats and vehicles on beaches.
5. Concentrated fishing effort causing lower market prices throughout peak times.

Fishers are concerned about Catch/Species quota because

1. High/selective grading of fish at harvest, seeing lesser grade fish returned dead to the water to save quota.
2. Black marketing of seafood by commercial and recreational fishers.
3. Higher prices required for NSW species alongside fish from other states.
4. 100% cost recovery for quota management from DPI. Causing them to make significant decisions about their business without knowing how much it will cost them to maintain.

These concepts have been devised by a small group of fishermen, heavily affiliated with the National Party, who seek to regulate much of their immediate commercial competition out of work. Many of this small group took on representative roles on behalf of industry, gathered information, and did not disseminate any of the information back to the greater industry.

As a result they began accumulating large amounts of shares during a time that there had been no ministerial announcements and no clear advantage of buying more shares. As a result, many of the shares now required by the active fishers have already been accumulated by them.

Many of those engaged in "share speculating" are also involved in self-appointed industry organisations such as the Professional Fishermen's Association and NSW Seafood Industry Council. These organisations are not supported and do not represent the views of the greater industry.

For the Minister and the department to have fairly introduced a reform that involved share trading, there should have been a hold on all shares trading prior to the ministerial announcement. Many individuals, coops and investors gained advantage from information which was supposed to be under "parliamentary secrecy".

The main reasoning for the reform was due to perceived over allocation of shares and potential latent effort. Latent effort has been exaggerated as a significant problem to drive this reform. The reality is latent effort has always been regulated by the existing output control of "owner operator", where one business equals one pair of hands. Even if a fisher has multiple endorsements, they could only humanly use 1 or 2 of those endorsements in a 24 hour period.

This output control of "owner operator" has always maintained the value of the shares in each share class at a realistic value, and has always seen these fishing business past down to younger owner operators. Keeping the ownership of these businesses and the money they spend in the coastal communities where they operate.

While this reform seeks to redefine the access, the provision to allow unendorsed crew by an operator will see all effort applied to all share classes simultaneously by an operator, across the state. It is not in the best interest of the fishery or the fish stocks.

The selected linkages appear to only favour the shareholder that derives their income leasing quota to other fishermen, over the shareholder that catches fish.

I firmly believe this proposed reform of the commercial fishing industry is not in the best interest of any stakeholder. All international expert reports where such linkages have been introduced have shown this form of fishery management to be flawed.

Sincerely