

**Submission
No 129**

INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Ms Reala Brislane
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N.S.W

The Director

General purpose standing Committee No5

Parliament House

Macquarie Street

Sydney N.S.W

Dear Director,

I entered the fishing industry in 1991.

I had to purchase a state and a commonwealth license and also own and operate my own business.

I had to solely derive my entire income from fishing as a requirement in which I have done for the past 25 years.

Around 1993 came the introduction of lobster quota. The criteria was based on weight caught in particular years requested by fisheries. I was allocated 13 shares. The minimal share holding was set at 55 shares. So I paid a private solicitor to forward my case which I was then allowed the right to catch my 13 shares. Then years later purchased more shares to raise my share holding to fisheries requirements.

Then around 1999/2000 came the introduction of restricted fisheries and Share management. The criteria was based on catch returns and methods in set years. Again I was left short of a few catch returns of effort to meet the requirements to keep fishing at my current level. In order to keep working I had to purchase an existing fishing business so my catch efforts would meet the criteria fisheries were asking. I had to borrow around \$30,000.00

and acquired a fishing business from a broker. I then had to attend Coffs Harbour courthouse to present my purchase to a panel of fisheries employees. I was unsure of the process and the procedure I was instructed by a fisheries employee that I would have to amalgamate the two businesses I owned together and not knowing to me at the time surrender the existing methods and catch history on the newly purchased fishing business, I signed something they handed to me and as I wasn't entirely explained of the process at the time an amount of catch returns and methods that I now need today were absorbed into the system. I asked fisheries for a copy of whatever I signed as I was seeking the effort and method returns and never received a copy of the signed document. They pulled the wool over my eyes as I later found out they had done to same to other fishers.

I continued to work and fish everyday and fourteen years into my fishing career I had saved enough money and also felt stable in my fishing future to purchase a house. I put a roof over my family of four children. My children, especially my two sons enjoyed going to work with me. I worked everyday and hard to keep up with my mortgages and to provide for my family.

In 2011 I took out a loan for \$100,000.00 so my two sons who were 15 and 18 at the time could follow me and enter the fishing industry. My 2 sons were to use the knowledge they had learnt from fishing beside me and repay the loan. They like I worked everyday and hard in all sorts of weather, kept up the repayments and at the

ages of 20 and 23 paid the loan off and both owned their own businesses. They were in my eyes the future of the fishing industry.

During the start of their fishing career the reform was introduced. The over issuing of shares back when share management started. The fact that latent licenses were laying around and could be activated. There was a need to reduce numbers of fishing businesses.

Working parties were put together. I put a letter in for the estuary groups for which my sons and myself were working in everyday. Having 3 owner operating estuary businesses in my household I felt the need to be apart of our future. It was a requirement to be a stakeholder in estuary shares to be on the working parties. My letter of application was rejected and I later found that leasees of estuary businesses had filled these positions.

I however got on trap and line and also spanner crab working parties. I attended every meeting and also travelled to Sydney to meet with fisheries. The idea was for us all work together and create possible ways that this reform process could introduce itself and work. The majority of the time our input did not count one bit, we were dictated down to the most ridiculous ideas that would destroy the hard worker of the industry. As catch history had been previously used in adjustments to the industry the despair of all your hardwork in all sorts of weather elements being handed out to latent licenses that chose not to work was an unfair call.

The reality of the hardworking fisher who would have to buy his job back over and over has caused enormous stress. At the age of 51 with a mortgage

no bank or financial institution was going to lend me money. Why should I have to get into debt to keep doing what I had done for the past 25 years???

Part of the reform was to give a share a value. I have searched for the shares I need to purchase to keep my current level to no avail. Share barons have greedily bought everything and forced prices way above their actual catch value. At this stage I will not be able to work at my current level and my business and life will suffer. I believe owner operator is a good control measure and an effective way to reform the fishing industry. The overall summary of the reform is based on an incase scenario of latent licenses becoming active. In our current scheme fish stocks have only risen. There is no current sense in a days regime an example is issuing a fisher with a day classed as a 24hr period. Work Safe doesn't allow workers to work a full 24hr period - why should fishers be forced to do so. There is a need to restructure this whole reform. Fairness for the hardworkers. I really don't see it being fair when at the current prices of shares I will need to spend ~~£~~Over a \$100,000.00 to keep fishing like I've done for the past 25 years. Please consider the ridiculous issues of this reform.

Reala Brislane