

**Submission
No 158**

**INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH
WALES**

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From Allan Farrell
Fisherman

To the Commercial Fishing Inquiry

9/12/16

To whom it may concern

My name is Allan Farrell. I have been a commercial fisherman for 35 years.

From day one I have had Fisheries Managers telling me what and how to do things. One of the main things which we have been told is to diversify ("don't put all your eggs in one basket"). Now DPI – Fisheries are forcing me to do exactly the opposite to continue my basic operation as it requires me to purchase shares in three different fisheries to maintain the same level of output as I do now.

When share management arrived and was brought into being we were told that catch history was obsolete and would not be used in any further management considerations. Now DPI – Fisheries has come out and based all of their assumptions and strategies using catch history, not on a personal basis but on an overall record. This means that if I caught five tonnes of fish and someone else catches none that bloke gets two and a half tonnes to even it up.

Regarding the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry:

Point 1

Section C

Relates to scientific research into Management. All fisheries in NSW have been proven to be sustainable. This means to me that the reforms have no scientific basis at all.

Section D

If there has been any work done by the Resource Assessment Unit then they have never been seen by anybody that I know.

Section E

Aims of the Business Adjustment Program

- (i) In the Stevens Report it continually stated that the Fisheries Department has mismanaged things. Now the Department want us to pay for the "over-allocation of shares" to fix up their mistakes.
- (ii) Implementation to date has been a complete joke like:
 - a. Unlicensed crew will be unendorsed commercial fishers, providing extra effort that will suit some people but will take opportunity away from other endorsement holders;
 - b. Crabbing quota already issued and prawning changes: This is a sweetener to get some fishers to appear happy, yet before the reform process is even complete, some elements are already being adopted like additional crab traps, etc.
- (iii) The impact on the industry to date has been horrific, with many people in my area already sold out because of the requirement to buy more shares just to maintain their turnover at present as they cannot see any future in the fishing industry.
This will probably lead to the demise of the Clarence River Fishermen's Co-operative. If this happens more people will go down with it, myself included.
Co-operatives were formed to pool costs, etc. If the Co-operative closes the cost to me and every other fisher will be enormous (eg: Cool Room ~\$5000.00; Ice Machine ~\$6000.00, etc) and the worst thing is I will have to market all of my product.
- (iv) Concerning the economic modelling underpinning the restructure, I don't think there has been any at all. If there has it has been cherry picked to look good. The fact of the matter is, fishers who choose to remain in the industry will have to purchase two or three more parcels of shares to do exactly what they are doing now. If proper modelling has been done it would have shown up the vulnerability of Co-operatives and fishers to non-profitability.

The minister continually referred to "latent effort" as the main danger to the fisheries, when in effect he is activating it by attaching catch history from active fishers to it.

Latent effort is not a problem because it takes tens of thousands of dollars to activate it (boat purchase, nets, traps, "know how", etc.).

Fisheries say that they have had much consultation. This is wrong; all that they have done is tell us what they are going to do, but they cannot tell us exactly how or if it will work.

From what we fishers can gather, is that the Department has had advice (no one knows where from) and most of it has been bad or self-centred.

There are speculators out there that have up to fifteen separate businesses (impossible to work them all) who will hold the average fisher to ransom. The minister says that we will be better off. What a joke.

Yours in fishing,

Allan Farrell

PS: Bring on the next election.