



P.O. Box 630  
NARRABEEN NSW  
2101

30<sup>th</sup> June 2005

The Honourable Ian MacDonald, MLA  
Minister for Primary Industries  
Level 30 Governor Macquarie Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
Sydney, NSW, 2000

Dear Minister,

In October and December of 2003 staff from your Department met with representatives from the commercial and recreational fishing sectors to discuss the way forward for the formation of regional liaison forums with the aim of bringing together stakeholders to minimize conflict between the recreational and commercial sectors. An AAG representative attended these early meetings, and his comments at the time was that the concept is basically a good one as everyone wants a sustainable wild fishery and this will make Fisheries accountable for their decisions and actions. Bringing together the various stakeholders for discussions will likely minimise conflict, at least until the stage when the allocation of the shared resource is reached.

A subsequent Sydney Pro-Am meeting in April 2004 attended by two of your advisors, Jamie Gibson and Don Stewart, plus Daniel Raff from NSW Fisheries, gave more details of the concept for the establishment of these "Regional Liaison Forums", and it transpired that the re-opening of the Shaw's Bay mullet shot in the Richmond River was being taken as a good example of what can be achieved with these "Regional Liaison Forums" between recreational and professional fishers.

At this April 2004 Sydney Pro-Am meeting it was stated that these "Regional Liaison Forums" could be setup for single issue purposes, and that is the likely relaxation of restrictions on commercial fishers.

This proposal did have it opponents within the recreational fishing community, with some being concerned that the apathetic nature of recreational anglers could lead to a domineering influence from the professional sector. Others had concerns that the process

may be used to modify, review or change the Recreational Fishing Havens, and that trade-offs may be negotiated at public expense for one particular commercial group.

It appears your intention is to see a productive relationship between the recreational and professional fishers and the Fisheries Department. This is supported by further statements made by yourself in Parliament, eg Hansard of 16/11/2004: "I like this question. It is another variation on a series of questions asked by the Hon. Jon Jenkins. He seems intent on re-creating the division between commercial and recreational fishers. I caution him to be careful in what he says".

You have stated on a number of occasions that you are determined to maintain a viable commercial fishing industry, as exemplified from Hansard 28/10/2004 "We need to maintain a steady supply of locally caught fish—not imported fish from South-East Asia and other countries—rather than continuing to curtail".

The formation of these "Regional Liaison Forums" appears to have fallen by the wayside. But various responses by yourself and your department have made it clear that consultation between stakeholders for the purpose of relaxing commercial restrictions is still on the agenda. In your reply to AAG's support of the extension of the netting ban on the Black Road bait ground, you stated: "This closure may be reviewed if a consensus approach can be reached between the commercial and recreational advisory bodies in the future". The NSW DPI Fisheries Manager for the Estuary Prawn Trawl advised the following; "I can confirm that the Minister has decided not to change the operating hours for prawn trawlers in Broken Bay, but will review the arrangement should a consensus approach be supported by the key advisory bodies on commercial and recreational fishing".

Our questions are:

- Are you and your Department still pushing ahead with the concept of a "productive relationship" between the commercial and recreational sector and your Department, and if so, then what format will this take?
- Will discussions take place between various advisory bodies that are already in place. For the recreational sector this will be ACoRF. Or will there be another structure of representatives from the commercial and recreational sectors and your department?
- If a separate structure, how will representatives from the recreational sector be chosen? Will these groups be local to the area such as the original concept of "regional liaison forums" or will there be one advisory body?
- If using the current structure, how do you envisage that the consensus process will work between the commercial sector and ACoRF?

Communication is probably the key to reducing conflict between the recreational and commercial sectors, and they do share common interests by wanting a sustainable wild fishery, exclusions brought about by the marine parks process, and management issues from NSW DPI (Fisheries). However, if this process is to be used by the commercial

sector to relax current restrictions, whether they be in recreational fishing havens or not, and no matter what the trade-offs (if any) may be, then there will be many in the recreational sector who will see the process as favouring the commercial sector in the allocation of a shared resource. Any process where consensus in resource allocation is to be reached must be carefully thought through, and decisions must be based on sustainable fisheries and not political agendas.

Yours sincerely

Phillip Ingram  
President  
Anglers Action Group (Sydney Northside) Inc.