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20<sup>th</sup> April 2006

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

Dear Minister,

**Re: National Conservation Council's article in the Sydney Morning Herald**

From your statements on the Hi-Tide radio program on Sunday 16th April it was obvious that you and your Department were well aware of the report "Empty Oceans, Empty Nets" by the Hunter Community Environment Centre that researches the state of NSW Fisheries. This was followed up with the articles "Fish stocks near collapse" and "Net profits divided over catch" that appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald on Friday 14th April 2006, and subsequent news items on the ABC by the Nature Conservation Council.. The first article and subsequent news items were not only blatantly anti-fishing with the statements made, but the implications are that the Department of Primary Industries are not doing their job in managing the Fisheries of NSW.

Both you and your staff have to be commended on your rebuttal on various radio programs of some of the claims made by the NCC. Dr Steve Keneally stated on ABC TV News "that no NSW stocks are under threat, nor in imminent danger of collapse. All stocks are being harvested sustainably and constantly monitored by the Fisheries managers." Also by you on Hi-Tide on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> April when you pointed out the NCC's misuse of commercial catch data in their report in proving their case. We do wonder though if this is sufficient as this is a tactic that the NCC consistently employs to push their anti-fishing agenda.

In correspondence with you on 13th July 2004 we highlighted a segment on the ABC current affairs program the 7.30 Report of 6th July 2004 concerning the grey nurse shark and Montague Island, plus documents on their web site and other radio interviews. In this correspondence we pointed out the commonality of all of these were the facts presented by the NCC concerning the grey nurse being at odds with what NSW Fisheries presented at the stakeholders forum on the grey nurse on 29th May 2004. This is despite the fact that the same representative of the NCC was present at this forum, and was fully aware of the information that was presented.

We accept the fact, as do you, that organizations are free to express various views on behalf of their members (we express our views quite a lot, but we try to base them on factual information). We also accept the fact that you, as indicated in your reply to that correspondence, consider it "appropriate that a conservation representative be included as a representative on these committees to provide a conservation based view to the discussion." But is the NCC the group that's best suited for this role?

In view of the report and subsequent claims by the NCC:

- Will you or your department consider contacting the NCC to contest their research and claims? If not, then why not?

- Will you consider replacing the NCC representatives on the various recreational fishing committees with one from another organization? If not, then why not?

Additionally, we have had previous correspondence with you concerning recognition of a peak body for recreational fishers (2<sup>nd</sup> April 2004) and your reply indicated your consideration was basically that ACoRF served the role this "peak body". As the Government via the Marine Park Act 1997 recognizes the Nature Conservation Council as the peak non-government environment organization for NSW as it serves as an umbrella organization for over 120 conservation groups and scientific societies in NSW, then follow-on questions are:

- Noting that ACoRF is a Ministerially-appointed advisory committee which makes recommendations to the Minister, will the NSW Government consider the recognition of a peak, non-government organization for recreational fishers of NSW, one that serves as an umbrella organization for the many recreational fishing groups in NSW, as has been done with the NCC?

- As the State Government already funds the NCC with both its core business and special projects, and also with a special one-off payment following the withdrawal by the Commonwealth Government of its Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisation (GVEHO) program, will the State Government provide similar funding for an equivalent body for recreational fishers? If not, then why not?

- If the State Government is not willing to recognize a non-Government peak body for recreational fishers, then why does the Government, through an act of legislation,

recognize an environmental lobby group as a peak non-government environmental group and not one for recreational fishers?

With the NCC's blatant and consistent misuse of known facts to push their own anti-fishing agenda, and their implied sleight of the Department of Primary Industries management of the State's fisheries, one has to wonder at the validity of their comments on the various committees, and if the NCC is the appropriate environmental group to have on these committees. There are other environmental groups that could fill the role just as well. Additionally, it seems apparent the Government accepts the recognition of peak, non-government organizations and these are done through legislation, we wonder why a similar group for recreational fishers is not recognized by the government.

Yours sincerely

Phillip Ingram  
President  
Anglers Action Group