



P.O. Box 630
NARRABEEN NSW
2101

12th August, 2004

Illegal Fishing Review,
c/- PO Box 21,
Cronulla NSW 2230

Comments on the Report on Illegal Fishing for Commercial Gain or Profit in NSW

In May 2004 Mick Palmer released the Report on Illegal Fishing for Commercial Gain or Profit in NSW. This correspondence are the comments on this report by the Anglers Action Group (Sydney Northside) Inc.

Our group agrees with the sentiments of the report that the practice of unlicensed illegal harvesting and sale of fish and crustaceans in NSW is unacceptable, and that some of the activities may be unsustainable in certain situations, particularly for low-fecundity and/or slow growing species of finfish, crustaceans and shellfish.

We also agree with many of the findings and recommendations made in the report.

However, some of the recommendations we have issues with as they are aimed at increased restrictions for the recreational sector by either access restrictions, or more restrictive catch limits with either bag and/or boat limits. These are seen as a redistribution of the resource in favour of the commercial sector. The report does not recognize the fact that illegal harvesters are not interested in the recreational bag limits as these are ignored by those involved in these activities. The report also fails to recognize the fact that recreational bag limits are in fact possession limits, so some of the findings given in the report are already covered by existing legislation. There are other ways of controlling illegal activities other than implementing more restrictive access and catch limits for the recreational sector. Included here are aspects of the receivers and the judicial system and appropriate penalties, all areas recognized in the report.

We also have concerns regarding the increased enforcement role for Fisheries Officers as recreational trust moneys directly funds 16 Fisheries Officers. Another aspect is that this could well lead to an increase in duties by Fishcare Volunteers in roles previously

undertaken by Fisheries Officers - this again has recreational trust money being involved. It is the commercial sector that will benefit most from an increased enforcement role aimed at illegal fishing for commercial gain, particularly if recommendations for more restrictive bag limits are approved. Reducing illegal fishing for commercial gain or profit by increased enforcement aims at maintaining "the ability of the legitimate fishing industry to properly plan and manage its business affairs and maintain confidence and profitability in the industry". We have no objections to these goals provided they are not done at the expense of the recreational sector, but this would be a likely outcomes if this course is followed. This is an outcome that many in our group have objections with, particularly with the talk of increasing the recreational fishing license to keep in-line with inflation, increased access restrictions and a less equitable distribution of the resource between the commercial and recreational sectors.

Finally, these recommended restrictions to the recreational sector were only permitted under Point 7 of the Terms of Reference of the investigation: "Address other matters referred by the Director-General, NSW Fisheries, or the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, or matters identified by the forum". It would probably have been better for the investigation, and the report and its recommendations and findings, if this all-inclusive point was not included in the terms of reference as attention would then be focused on the main issues.

Yours sincerely

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