



P.O. Box 630
NARRABEEN NSW
2101

13th July 2005

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

Dear Minister,

AAG has been cc'd a letter (with photographic support) to you from the coordinator of the South West Rocks Marine Group dated 23 June 2005. It concerns an incident that occurred at South West Rocks on Saturday 14th May 2005. This took place at Front Creek where a school of sea mullet had become landlocked, and present were vehicles and boats from local beach hauling crews together with a vehicle with a Fisheries Research sign.

Of concern is the paragraph in the letter that reads as follows:

"I spoke with the person who stated he was the DPI Fisheries research officer. I stated that the assembled crew did not hold any estuary endorsements or permits. He agreed they only held beach haul licenses but stated that they could net the fish under his research permit. He stated that he intended to net the area."

Whether this conversation took place or not is immaterial, as is the subsequent opening of the lake that evening to let the mullet run to sea and supposedly into nets. What this alleged conversation does is raise a number of questions that require answers, namely:

- Do the regulations allow people without the proper license to use commercial fishing gear to catch fish under the research permits held by DPI Fisheries research, or other, officers?

- If so, is this permissible at the discretion of the Fisheries officer or are there controls in place where approval needs to be obtained or at least more senior staff notified?

- If no controls are in place, then why not?

- Are there any conditions, restrictions or stipulations that allow such use of a Fisheries officers permit? If so, then what are they?

We are aware that there may be times when commercial fishers or other people may be called in for a research project and to carry out specific operations for which they are otherwise not legally entitled to do, such as the limited netting of the recreational fishing haven in Botany Bay for the catch-and-release project in 2003. The problem is the potential for abuse of the system, or what may be seen or interpreted by others as the abuse of the system with collusion or something more serious. Fisheries staff must not only act with propriety, but they must also be seen to act with propriety. The public must also be assured that procedures are in place to ensure that this happens.

Yours Sincerely

Phillip Ingram
President
Anglers Action Group (Sydney Northside) Inc