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3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2004

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

Dear Minister,

There has been recent press coverage regarding the proliferation of the weed *Salvinia* in the Hawkesbury River between Sackville and Windsor. What has not been covered by the media is the outbreak of *Egeria densa*. Media coverage of the *Salvinia* is to be expected, as *Salvinia* forms a dense mat-like coverage on the surface. The *Egeria densa* is possibly more detrimental to the ecology of the area, but it forms dense strands on the river's bottom, and is not visible and does not receive the public's attention.

Both infestations are thought to result from a combination of high nutrient levels from agriculture and sewage outfalls, together with low flow regimes which are exacerbated by the current drought. Both impact on the ecology of the river, *Salvinia* by preventing light penetrating the photic zone, and *Egeria densa* by smothering and out competing natural river fauna.

When asked on the radio program Hi-Tide on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2004 about possible action by NSW Fisheries into the *Salvinia* outbreak, the Director General of NSW Fisheries stated that Fisheries will not become involved until it starts to be detrimental to the fish. Although both weed infestations are not harming individual fish, they are having a detrimental effect on the habitat and environment in which many fish species live. This is much the same as *Caulerpa taxifolia*. Although *Caulerpa* is a macro algae, it is not

harmful to individual fish, but can overtake their habitat, and yet NSW Fisheries has shown great interest in, and researched, the eradication of Caulerpa, recently releasing a management plan for its control.

This seems to raise various issues, namely:

- Exactly when does NSW Fisheries become involved in the management and control of aquatic weeds?
- If it is, as the Director General states, not Fisheries responsibility until fish are affected, then why is there the small grants program for habitat restoration of rivers and estuaries from funds from the Recreational Fishing Trust, and why was money set aside for habitat improvement in the Clarence River?

It seems that NSW Fisheries is either taking liberties with license money or is selective in habitat control, restoration and improvement issues. Most anglers are environmentally aware, as the recent planting by members of Bass Sydney in the riparian zone of South Creek, and the willow removal projects by members of the Council of Freshwater Anglers, have shown. Most would also approve of habitat restoration and control programs from license money. If NSW Fisheries won't get involved in habitat problems before fish are affected, then why should license money go to help restoring fish habitats, especially when the causes for this habitat deterioration is due to other areas or sectors such as agriculture or sewage?

Lastly, now that Mineral Resources, Fisheries, Agriculture and State Forests have been combined into the Department of Primary Industries, will there be closer ties between the various departments in rehabilitation of habitats in the aquatic environment?

Yours Sincerely

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