

Mr Phillip Ingram
President
Anglers Action Group (Sydney Northside) Inc
PO Box 630
NARRABEEN NSW 2101

Dear Mt Ingram

Thank you for your letter of 8 January 2004 to the Hon Ian Macdonald MLC, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, regarding the sustainability of the baitfish fishery in NSW. The Minister has asked me to respond on his behalf.

I note the issues you have raised and can advise that the collection of bait species by NSW ocean hauling, purse seine, line fishers and Commonwealth Tuna operators has been included as part of the ocean hauling fishery management strategy, which commenced operation from 1 November 2002.

The fishery management strategy indicates that new access arrangements for Commonwealth tuna operators gathering bait will be developed progressively over the next two year. The fishery is to become a restricted fishery and regulations will shortly be drafted to allow for this process.

The first step has been to limit ongoing purse seine permits to existing permit holders while these new arrangements are being developed. Eligibility for a permit to take bait for tuna fishing with a purse seine net was previously based on a demonstrated regular collection of bait for tuna fishing since at least 1980.

The use of lift nets to take bait for Commonwealth tuna fishing operations has also become subject to permit arrangements, and will be included in the restricted live bait for Commonwealth tuna operations fishery.

A log book reporting system for permit holders has been implemented by NSW Fisheries to ensure that the commercial harvest from NSW waters is known. Fisheries harvesting in Commonwealth fisheries report directly to the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA). NSW Fisheries and AFMA work cooperatively to exchange this information.

This strategy contains performance review trigger points that take into consideration catches in the fishery and of any species under other jurisdictions. As such, when any review is undertaken the total withdrawal from the stock is considered.

If it is determined that a reduction of catch levels is required in the future, the most appropriate mechanism may be utilised. A wide variety of management tools exist for this purpose, including time and area closures or output controls such as introducing quotas.

If you have further enquiries please do not hesitate to contact Ms Dianna Watkins,
Principal Manager, Commercial Fisheries on (02) 9527 8547

Yours sincerely

STEVE DUNN
Director-General, NSW Fisheries