

New South Wales

Minister for Primary Industries

MA04/1070
MP104/4775
(Stamped 23 Dec 2004)

Mr Phillip Ingram
President
Anglers Action Group (Sydney Northside) Inc
PO Box 630
NARRABEEN NSW 2010

Dear Mr Ingram

Thank you for your letter of 28 October 2004 concerning the sustainability of baitfish stock.

I note your concern about the implementation of the monitoring program required under the fishery management strategies, as a consequence of the suspension of the new fee for this program. The Department of Primary Industries is undertaking further consultation with the commercial fishing industry on the introduction of the fee, in light of industry's concerns about its ability to pay higher costs. I can assure you that the work associated with the monitoring program is continuing.

Currently access to bait resources in NSW waters for use in the tuna industry is managed under a system of permits issued under Section 37 of the *Fisheries Management Act 1994*. Permits are issued only to the skippers of vessels that have valid NSW licenses and where a history of gathering bait in NSW waters has been verified.

In November 2002, the *Ocean Hauling Fishery Management Strategy* was approved under both NSW State and Commonwealth environmental legislation. Included in this strategy was a requirement to implement a cap on the number of vessels gathering bait for tuna fishing operations and to develop longer-term access arrangements for the Tuna Bait sector of the fishery.

To meet objectives of the strategy, the NSW Government announced that a restricted fishery would be created to replace the current permit system, covers the taking of blue mackerel, yellowtail scad and pilchards from NSW waters with purse seine or lift nets for use as live bait in tuna fishing operations.

A regulation of the new restricted fishery is currently being drafted. Once finalised, an application process will be conducted to determine eligibility to the fishery. In the interim, no additional permits are not being issued.

A logbook was introduced for the holders of tuna bait permits in late July 2003 and fishers have now been submitting returns since mid August 2003. Catches so far for

the approximately 29 vessels that have submitted returns, totalled around 130 tonnes for the first year.

If you have further enquiries please do not hesitate to contact Mr Darryl Sullings, Fisheries Manager Ocean Haul on (02) 9527 8548.

Yours sincerely

IAN MACDONALD MLC
NSW MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES