

**Minister for Natural Resources
Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Mineral Resources**

MP106/379

(Stamped 24 Apr 2006)

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

Dear Mr Ingram

Thank you for your letter of 16 January 2006 concerning the use of data collected by volunteer divers, particularly with regard to the Harbourkeepers program organized by the National Parks Association (NPA).

The Harbourkeepers program is an NPA initiative, NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) officers provided some assistance to NPA with the design and development of their survey recording process. In return, NPA have agreed to provide the data to NSW DPI for inclusion in the Departmental database of fish records and hence make it available through the NSW Government's *Bionet* web service.

NSW DPI fish records database collates data from a wide range of sources including the Department's research programs, statutory reporting processes, technical publications and members of the public. It includes much more detailed information about individual records than is provided through the *Bionet* web service. Some of this information relates to the circumstances under which the data was collected, thus allowing data users (decision makers) to assess the reliability and representativeness of the data. The information is not provided to the *Bionet* public service for a number of reasons including privacy and intellectual property considerations. However, the complete dataset is available to inform decisions. It is premature to determine whether data provided through the Harbourkeepers program will have any relevance to future decision making processes.

I am confident that the Government assessment and decision making processes, including those associated with marine park selection, zoning and management, are made with consideration of the widest available range of information and in a professional manner.

NSW DPI actively encourages members of the public to report sightings of fish species via the threatened, protected and pest species sightings program (please see:

http://www.fisheries.nsw.gov.au/threatened_species/general/community_involvement). A brochure about the program is enclosed. Members of the Anglers Action Group would be welcome to provide reports.

Yours sincerely

IAN MACDONALD MLC

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