

New South Wales
Department of Primary Industries

V06/164
(stamped 13 JUL 2006)

Mr Phillip Ingram
President
Anglers Action Group
PO Box 630
NARRABEEN NSW 2101

Dear Mr Ingram

The Minister has asked me to review outstanding correspondence that was referenced in an article in a recent edition of Fishing World.

I am sure you appreciate the immense task of consolidating all the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) correspondence and I assure you that by far the majority of all correspondence has received a response. This includes many of the letters listed in your article. Given the frequency and complexity of the issues you have raised in your correspondence the Minister has asked me to respond to you on his behalf.

There is no record of your letter dated 25 June 2005 regarding spearfishing at Lord Howe Island. However, in response to your letters of 21 January 2005 and 6 November 2005 regarding spearfishing at Lord Howe Island and community consultation it was suggested that you meet with NSW DPI staff to discuss the matter in detail. As I am advised that you have not taken the opportunity to meet with staff my response on those issues follows.

The consultation process required to establish marine parks in NSW is set out in legislative provisions in the Marine Parks Act 1997 and the Fisheries Management Act 1994. While these minimum requirements are set out in legislation, it has been the Government's practice to use a far more extensive process to help ensure that community input can occur to the greatest extent possible. Marine park zoning plans are developed following extensive community consultation with user groups, including commercial and recreational fishers, charter boat operators, SCUBA divers, and indigenous communities three separate stages of the planning of a marine park. A formal local advisory committee and a range of local stakeholder groups also provide extensive advice to the Marine Parks Authority during the development of marine park zoning plans. The development of zoning plans allows for a case-by-case assessment of each of the unique circumstances within each park.

In the case of Lord Howe Island Marine Park, I am advised that during the development of zoning arrangements the views expressed in responses to the development of draft zoning arrangements the views expressed in responses to the draft zoning plan were

carefully considered, including those of the Lord Howe Island community, who in general do not support the taking of fish by spearfishing. With regards to your comments on “weighting factors”, consultation reports show various percentages that reflect the particular, and often very opposing, views of the many stakeholder groups. The Government’s role is to try and balance conservation imperatives with the views of all stakeholders. During this process the opinions of local communities must always be given particular consideration as zoning outcomes have the potential to have a significant impact on their lives.

With regard to your letter dated 17 March 2006 concerning the timeframe for the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park, the Government is acting quickly and efficiently to facilitate the zoning process. The time allowed for this has been set so that it is long enough to give adequate time for consultation, but is not overly long so as to avoid leaving industry and community groups in an extended period of uncertainty.

With regard to your letter dated 23 March 2006, and 11 May 2006, marine parks are multiple use and recreational fishing is able to continue in the majority of the marine parks. Generally, 80% of a marine park remains open to recreational fishing to ensure that good fishing opportunities continue.

Unfortunately, NSW DPI has no record of your correspondence to the former Director-General of Fisheries concerning mullet and recreational fishing havens.

Yours sincerely

B D BUFFIER
DIRECTOR GENERAL