



P.O. Box 630
NARRABEEN
NSW 2101

5th November, 2004

The Secretary,
RecFish Australia,
P O Box 854
Dickson ACT 2602

Dear Sir,

The importance of recreational fishing has been recognised by the Federal Government with election pledges of:

- a grant of \$400,000 over 4 years to develop RecFish Australia as an effective National peak body for recreational anglers in Australia (even though Federal funding was previously cut by the Government back in 1996). With new funding stream this it appears that the Federal Government recognises the need and importance of peak bodies for recreational fishing consultation.
- a development grant of \$15m for recreational fishing which, we understand, will be available over 3 years,

This recognition by the Federal Government of both recreational fishing and a peak body is seen as a big step forward, and its timing is fortuitous as RecFish Australia has had a discussion paper for a national system to secure its funding. Our understanding is that the current membership fee for State delegates is \$2,500 pa, to increase to \$5,000 pa in 2005, and will move to a pro-rata State funded membership system by 2007.

This proposed State funded membership model raises a number of issues, the main one being how will RecFish Australia recognise the representatives of the States in such a funding model and fee structure.

The current RFA member for NSW is the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (ACoRF). In a response to a letter by AAG, the Minister, concerning the role of ACoRF, wrote on 1st June 2004:

“ACoRF is a statutory body established under the provisions of the NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994. The Council provides quality advice to me on matters relating to recreational fishing, including maintaining and improving the quality of recreational angling. Its role is to advise the NSW Government how recreational fishers view important fisheries management issues. While I am pleased to receive the views of other interested parties on these issues ACoRF is the peak body for this purpose and it is not a lobby group.

“The Council comprises a chair, persons with expertise in estuary fishing, offshore fishing, underwater fishing, sale of fishing tackle, fishing media and charter boat fishing. ACoRF is the key voice for recreational fishers in NSW.

“The members act as a link for consultation between government and recreational fishers. Many ACoRF representatives are also members of the numerous independent local, regional and state fishing organizations in NSW”.

Though it may be good for the purpose for which it was legislated, that is advising the Minister on matters pertaining to recreational fishing, there are many who believe ACoRF is not “the key voice for recreational fishers in NSW” as the Minister puts it as it is inappropriate for a Ministerial advisory body to have membership in a lobby group. It is also considered inappropriate for public moneys to pay for membership fees into a lobby group for a body whose members are nominated by the Minister. There are concerns regarding the composition of ACoRF as to the lack of representation of aligned and unaligned anglers, lack of regional representation, and with one member being from an environmental group that has recently expressed strong anti-recreational fishing sentiments.

Our questions to RecFish Australia are:

- What criteria or requirements do RecFish Australia use to accept a group as the representative body for a particular State? Are these requirements included in the constitution of the RFA, and how do Recfish monitor members performance?
- Does RecFish Australia consider that ACoRF meets their criteria for membership to RecFish Australia and to be representative of the recreational anglers of NSW?
- Will RecFish Australia consider other groups for membership to RecFish Australia as NSW representative. If not, then why not?

Our concerns are basically the criteria used by RecFish Australia in determining which State bodies are able to represent their recreational anglers at the Federal level, and whether these bodies such as ACoRF meet these requirements for membership to RecFish Australia. This needs to be clarified, especially as it now appears that RecFish Australia’s funding will move towards a State based pro-rata system, and there is more recognition of both recreational fishing and the need for a peak body by the Federal Government departments.

On the issue of the \$15m dollar development grants for recreational fishing could you please advise what maybe the process for such grant applications, if this is not available then we would appreciate being kept informed as progress is made.

Yours sincerely

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