

**Submission  
No 10**

## **INQUIRY INTO COMMERCIAL FISHING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** It's Wild Seafood

**Date received:** 29 November 2016

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Re: Commercial Fishing in New South Wales

## **“BEST THING THAT HAS EVER HAPPENED IN THE NSW FISHING INDUSTRY.”**

I say this with honesty, having been a licence commercial fisher for 42 of my 57 years and playing commercial fisher as a kid with both of my grandfathers, my father, uncles, my brother and brother in law, and now with my sons and nephews. During this time I have never had a conviction or even a warning from the DPI for non compliance of rules and regulations.

As a commercial fisher I have held membership in four co-ops, direct marketed my product to Sydney Fish Market from several ports, wholesaled to retailers and processors, exported to several countries and have had retail outlets.

For 16 years I have owned and operated the first 'A' rated export premises in NSW and domestic product processing factory. I currently own 2 NSW fishing businesses, each holding shares in all of the categories in the ocean trawl fishery. Most shares have been purchased from fishers wanting to re-adjust their businesses to get prepared for the upcoming changes. One of which is currently active on my 19 metre steel trawler, the other licence and business are “on the shelf” awaiting the delayed outcomes of the final arrangements of this long overdue reform.

This reform is not something the current minister or the DPI have come up with recently. The need for share management has come about from pressure from the rest of the world to manage and protect fish stocks. The introduction of the 1994 Management Act was the

start of this whole process. I personally was on the first ocean trawl management committee after the introduction of the 1994 Act; we had the option of going to a restricted fishery or straight to share management then. Due to the 6% community contribution that came with the share management, which we believed at that time, the industry was not in a good enough financial position to cop this without warning, thus, we voted to go restricted fishery and move to share management in the near future. Lobster and Abalone were the test fisheries first, due to being a single species, high value product. I believe this has resulted in the best managed, valuable and secure fisheries in Australia.

The biggest problem back then and even to date, fisherman received information from the DPI, they either threw it straight into the bin thinking “more bullshit” or opened it, did not understand it and then threw it in the bin, rather than contact fisheries to find out what it meant and how it may affect them. Since the introduction of the 1994 Management Act, and in the early years in particular, every new fisher and upgrading fisher, have signed paperwork which have contained warnings, not to invest in this fishery, as there would be no guaranteed access in the future. This warning has been well expressed to all involved in transfers of licences, businesses and shares. Having traded in numerous shares and businesses since they become tradeable, I feel I have reasonable eligibility to comment on the reform.

## **Value:**

Share Management:

- security for fishers
- stock protection from overfishing
- share controlled maximum effort

Security:

- more investment in better gear
- equipment to value add product to create better \$ return for less kg's of product
- more jobs are created

## **Scientific:**

This reform will allow for better management of less shareholders, having the same commercial catch and with more protection from the inactive fishers becoming active when stocks improve, more “hands on” decisions by active fishers to manage stocks, be like farmers, not just harvesters, and then there would be a more realistic achievable outcome by the DPI managers and shareholders.

## **Business Adjustment Program:**

I believe the productivity report is very relevant to the reform. It is about share management and self adjustment to businesses for future management of fish stocks.

The implementation of this restructure has been majorly delayed by a few outspoken fishers who chose to ignore the intentions of the 1994 Fisheries Management Act including quota management where appropriate.

Regardless of which political party, minister of the day, fisheries director or fishery managers are in control, this process was legislated to happen over 20 years ago.

I believe 90% of the restructure has already happened, with a massive amount of share transfers having already occurred. Businesses being sold, or sold back or handed back to DPI by fishers who either want to stay or leave the industry.

## **Impact:**

This adjustment program has already had a massive “positive” impact on our industry. Shareholders are now starting to realize they have security for the future. Their financial investment is now a documented share, (percentage) of the access to each fishery they hold shares in. Shares which are fully tradeable, like other shares i.e. Coles and Woolworths, in which supply and demand will control their \$ value.

I believe the direct impact on the fish co-ops, wholesalers, retailers and suppliers of goods and services to fishers would be minimal. Like every other business in the world, if you don't adjust to new changes happening around you, you won't survive.

The recent decline in co-op numbers and financial sustainability of co-ops is due to outdated management practices by those fishers controlling them, similar to our past fisheries management practices, that were introduced by the same ‘mentality’ fishers.

## **The \$16 Million:**

BEST \$ EVER OFFERED TO THE INDUSTRY. Money to allow fishers to leave with dignity and a payout, for their accumulated historic access to fish. Money to help subsidize fishers, who want to stay in the industry, to access additional shares to remain active.

Having experienced no real long term security in the past, I feel it is about time NSW caught up with the rest of the fisheries in Australia.

For example:

- Commonwealth South East Trawl – Quota Fishery
- South Australia Prawn – Nights
- QLD Whiting Fishery – Catch Quota
- QLD Prawn Trawl – Effort Units
- Lobsters in Tasmania and Western Australia – Quota
- Northern Prawn Trawl – Nights

The delayed implementation of this plan has already cost this industry far too much.

My recommendation to this committee is for all involved to allow DPI to move forward on this 1994 plan in which the genuine fishers will achieve the security of a sustainable, valuable industry into the future.

Regards,

Phillip Ward,