

Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council outcomes

Meeting 32, 18 September 2024 Microsoft Teams virtual meeting

Members Present	Johann Bell Patrick Linehan Paul Lennon Anna Clark Grahame Williams OAM Vicki Lear Matt Hansen Karl Mathers Ray Tang Bill Blair Peter Dugan Ian Puckeridge Matt Tripet Bryan van der Walt	Independent Chair Region 1 – Mid & Far North Coast Region 2 – Lower North Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 4 – Illawarra Region 6 – North West Inland (and MFAC rep) Region 7 – South West Inland (Deputy Chair) Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Charter Fishing Spearfishing Social Benefits of Recreational Fishing A/Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management
Apologies	Dean Hamilton	Region 5 – South Coast

1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

a) Introduction by the Chair, including Acknowledgement of Country

NOTED:

- The Chair opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the 32nd meeting of RFNSW.

b) Register of Interest

NOTED:

- The Chair requested that members declare any changes or additions to the RFNSW Register of Interests (Risk Register).
- Member Ray Tang advised the Chair that his employer, Energy Australia, is undertaking a state significant project to investigate the feasibility of installing a pumped hydro energy storage project at Lake Lyell, near Lithgow NSW.
- Mr Tang also declared the Wallerawang Branch of the Central Acclimatisation Society (which he is a member of) had been successful in gaining funding from the Recreational Fishing Trust to run a Gone Fishing Day event at Wallerawang in October 2024.
- Member Matt Tripet declared he would be attending the Wild Trout Conference, hosted by the Trout Foundation and the Victorian Fisheries Authority, in Mansfield, Victoria. Mr Tripet was invited to provide a presentation on Social Licensing and mental health benefits of recreational fishing, through the lens of trout fishing in Australia.
- Mr Hansen declared he was no longer affiliated with OzFish Unlimited and is solely a member of the Inland Waterways Rejuvenation Association.
- Member Karl Mathers declared his involvement in a Charles Sturt University project undertaking additional research relating to the carp virus (Cyprinid herpesvirus 3).
- At the request of member Grahame Williams OAM, DPIRD provided a brief overview of the conflict of interest process at the meeting, including clarification on what constitutes a conflict and a general guide to what members should declare.

c) Agreement on the agenda, adoption of previous meeting record, proposed future meeting schedule

NOTED:

- RFNSW members agreed on the agenda for the meeting.
- The outcomes of the 31st meeting of RFNSW were accepted without change as a true and accurate record of that meeting by the previous Council members in attendance.
- Next meeting is proposed to be held on 20-21 November 2024.

2) NSW Harvest Strategies update

NOTED:

- The Department provided a re-cap of the recent RFNSW out-of-session meeting on the draft Mulloway Harvest Strategy and proposed recreational fishing management arrangements.
- It was noted that RFNSW had been a strong advocate for the prioritisation of improved management arrangements for this iconic species for many years and acknowledged the efforts of Dr James Findlay (Chair) and the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group members to develop a draft Mulloway Harvest Strategy. Council thanked them for their dedication and expertise on this work.
- The Council also took the opportunity to reiterate its support for the introduction of real time reporting of Mulloway catch to enhance harvest estimates and ensure accurate

assessments to better inform the Harvest Strategy process.

- A copy of RFNSW's final feedback on the draft Harvest Strategy will be submitted to DPIRD following the meeting.

Action item: RFNSW to submit feedback on the draft Mulloway Harvest Strategy to DPIRD following the meeting.

3) Overview of the stakeholder forum on establishing a peak NSW recreational fishing body

NOTED:

- A brief overview of the recent online stakeholder forum on the establishment of a peak NSW recreational fishing body was provided by Dr James Findlay, facilitator of the Peak Body Working Group and member Karl Mathers.
- Council welcomed the news that consultation with key recreational stakeholder groups was well underway to determine the preferred governance model prior to wider community consultation on establishment of a peak recreational fishing body in NSW.
- Dr James Findlay encouraged all members to attend the next Working Group meeting.

4) Recfishwest presentation

NOTED

- Council received a presentation from Mr Andrew Rowland, CEO of Western Australia's peak recreational fishing body, Recfishwest.
- The presentation examined the role, responsibilities and objectives of the organisation and how they advocate on behalf of their stakeholders to ensure quality fishing experiences in Western Australia.
- Mr Rowland provided several examples of co-management of fishery resources undertaken by Recfishwest and the Western Australian Government. Council thanked Mr Rowland for his time and insightful presentation.

5) Recreational Fishing Trust matters

a) Audit outcomes

NOTED

- On 19 August 2024, the Minister wrote to the Chair to advise the outcomes of the recently completed, independent audit of Recreational Fishing Trust.
- The NSW Government has supported all twenty-six recommendations in the Audit of the Recreational Fishing Trust report.
- DPIRD provided a brief overview of the audit recommendations and the status of DPIRD actions to facilitate the recommendations.
- Proposed amendments to the RFNSW Charter and Code of Conduct were presented to the Council with a follow up action to send the updated documents to members once approved by DPIRD.

Action item: DPIRD to send the updated RFNSW Charter and Code of Conduct to members.

b) General Recreational Fishing Trust update

NOTED:

- DPIRD to provide a brief update on current recreational fishing trust and funding matters.
- On 2 August 2024, the Minister announced a new \$2 million recreational fishing small infrastructure grants program to make fishing even more accessible, safe and convenient, including funding grants for fishing platforms, fish cleaning tables and other fishing facilities.
- The Department will be undertaking the largest ever survey of NSW recreational fishing licence holders to provide direct feedback on potential future investment from the Trusts.
- A summary of current active Trust projects was provided for Council's information.
- Members raised concerns on behalf of stakeholders regarding the current delay to the announcement on the outcomes of the current round of Trust funding, noting this may impact the delivery of successful grant projects as well as potential increases in project costs.

Action item: RFNSW to write to the Minister regarding stakeholder feedback on the status of the current Recreational Fishing Trust round.

6) Rock fishing safety

NOTED:

- At the request of member Karl Mathers, the Department provided a brief overview of the Government's role and responsibilities regarding rock fishing, including relevant legislation and statistics on rock fishing fatalities.
- RFNSW noted the rock fishing fatality rate in NSW has not reduced over time. Previously a coronial inquiry into rock fishing fatalities and a Surf Life Saving Australia research review of rock fishing in NSW had recommended that the wearing of life jackets by rock fishers be mandated in NSW.
- It was also noted the *Rock Fishing Safety Act 2016* (RFSA) requires rock fishers to wear an appropriate life jacket while fishing in declared areas. However, currently only nine Councils have opted in.
- RFNSW recommended that the government undertakes a comprehensive review of the RFSA and its effectiveness, with a clear position to review the benefits and costs associated with mandating the statewide wearing of life jackets by rock fishers in NSW.
- Additionally, while the Council noted that state and local Government and various partner organisations undertake a wide range of education programs to better educate and inform rock fishers of the inherent dangers of rock fishing, there was general consensus that more needs to be done to enhance rock fisher knowledge, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.
- Member Patrick Linehan requested the meeting outcomes reflect his view that he does not support the statewide mandatory wearing of lifejackets but rather encourages more targeted rock fishing safety education programs, particularly at CALD communities.

Action item: RFNSW to recommend to the Minister that she writes to the Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism to advise the following:

- RFNSW notes the rock fishing fatality rate in NSW has not reduced over time.
- RFNSW recommends that the government undertakes a comprehensive review of the RFSA and its effectiveness, with a clear position to review the benefits and costs associated with mandating the statewide wearing of life jackets by rock fishers in NSW.
- RFNSW recognises there is a need to enhance safety and education programs even further in collaboration with partner agencies, especially for CALD communities.

7) Fisheries Management Regulation Repeal update ocal Aboriginal Cultural Plans (LMPs)

NOTED:

NOTED:

- DPIRD Fisheries intends to remake the Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2019 (the Regulation) through a periodic staged repeal process. A range of amendments are currently being identified which will be subject to a public consultation process on the proposed new Regulation.
- DPIRD provided an overview of proposed amendments to recreational fishing regulations identified to date, which include:
 - formalising existing temporary legal instruments regarding bag and size limits into Regulation
 - introducing changes for crab catching gear (traps and nets) to improve environmental outcomes
 - refining the requirements for escape gaps in traps based on the latest scientific information
 - refining the requirements for gear marking and the use of attended lines to reduce potential for pollution and unwanted bycatch.
 - New rules governing the use of single use plastic while fishing
 - Providing for CPI adjustment of recreational fishing fees to standardise with other fisheries licensing fees.
- RFNSW was supportive of the proposed amendments being included in the draft Regulation for public consultation.

8) Local Aboriginal Cultural Plans (LMPs)

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the proposed next steps for the continuation of the Tweed and Birpai Barray (Hastings) Aboriginal Cultural Fishing Local Management Plan (LMP) trials due to the success of the trials to date.
- A brief overview of the LMPs was provided including the goals and objectives, provisions of the Plans such as gear and bag and size limits and supporting material, such as signage identifying the LMPs sites.
- A recent evaluation identified a number of positive outcomes including strong working relationships between the community and the Department; demonstrated ongoing commitment and inclusion.
- Given the positive outcomes of the LMPs, it is proposed to extend the trials for a further 5 years with consideration of other trial areas in consultation with interested communities.

9) Presentation on shore-based guides

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided a brief overview of available information on the operations of shore-based guides.
- Members continued discussions on the perceived increase in shore-based guides activity in NSW.
- The marine shore-based fishing guide industry is a small niche sector primarily fishing off ocean beaches and rocky headlands and is currently regulated through existing recreational fishing rules.
- Member Paul Lennon reiterated his concerns regarding the ability for shore-based guides to apply for licence exemption certificates and the lack of data collection from this sector.
- The Chair requested DPIRD liaise with relevant interested Council members out of session to gather more information on the extent of activity of this sector (including the approximate number of shore-based guide operators in NSW). This data can be used to further inform Council on the impact of the activity on our fisheries resources and future management approaches, as needed.

Action: DPIRD to consult with relevant RFNSW members on shore-based guides operations out of session in NSW to refine the information on the extent of activity of this sector to inform future discussions on this issue.

10) Incoming correspondence

a) Letter from A/D-DG, DPI Fisheries re disbanding of the Business Efficiency Program Working Group

Noted.

b) Letter from A/D-DG, DPI Fisheries re Renewal of Port Stephens prawn closure

Noted.

11) General Business

NOTED:

- Member Ray Tang reiterated concerns with potential fishery habitat impacts, including damage to fish spawning associated with 4WD vehicles driving upstream of small watercourses, in particular on the Turon and Cox's River.
- At the meeting, DPIRD undertook to seek feedback from the DPIRD Freshwater Environment team and report back at the next Council meeting.

Meeting closed.