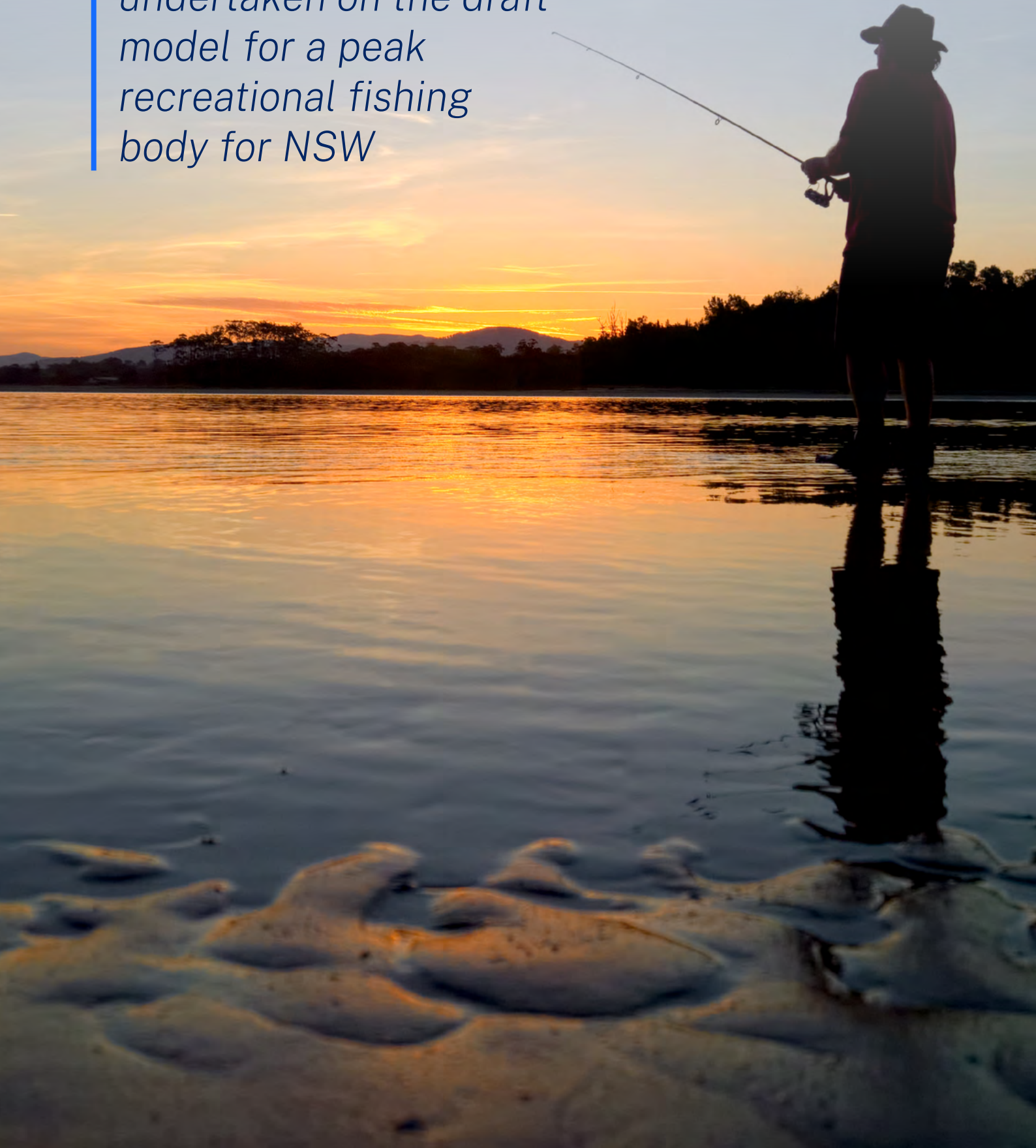


Public consultation summary report

# Establishing a peak body for recreational fishing in NSW



*A summary of feedback  
from public consultation  
undertaken on the draft  
model for a peak  
recreational fishing  
body for NSW*



# Executive summary

Public consultation was undertaken from 6 August 2025 to 1 October 2025 on the proposal to establish a new NSW peak recreational fishing body. The proposed peak body will aim to improve recreational fishing in NSW by providing representation and advocacy on behalf of recreational fishers.

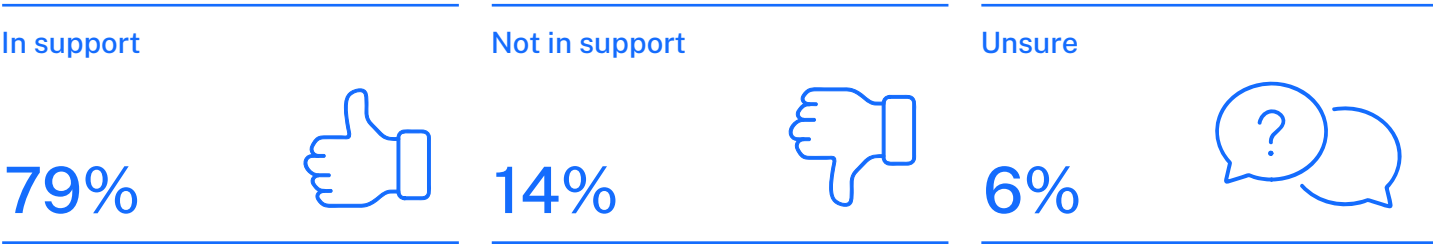
The public consultation process was undertaken online via the Have Your Say platform, which provides best practice accessible web content, including translation into community languages.

*Feedback from recreational fishers, and the broader NSW community will be provided to the interim board to be incorporated into the final model.*

## Written submissions



Responses: A total of 99 individual and organisation written responses



A total of 99 individual and organisation written responses were received. Of the responses, 79 (79%) were in support and/or provided constructive feedback on the proposed peak body model, 14 (14%) were not in support and for 6 (6%) responses their position could not be determined.

The majority of submissions were received from recreational fishers (81%), including fishing club members and representatives (approximately 17%).

### Key themes/issues raised by recreational fishers on the draft proposal were:

- An essential need to represent all fishers, not just saltwater extractive users from metro areas or commercial related interests.
- Having fair, transparent and outcomes focused leadership and governance practices –not subject to political agendas.
- Either using recreational licence fees as membership fees or keeping any associated fees low and only implementing fees after the body had generated outcomes.
- The peak body needing to have real ability to influence and advocate in Government decision-making.

Key themes/issues raised on the draft model by environment and conservation groups in submissions were:

- Board representation should include environmental interests/skill sets.
- There should be a sustainability or environmental key focus area.
- Assumption that the peak body’s influence/existence will enable higher extractive activity and result in detrimental environmental impacts.

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## Other feedback

*A range of themes and issues emerged from submissions from many respondents regardless of background interest:*

- Some confusion with the role of the existing Recreational Fishing Advisory Council of NSW or querying the need for another recreational fishing body.
- Genuine and inclusive representation is the only way this peak body will truly be effective.
- Advocacy for long-term, science based and sustainable fishing practices and outcomes.
- Board member background and knowledge requirements – corporate governance related skills, recreational fishing experience and engagement and environmental or conservation related qualifications.
- Transparency over the use of any Government funding as well as decision making processes.
- Educational and community outreach opportunities as a priority.
- Partnerships with other water users and outdoor recreation organisations.

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## Background

A 2023 election commitment was made by the NSW Government to establish a new peak body for recreational fishers. With around one million people recreationally fishing in NSW each year, it is important that a body through which the sector can engage on matters of interest and have their views represented to Government, be established. This body is expected to enable Government to engage and deliver programs for recreational fishers more effectively and efficiently.

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## Consultation undertaken in the development of the proposed peak body model

A stakeholder forum was held in November 2023, convened by independent facilitator, Dr James Findlay, attended by representatives from the tackle industry, women's fishing groups, mental health and wellbeing experts, angling and spearfishing organisations, young and emerging fishing leaders, fishing media, fishers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the disability sector, the charter fishing industry and the existing fishing advisory groups.

Based on feedback from this initial forum, a smaller working group was formed through an Expression of Interest process to develop a draft model. The working group, with support from the stakeholder forum members, prepared a draft model for a peak body.

*In August 2024 the stakeholder forum met again to review and refine the draft model. This version was then presented to the Minister and approved for public consultation.*

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## Public consultation on the draft model

Public consultation on the draft model was undertaken over a period of eight weeks, from 6 August 2025 to 1 October 2025.

*The approach to public consultation was informed by recent engagement with recreational fishing communities and stakeholder groups, and feedback from the working group (recreational fishing experts).*

### **The primary objectives of the consultation and engagement process were to:**

- obtain feedback from recreational fishers, relevant stakeholder groups and the broader NSW community on the proposed peak body, and
- raise broader public awareness of the proposed peak body and highlight the potential benefits associated with establishing an independent peak body.

### **On commencement of the public consultation process DPIRD undertook the following actions:**

- A ministerial media release was issued on 6 August 2025.
- A page on the Have Your Say government consultation website to provide information and allow for feedback via an online submission form.
- A social media post on DPIRD Fisheries Facebook and Instagram on 12 August, which received 9,321 views and 84 interactions (comments, likes, shares).
- 'Newscast' an e-newsletter was sent to over 530,000 subscribers on 13 August and 4 September to announce the commencement of the consultation process and subsequent reminder. The communication also highlighted the key differences between this consultation and another recreational fishing advisory council consultation occurring during the same period to help avoid public confusion.
- Communication from the facilitator of the Working Group to stakeholder reference group members advising of the public consultation process and encouraging them to participate and share the information through their networks.
- Information made available on the NSW Government Have Your Say consultation website included:
  - Background and contextual information on the development of the draft, the purpose of the peak body and ways to provide feedback.
  - Information of factors contributing to success of peak bodies on other jurisdictions.
  - Proposed focus areas for a recreational fishing peak body.
  - Proposed governance and funding arrangements.

## Questions posed in the online submission form to support discussions and to feedback included:



### The draft model

1. What would you like to see from an independent peak body for NSW recreational fishers, and what benefits do you think it could provide to the recreational fishing community?
2. Do you have any suggestions to ensure the peak body is representative of all recreational fishers and that democratic processes function effectively?
3. Are there any voices, groups or perspectives that are often overlooked and should be included?
4. Would you like to see more information about Focus areas?
5. Do you support the draft focus areas for the peak body?
6. Are there any additional areas you believe should be included?
7. Would you like to see more information about Membership?
8. What would encourage recreational fishers to become members of the peak body?
9. Would you like to see more information on Governance and board structure?
10. How should the peak body's board be set up and operate?
11. Do you have any additional comments, concerns, or issues you would like to raise regarding the peak body?

### Demographic information

1. Select the interest that applies to you most:
  - a. Recreational fisher
  - b. Fishing club member
  - c. Recreational fishing organisation
  - d. Researcher
  - e. Environment / conservation group
  - f. General interest
  - g. Other

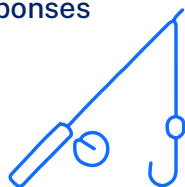
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# Written submissions received

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Recreational fishing/fishing club/spearfishing or organisation responses

81%



Environmental/conservation individual or organisation responses

7%



Other (including multiple interests), general interest or did not specify

11%



**A total of 99 submissions, including 97 online and 2 via email, were received during the public consultation process. Of these:**

81 recreational fishing/fishing club/spearfishing or organisation responses (81%)

7 environmental/conservation individual or organisation responses (7%)

11 other (including multiple interests), general interest or did not specify (11%)

## Of the responses:

14 were not in support of the draft model (14%)

6 positions on the draft model could not be determined (6%)

The 79 remaining submissions were either explicitly in favour of a representative body based on the draft model or did not specify they were against one and provided constructive feedback on the model (79%)

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# Summary of feedback from written submissions

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## Recreational fishers, club members or organisations

The majority of recreational fishers or organisations expressed support for the concept of a representative peak body that would have real decision-making influence and/or power.

### Key themes/issues raised on the draft model:

- Unbiased representation of all fishing styles and interests needs to be the priority for a recreational fishing peak body.
- Adequate long-term funding is essential to the ongoing success of the body and many suggestions around making membership part of the recreational fishing licence fee.
- Membership benefits (including outcomes delivered by the peak body) need to be clear and well-communicated.
- Acknowledgement needed of freshwater interests in the key focus areas.
- Acknowledgement needed for a more extensive listing of diversity groups in the key focus areas.
- A lack of consensus on board member terms (too long or not long enough) but multiple submissions acknowledging the need to 'stagger' board member appointment terms in order to maintain continuity of the board, and function of the peak body generally, for effectiveness.

- Broad support for the payment of quality board members, with articulation of preferred board member criteria including experience in previous similar governance roles, engagement with recreational fishing community and fishing activities generally, communication and lobbying skills.
- Transparency needed for the body's decision making, agenda, outcomes, as well as setting strategic targets for progress and clear communication with members.
- An additional key focus area needed on sustainability.

### **Other issues and opportunities**

- Confusion on the differentiation of roles with the Recreational Fishing Advisory Council of NSW.
- Engagement with grassroots networks especially existing volunteer networks as essential.
- A desire expressed for studies to be conducted in order to improve the understanding of environmental impacts and economic benefits of recreational fishing.
- Waterway management and broader community engagement and education as a priority or project area.
- Multiple submissions from engaged recreational fishers contained detail of proposed projects under the key focus areas – these will be passed along to the peak body's leadership once recruited and established for further consideration.

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## Other interests and organisations

The majority of submissions by people and organisations who identified as environment/ conservation group or other sectors did not support the concept of a recreational fishing peak body or generally expressed concern that the key focus areas had an extractive focus and would promote ecosystem and fisheries stock decline. Some noted an alternate preference for funding initiatives to appropriately support environmental outcomes as a priority for government.

### **Key themes/issues raised on the draft model**

Key focus areas should include an environment/sustainability element that includes collaboration with all water users to improve ecosystem and fisheries stock health.

Board members should have specific environmental science qualifications to assist a potential body to make science informed decisions and ensure sustainable perspectives on fishing access are part of the body's deliberations/policy decisions.

Impact of the body will be negative for environmental outcomes.

There needs to be improved understanding of environmental and social impacts of recreational fishing.

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## Other issues and opportunities

- There is a lack of clarity of the differentiation in roles between the proposed peak body and the Recreational Fishing Advisory Council of NSW.
- Educational outreach programs should be a priority.
- Partnerships with other outdoor recreation bodies to avoid duplication or working at cross-purposes – utilise existing resources as much as possible.
- Unfair that Government funding allocated to one recreational group which will have no broader social benefit to taxpayers.

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# Conclusion

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*Feedback from the public consultation process demonstrated there is strong support within the recreational fishing community for establishment of an independent peak body, to effectively consult, and deliver timely advice, advocacy for the recreational fishing community.*

Feedback received during consultation does not indicate that substantial changes are required, however it emphasises that some areas require careful consideration by the Board.

Issues raised such as the need for board expertise in fisheries science are already incorporated into the board's skills matrix and will be considered during selection of initial members.

There continues to be a range of views on the key focus areas for a recreational fishing peak body, as well as governance arrangements and ideal communication approaches. The draft model as presented for consultation, and the feedback received will serve as a solid basis for the prospective board members to establish the organisation and commence a work program, with the input of members, recreational fishing communities, and partner or affiliate organisations.

The summary of public submissions, as well as constructive feedback on key focus areas and project ideas, will be provided to the proposed board members to assist them in finalising the constitution and developing a work plan for the peak body. Details of the model and how key elements are incorporated into the constitution will be determined by the prospective board members, based on legal advice and their own expertise. Details of the association's work program and how it addresses key focus areas are also a matter for the association once established, having regard to available resources and the initial focus on establishment of a financially sustainable organisation.



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