

Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council (RFNSW) Chair's Summary Meeting 33

The 33rd meeting of RFNSW was held at Rydges Sydney Central Hotel on 20-21 November 2024. Members welcomed the opportunity to meet face-to-face to provide advice on a range of matters relating to recreational fishing in NSW. Additionally, Council appreciated the opportunity to have a joint session with the Commercial Fishing Advisory Council (CommFish). Council also welcomed the Hon. Tara Moriarty MLC, Minister for Agriculture to the meeting on 21 November. The key outcomes from discussions of the key agenda items are summarised below.

Joint session with CommFish

RFNSW and CommFish held a joint session to discuss the important issue of improving water quality in our estuaries and rivers to boost fish stocks and explore how the commercial and recreational sectors can work together on new initiatives to boost water quality and associated environmental outcomes. The two Councils received a presentation from Duncan Leadbitter (Visiting Fellow, University of Wollongong) who provided a short video on the impacts of acid sulphate soils on water quality on floodplains. RFNSW and CommFish both highlighted how they can advocate and play a role in initiating new water quality initiatives in partnership with DPIRD and other government agencies. The Councils agreed to prepare a joint Communique to advise the Minister about suggested next steps on this important issue.

Session with Hon. Tara Moriarty, MLC, Minister for Agriculture

RFNSW appreciated the opportunity to meet online with the Minister to report on the discussions with CommFish regarding improving water quality. The Minister acknowledged the proactive and positive efforts of RFNSW and CommFish to initiate further action on this important issue, noting good water quality is critical for sustaining fish populations and our marine and freshwater ecosystems.

Recreational Fishing Trust matters

RFNSW was advised that the current funding round for Recreational Fishing Trust grants opened on 6 November, and that a recreational fishing licence holder survey to seek feedback on current Trust programs and priorities for future expenditure had also commenced, with survey invitations sent to ~350,000 licence holders. Council also received an update on the implementation of the Recreational Fishing Trust Audit recommendations, all of which have been supported by the NSW Government.

Fish for Life

Members received an update on recent 'Fish For Life' program outcomes. The 'Keep It Clean' initiative focuses on raising awareness about the impact of fishing-related litter and engaging recreational fishers in cleanup activities across NSW, in partnership with OzFish. The content encourages fishers to do the right thing when it comes to litter and the environment. High-quality video and social media content under 6 themes have been promoted through various media channels resulting in over 2.5 million impressions. Additionally, 29 'Keep it Clean' events have been held, resulting in over 7.5 tonnes of litter being removed from fishing spots and fish habitats. The 'Take a Mate Fishing' initiative was launched on R U OK? Day on 12 September and highlights the wellbeing benefits of fishing, while promoting fishing as a pathway for people to relax and have meaningful conversations about mental health. Various subprograms are underway to promote fishing as an inclusive and welcoming activity for women and people with disabilities.

The next meeting will be held in March 2025.



Professor Johann Bell (Chair)