



Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council (COMMFISH NSW AC)

Dear Minister

The Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council (CommFish NSW) held its 29th meeting on the 20th and 21st of November 2024 in Sydney to coincide with the Friends of Seafood event at Parliament House.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to speak to CommFish. Meeting you and celebrating the industry through the Friends of Seafood evening are important events that present immense benefits building and maintaining relations between industry and Government.

As touched on in the meeting, the industry, particularly CommFish NSW, thank you for the two-year waiver of fish receiver fees. The reaction from fishers has been incredibly positive. We now have fresh local seafood available to NSW consumers direct from boats in regional ports, in fruit shops, and alongside gourmet cheeses in bottle shops. Opportunities for direct sales to hotels and restaurants are also being explored.

I reiterate members appreciation for the Government's support for north coast fishers struggling following recent White Spot outbreaks and also the early steps for a greener industry through the Beyond Fossil Fuel at Sea project. Two members have been trialing this fuel and their feedback has been positive. The challenge for Government will be to make the fuel affordable if it is to be widely adopted.

Also mentioned was the importance of the NSW Commercial Fishing Business Efficiency Program to fishers; and the commitment by CommFish and the Department to keep this moving. The program removes red tape now that new ways of managing catch and effort apply and your support to consult the community on a further round of regulatory change is crucial if the full benefits of our new management arrangement are to be realised.

Other important items discussed, including prior to and after our catch up, include:

- An introductory session with the CEO and Chair of the NSW Wild Harvest Fishers Inc. where we agreed to collaborate on issues of common interest.
- Intention to prepare a new NSW Sustainable Commercial Fishing Strategy for your consideration, to set the direction to strengthen the commercial fishing sector over the coming years.
- Results from observer work in the ocean trawl and estuary meshing sectors, demonstrating sound environmental performance in some cases and challenges in others that CommFish and the department will need to work on.
- Action initiated or underway by the Department to address contemporary issues in the Abalone and Southern Fish Trawl fisheries critical for industry certainty.



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- Improvements needed to mud crab tag prototypes and Marine Stewardship Council Certification for the Lobster Fishery.
- Fish passage and related environmental works at Menindee Lakes and streamlining administration for inland commercial fishers and the Department when authorising the use of nets in inland waters to harvest carp.
- Staged Repeal of the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2019*, including changes under consideration relating to commercial and recreational fisheries.

On the second day, CommFish met with RFNSW to discuss water quality and how both Councils could work together to promote the importance of good water quality to fish stocks and funding for the ongoing improvement of the health of NSW estuaries.

It is anticipated that the next CommFish meeting will take place early 2025. Should you have any issues that you would like CommFish to consider, please feel free to contact me.

I am also happy to provide a more detailed briefing on any of the issues discussed at the meeting at a time convenient to you.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Richey AM

Chairman CommFish NSW