

**Recreational Fishing NSW
Advisory Council**

Outcomes

**Meeting 36, Thursday 11 December 2025
Branksome Hotel Sydney**

Attendees	Johann Bell Patrick Linehan Paul Lennon Grahame Williams OAM Anna Clark Vicki Lear Bill Blair Ray Tang Heath Folpp	Independent Chairperson 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 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands A/Executive Director Fisheries
Apologies	Matt Tripet Peter Dugan Matt Hansen Ian Puckeridge	Social Benefits of Recreational Fishing Charter Fishing Region 6 – North West Inland (and MFAC rep) Spearfishing

1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

a) Introduction by the Chairperson, including Acknowledgement of Country

NOTED:

- The Chair opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the 36th meeting of RFNSW.
- The Chair noted the apologies for the meeting.

- The Chair thanked members for their ongoing contributions and enthusiasm over the last three years noting that member current terms were ending in February 2026.

b) Register of Interests

NOTED:

- Member Ray Tang declared that through his employment, his employer is undertaking the EIS stage of the Pumped Hydro Project (near Lithgow). Mr Tang also advised the Wallerawang Central Acclimatisation Society had completed its latest Gone Fishing Day event.

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

NOTED:

- RFNSW members agreed on the agenda for the meeting.
- The Chair introduced Dr Heath Folpp as the new Director Fisheries Management (commencing January 2026). Dr. Folpp highlighted the important role that Council plays in providing quality advice to the Minister and its ongoing contributions to key fisheries policy outcomes in NSW.
- DPIRD thanked the Council for the feedback on the outcomes from the previous meeting. The outcomes of the 35th meeting of RFNSW were accepted with some minor amendments as a true and accurate record of that meeting by the previous Council members in attendance.

2) Resource Management Update

a) Mulloway Harvest Strategy

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided a brief update on the public consultation phase of the draft Mulloway Harvest Strategy. DPIRD highlighted that there was significant feedback on the draft strategy, which will be considered by the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group (MHSWG) at its next meeting.
- DPIRD advised that RFNSW will be consulted on any proposed changes to the draft harvest strategy.
- Council acknowledged the extensive effort of the MHSWG and DPIRD to develop the strategy and highlighted the need to ensure the timely completion and implementation of this strategy, but also future strategies for key species.

- Council understands that the final Mulloway Harvest Strategy will need to be reviewed by RFNSW and CommFish prior to consideration by the Minister. A presentation on the rationale for, and development of, the Harvest Strategy may need to be provided to new membership on the Council in the future depending on timing of the review process.

b) Trap and Line Harvest Strategy

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the Trap and Line Harvest Strategies (Kingfish and Snapper) and advised that the development of a draft strategy is progressing well.
- DPIRD is currently focusing on improving the stock assessment models for these key species and that independent scientific review of the new models will be undertaken before they are used..
- The working group is aiming to evaluate the independent review of the new stock assessment models and finalise the draft harvest strategy in 2026.
- Once the draft harvest strategy is developed, RFNSW will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the document before it goes out for public consultation.
- DPIRD also advised that it is currently undertaking an assessment to determine the structure and scope of harvest strategies required for future development. Key objectives include identifying which fisheries/species require a harvest strategy, prioritisation of species/fisheries and ways to streamline the harvest strategy development process.

c) Rebuilding Programs

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the development of Rebuilding Programs for four key species: Grey Morwong, Silver Trevally, Pearl Perch and Redfish. Community consultation closes on 31 January 2026.
- DPIRD will continue to keep RFNSW informed on development of the Programs. Council encouraged the Department to heavily promote any changes to recreational bag and size limits involved in efforts to rebuild the stocks of these species.

3) Session with Deputy Secretary Fisheries and Forestry – Ms. Tara Black

NOTED:

- Council welcomed the opportunity to have a session with DPIRD Deputy Secretary Fisheries

and Forestry, Ms Tara Black.

- The Deputy Secretary provided an update on the recent structural realignment within the Fisheries and Forestry cluster. Ms Black outlined that the changes are intended to provide for a more balanced executive structure, enhanced collaboration and improved policy and compliance capacity.
- The Deputy Secretary also gave an update on the review of Fisheries Officers Powers, which includes a review of Part 9 of the *NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994*. Ms Black highlighted that there are five focus points for the review: Legislative Change, Safety & WHS, Operating Procedures, Real Time Data and Culture. The DPIRD is working through the Fisheries Officers Powers report and its recommendations with our Fisheries Officers and the Public Sector Association.
- Council reiterated its support for the ongoing work of the Fisheries Compliance Unit (FCU) and was supportive of changes that improve working conditions of Fisheries Officers and fishing rule enforcement outcomes.
- Council indicated support again for increased penalties for fisheries offences to provide even more of a deterrent for fisheries offences.
- Council advised Ms Black about the Joint Communique on improving water quality in NSW, which had been developed by RFNSW and CommFish. The Chair had recently submitted the Communique to the Minister for consideration. RFNSW highlighted the importance of promoting the urgent need to improve water quality to sustain productive fisheries in NSW, with an initial focus on acidic water quality issues in our coastal floodplains.
- RFNSW also highlighted the work undertaken by RFNSW and DPIRD to develop the Recreational Fishing Action Plan. Council deeply appreciated Ms Black's commitment to assist the Minister's Office to release the Plan just as soon as possible.
- Members also raised the need for ongoing timely decision-making on applications submitted for Recreational Fishing Trust funding to enhance the appeal of the scheme to the potential applicants on which the Trust Fund program depends for impact.
- Council members also noted the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry on Access Restrictions to Public Lands and Waterways that is currently underway. Ms Black advised that the Department had made a submission to the Inquiry, which highlighted the importance of recreational fishing access.

4) Recreational Fishing Trust Matters

NOTED:

- DPIRD advised the 2024/25 Recreational Fishing Trusts Annual Report has been prepared and will be promoted via the Department's social media channels once published.

Action Item: DPIRD to provide a copy of the 2024/25 Recreational Fishing Trusts Annual Report to Council members once published.

- Council was advised that the current Recreational Fishing Trust funding round opened on 1 December 2025 and closes on January 23, 2026. The application period was extended to 8 weeks noting the holiday period.
- DPIRD advised RFNSW that the Minister had recently approved nine Recreational Fishing Trust projects following consideration of additional information, following correspondence to the Minister on this issue.
- Council noted Recreational Fishing Trust funding had been approved for the operation of Dutton Trout Hatchery at Ebor. While discussing Trust applications, Council sought some clarification regarding the funding arrangements for the Dutton Trout Hatchery.
Action Item: DPIRD to provide Recreational Fishing Trust funding budget details to relevant members.
- Council noted the summary of current Trust projects which was provided for information.
- DPIRD advised RFNSW that following an expression of interest, the process for selection of members for the Recreational Fishing Trust Advisory Council was underway. The Department also advised the expression of interest for membership of RFNSW for the next three year term closes on 19 December 2025.

5) Recreational Fishing Peak Body Update

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the implementation of a Recreational Fishing Peak Body. Submissions are currently being reviewed following public exhibition of the draft governance model for the Peak Body. The Department will keep Council updated on establishment of the Peak Body.

6) Commercial Fishing Proposals

NOTED:

- RFNSW received a presentation from DPIRD and CommFish member, Graeme Byrnes, on a number of commercial fishing proposals, including:
 - 1) Adjusting the flathead trip limit that applies to the NSW Southern Fish Trawl (SFT) fishery;
 - 2) Adjusting the 80/20 rule that applies to beach hauling in the Ocean Hauling (OH) fishery; and
 - 3) Additional access to key commercial species in estuaries
- RFNSW highlighted concerns with each of the proposals including, but not limited to, changes in resource allocation, fishery stock concerns, and shifting of commercial fishing effort. It was

noted the proposals had potential to significantly reduce recreational fishing opportunities.

- RFNSW noted the significant complexity and potential contentious nature of each of the proposals and requested further deliberation and consultation on these matters to identify practical and equitable outcomes (for example, using the previous BEP Working Group process).
- Council discussed each proposal in-depth and was **not supportive** of any of the proposals at this time.
- Council also sought an update on the SFT transition into the Commonwealth Southern and Eastern Scalefish and Shark Fishery (SESSF). DPIRD advised that this process is still ongoing. Council recommended that DPIRD work to fast-track the transition of the SFT Fishery to the Commonwealth fishery, which would potentially address the flathead trip limit issue. It was also noted that feedback from the Fisheries Compliance Unit would be useful.

Action Item: RFNSW to write to DPIRD to outline its concerns (and lack of support at this time) for the commercial fishing proposals and to recommend further deliberation and consultation on these matters.

8) Recreational Fishing Socio-Economic Survey

NOTED:

Action Item: DPIRD to provide information on the proposed 2026 Economic and Social Indicators Project to RFNSW out of session.

9) Fish For Life Presentation

NOTED:

- Council received an update on the latest outcomes from the 'Fish For Life' Program.
- The 'Women in recreational fishing' initiative continues to have a positive impact on participation through the NSW Women in Fishing Recreational Facebook group (with >4,600 members in just 12 months) and 40 women leading fishing workshops that have had over 700 participants.
- DPIRD also advised that new initiatives under the 'Fish For Life' brand, focusing on responsible and sustainable fishing practices while fostering stewardship among NSW fishers, will commence in 2026.
- A brief update was also given on the NSW FishSmart App, highlighting the addition of new features, including mappable fishing closures, and detailed information on general inland waters, trout waters, trout dams, and accessible fishing platforms.

11) Draft Cultural Fishing Harvest Strategy Framework

NOTED:

- Council received a presentation from Fishwell Consulting and DPIRD on the process for developing a harvest strategy framework for cultural fishing in NSW. The aim of this framework is to balance localised needs and access for cultural fishing practices.
- The presentation outlined the background, challenges and sensitivities associated with the management of cultural fishing in NSW. The presentation also highlighted the differences between contemporary harvest strategy approaches and cultural fishing.

12) Fish Stocking and Freshwater Fisheries Management

a) Freshwater Stocking Update

NOTED:

- DPIRD provided an update on the fish stocking program for the current season. Almost 1.5 million fish have been stocked from DPIRD Hatcheries as part of the 2025/26 season.
- The Community Native Fish Stocking grants program has seen the release of around 50,000 Australian Bass with more planned to occur soon. Golden Perch and Murray Cod stockings under this program are due to kick off soon.

b) Gaden Trout Hatchery 2.0 improvements Update

NOTED:

- DPIRD advised that the Gaden Trout Hatchery 2.0 construction works are currently out for tender with announcement of the selected supplier expected in the short term.

c) Fish Stocking Trucks Update

NOTED:

- As requested at the previous meeting, DPIRD gave an update on the Fish Stocking Trucks. Gaden's new fish transporter is now in operation. This new asset will allow the hatchery to more effectively stock larger numbers of trout across the fishery. A similar truck is currently being facilitated for the Dutton Trout Hatchery.

d) Catch and release in the Monaro Region

NOTED:

- DPIRD advised that it is continuing to consult with the Monaro Acclimatisation Society (MAS) regarding the management of trout in local waters, particularly the Maclaughlin River.
- RFNSW was advised that catch and release educational signage will be installed in the coming weeks. MAS will consider applying for Recreational Fishing Trust funding if there is interest in

expanding this signage to other Monaro waterways.

- MAS advised that they will engage with DPIRD researchers to assess relevant data on these key trout fisheries.

e) Burrinjuck Dam Fish Kill Update

NOTED:

- DPIRD was made aware of a small, localised fish kill of Murray Cod (est 40-50 fish) in the Goodradigbee Arm of Burrinjuck Reservoir. Small-scale Murray Cod fish kills have occurred in this location in the past. There was no evidence of large-scale fish kills throughout the reservoir.
- Technical staff have collected otoliths from deceased fish and taken water samples for investigation. DPIRD will keep RFNSW informed of any outcomes.

13) Threatened Species Project Update

a) Grey Nurse Sharks

NOTED:

- DPIRD Threatened Species Unit provided an update on the Grey Nurse Shark (GNS) Project. The update outlined the key objectives of the GNS shark recovery program.
- It was highlighted that the current focus of the project includes improved reporting of GNS sightings, educational content and social media campaigns that aim to increase awareness.

b) Native Fish Recovery and Resilience Action Plan for the Darling Baaka

NOTED:

- DPIRD Threatened Species Unit provided an update on the Native Fish Recovery and Resilience Action Plan for the Darling Baaka catchment.
- The scope of the Action Plan was highlighted and the current focus areas, including in-stream action (re-snagging), species-specific actions, off stream actions (erosion and run off), capacity building for local communities and organisations, and increased data collection.
- Council sought some clarification regarding recently listed threatened species and the implications on Trout Stocking. DPIRD advised that any interactions between threatened species and Trout Stocking will continue to be guided by the Fish Stocking Fisheries Management Strategy in consultation with stocking organisations.
- Council queried the notification of advisory Councils and other organisations during threatened

species listing and consultation processes. DPIRD advised that there is a NSW notification requirement, however, there is not this same requirement for Commonwealth listing proposals.

Action Item: DPIRD to write (on behalf of the chair) to the Commonwealth Threatened Species Scientific Committee Executive Officer requesting that RFNSW be notified about threatened species listing proposals and associated consultation processes.

14) Member feedback on Update Papers

NOTED:

- Council noted the update papers provided with the agenda and thanked DPIRD staff for their extensive updates and work on the Artificial Reefs Program and the 'Making More Maccas' – Macquarie Perch program.

15) General Business

NOTED:

- An RFNSW member highlighted a water quality issue in the Windburndale Rivulet, impacted by plantation harvesting in the upper reaches of the system. Recent media highlighted significant riparian vegetation removal resulting in run off and increased water turbidity.

Action Item: DPIRD to submit a compliance report on behalf of RFNSW regarding the issue.

a) Correspondence

NOTED:

- Council noted the incoming correspondence, with no follow-up action required.

16) RFNSW Achievements

NOTED:

- Council reflected on the many outcomes and achievements of RFNSW since its establishment, and over the past three years. It was highly evident that RFNSW continues to play a significant role in recreational fisheries policy development and consideration of matters relating to recreational fishing, including provision of quality advice to the Minister.
- The Chair and departing members noted they were proud to have served on the Council, and look forward to seeing the continued positive input that Council provides to the Government on the management of fisheries resources in NSW.
- DPIRD extended its sincere thanks to all RFNSW members and Chair, Professor Johann Bell, for their dedication and invaluable contributions, as terms come to a close in February 2026.

The Department expressed deep appreciation for their passion, hard work, and commitment throughout their tenure.

Meeting closed.