


TARFish

Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing Inc.

www.tarfish.org

*Looking after the
interests of recreational
marine fishers*



18th April 2016

Australian Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
CANBERRA 2601
Email: Fisheries.Inquiry@pc.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

I provide this submission on behalf of the Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing Inc. (known as TARFish) for the inquiry into Australia's marine and aquaculture fisheries.

TARFish is the state government recognised peak body for recreational marine fishers in Tasmania. TARFish has held that role and designation since 2004 and looks after the interests of Tasmania's 120,000+ recreational marine fishing community.

The TARFish submission will focus on responding to the commissions Information Request questions contained within the Productivity Commission Issues Paper as they relate to a Tasmanian fishery perspective that is state and commonwealth waters out to Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surrounding Tasmania waters.

Should you have any questions on our submission please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Mark Nikolai

Chief Executive Officer

Information Request:

Are fish stocks allocated and managed in a way so as to ensure a viable and sustainable fishing sector both now and into the future?

Marine resource allocation occurs in one fishery but not across the majority of fisheries. The Rock Lobster fishery has an agreed explicit allocation level to the recreational and commercial sectors however no allocations have been established for Abalone, Scallop, Scafish and Minor Species fisheries. TARFish believes marine fisheries are fundamentally managed to support a viable and sustainable fishing sector however there are fisheries that are under significant pressure.

The Rock Lobster fishery has had continual reductions in the Total Allowable Catch since 2006-07 from a high of around 1694 tonnes to 1220 tonnes in 2016/17 season. According to the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) "The stock decline over the last few years (since 2006) has been due to below average levels of recruitment and levels of catch that have eroded the previous stock rebuilding gains. Looking forward, there is no guarantee that recruitment levels will improve in the short – medium term."¹

How should the value of recreational fishing and Indigenous customary fishing be measured and so better inform access allocation decisions?

There has been some preliminary work in recent years that has attempted to determine how the recreational fishing sector should be valued. ABARES prepared a report A Framework for Regular National Recreational Fishing Surveys² which provides some guidance around the development of a common and agreed methodology to value recreational fishing

Another body of work recently undertaken by Ridge Partners (Colquhoun 2015) determined the most appropriate method for valuing the recreational fishing sector, developed in partnership with forty-five sector leaders and agency representatives as part of a national workshop process. An expenditure based valuation approach was identified as most appropriate to value the economic contribution of the recreational fishing sector. This valuation approach is based on fishers' estimated direct attributable annual expenditure as a proxy, and recognises the sector's recreational service values beyond catch. The expenditure based valuation approach was endorsed by the Federal Government in the 2005 Campbell Report, and was later confirmed by fisheries economics experts and ABARES at a Forum held on 13th February 2015.

Another method that has been suggested as an option in valuing recreational fishing is the Travel Cost Method (TCM). According to the Environmental Protection Agency United States "The travel cost method uses observable data on recreation visitation to infer the recreation-related use values of environmental amenities. If it works, changes in environmental amenities can be valued providing the benefit side of a cost-benefit calculation."³

¹ http://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/2013_Rock_Lobster_stock_assessment_update.pdf

²

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/284369730_A_framework_for_regular_national_recreational_fishing_surveys

³

<https://yosemite.epa.gov/ee/epa/eed.nsf/dcee735e22c76aef85257662005f4116/c5ff7d9b62a4860f8525779700781a21!OpenDocument>

The major drivers of recreational fishing according to the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (now IMAS) “Motivations for recreational fishing relate to both catch and non-catch aspects of the fishing experience. Overall, Tasmanian recreational fishers assigned the highest importance to non-catch related motives – “being outdoors” and “relaxing/unwinding” - followed by catch-related motives – “catching fish for food” and “for enjoyment/sport”. Social motives – “spending time with family” and “spending time with friends” - were next in importance.”⁴

The peak body for Victoria's recreational fishers VRFish has recently published their second report⁵ on “valuing” recreational fishing in Victoria that also uses a quantifiable methodology that should provide some future guidance on determining an agreeable valuation methodology.

Another body of work funded through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) produced the report Identifying the health and well-being benefits of recreational fishing⁶ and articulates clearly a range of non-financial health and social benefits of recreational fishing which must be somehow picked up in any attempt at understanding the total “value” of recreational fishing.

As can be seen putting a value on recreational fishing is a complex and varied undertaking that will require leadership and agreement across state and commonwealth governments and recreational fishing stakeholders.

TARFish has, since 2008, been identifying its number 1 research priority each year to be in the area of the social and economic contribution of recreational fishing. Recreational fishing has significant direct and indirect financial contributions to the economy however it also has significant social benefits and it is these benefits that the sector has found challenging to put some form of valuation, or measurability, around. Based on the level of broad interest around how to value recreational fishing TARFish expects that some decisions will be made in the foreseeable future that will see agreement across the states and at a national level on how best to put a “valuation” on recreational fishing that includes financial and non-financial benefits.

Do the current access arrangements provide for the realisation of the highest economic value from fisheries?

Without an agreed “valuation” methodology, as noted above, and little research into recreational fishing activity for the purposes of determining highest economic value TARFish do not believe that the current access arrangements provide for the realisation of the highest economic value from fisheries. A clear and unequivocal example of this can be found in the Commonwealth Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) and its management by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA).

Since at least 2012 there has been a concerted commercial push to introduce Australia's first industrial scale fishing operations into the SPF, firstly with the fishing vessel Margiris and more recently with the fishing vessel the Geelong Star. A review of the commonwealths Fisheries Management Act and associated fisheries management plans by David Borthwick AO PSM in 2012 highlighted the lack of consideration by AFMA of recreational fishing when managing fisheries due to their limited objectives within the Act.

⁴ An evaluation of motivations, attitudes, and awareness of Tasmanian Recreational Fishers S. Frijlink & J.M. Lyle 2010

⁵ Economic Study of Recreational Fishing in Victoria 2015

⁶ Identifying the health and well-being benefits of recreational fishing, McManus, Hunt, Storey & White

The report highlights “the Review considers that the fisheries Acts should give explicit acknowledgement to the need for AFMA to give consideration to the interests of recreational anglers. They contribute a lot to the economic and social life of our country, all the more so in regional areas. AFMA already responds in limited ways to restrict commercial fishing of some species that are the focus of some forms of recreational fishing. Reflecting the FMA, AFMA applies management controls on commercial fishing in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery to protect blue and black marlin. However, the interactions between recreational and commercial fisheries interests – and the divergence between such interests – are likely to be an ever more pressing issue in the future.”⁷

In the SPF recreational fishers have a major interest in these fish due to their critical ecosystem value as a major food web source for the pelagic fish species they target. If that direct interrelationship between bait and predator is broken by what has become known as localised depletion then recreational fishers could be unduly impacted.

The recreational fishing sector has long argued that the “value” of these small pelagic fish is much greater than the reported \$1.00 per kg industrial scale fishing economic revenue. Without a determined recreational “value” for these fish AFMA has no comparative value to industrial scale fishing making a judgement of highest and best use impossible.

Is there a reasonable balance between the interests of different users in the current allocations of access to marine fisheries?

TARFish believes in most fisheries there is a reasonable balance between the interests of different users however there are examples where interactions between commercial and recreational fishers see this balance weighted heavily toward the commercial fishing sector. As noted above without clear and strong legislative recognition of recreational fishing in the Fisheries Management Act and management plans then the balance is unfairly skewed as is shown in the above example of the SPF and the Margiris/Geelong Star.

Is there room to improve the process for determining the allocation of such rights? For example, how might competing interests be better reconciled?

TARFish believe having legislative recognition of recreational fishing with supporting legislative objectives and an agreed recreational fishing value that considers financial and non-financial drivers would provide an improved basis for marine resource allocation discussions between the sectors and resource managers. These mechanisms would provide the framework to make informed decisions about highest and best use of a particular resource and support a triple bottom line approach to fisheries management.

The Review of Commonwealth Fisheries provides some guidance in validating the TARFish response to this question “Where applicable, resource sharing issues between recreational and commercial fisheries need to be explicitly addressed in fisheries management plans. The issues need to be drawn out by AFMA through scientific, economic or other analysis and tested with expert evidence and public consultation.”⁸

⁷ Review of Commonwealth Fisheries: Legislation, Policy and Management, Borthwich 2012, page x

⁸ Review of Commonwealth Fisheries: Legislation, Policy and Management, Borthwich 2012, page x

Where are there overlaps or conflicts between the rights of access for the different groups of fisheries users? How are such overlaps and conflicts best addressed? How best can the common interests of users be leveraged to improve fisheries outcomes?

Overlaps/conflicts exist where commonwealth fishers and recreational fishers target the same species in the same/similar locations or where commonwealth fishers target a prey species which may have a consequential impact of recreational fishing activities.

Overlaps and conflicts could be addressed by establishing a framework where the rights of all stakeholders are legislatively recognised and an agreed methodology implemented to support fair and equitable resource share allocations.

What are the major challenges and opportunities facing the commercial fishing industry over the next 20 years?

TARFish believes one of the major challenges facing the commercial fishing industry is receiving and maintaining its social licence to operate. Social licence to operate has become a major driver and regulator of nearly every organisation across the world and a failure to understand and accept the community's expectations of fair and equitable activities and practices has cost many organisations their very existence and severely damaged many others.

An example of where a commercial fishing activity that has failed to gain a social licence to operate is in the Small Pelagic Fishery (SPF) with industrial scale fishing. Acceptance of industrial scale fishing operations has become one of Australia's most broad scale community social licence issues in our immediate past. It would appear an unwillingness to firstly understand social licence and secondly a complete failure to effectively work with communities & stakeholders around the areas of contention has created what TARFish believe is the central tenet of the "Supertrawlers" issue in the SPF, namely it has little to no social licence and the actions of the industrial scale fishing vessels operator and the fisheries management authority have exacerbated the situation and continues to do so.

The challenge for governments and commercial fishing operators is what to do about activities and operations that have little to no social licence and/or social contribution but may have a legal right to operate. TARFish has been consistently indicating that the lack of social licence will create, foster and continuously fuel public angst against industrial scale fishing activities in the SPF until the question of the lack of social licence is addressed.

Are controls such as licences, bag limits and size limits effective?

In Tasmania licences are only required for species that are deemed to be high value by the state government, e.g. rock lobster, abalone and certain gear types and activities, e.g. Gill nets, rock lobster pots and diving. Licences are not a control measure as they are used to generate revenue to support recreational fishing support services. Currently Tasmania does not have a general fishing licence, known as a rod and line licence. With around 20% of fishers buying a licence of some sort and around 80% of fishers not requiring a licence to fish it raises an equity issue around the funding of

services to support recreational fishing. i.e 20% of fishers are paying for 100% of the service provision for recreational fishing.

Falling revenues and increasing costs of service provisions have resulted in very limited funding of support services for recreational fishing particularly over the last 10 years. Research funding is very tight limiting the extent of required research to make informed resource management decisions. The state government has also reallocated recreational fishing licence revenue to pay for core government services that were previously funded from consolidated revenue. TARFish believes that the model used to fund recreational fishing support services needs to remove the inequity issues that currently exist.

Bag and possession limits are an imprecise measure used to indirectly control the take of fish species and in general, over time, appear to provide the required degree of biological control.

Size limits are a direct biological control being set at a level above the sexual maturity of fish species to ensure they are contributing to future stocks. They would appear to be effective and in most cases are set at a scientifically justifiable level.

Is there scope to reduce the burden (time or monetary costs) of fishing rules on recreational fishers while achieving the same regulatory objectives?

By their very nature recreational fishing rules are evolving and being shaped by changing community expectations over time. The level of complexity being contemplated and written into rules needs to be tempered with an understanding and acceptance that rules in and of themselves will not manage and control recreational fishing activities in every instance. Rules that are written to try and address every single occurrence that may eventuate need to be balanced with a set of rules that manages the resources with the majority of fishers in mind and comes from a basis of managing the fishery resources for sustainable fish stocks into the future.

How well is recreational fishing recognised in current fisheries management and regulatory arrangements (including in relation to access rights)?

The Review of Commonwealth Fisheries report notes “, the Review considers that the fisheries Acts should give explicit acknowledgement to the need for AFMA to give consideration to the interests of recreational anglers. They contribute a lot to the economic and social life of our country, all the more so in regional areas. AFMA already responds in limited ways to restrict commercial fishing of some species that are the focus of some forms of recreational fishing. Reflecting the FMA, AFMA applies management controls on commercial fishing in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery to protect blue and black marlin. However, the interactions between recreational and commercial fisheries interests – and the divergence between such interests – are likely to be an ever more pressing issue in the future.⁹

TARFish agrees there is limited recreational fishing recognition in current fisheries management and regulatory arrangements at a commonwealth level and this directly leads into non-existent resource sharing rights.

⁹ Review of Commonwealth Fisheries: Legislation, Policy and Management, Borthwick 2012, page x

What are the main sources of tension between recreational fishers and other fishery users?

Overlaps/conflicts exist where commonwealth fishers and recreational fishers target the same species in the same/similar locations or where commonwealth fishers target a prey species which may have a consequential impact on recreational fishing activities.

Overlaps and conflicts could be addressed by establishing a framework where the rights of all stakeholders are legislatively recognised and an agreed methodology implemented to support fair and equitable resource share allocations.

What, if any, tensions exist between the controls on recreational fishing across jurisdictions and fisheries?

TARFish do not believe there are major areas of tension in relation to controls on recreational fishing across jurisdictions and fisheries. Rules and regulations across states are intrinsically based on maintaining healthy and sustainable fish stocks. Fish stocks can and do vary not only between states but also regionally. Bag/possession limits that underpin fish stock levels in Tasmania can be vastly different to other states for a number of reasons. Fishing pressure can be vastly different between the states due to population, different sub species can exist that vary markedly across states, fish size can be dramatically different across states, ie Southern Bluefin Tuna reach Jumbo size (larger than 100kg) in Tasmania but do not show up in South Australia or New South Wales etc.

Given the services provided by state and territory governments to support recreational fishing, do recreational fishers get good value from licence fees?

In Tasmania licences are only required for species that are deemed to be high value by the state government, e.g. rock lobster, abalone and certain gear types and activities, e.g. Gill nets, rock lobster pots and diving. Licences numbers are not a control measure as they are used to generate revenue to support recreational fishing support services. Currently Tasmania does not have a general fishing licence, known as a rod and line licence. With around 20% of fishers buying a licence of some sort and around 80% of fishers not requiring a licence to fish it raises an equity issue around the funding of services to support recreational fishing. I.e. 20% of fishers are paying for 100% of the service provision for recreational fishing.

Falling revenues and increasing costs of service provisions have resulted in very limited funding of support services for recreational fishing particularly over the last 10 years. Research funding is very tight limiting the extent of required research to make informed resource management decisions. The state government has also reallocated recreational fishing licence revenue to pay for core government services that were previously funded from consolidated revenue. TARFish believes that the model used to fund recreational fishing support services needs to remove the inequity issues that currently exists.

Given the above TARFish believes recreational fishers do get good value from a flawed funding model however service provision is reducing due to the restrictive licencing model. Unless a change in government policy occurs it is expected that services will continue to be strained and over time will reduce.

Are the underlying objectives of fisheries management regulation clear and widely understood?

TARFish believes the answer to this question, and solutions, lie in the Review of Commonwealth Fisheries report¹⁰.

“The objectives in the FMA and FAA are currently pitched toward economic and commercial outcomes (particularly to “efficient and cost-effective fisheries management”, “exploitation of fisheries resources” and to “maximising the net economic return to the Australian community”) and these factors have historically – at least in terms of the degree of assessed overfishing – been accorded precedence over maintaining ecological functions and relationships and long-run sustainability of fisheries.

The objectives of the FMA and FAA should be recast so that AFMA is required to have regard to: the principles embodied in the HSP; minimising by-catch and discards; and the impacts of fishing on marine ecosystems. In particular, the Review proposes that

- The Acts explicitly require AFMA to give more equal weighting in its consideration of the above objectives in fisheries assessments; that does not necessarily mean equal outcomes. Where there may be trade-offs in the pursuit of objectives this should be brought out explicitly in fisheries assessments, with explanation of the reasons for the intended approach.
- In proposing that the objectives of the Act explicitly incorporate three new elements, the Review is not suggesting that other objectives should not be retained in some form. However, as noted there should be no explicit or implicit hierarchy of objectives.
- The Review proposes that, in the redrafted objectives, AFMA be required to have regard to the interests of recreational and Indigenous fishers (and other users of the marine environment).

What should be the main objectives of fisheries management and regulation?

TARFish believes that the main objectives should support the triple bottom line approach of balancing economic, environmental and social objectives. At present economic considerations seem to vastly outweigh environmental and social considerations leading to real risks of community disconnect and social licence issues as witnessed in the “Super Trawler” issue associated with the Margiris and Geelong Star fishing vessels.

If social objectives should be included as objectives of fisheries laws, what priority should they be afforded relative to the other objectives of fisheries regulation?

TARFish understands the triple bottom line approach is about balancing the needs of each component so that a total cost/benefit approach is understood and managed accordingly. With the continuing worldwide development of social considerations and impacts it appears inevitable that social objectives will need to be implemented that align with community expectations and reviewed and updated regularly. This is a difficult question to respond to as it changes over time however as a starting point it would make sense as the author of the Review of Commonwealth Fisheries notes

¹⁰ Review of Commonwealth Fisheries: Legislation, Policy and Management, Borthwick 2012, page vi

above “ to give more equal weighting in its consideration of the above objectives in fisheries assessments...”.

For what species, fishing methods and/or in which locations do regulatory overlaps, conflicts and/or duplication arise across Australian fisheries?

In Tasmania Striped Trumpeter are an iconic deep water species increasingly targeted by recreational fishers due to their excellent eating qualities. Commercial fishing for Striped Trumpeter in state waters has declined over the years for a number of reasons. Stocks of Striped Trumpeter have been shown by the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS)¹¹ to be under pressure and as a result of this recently recreational bag/possession limits have been halved and the legal size has been increased and is expected to be increased again at the next Scalefish Rules Review.

An annual seasonal closure for state waters has been put in place for September & October to protect spawning fish as an additional resource management measure to further help to protect this species. State commercial and recreational fishers strongly support the spawning closure however commonwealth fishers are allowed to fish through the closure period in commonwealth waters resulting in constant friction and questioning about the disconnect between state and commonwealth fisheries regulations.

Marine Parks

TARFish is a member of the South East Marine Park Forum set up by Parks Australia to review the commonwealths South East Marine Reserve. TARFish has been an enthusiastic member since its inception over 2 years ago.

TARFish supports Marine Parks (Marine Protected Areas (MPA)) based on the following:

1. Science - a national representative system of multiple use MPAs in Australian waters based on biodiversity protection and sustainability of fisheries resources where the need has been identified through independent peer reviewed science;
2. Management - MPAs with simple, practical management plans based on decisions that are risk-based, transparent, informed and timely and with sufficient resources for implementation and future management;
3. Reviews -MPAs that are subject to review and monitoring to measure the effectiveness and appropriateness of management plans;
4. Reasonable use - MPAs that provide reasonable use and minimise impacts on existing users.
5. Unity - a unified approach (national, state and local) and will assist recreational fishers to present well researched, credible alternatives to Government that meet the objectives of MPAs but minimise the impacts on recreational fishers;
6. Socio-economic consideration - social and economic factors being given equal consideration to environmental factors in the evaluation of MPA proposals;
7. Compensation - initiatives to enhance recreational fishing where MPAs have a significant impact on recreational fishing;
8. Alliances - strategic alliances with other groups (commercial fishing, tourism, oil and gas, conservation) where common objectives have been established;

¹¹ Spawning Dynamics and age structure of wild caught Tasmanian striped trumpeter during the 2010 spawning season, Tracey, Ewing & Lyle

9. Guideline - the development of guidelines for effective engagement of stakeholders including adequate opportunity for consultation in the development phase in MPA establishment;
10. Monitoring- recreational fishers to get involved in the collection of baseline data in MPAs including catch and effort, value of fishing to local economies, values, attitudes, opinions, desires of recreational fishers;
11. Involvement - greater involvement by local communities in the development, implementation and management of the MPAs in their localities and a greater sense of 'ownership' of those MPAs;
12. Locals - using local community knowledge to develop a much better understanding of marine biodiversity within MPAs and the nature, extent and impact of activities within;
13. Partnerships - creation of partnerships with stakeholders of MPAs to forge a greater effectiveness in management, monitoring, reporting, education and extension of common interest objectives for sustaining biodiversity;
14. Advisory Groups - establishing a stakeholder advisory group or committee to provide opportunities for the community to engage with government and its agencies on the continuing MPA management processes and direction of research for increasing the knowledge base; and

TARFish will NOT support:

- No take/no go zones - the establishment of any no take/no go reserves unless it is satisfied there is sound scientific justification;
- Discrimination - discrimination against any forms of recreational fishing and exclusion from areas and species that are available to other fishers; or
- Unreasonableness - any MPA which will impact on recreational fishing to protect species, elements of biodiversity or natural features that could be protected in areas where there would be less impact on recreational fishing.