

**Recreational Fishing NSW
Advisory Council minutes**

**Meeting 29, 23 and 24 October 2023
Rydges, Sydney Central**

Members Present	Johann Bell Paul Lennon Anna Clark Grahame Williams OAM Vicki Lear Dean Hamilton Matt Hansen Karl Mathers Ray Tang Bill Blair Peter Dugan Ian Puckeridge Peter Turnell	Independent Chair Region 2 – Lower North Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 4 – Illawarra Region 5 – South Coast Region 6 – North West Inland (and MFAC rep) Region 7 – South West Inland (Deputy Chair) Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Charter Fishing Spearfishing Director, Fisheries and Aquaculture Management
Apologies	Patrick Linehan Matt Tripet Ian Puckeridge (<i>apology for 24 October only</i>)	Region 1 Social Benefits of Recreational Fishing Spearfishing

1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

NOTED:

- The Chair opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the 29th meeting of RFNSW.

2) Register of Interests

NOTED:

- The Chair requested that members declare any changes or additions to the RFNSW Conflict

of Interest Register (Risk Register).

- Member Vicki Lear declared that she had resigned from the Australian Women in Fishing program.
- Member Ray Tang declared the Wallerawang branch of the Central Acclimatisation Society held a Gone Fishing Day event in October 2023 following a successful application for funding from the Recreational Fishing Trust.
- Member Peter Turnell (nominee of the Secretary) re-declared that his wife was employed by DPI Fisheries.

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

NOTED:

- RFNSW members agreed on the agenda for the meeting.
- The outcomes of the 28th meeting of RFNSW were accepted without change as a true and accurate record of that meeting by the previous Council members in attendance.
- Next meeting is proposed to be held on 29 February 2024 (TBC).

4) RFNSW Key Priority Areas

NOTED:

- DPI provided a brief overview of the status of actions for each of the Key Priority Area issues and discussed further actions that will be developed for each issue.
- At the meeting, DPI provided a summary of the goals and key objectives of the revised draft Five Year Recreational Fishing Action Plan developed in close consultation with RFNSW.
- At the meeting, members provided initial feedback on the draft Action Plan.
- It was proposed that members provide any further feedback to DPI on the draft Plan after which time DPI will prepare a final draft for proposed submission to the Minister by RFNSW.
- RFNSW recommended that a request be forwarded to the Minister to meet a small group of members to present and discuss the draft Five Year Recreational Fishing Action Plan.

Action item: DPI to collate member comments on the draft Five Year Recreational Fishing Action and prepare a final draft for proposed submission to the Minister by RFNSW.

Action item: RFNSW to request a meeting with the Minister to present and discuss the draft Five Year Recreational Fishing Action Plan.

5) NSW Harvest Strategy update

a) Outline of the Recreational Fisheries Monitoring Program

NOTED:

- Member Ian Puckeridge previously requested discussion on issues raised during a recent Harvest Strategy working group regarding available recreational fishing data.
- For the benefit of new members, DPI provided an overview of the current Recreational

Fisheries Monitoring Program, which includes the Statewide Survey of Recreational Fishing in NSW.

- The presentation provided insight into recreational fishing catch and effort patterns and trends in NSW, and the value of this regular survey for informing stock assessments of key fish species in NSW.
- DPI discussed the program's constraints and challenges, including the lack of a full population-wide sampling frame; some niche species being poorly represented by diarists and spam caller effects causing telephone interview sample loss.
- DPI advised that structural changes to the telephone diary survey were being developed using a Hybrid Computer Assisted Telephone Interview approach based on digital platforms and real-time-data-entry. It was noted this would increase speed of delivery and improve accessibility of the data.
- It was further noted that improvements were being considered for the on-site survey program, based on expansion of future monitoring, including remote video monitoring and drone/roving survey combinations.
- It was noted that studies carried out at larger spatial scales have an even greater potential to contribute to monitoring of the recreational fishery and robust stock assessments of key species, such as tournament monitoring, tagging and state-wide surveys of recreational fishing.

b) Digital tagging and associated reporting system for key species

NOTED:

- Council received a further update on DPI's investigation of options to support a digital near-real-time solution for a tagging and associated reporting system for Mulloway and Lobster for recreational fishers.
- A brief overview of recreational fisher digital solutions being developed and implemented in other states for key species, including Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, was also provided to members.
- DPI also provided further details about how a digital tagging and data collection system could be applied in NSW and RFNSW remained supportive of the concept proposal.
 - Two members of the Council attended a presentation from DPI to CommFish regarding the FishOnline Modernisation Project. The members were impressed with the project and the potential to develop the platform to allow for enhanced collection of recreational catch data in the future.
- Members requested consideration of inclusion of inland species in the reporting system following completion of trials.
- It was noted that a substantial education campaign to help stakeholders understand the need to improve estimates of recreational catch would need to be undertaken prior to implementation.

c) Harvest Strategy update

NOTED:

- DPI updated Council on the following points related to development of Harvest

Strategies:

- Status of the Harvest Strategy for Mulloway, which is nearing completion, with a current focus on refining operational aspects, e.g., reporting and regulations required to underpin operation of the Harvest Strategy.
- The next meeting of the Mulloway Harvest Strategy Working Group would be held on 27 and 28 November 2023.
- Commencement of interim measures for Mulloway on 1 September 2023.
- Approval and publication of the Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy in September 2023 (published on the DPI website), and publication of a fact sheet.
- The focus of the Line and Trap Harvest Strategy Working Group on Snapper and Kingfish strategies, and development of a broader framework and scope of the Harvest Strategy, with the next meeting proposed for 13 and 14 November 2023.
- Publication of fact sheets on the Harvest Strategies for Lobster and Trawl whiting on the DPI website for the benefit of stakeholders.
- A National Fisheries Research and Development Corporation project underway to review and update the 2014 National Guidelines to Develop Fishery Harvest Strategies (expected to take approximately 12 months).

6) Commercial fishing operations

a) Commercial Fishing Operations presentation

NOTED:

- At meeting 28, members expressed an interest in gaining further knowledge and understanding of the different commercial fisheries operations in NSW to assist with future consideration of cross-sector issues.
- At the meeting, DPI provided a brief overview of the fundamental concepts of commercial fishing, including fishing businesses and components, managing commercial catch, restricted access and quota management and ongoing review of industry performance.
- Members were provided with a brief overview of the Ocean Hauling, Lobster and Abalone fisheries.
- It was noted that a raft of tools are used to manage commercial catch, including catch limits, boat size, catch and effort quota, marine park zoning rules, fishing closures and threatened, endangered and protected species.
- A subsequent session on Commercial Fishing Operations will be tabled for Meeting 30.

b) Concerns raised by member Bill Blair regarding commercial fishing in small estuaries

NOTED:

- Member Bill Blair raised the issue of the potential impact of commercial fishing on some species in small estuaries, such as black bream, which have limited movement between estuaries.
- It was suggested that an information session with member Bill Blair be facilitated by DPI out of session to enable further analysis and consideration of this issue.

Action item: DPI to facilitate an information session with member Bill Blair out of session to enable further analysis and consideration of this issue.

7) Identification of priority research topics

NOTED:

- As an action item from the previous meeting, the Chair led discussion to identify priority areas of research that could be highlighted as potential topics for Recreational Fishing Trust applications during future funding rounds.
- DPI provided a brief overview of current DPI fisheries research areas and advice on current knowledge gaps and potential priority research areas to consider.
- Council formed small break-out groups to identify potential topics/areas for future research projects.
- The suggested topics will be collated into a list for further refinement by the RFNSW Chair following the meeting.

8) Freshwater Fisheries update

a) Nesting cod predation

NOTED:

- Members received an insightful presentation on recent research on nesting Eastern freshwater cod disturbance and predation.
- On behalf of members, member Matt Hansen thanked DPI's research team for work being undertaken in this area and provided initial support for potential future trials of 'quiet zones'.

b) Hatchery update

NOTED

- DPI provided an update on major upgrade works at the Gaden Trout Hatchery and the Narrandera Fisheries Centre.
- For the interest of members, a video highlighting the new Narrandera facility was shown at the meeting.
- It was noted work was progressing on the Gaden Hatchery and further updates would be provided at the next meeting.
- Members took the opportunity to commend DPI for the development of the recent infrastructure upgrades to the Narrandera Fisheries Centre.

9) General Business

a) Status of the National Carp Control Plan and the draft Trout Action Plan

NOTED:

- Member Bill Blair acknowledged an update on the National Carp Control Plan was provided by DPI at the last meeting, however, Mr Blair identified additional complementary measures may be needed to target potential incursions of carp into new waterways in NSW.

- Member Ray Tang reiterated this point and explained there is a potential need to explore spot control measures for Carp, which could include the hiring of contractors to target small areas in key recreational fishing waterways where new Carp incursions have been detected to remove breeding stock.
- To discuss this matter in further detail, it was proposed that inland RFNSW members meet with relevant DPI Freshwater Environment and Fisheries Research Unit staff to discuss the progress of the National Carp Control Plan and potential additional complementary actions, such as spot control measures for Carp to target small areas in key recreational fishing waterways where new Carp incursions have been detected. Such actions are needed urgently to remove breeding stock.
- In addition, DPI advised RFNSW that it is seeking community feedback on the draft Trout Cod Action Plan, designed to help guide recovery of the species in NSW. The Plan outlines short, medium and long-term priority actions to transition towards potentially delisting Trout Cod as a threatened species in the future.
- Members noted that it would have been advantageous to have had Council input during development of the Plan to review the aspects related to recreational fishing.
- RFNSW expressed a strong interest in providing input on the draft Plan.

Action item: Inland RFNSW members to meet with relevant DPI Freshwater Environment and Fisheries Research Unit staff to discuss potential additional complementary actions, such as spot control measures for Carp to target small areas in key recreational fishing waterways where new Carp incursions have been detected to remove breeding stock.

10) Joint session – RFNSW and CommFish NSW

Members welcomed the opportunity to meet with CommFish NSW to discuss several issues of common interest.

a) Offshore wind farm presentation and discussion

NOTED:

- The Councils received a presentation from the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) on the process for declaring areas as suitable for offshore renewable energy, including offshore wind farms off the Hunter and Illawarra coasts.
- DCCEEW advised that no area had been declared for Illawarra yet and public consultation is underway.
- Consultation on potential offshore wind farm developments will occur at multiple stages of the regulatory process and continue throughout the life of any project that may ultimately be approved for construction.
- If an area is declared, any prospective developer that receives a feasibility licence will undertake a range of scientific studies to determine the optimal location, size and arrangement of turbines.

- Prospective developers will also need to consult on the location and placement of any future turbines as part of their licence requirements.
- Members of both Councils raised concerns with the offshore wind farm proposals due to the potential for significant impacts on both commercial and recreational fishing, in terms of access to fishing areas and changes in catch rates within the areas.
- RFNSW members also raised concerns about the location and scale of the proposed 1,460 km² Illawarra area, the potential effects of the structures on the distribution of fish in the area, and the potential exclusion zones associated with the structures.

Action item: The RFNSW chair to write to the Minister to express Council's concerns about the potential impacts of the proposed offshore wind areas off the Hunter and Illawarra coasts on recreational fishing.

b) Aboriginal Fishing and Marine and Coastal Environments update

NOTED:

- The Councils also received an update from NSW DPI on the development of the draft Aboriginal Cultural Fishing Regulation and the Draft Network Management Plan for NSW Mainland Marine Parks.
- DPI advised that the final draft plan and associated reports have been submitted by the Marine Estate Management Authority to the Minister for Agriculture and Minister for the Environment for their consideration on the Draft Network Management Plan for NSW Mainland Marine Parks (DNMP).
- An update was provided on the Friends of Bongin Bongin Bay 'no-take aquatic reserve proposal' noting DPI would be meeting with the group on site on 26 October 2023 to discuss their proposal.
- It was noted that the department's current priority is the effective management of the existing network of marine protected areas, particularly finalising and implementing the DNMP across the five mainland marine parks and progressing management rules review in line with the rules-related actions in the DNMP.
- DPI noted that the drafting of the Aboriginal cultural fishing regulation was underway and was being informed by advice from a range of stakeholders, including the DPI Fisheries Joint Advisory Council round table held earlier in the year that included representation from CommFish NSW, RFNSW and the Aboriginal Fishing Advisory Council.

11) Election commitments

NOTED:

- DPI provided a brief update on the Government's election commitments relating to recreational fishing, which include:
 - Establish a peak recreational fishing body and a peak industry body for the NSW commercial fishing sector;
 - Conduct an audit of the NSW Recreational Fishing Trusts;

- Pass laws to create a recreational fishing board responsible for allocating funds from the trusts; and
 - Make fishing available and welcoming for women and people with disabilities.
- The Chair advised that the Minister had written to him in August inviting comments on the proposed Recreational Fishing Trust audit scope. It is expected the audit will commence shortly.
- DPI also advised the Government has made a commitment to consult with recreational fishers about establishing a peak recreational fishing body.

12) Recreational Fishing Trust project update

NOTED:

- DPI provided a brief update on the 'Keep It Clean' campaign noting social media was being rolled out in October 2023 to include static infed posts and short videos.
- It was noted that following a Request for Quote process, a contract to undertake community clean up events and promote the "Keep it Clean" campaign had been awarded to OzFish Unlimited. It is expected that OzFish will undertake 30 clean ups across 10 coastal locations in 2023 and 2024.
- DPI was pleased to advise Council that two large artificial reefs were deployed in September and October off Terrigal and Forster, bringing the total number of offshore reefs to 11. Each reef consists of two large (50 tonne) steel structures with a footprint of 16m x 16m and a height of 12m. The reefs were assembled in White Bay, Sydney. The reefs provide new fishing locations for recreational fishers by creating quality reef habitat.
- An update was also provided on another successful Gone Fishing Day held on 8 October 2023. It was noted over 100 fishing clubs and other organisations received grants or fishing packages from DPI (using Recreational Fishing Trust funds) to run their own Gone Fishing Day events.
- DPI congratulated member Ray Tang and members of the Wallerawang branch of the Central Acclimatisation Society for a very successful event held at Wallace Lake.

Action item: DPI to circulate links to the 'Keep it Clean' videos to members for information.

13) Incoming correspondence

a) DDG letter to Chair regarding the approval of the Spanner Crab Harvest Strategy

NOTED:

- Members noted the correspondence.

b) DDG letter to Chair regarding new interim arrangements for Mulloway commencing 1 September 2023

NOTED:

- Members noted the correspondence.

c) Mr Philp re commercial fishing in Warrell Creek

NOTED:

- Members discussed the correspondence noting Mr Philp's concerns with commercial

- fishing and fish stocks in Warrell Creek (mid North Coast).
- Members noted Mr Philp's concerns and it was agreed that in the first instance Mr Philp be offered the opportunity to meet with relevant commercial fisheries management staff from DPI to verbally discuss his concerns.

Action item: DPI to coordinate a meeting between Mr Philp and DPI to discuss his concerns regarding commercial fishing in Warrell Creek.

d) Email from Mr Leadbitter re cameras for rock fishing hot spots

NOTED:

- Mr Leadbitter wrote to the Chair of RFNSW in September 2023 regarding a suggestion to fit cameras at dangerous rock platforms to show sea conditions as an aid to planning fishing trips.
- RFNSW acknowledged the potential merit of the proposal and recommended that DPI contact relevant rock fishing stakeholders, including relevant local Councils, water safety organisations and recreational fishing organisations to discuss the concept further. Subject to stakeholder consultation, there may be opportunity to trial this concept at key sites in high priority locations, e.g., Wollongong and Randwick Local Government Areas.

Action item: DPI to contact relevant rock fishing stakeholders, including relevant local Councils, water safety organisations and recreational fishing organisations to discuss the concept of cameras for rock fishing hot spots.

14) Presentation on the Predicted Marine Heatwave

NOTED:

- Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to Meeting 30

Meeting closed.
