

Issues for consideration by the SARC identified at a meeting of the Estuary General Hand Gathering Working Group held 4 August 2015

Important note: *The issues below were raised by members of the WG as expert individual views for consideration by SARC. They are not considered to be the representative view of any particular group of fishers or shareholders. The issues raised will be considered by SARC in formulating the final recommendations on linkages that will be provided to the Minister for his consideration.*

Comments on linkage recommendations

General issues:

- Uncertainty regarding the criteria (and data) that will be used by the Independent Allocation Panel (IAP) to allocate catch quota for each species. Data is very important as there have been changes in stock through time that have meant fishers haven't always been active.
- Resource sharing, impact of marine parks, natural mortality, impacts on areas we can access & what's allocated to us. Is the TAC yet to be divided? Resource sharing policy hasn't been set. TACC is usually set by TAC committee. Would like commercial portion set (resource sharing).
- One fisher stated he's involved in a few fisheries going through reform, this one has best chance of success just need to resolve the issue with TAC – if it's enough, everyone will be reasonably happy. But acknowledge that some will be impacted more than others. Can't look after everyone unless more money was available.

Estuary General – Hand gathering:

i) Minimum shareholdings

- Coming up to the minimum shareholding or increasing shareholdings is a concern because fishers don't know how the species shares will be allocated to current shares. Also, if 125 shares (worm only shares) and you buy these, will you be allocated other species shares on these? Also, not sure the shares are available within the region.
- Concern that 1 share wormers (most of which are active fishers) will have to buy 124 shares to keep doing what they've been doing for 20 years.
- Suggestion to sunset 1 share wormers and not allow nomination, keep it till they retire.

ii) Quota (pipis)

- Can see benefit in going to quota for pipis, but not at present due to uncertainties. Uncertain cost of quota management, how many shares required (don't know if it's worth buying more shares as you don't know how many you may need for quota later). Also uncertainty regarding pipi mortality and natural variability. Would be good to have estimate of fishery costs if a certain number of fishers remain.
- Concern over low ITCAL and uncertainty of the future TAC. Would be good to have a TAC set earlier to make decisions about investment.
- Concern over the data that the IAP may use for allocation, the period of data they'll use. Don't want to go with quota and then get dealt an allocation that we are not happy with.
- Concern with the uncertainty with the future catch quota allocation in terms of how many species shares will be allocated (and for which species) on the current shares.

- Pipi bait industry has increased (3-4 extra harvesters on the beach), future is looking bright with the resource. Most happy with the 40kg/day limit, don't want to see it go to less.
- A suggestion was made that, due to the status of the stock the fishery should be able to remain open for twelve months with the 40kg/day limit remaining in place and, if necessary, a TAC set to ensure stocks are not over exploited (for the period up to when Species Shares and Quotas etc are in place).
- Concern that a competitive TAC would drive prices down because of the race-to-fish.
- Suggestion that need 7 tonnes per fisher for quota (pipis).
- Comment made that fishers need to capitalise on the resource available when it's available.

iii) Quota (Cockles)

- Closure on one of the lakes (Merimbula) – management arrangement limitation.
- Only limited (e.g. 4) licences in some regions – so don't see why need to go to quota.

iv) Quota (Beach worms)

- Not so worried about quota allocation. But the 1 share wormers are concerned about coming up to the minimum within the region (share availability issue also).
- Some ok with buying more shares, as they could diversify and harvest pipis.
- Some wormers do have 125 shares now and do catch pipis and worms already.

Other fisheries management issues raised for consideration by DPI

- Nominated fishers – will they be allowed in future? If you get an allocation in future (shares held in two regions, species shares can all be used in one region (if endorsed for that region).
- General comment that species should be added to hand gathering (e.g. octopus).
- Suggestion that 280kg (week limit based on 40kg/day) of pipis can be taken in 3 days and fishers could then take the rest of the week off and go into other fisheries during that time.
- Pipi trip limit of 40kg is ok, but concerned about seasonal closure as don't think it's necessary at the moment. Some would like to see the 6 month closure lifted, alternatively at least be allowed to take in the Christmas through Easter period.
- Some would like to see mechanism through reporting to log 40kg pipis per day at end of day, so as to remove multiple trips and multiple vehicles. Want to do direct reports. Issue with 40kg in possession. Can't take 40kg from one region and then another (endorsed in 2 regions, so should be allowed to take from 2 regions on same day, but are restricted by possession limit), as you'd have too much in possession.
- Pipi stocks have recovered, this is due to: size limit, trip limit and seasonal closures – also natural cycle of the pipis. Boom & bust nature of the stock.

Exit Grant issues

- Is there flexibility in exit grant process? Concern that fishers don't know the catch quota allocation per share prior to the exit grant.
- Suggestion for two staged exit grant for hand gathers owing to IAP process. Money could be set aside for hand gathers so that it's available once the decision is made by the IAP when fishers may need to purchase shares or quota.
- Concern about new businesses being issued after taking exit grant (if get shares again to entitle fisher to a business?)
- Could fishing business transfer rules be relaxed? Don't know until linkages are designed. Unless linkage is strong, there is a risk associated with the removal of the fishing business as a management tool.
- Some do not agree with the current format of the proposed exit grant.