

# ESTUARY GENERAL MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Chairperson's Summary

The Estuary General Management Advisory Committee (EGMAC) met at the Cronulla Fisheries Centre on Friday 14 December 2007.

As this was my first occasion chairing EGMAC I believe it would be useful to indicate briefly my general impression of the attitudes of the members of this committee.

There is a strong feeling of trust between the Fisheries Manager and the Industry members of EGMAC.

Most Industry members believe that the accessible parts of the fishery are becoming very restricted given the loss of area to commercial fishing. This in turn is making it very difficult for fishers to make a profitable living from it.

Industry is understandably keen to learn of the outcomes of the review on structural adjustment and how these will impact on their long-term future in the fishery.

Efforts are still being made to locate an Industry representative from Region 1 and a conservation representative.

A summary of the key issues discussed by the EGMAC follows:

- The Committee noted DPI's proposal to amend the *Fisheries Management (General) Regulation 2002* and the movement of provisions from the General Regulation into the *Fisheries Management (Estuary General Share Management Plan) Regulation 2006*.
- Industry representatives reiterated their concern that the use of square-mesh codends may not be practical in certain gear types and estuaries. DPI noted Industry's concern and advised that the implementation of square-mesh codends is based on extensive research into the selectivity of prawn catching gear in NSW. The Committee supported DPI developing a policy that facilitates Industry's ability to trial modifications to gear in the fishery.
- The Committee noted Industry concern regarding the use of unlicensed assistance in the EG fishery with respect to prawn seining. Industry agreed to consult with stakeholders and DPI in regard to limiting access to the EG fishery to licensed commercial fishers only.
- The Committee noted Industry concern regarding a minimum legal length (MLL) for eels rather than a minimum legal weight. The Committee supported Industry's proposal for an increase in the maximum mesh size in eel traps to facilitate the escape of eels below the MLL.
- The Committee supported strongly the renewal of the export approval for the EG fishery.
- The Committee noted the potential for Industry to be responsible for managing prawn net (set pocket) priority determinations. Further, the Committee noted the challenges in developing a framework to facilitate the process and the potential difficulties that Industry managed priority determinations could encounter.
- The Committee recognised the potential for the formation of a working group comprising representatives from the Seafood Industry Advisory Council and Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing to initiate the development of a strategy that:

- (i) identifies the key water quality parameters necessary for sustainable fisheries, and

(ii) establishes a mechanism to maintain and improve the environmental conditions required for sustainable fisheries production.

The Committee noted that the strategy could be similar to the NSW Oyster Industry Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy and would be of benefit to all fisheries.



Patrick Appleton  
Chairperson, Estuary General Management Advisory Committee  
15 January 2008