

FINAL OUTCOMES

Our Ref: OUT22/2932

MEETING	Charter Fishing NSW Working Group – CFNSW
DATE / TIME	15 March 2022 010:00 – 12:10 hours
LOCATION	Virtual Meeting via Zoom
ATTENDEES	John Paton (Chair) Kyle Cush (Region 1) Andrew Trappel (Region 2) Roland Persson (Region 4 South) Peter Dugan (Region 6) Bill Deveril (Region 7) Vic Levett (RFNSW)
APOLOGIES	Scott Thorrington (Region 3), John Lee (Region 4 North), Ann Garard (Region 5)

1. Introduction by the Chair

The Chair welcomed members to the first CFNSW meeting in 2022 and provided an acknowledgement of Country. The meeting opened at 10:00 am.

2. Register of Interests

The Chair requested that members declare any conflicts of interests on the register of interest's form (Appendix A to the agenda).

Action item: Members to respond to email request from DPI and return register of interest form sent via email to charter.fishing@dpi.nsw.gov.au

3. Agreement on the outcomes from the previous meeting

The outcomes from the previous meeting held on 7 December 2021 were tabled (provided in Appendix B to the agenda). The outcomes were unanimously supported by present members as being a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. Correspondence sent and received

The Correspondence list was noted by the Working group.

5. Action List

Items in the action list were discussed. It was noted that the completed items will be removed from the Action list.

Vic Levett (RFNSW) advised that rowers on Sydney harbour have now largely improved their visibility and are equipped with lighting and this issue can be removed from the list.

6. Updates

a) Management update

DPI provided a management update to the Working group, which included an update on the easing of COVID rules, industry promotion, catch reporting statistics, FADS, Artificial reef deployment and fish stocking programs.

COVID – it was noted that the mandatory restrictions previously applicable to charter operations had been removed. Charter fishing operators are encouraged to continue to operate under COVID safe plans to minimise the spread of COVID.

Industry promotion – an update was given on the current industry promotion strategy. The Region 2 member suggested that a short video may be an effective promotional approach. The Region 4 (South) advised of low levels of clients utilising Discover vouchers for charter trips and suggested further promotion may improve clientele awareness.

Action Item: DPI to investigate opportunities to develop and use short duration videos for industry promotion and to further promote Dive and Discover voucher use.

Catch Reporting - DPI provided an update on catch reporting and reporting rates which are trending in the 95-percentile range. A breakdown analyses of charter fishing effort and activity by region following the COVID pandemic was provided highlighting the impacts of COVID restrictions on clientele numbers. The Working group acknowledged the proportion of non-compliance in the industry was relatively low (approximately 5% or less). The Working group was advised that further management and compliance action may be necessary to maintain current compliance rates for catch record.

Action item: DPI to investigate avenues of advising operators of overdue records more promptly and continue efforts to maintain the high reporting rates.

Legislative Amendments - DPI provided an update on progress towards implementation of the legislative amendments, including key changes for industry and likely implementation later this year. It was noted that the legislative amendments will make it possible for charter licence holders to voluntarily surrender their licence if they wish to do so. A DPI industry 'fact sheet' highlighting the key changes for industry is being developed to assist operators to understand the new rules and will be released shortly.

Action item: DPI develop an 'fact sheet' for distribution to industry.

FADs, Artificial reef deployment and Fish Stocking programs - DPI provided an update on the FADs, Artificial Reef deployment and Fish Stocking programs. It was noted that both commercial and DPI hatcheries have had good success in producing large numbers of dusky flathead for stocking in the 2021 year.

The RFNSW member advised that there is some conflict over the use of some FADs by some commercial fishers in some regions.

Action item: DPI to monitor the situation regarding commercial fisher's utilisation of DPI deployed FADs.

Action item: DPI to forward a copy of the presentation to members of the Working group for reference.

Compliance update – DPI provided an update from Fisheries compliance regarding potential illegal charter operations. The Working group was advised that current regulatory amendments would help to strengthen fisheries compliance activities regarding illegal operators advertising.

Action item: Members to contact either Fisheries Compliance or Management regarding any concerns about illegal charter fishing operations.

b) Research

DPI provided an update on the key finding of the 2019/20 Recreational Fisheries Monitoring Program to the Working group and the progress of the 2021/22 program. It was noted that the charter fishing logbook data is an essential data source for species stock assessments including stock performance and economic indicators. The data is also a vital contributor in the 'Performance, Development and Insights' report by DPI, which is an annual publication highlighting the socio-economic output of each primary industry sector.

Action item: DPI to provide the Working group with a copy of this presentation

c) CFNSW members updates

Industry members provided an update for their respective regions.

It was commonly noted that the recent extreme weather events (floods) were having a significant short-term financial impact on operators, with businesses being forced to cancel trips due to poor weather, dangerous conditions, and a significant number of clientele cancellations.

Generally, members were optimistic about the future of the industry with variable reports of improving economic conditions (prior to the floods) and good catches of fish in offshore areas. It was noted that the industry will continue to move forward following the impacts of COVID restrictions and the recent weather events.

7. Charter fishing gemfish boat limit review

DPI provided an update on review of the fisheries closure for gemfish boat and bag limits. DPI is considering a proposal to increase the boat limit of Gemfish to 20 for Charter fishing boats only for a trial period of 2 years to address this issue. While this increase was supported by the Working group, it was raised by the Chair that the bag limit of 2 per person will continue constrain operators with large client capacity exceeding 10 clients.

The Chair **moved a motion** 'that the boat limit for Gemfish applicable to Charter fishing vessels be removed in its entirety, with only the 2 per person limit to apply'. It was noted that Charter fishing operators are restricted by the maximum number of notational 'offshore seats' allocated to a charter fishing licence holder. The motion was **unanimously** supported by members.

8. Other business

Impacts of recent flooding – An update on DPI's flood disaster response and available State and Federal assistance measures was discussed.

Action item: Members to encourage operators in their regions to either call DPI or respond to the recent DPI email regarding details of flood damage to their businesses so DPI can include this information in relevant assistance and support processes.

9. Chairperson summary and proposed meeting date for next CFNSW meeting

The Chairperson provided a summary of the meeting and thanked the members and industry for their resilience and courage during the COVID pandemic, highlighting the

need to responsibly move forward. The chair thanked the members for their continued efforts on the Working group.

The next meeting was proposed to be scheduled in July 2022 and be held in person if possible.

Meeting Closed at 12:10pm