

## Commercial Fisheries Business Efficiency Program Consultation

### Paper 2: Removal of boat licences

#### What is being reviewed?

Commercial fishing boat licensing arrangements. There are three aspects of management of commercial fishing boats in NSW that are relevant: (a) the boats that are currently required to be licensed, (b) the maximum boat lengths that apply in each fishery, and (c) managing the number and size of boats that may be used in a fishery despite being longer than the maximum boat length for the fishery.

#### Boats required to be licensed:

Boats used in the following fisheries are currently required to be licensed: Lobster Fishery, Abalone Fishery, Ocean Trap and Line Fishery, Sea Urchin and Turban Shell Fishery, and Inland Fishery.

Boats used in the following fisheries are only required to be licensed if used in certain sectors or if over a certain length:

- Estuary General Fishery if over 10 metres,
- Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery if over 10 metres,
- Ocean Hauling Fishery if purse seining, or if the boat is over 20 metres and used in the garfish net (hauling) or pilchard, anchovy and bait net (hauling) sectors, and
- Ocean Trawl Fishery if deepwater prawn trawling, or if the boat is over 20 metres and used in the inshore prawn, offshore prawn, northern fish or southern fish sectors.

Boats operating in other jurisdictions that depart from a NSW port and return to a NSW port are also required to be licensed.

#### Maximum boat lengths that apply in each fishery:

The regulations currently establish maximum boat lengths for some fisheries. These are shown in the following table.

Fishery or sector	Current maximum boat length
Lobster	No maximum length
Abalone	No maximum length
Sea Urchin and Turban Shell	No maximum length

Fishery or sector	Current maximum boat length
Inland	No maximum length
Estuary General	10 metres
Estuary Prawn Trawl	10 metres
Ocean Trap and Line	16 metres
Ocean Hauling (except beach hauling)	20 metres
Beach hauling	6 metres
Ocean Trawl	20 metres

### Managing the number and size of boats longer than the maximum boat lengths:

Some boats are exempt from the maximum boat lengths that apply to a fishery.

The boats that are exempt have a recorded history of activity in the fishery, and they are identified by a fishery-specific exemption code (or notation) on the front of the boat's licence.

The following table shows the number of boat licences with each exemption code and the length of the physical boats currently associated with each, as a range.

Fishery or sector	Exemption code	Number of licences with exemption code	Length of physical boats (range)
Estuary General	EG	28	4.40 m – 15.70 m
Estuary Prawn Trawl	EPT	39	6.68 m – 15.59 m
Ocean Hauling (except beach hauling)	OH	2	21.8 m – 31.07 m
Ocean Trap and Line	OTL	10	3.4 m – 20.38 m
Ocean Trawl	OT	6	16.02 m – 23.5 m

### What is proposed?

It is proposed to:

- 1) Remove the requirement for boats used in NSW commercial fisheries to be licensed.
- 2) Remove the requirement for interstate boats departing from a NSW port and returning to a NSW port to be licenced.
- 3) Phase-out the use of boats that exceed the maximum length for a fishery (this includes boats upgraded under the former Tuna Upgrade Policy).
- 4) Increase the maximum boat length applying to the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery to 20 metres (from 16 metres) in response to submissions to the Business Efficiency Program.

## How would boats exceeding the maximum lengths be phased out?

Phasing-out the use of boats that exceed the maximum length for a fishery would involve a public list of the boats that may continue to be used in the fishery despite being longer than the maximum length for the fishery.

Boats would be identified in the public list by the name of the boat and the *unique identifier* issued by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority for the boat.

Once the boat is no longer fit for commercial use it would be removed from the list.

The creation of the list would be a once-off process applied at the time the new arrangements are implemented. Once the list is created no other boats will be able to be added to the list.

The boats added to the list, on a fishery by fishery basis, would be those that are longer than the maximum length for a fishery and that are authorised by a boat licence with a relevant exemption code for use in the fishery.

## Why the change?

Historically, commercial fishing boat licences were an important tool for mitigating against significant increases in commercial catch – by limiting the number and size of boats used.

The NSW commercial fishing industry has undergone significant reform in recent years and a new management regime directly controls the amount of catch that can be taken from, or effort that can be used in a fishery. These reforms have strengthened management arrangements under which NSW commercial fisheries operate.

The new arrangements mean that in many cases a Total Allowable Catch or Total Allowable Effort is now set for a fishery, and shareholders receive an allocation (or a limit) of catch or effort to which they can fish.

Benefits from the proposed changes include reduced regulatory burden (or 'red-tape') on industry, reduced DPI administration and reduced costs. The changes will also address the duplication of boat registration by DPI and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

Increasing the maximum boat length in the Ocean Trap and Line Fishery to 20 meters would improve safety for fishers, provide for improved handling of catch for premium market price, and reduce the number of boats that would need to be included in the proposed list (from ten boats down to one boat).

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