

**Recreational Fishing NSW
Advisory Council minutes**

**Meeting 27, 27 and 28 April 2023
Rydges, Central Sydney**

Members Present	Johann Bell Patrick Linehan Paul Lennon Anna Clark Grahame Williams OAM Dean Hamilton Matt Hansen Karl Mathers Ray Tang Bill Blair Peter Dugan Matt Tripet Peter Turnell	Independent Chair Region 1 – Upper North Coast Region 2 – Lower North Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 3 – Sydney & Central Coast Region 5 – South Coast Region 6 – North West Inland (and MFAC rep) Region 7 – South West Inland Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Region 8 – Central & Southern Tablelands Charter Fishing Social Benefits of Recreational Fishing Nominee of the Secretary - DPI representative
Apologies	Ian Puckeridge Vicki Lear	Spearfishing Region 4 – Illawarra

1) Welcome, introductions and housekeeping

NOTED:

- The Chair opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the 27th meeting of RFNSW.
- The Chair was pleased to advise members that the Hon. Tara Moriarty, MP, Minister for Agriculture, Regional NSW and Western NSW would be joining the meeting to meet with members.

2) Register of Interests

NOTED:

- The Chair requested that members declare any changes or additions to the Register of Interests.
- DPI requested any outstanding Pecuniary Interest forms to be submitted to the Department as soon as possible.

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

NOTED:

- RFNSW members agreed on the agenda for the meeting.
- Noting it was the first meeting of the new Council, the outcomes of the 26th 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 2 – 3 August (location TBC)

ACTION: DPI to email Meeting 26 outcomes to the new Council members for their information.

4) Session with the Hon. Moriarty MP, Minister for Regional NSW

NOTED:

- Members of RFNSW greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet with the new Minister, introduce themselves and explain their roles on the Council.
- Brief discussions were held on a number of current and emerging priority issues for recreational fishing.
- Members also highlighted a key RFNSW initiative – *the Recreational Fishing Strategy – Driving Recreational Fishing Forward* and requested that this important document be referred to the Minister for consideration.
- The Council reiterated that it is looking forward to working with the Minister to achieve positive recreational fishing outcomes in NSW.

5) Role of RFNSW and brief overview of Council processes

NOTED:

- DPI provided a brief overview of Council processes and protocols, including outlining the key components of the RFNSW Terms of Reference, Charter and Code of Conduct.
- DPI reiterated the importance of members disclosing all potential conflicts of interest and encouraged members to seek advice from the Chair or DPI if uncertain as to whether they need to declare a potential conflict of interest in relation to their role on RFNSW.
- During this session, discussion was held on the need to elect a deputy Chairperson for those occasions where the Chairperson was unavailable.
- The Chair, with the support of the Council, nominated Karl Mathers to act as Deputy Chair on an as needs basis for the current term of Council.

ACTION: DPI to refer Council advice to the Minister to appoint Karl Mathers as Deputy Chair for the remainder of this current term.

6) RFNSW Top Priority Areas

NOTED:

- The previous Council developed a 'top priority areas' list outlining the key issues the Council considers as high priority for recreational fishing.
- At the meeting, break-out groups were formed to identify current and emerging priority issues, which were then workshopped into a draft 'top priority areas' list.
- Some of the key focus areas include building on the Fish For Life program; promoting and protecting recreational fishing access; supporting innovative recreational catch data collection for key species; making recreational fishing havens even better, implementing innovative management plans for key recreational fisheries and boosting initiatives to improve fish habitat, including reducing impacts from cold water pollution, removing barriers to fish passage and restoring both coastal and freshwater fish habitat.
- The draft list will be referred to members for comment prior to being forwarded to the Minister.

7) NSW Harvest Strategy update

NOTED:

- DPI provided an update on the development and implementation of Harvest Strategies in NSW for the benefit of new Council members.
- Council was advised that the Line and Trap Harvest Strategy Working Group had been established to develop harvest strategies for key species, commencing with Kingfish and Snapper. The Working Group held its first meeting in May 2023.
- Members were very supportive of ensuring more educational materials on Harvest Strategies were developed and distributed to recreational fishers, especially grass roots fishers.

8) Freshwater ecosystems update: Carp and fish kills

NOTED:

- The Council received an informative update from DPI on the mass fish death that occurred in Menindee on the lower Darling-Baarka River in March 2023 related to low oxygen levels (hypoxia) in the river system following a significant flood event.
- DPI advised the Council that an independent investigation into the fish kills would be undertaken and that multiple agencies across NSW and the Commonwealth will continue to work together to mitigate risks.
- DPI also updated the Council on the status of the National Carp Control Program. It was noted that the NSW Government supported the development of the carp herpes virus by the Commonwealth Government and the release of the National Carp Control Program (NCCP) in 2022.
- DPI noted that the NCCP identified the potential for the virus to be used as a biological control and recommended further research be undertaken prior to a final decision. It was further noted that control measures (i.e., removal) would be an important part of a future

control strategy but was unlikely to have any significant effect in isolation from a large-scale strategic action (i.e., carp herpes virus).

- The Council reiterated its support for the work being done by DPI and thanked Cameron Lay, Director, Freshwater Environment, and his team for their efforts to date in responding to the recent fish kill at Menindee.

9) Recreational Fishing Strategy – Driving Recreational Fishing Forward: 2023 – 2033

NOTED:

- DPI updated the Council on the status of *the Recreational Fishing Strategy – Driving Recreational Fishing Forward* and for the benefit of new members, provided a brief introduction on the development of the Strategy.
- It was noted that the Strategy had been developed during the previous term as a key RFNSW issue in collaboration with DPI and included a range of initiatives to boost recreational fishing over the next 10 years.
- The Council recommended that the draft Strategy be referred to the Minister for consideration.

ACTION: DPI to provide a copy of the draft Recreational Fishing Strategy to new Council members for information. DPI to refer the draft Recreational Fishing Strategy to the Minister for consideration.

10) Fish for Life update

NOTED:

- DPI updated the Council on progress being made with the Fish For Life program.
- It was noted that a project manager had been appointed to coordinate the program, and the initiative was presented at the World Recreational Fishing Conference in February, receiving excellent feedback from other jurisdictions.
- It was also noted that the 'Fishing Litter Legends' and 'Female Fishos' Fish for Life sub programs were underway, with a marketing agency engaged to develop quality fishing litter social media content, a tender process nearing completion for an organisation to deliver and promote community clean up events under a DPI contract, and develop a pathway for a 'women in recreational fishing' online network.
- The Council noted the progress that the subprograms have made and looks forward to receiving further updates at future meetings.

11) Fish stocking and hatchery update

NOTED:

- For the benefit of new members, DPI provided a brief overview of the Department's Fish Stocking program.
- It was noted that over 2 million salmonids and 3.4 million native fish were stocked this season (across all programs).

- It was also noted that the \$4\$ scheme where community organisations receive matching funding from the Recreational Fishing Trust has been doubled to \$2 for every \$1 of matching funding for the period 2022/2023.
- An update was also provided on DPI's inland hatcheries and asset upgrades, including advice that the new Narrandera fish hatchery was nearing completion and the Gaden Hatchery and tourist centre upgrade was underway.

12) DPI fishing closures and regulation amendment proposals

a) Port Stephens crab gear modification requirement fishing closure

NOTED:

- DPI advised the Council that this section 8 fishing closure has been in place since 2015 and requires recreational fishers to modify witches hats and crab traps to reduce entanglement and drowning of turtles in Port Stephens.
- It was noted that these arrangements continue to be well received by local fishers, fishing businesses and the community.
- DPI sought Council endorsement for inclusion of this closure in regulation, which was supported by RFNSW.

b) Lake Macquarie crab trap order

NOTED:

- DPI advised the Council that an order under section 37 was made in 2021 for a 2-year trial to permit the use of crab traps in Lake Macquarie.
- Following completion of the trial, DPI sought Council endorsement to extend this order for a further 5-year period.
- RFNSW provided the requested endorsement.

c) Porters Creek dam catch and release lure and fly only fishing

NOTED:

- DPI advised the Council that public access to Porters Creek dam had recently been made available to create a productive new fishery in the impoundment on the NSW South Coast.
- DPI sought Council endorsement to implement a 3-year trial to permit a catch and release, lure and fly only fishery in the dam.
- RFNSW supported the proposal.

d) Slavens Creek dam access

NOTED:

- DPI advised the Council that this proposal involved amending the regulation to permit fishing in Slavens Creek dam.

- It was noted that this small dam is located alongside the walking track into the Thompsons Creek Dam fishing precinct, is stocked with trout, and is popular with novice anglers.
- DPI sought endorsement from Council to amend the regulation, and the request was supported by RFNSW.

e) Murray Crayfish Murrumbidgee System

NOTED:

- DPI advised the Council that it is proposed to correct an error in the description of waters involving Old Man Creek and its tributaries (Beavers and Dog Falls Creeks) to ensure consistency in Murray Cray regulation across the Old Man Creek catchment. As it stands, the take of Murray Cray is excluded in Old Mans Creek but the exclusion does not apply in its tributaries.
- DPI sought Council endorsement to amend the clerical error, which was supported by RFNSW

13) Discussion on the social benefits of recreational fishing

NOTED:

- Member Matt Tripet led a discussion on the vital role recreational fishing can play in delivering mental health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Member Dean Hamilton also shared program information on how the wellbeing benefits of fishing can help veterans, first responders and other community members deal with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- Council acknowledged the role fishing can play in this important therapeutic work and recommended that further consideration of this issue be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

14) Commercial Fisheries Business Efficiency Program (BEP) Working Group – call for nominations

NOTED:

- DPI provided a brief overview of the BEP Working Group, which includes membership from both RFNSW and CommFish NSW, and which was formed to assist with the review of existing commercial fishing regulations that are no longer considered necessary, and which impede business efficiency.
- DPI sought nominations from the Council for three new RFNSW members in light of the new Council term commencing recently.
- It was noted member Paul Lennon agreed to continue in his role as Working Group member and member Grahame Williams OAM agreed to join the Working Group.

ACTION: DPI to seek an additional nomination from Council members out of session to join the BEP Working Group. DPI to provide the names and details of the three members to the Group Executive Officer once membership was approved by Chair.

15) Aboriginal Fishing and Marine and Coastal Environments unit update

NOTED:

- DPI updated the Council on a number of Aboriginal Fishing unit programs including the Aboriginal Fisheries Development Program, the Cultural Fishing Harvest Strategy framework (to support the inclusion of cultural fishing into all Harvest Strategies) and the Cultural Fishing Local Management Plans for Hastings and Tweed. It was noted that the Council had previously been briefed on these important programs.
- A marine park planning update was also provided to members, noting that the draft 10-year Management Plan for NSW Mainland Marine Park Network had been developed (five parks) and informed draft management rules for Batemans and Port-Stephens-Great Lakes marine parks.
- It was noted that planning for the Lord Howe Island (LHI) Marine Park had commenced and a process was underway to identify all values, and threats to the values, of the LHI Marine Park, including qualitative interviews/focus groups with community and key stakeholders (July – September). It was also noted that all Fisheries Advisory Councils, including RFNSW would be included in this process.
- Council was pleased to note that the presentation included discussion of opportunities for recreational fishing in marine parks, including opportunities for low-risk recreational fishing (including spearfishing) and enhancing access and recreational fishing experiences, such as wilderness- or kayak-only fishing areas.

16) Recreational Fishing Trust overview

NOTED:

- DPI provided a brief overview of the Recreational Fishing Trust, with an update on current 2022/2023 revenue, licence sales and recent trends in licence duration and payment method.
- DPI also provided an overview on the NSW Licence Holder Survey that was completed by Australian Survey Research in December 2022, reporting on licence holder views and values on the expenditure of licence fees to improve recreational fishing in NSW.

17) General Business

a) Ministerial correspondence referral – Spearing of Octopus

NOTED:

- DPI advised the Council that a community member had written to the former Minister seeking to prohibit the spearing of Octopus due to observation of spear fishers using speared octopus to flush out lobsters to make them easier to catch. The issue was subsequently referred to RFNSW for consideration.
- It was considered that his practice was low risk with regard to octopus stock sustainability activity but DPI would maintain a close watching brief on this matter and continue to encourage and promote responsible fishing practices.

b) DPI D-DG correspondence – amendments to Fisheries Officers powers

NOTED:

- Council noted the correspondence from Deputy Director General Fisheries to RFNSW Chair regarding the role of Fisheries Officers and the recent amendments to their powers in NSW.

18) Environmental Assessment on Recreational Fishing update

NOTED:

- DPI provided the Council with a presentation on the Environmental Assessment on Recreational Fishing (EA).
- The presentation included an update for the benefit of new members including the methodology as well as the key threats identified to date. The current work underway to assess impacts on Aboriginal cultural values was also discussed.