



Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council (COMMFISH NSW AC)

Dear Minister

The Commercial Fishing NSW Advisory Council (CommFish NSW) held its 26th meeting at Nelson Bay on the 4th of May 2023. On the evening of the 3rd of May, Council held an informal “meet and greet” with local fishers which was very useful to hear of local issues. Informal gatherings with industry have become standard practice for all regional meetings and are proving to be a success.

At the meeting, the two new members of the Council were welcomed for their first face to face meeting as was the first member of the Mentoring Program. Members were briefed by the Estuary Prawn Trawl Fishery member on the issues and hardships being faced by the Clarence River fishers due to the outbreak of White spot disease. Council supports any assistance that can be given to these fishers and the businesses that depend on the fishery.

Members were also briefed by NSW DPI on the Fisher Online Modernisation Program, Estuary Prawn Trawl gear trials and the Danish Seine fishing research, the Draft Administrative sanctions for the commercial and charter fishing industries, the overdue general records project, an update on the Aboriginal Fisheries Business Development Program, the development of the draft cultural fishing regulations and an update on the cultural fishing framework for NSW Harvest Strategies. An update on the introduction of Vessel Monitoring Systems for NSW was also provided.

BDO – EconSearch briefed CommFish on the latest data from the ongoing Social Economic Indicators program and the NSW DPI Program Leader, Commercial Fisheries provided an update on fisheries issues.

The Business Efficiency Program has been one of the main agenda items for quite a few meetings and once again Council has provided advice to NSW DPI on several proposals, some of which had been held over to seek further advice from the proponents.

Members were given an update by the Ministerial Fisheries Advisory Council (MFAC) industry member on his financing of shares in the fishing industry proposal. Council also agreed on the new membership for the Business Efficiency Program Working Group that meets with representatives of the Recreational Fishing Advisory Council (RFNSW) to talk through some of the proposals that may be seen as contentious.

The Menindee fish deaths were discussed with Council agreeing that there would be benefits in a pre-determined emergency action plan though noted there is currently an independent inquiry taking place.

Industry members raised that they have received concerns relating to the dumping of dredge spoil near fishing areas that can lead to the smothering of some species and have also received serious concerns on the possible impact of the proposed windfarms that may be sited over important fishing grounds and the subsequent loss of catch, income and employment.



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Members also highlighted to NSW DPI the possible shift of effort to inshore waters in the Southern Fish Trawl (SFT) following the buyout of 21 entitlements from the Commonwealth SE Trawl fishery and urged NSW DPI to take urgent action to protect the SFT from an influx of effort.

We will try and align our next meeting with your schedule to give you the opportunity to meet with Council if possible.

Regards

Stuart Richey AM, Chairman
CommFish NSW