

Workshop on establishing a Peak Recreational Fishing Body for NSW

Virtual meeting held 15 November 2023

Overview

1. Acknowledgement of Country and welcome

The facilitator, Dr James Findlay, opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed attendees.

2. Introduction and housekeeping

The facilitator introduced himself and outlined the purpose of the meeting which is an opportunity to hear about the proposal to establish a peak body for NSW and provide input on priorities to shape the new body's role and functions.

3. Overview of commitment to establish a Peak Recreational Fishing Body for NSW

An overview of the election commitment was provided by Sean Sloan, DDG Fisheries, highlighting the opportunity to establish an effective peak body.

4. Overview of recreational fishing in NSW and advisory arrangements

A snapshot of recreational fishing in NSW and current advisory arrangements was provided by Darryl Sullings, Principal Policy Officer, DPI Strategy and Engagement.

5. Success Factors for Recreational Fishing Peak Bodies

A comprehensive overview of a recent Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) funded research project into success factors for Recreational Fishing Peak Bodies was presented by principal researcher Jane Gallichan, CEO TarFish (Tasmanian Recreational Fishing peak body).

It was noted that that NSW is in a unique position to learn from the experience of peak bodies across Australia.

6. Facilitated discussion.

The workshop was attended by 37 stakeholders with diverse expertise including representing fishers with disabilities, CALD communities, as well as youth and recreational fishing future leaders.

Feedback contributed during the online forum, as well as input from responses received through the post-workshop survey, is summarised below. Note that comments are not verbatim but are summarised and grouped by relevant theme and are chosen to be reflective of a range of views.

7. Wrap up and close.

The facilitator closed the meeting, and indicated he would seek clarification on issues raised regarding the funding available to establish the body, and subsequent funding for services.

Date of next meeting to be advised, likely in early 2024.

Summary of feedback received.

Support for concept of a peak recreational fishing body

There was general in-principal support for the establishment of a peak recreational fishing body.

Yes, however, final support will depend on structure and membership.

We are in a position to pick the best and worst of all the other state bodies and this should leave us with the creation of the best available.

Vision for a peak recreational fishing body

In general participants indicated they want an effective, well-funded, solutions-oriented peak body advocating for the big picture future of recreational fishing. It was recognised that there is a need to represent all sectors and work with everyone, being mindful that most fishers are not members of clubs.

To have fisheries in NSW which allow abundant access for anglers and facilities which adequately provide for their needs. That NSW offers the best fishing possible for all. A place to which anglers from other states and countries will be attracted.

Energy needs to be toward 5,10,20, 30-year visions for the future. Not the past.

The focus needs to be the bigger picture and not local issues or specific interests.

Consultative approach with all stakeholders.

Represent all groups and associations, Be approachable to all.

Encouraging inter-agency collaborations, more direct lines of communication to Minister, Better communication to rec fishers, Better leadership and governance of representational bodies, including less partisan cooperation.

Key considerations for establishing a successful peak body

One respondent listed the prerequisites establishing a successful peak body succinctly as:

Membership, funding, structure of board, goals, constitution and objects, independence from government.

Secure funding to employ quality professional staff, CEO and board.

It was generally indicated that sufficient initial funding was needed to be able to attract professional staff and board members, and that \$300,000 P/A was not sufficient. Reliance on volunteers was not seen as viable for a successful peak body.

Enough money to manage itself with paid professional people. If not, then it will not work.

It needs to have a proper budget to represent all anglers and the funding needs to be separate from the license trust funds.

Needs to be well funded to enable constructive and effective management. That funding should be seen to be funded by rec fishers, for rec fishers.

Structure and governance

It was indicated that there is a need for strong governance arrangements, a strategic plan and professional board members with both knowledge of fishing and the skills needed to implement the strategic plan.

Independent chair, strong governance, partnership with us as we do in other states.

The key is select the right people not associations or bodies that only represent a small group.

The members of the board need to be actively involved in fishing...

Executive of the peak body should be apolitical and sign contracts that ensure professional behaviour and a commitment to resolving conflict through negotiation.

The peak body needs to represent and consider all fishers and anglers and not controlled by Board members with personal interests and agendas. The Board would be expected to have a reasonable knowledge in all fishing disciplines ...

A balance between appointed directors and those elected will be critical to its success.

Appointments should be made on the recommendation of an independent personnel consultant without any exterior recommendations. No jobs for mates or political bias.

Board members must only have only one term on the board. The board members need to be all about working with gov and representing anglers to move forward and not going into battle with gov. It's all about unity so it really comes down to selecting the right people ...

Independence from Government

The need to provide independent advocacy, while maintaining constructive relationships and moving towards co-management was discussed and reiterated in comments.

Independence from Government to enable authentic and respectful advocacy of rec fisher needs, opinions and wants without being beholden to departmental position. Must be separate to RFNSW but ideally maintain strong and effective working relationship with both Advisory Council and Department.

Key priorities - Issues and functions a peak body should focus on.

Key priorities stakeholders would like to see the peak body to focus on were:

- facilitating communication with recreational fishers,
- recreational fishing access and sustainability
- promoting the benefits of recreational fisheries, including social and mental health
- advocacy, working with government and extension services

The communications function of a peak body with all recreational fishers was raised as a critical function. Ways to improve communication were suggested, ensuring diverse groups have a seat at the table so that information flows effectively between a peak body and diverse sectors.

Access, resource sharing and environmental sustainability (including water issues) are key concerns for recreational fishers, including maintaining access to fishing locations, with some stakeholders raising marine parks and exclusion concerns. Ensuring accessibility for disabled fishers and making fishing welcoming for diverse groups was also captured in comments.

A theme that gained significant traction in workshop discussion as well as in survey feedback was the need to grow the number of recreational fishers, including with the younger generation, women and fishers of all ages and abilities.

Stakeholders underscored the importance of the advocacy role of a peak body, and the need to be 'solutions-focused' and maintain a constructive working relationship with Government.

Most importantly you need to create good communications channels with the million anglers in this state...

Sustainability and access. Without these there is no recreational fishing.

Growing the number of recreational fishers, connecting with rec fishers of all age types (especially younger generations) so that they understand someone is behind them.

A seat at the table when discussions affecting recreational fishers are being held (eg. access, closures, regulation changes), so that proper communication is disseminated to fishers.

Working with and representing recreational fishers with NSW DPI Fisheries and the Government.

Lobby government to support initiatives through the use of grants and funding.

Suggestions for future workshops and way forward

Most participants indicated a willingness to remain engaged in the process, with a preference for in-person workshops, noting varying availability due to time commitments and the size of the group. The option of forming a small subgroup to work on progressing key documents was put forward.

Prefer an in-person workshop rather than remote. Better for networking directly with other like-minded people.

Meetings should be face to face with smaller and selective groups.

I cannot see how it can work with so many people involved if trying to do by voice etc. Perhaps a video conference can work and be preceded with agenda direct requests to be completed and compiled in advance...

Suggest an EOI process to establish a working group with geographic and sector diversity group develop draft: Vision, Governance Structure (Board composition as per JG's findings), Draft strategic plan etc These outputs need to be consulted widely across NSW.