



Recreational Fishing Alliance Of NSW Inc

**MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE
RECREATIONAL FISHING ALLIANCE OF NSW INC**

**Centennial Parklands Education Centre,
Centennial Park
Saturday 16th October 2010**

1. OPENING

Mal Poole welcomed those present and opened the meeting at 10.05am. Mal P welcomed Todd Young (PFIGA) and David Screen (NSWCFA) to the meeting as new delegates to the RFA of NSW

2. ATTENDANCE

Those in attendance where:

Stan Konstantaras (ANSA NSW) Joe Garufi (ANSA NSW), Peter Gibson (NSWCFA), Mal Poole (NSWFCA), David Screen (NSWCFA), Todd Young (PFIGA)

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were received from:

Michael Hirst (NSWFCA), Steve Williamson (PFIGA) Max Castle (ANSA NSW), Mel Brown (USFA NSW), Peter Saunders (USFA NSW), Brett Turner (NSWFCA)

4. GUESTS

Nil

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes presented and moved that they be accepted by Stan K, seconded Joe G. Stan K noted that minutes of previous meetings are online and Delegates and Committee should access them this way.

Available at following link <http://rfansw.com.au/Meetings.html#minutes>

6. BUSINESS ARISING OUT OF THE MINUTES

- RFA Volunteer Survey draft was presented by Peter G to the committee. Peter G asked that committee review document. Mal Poole mentioned that FRDC was interested in the Survey and that the RFA might have an opportunity to put up a tactical research grant with FRDC to continue Peter G's work to date. Peter G will finalise report and send a copy to FRDC.
- Stan K advised committee that Project L63 deficit had been reversed when RFA received 2nd progress project payment from I&I.
- Peter G was finalising with compliments slip.
- Peter G had also completed introduction letter to non-member clubs. Joe G to liaise with Peter G on list of achievements and then to start sending letters out to prospective members.
- Stan K to add list of achievements letter with fee renewals that are due to be sent out.

Other selected Items moved to General Business.

7. TREASURER'S REPORT

Stan K gave an overview of the current project reporting and general RFA accounts.

RFA of NSW

Treasurers Report 16th October 2010

Opening Balance 26 th June 2010	\$ 39 639.00	
Income	\$24 953.00	
Project Expenses	\$18 879.00	
RFA Expenses	\$ 110.00	
Bank Fees	\$ 40.00	
Current Balance 16 th Oct 2010	\$45 563.00	(\$35 717.00 Project Balances) (\$ 9 846.00 RFA Cash Book)

The RFA has registered for GST from 23rd August 2010 – onwards with an annual reporting regime.

Discussion occurred about operating a dedicated accounting system for the RFA and the committee decided to operate a project specific MYOB account via Peter G.

Committee advised Peter G to purchase appropriate software package and implement with assistance from a part time paid contractor. The initial projects incorporated under this new accounting System will be the following projects that have been invoiced as “GST Inclusive” by the RFA of NSW;

- a) NSW I&I RFA Access Project - \$183,000.00
- b) FRDC Fraser Perry Finland Study Tour - \$3,200.00

David Screen also offered to oversee the process Peter G will undertake. Committee was supportive of the whole process and thanked all involved.

8. DELEGATE REPORTS

The delegates present were asked to provide an update/overview on their group's activities as a way of updating the other delegates and as a way to further gather support for issues if needed.

ANSA NSW

JoeG reported that ANSA NSW held its AGM / Presentation on the 4th September and that it was very successful. Delegates spoke about competition restructuring and the success of our catch and release divisions and records.

Concerns still surround Sydney Port work at Port Botany.

Proposed closures surrounding the Bronte Waverly Aquatic reserves for Groper and proposed Grey Nurse Shark closures at Fish Rock has ANSA NSW concerned.

ANSA NSW has re-built its www.angelrings.com.au website and had 5 rescues of rock anglers over a 10 day period in late Sept/Oct which concerns ANSA NSW as anglers are still ending up in the water. More education is needed.

Mal P mentioned that Stan K received the 2010 Water Safety Award, “Ministers Award for Most Significant Contribution to Water Safety by an Individual in NSW”

NSWCFA

Peter G gave overview of NSWCFA for the past few months. Rodney Tonkin was elected as President for NSWCFA at the last AGM. Peter G mentioned that the NSW was working on a Snowy river catchment Endangered Species submission.

The NSWCFA had decided not to support a closed season on Golden Perch (yellowbelly) closed season and that Karl Schaef was on the Redfin Steering Committee looking at whether this fish was a pest or legitimate recreational species.

Peter G mentioned that the NSWCFA was working on a letter of support fro the PFIGA accreditation plan.

Peter G mentioned that the Murray Darling was going to be a big issue for the NSWCFA, they are monitoring closely and hoping for outcomes which will return the rivers to health.

Peter G also mentioned that the NSWCFA had submitted a small grant application for reproducing the Freshwater Safety DVD on behalf of the RFA of NSW. It was discussed that the timing of the funding application review and successful receipt of the funds would not occur for a few months and in the interim the RFA of NSW would get 1000 copies made. Stan K was to chase Michael Power (afterglow) for an order and a master copy.

Stan K to send AFTA and NSW I&I master copies of DVD as well.

Peter G mentioned that David Screen was the additional delegate for the NSWCFA.

NSWFCA

Mal P gave an overview of the NSWFCA AGM. M Hirst and B Turner nominated as RFA delegates.

Mal P spoke about the most recent project that had been approved that involves NSWFCA holding a forum on how the association operates and engages the community and this is to be held in May 2011. Smaller clubs were being affected by Fair Trading changes and succession planning issues.

David S suggested that we all develop Position Descriptions (PDS) to help the associations out in this area. David S will provide PDS he is currently developing for all RFA members to consider, complete and pass down to clubs to do the same as a way of succession planning.

NSW USFA

The USFA is currently working with the RFA on its spearfishing safety DVD, with the USFA already having completed many sequences that will be used in the DVD. The DVD is almost complete with a launch date scheduled for Dec 10.

The USFA also launched a national spearfishing magazine on the 30th September.

PFIGA

Todd Young gave a detailed presentation on what the PFIGA was trying to achieve. Todd Y spoke on how the RFA can utilise PFIGA instructors and how further consultation on issues like safety, junior anglers and education can reciprocally benefit all the RFA members.

One of the main goals of the PFIGA is to accredit all the guides in Australia.

PFIGA requested that the RFA of NSW will support their accreditation system. RFA agreed and will draft letter of support and post banner and link on RFA website

9. AGENDA ITEMS

9 a. Fishing Inquiry

(See attachment No1)

Stan K thanked MP for presenting evidence at the NSW parliamentary Inquiry into recreational fishing. Mal P took a number of questions on notice and this will allow us to further submit information on the process.

Outcome is expected late November with representation, access and the marine park process issues that will feature highly in the final recommendations.

9 b. Marine Parks and Access

Jervis Bay and Solitary Is Marine Park reviews complete, with about 3000-6000 submissions per park.

The Marine Parks Moratorium Bill is about to start being debated in State Parliament soon, this will stop any more marine parks being reviewed for 5 years in NSW.

Mal P has a copy of Dr Andrew Read paper that questions the current marine park framework, he is looking a smaller more effective aquatic reserves and an answer to conserving biodiversity.

Mal P also had a chance to speak with Mike Kelly (Parliamentary Sec for Fisheries) on the Commonwealth Marine Protected Areas Plan. The Commonwealth wants minimal impacts to recreational anglers and may even extend the 2012 deadline to facilitate better consultation and planning in the process. An opportunity is available to the RFA to continue discussions with him. Another meeting is planned with Mike Kelly and the RFA of NSW.

<http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp/east/index.html>

9 c. Access Project Update

The RFA has secured \$183,850.00 to implement RFA Access Officer - Project L071 which will employ a dedicated Access Officer to work for the RFA of NSW in securing recreational fishing rights across NSW.

The RFA has invited John Diplock from Hamata Pty Ltd to work with the RFA in an advisory role. RFA team consists of Mal P, Peter G and Stan K.

The selection panel will include a DII- Fisheries staff members and the RFA Committee.

The planning committee discussed what criteria and skill will be required by the applicant.

Mal P and Peter G to develop a Position Description that will include the following;

- Ability to interpret legislation
- Mapping and GIS skills
- Understanding of legislation and government procedures
- Contractor to the RFA of NSW
- Suitable background

- Able to work from a home office
- Will be equipped by RFA project as noted in budget
- Will be able to travel in own vehicle but will be compensated
- Will need good negotiation and presentation skills
- Will work closely with Land and Property Management Authority
- Will be supported by regular meetings with Fishing Project Access Committee
- Will report regularly to Fishing Project Access Committee

David S will now also join the RFA team.

Position will be advertised in next few days.

Stan K has submitted first invoice for payment and signed project contracts back to NSW I&I.

Peter G working on Letter of Offer/ Contract and MP liaising with Dept of Land for use of office space and MOU between Lands and RFA of NSW.

9 d. Trust Updates

Updates are online at the following link

http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/357590/RFSTEC-33.pdf

The next meeting will be held on 23rd Nov 2010.

9 e. Website and Promotions

Peter G and Joe G have been working with NSW I&I to place RFA adverts in the next edition of the salt and freshwater fishing guides. The full page adverts have been secured free of charge. They will focus on fresh and saltwater safety respectively.

Stan K indicated that we will need a spearfishing safety advert for the next edition of the guides.

Stan K to place safe spearfishing advert in next edition of the USFA spearfishing magazine that will include an article on the RFA that Stan K will prepare.

Peter G asked associations to provide website content for www.rfansw.com.au

9 f. 2011 State Election

Committee agreed to put together a list of fishing polices and present these to all NSW Political parties prior to Dec 10.

Stan K to seek feedback and ideas and compile wish list and then liaise with Peter G to compile and send out list.

9 g. AFMA / DEWHA updates

Latest AFMA newsletter

<http://afma.createsend1.com/T/ViewEmail/r/5356B7D971E46981>

DEWHA Murray Darling Basin Plan

<http://www.thebasinplan.mdba.gov.au/>

9 h. Project Updates

Stan K gave updates on the various ongoing RFA projects.

1. RFA Rockfishing Workshops – 3 Workshops completed.
2. RFA Rockfishing Safety Folder – 30,000 copies are being distributed via the Surf Life saving mailing house in Melbourne on behalf of the RFA. 10,000 distributed to date.
3. Freshwater safety DVD complete and 1500 copies distributed. To date Rockfishing Safety DVD, Freshwater Safety DVD completed. Spearfishing Safety DVD almost completed and work on Boating Safety DVD will commence in 2011.

10. General Business

- Stan K to set meeting dates for 2011.
- AGM to be held in December 2010, with an evening preferred by the delegates. Stan K to pick date and organise BBQ dinner after AGM. Location will be South Sydney Clubhouse in Chifley.
- Committee discussed the issue of recruitment and succession planning. Davis S to help with position description framework.
- Stan K instructed committee that new invoice for full membership to RECFISH had been received and was awaiting payment.
- Stan K and MP had had an opportunity to talk to Martin Salter from the UK about representative issues in NSW. SK to circulate Martin Salter's advice to RFA committee. (See attachment No 2)
- Mal P gave committee update on recent RECFISH meeting in Canberra held on 14th October 2010. Discussed funding that NSW and VIC had injected into RECFISH.
- Mal P to circulate oil and gas exploration paper of the NSW coast to the RFA committee.

With no more general business Mal Poole closed the meeting at 1pm and invited those who wanted to fish to hang around. (See attachment 3)

**Stan Konstantaras
RFA of NSW Secretary
17th October 2010**

Abbreviations:

ANSANSW – NSW Branch – Australian National Sportfishing Association

NSWCFA – NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers

NSWFCA – NSW Fishing Clubs Association

PFIGA- Professional Guides and Instructors Association

USFA – Underwater Skindivers and Fisherman's Association

NSW DII – Department of Industry and Investment – Fisheries NSW

ACoRF – NSW Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing

RFSTEC- Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust Expenditure Committee

RFH – Recreational Fishing Haven

NPWS- National Parks and Wildlife

FRDC – Fisheries Research and Development Corporation

Attachment 1

UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

MALCOLM POOLE, Chairman, Recreational Fishing Alliance of New South Wales, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Should you consider at any stage that certain evidence you wish to give or documents you may wish to tender should be heard or seen only by the Committee, please indicate that fact and the Committee will consider your request. If you do take any questions on notice today, the Committee would appreciate a response to those questions being sent to the Committee Secretariat within 21 days of the date upon which the questions are forwarded to you. Before the Committee commences with its questions, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr POOLE: Yes, thank you. I would like to thank the Committee and the Government, in essence, for instigating the inquiry. Recreational fishing is one of Australia's favourite pastimes and enjoyed by potentially about 3.5 million fishers around Australia. In New South Wales we have about one million recreational anglers and it has been a long time since recreational fishing has had a thorough review carried out. I currently sit on a number of recreational fishing committees as well as commercial fishing committees in New South Wales and the Commonwealth and certainly it has been my part to want to know more about fishing, a pastime that I engage in, be it for sport or recreation, or food for the table.

To date the recreational fishers of New South Wales have invested about \$80 million. We have invested \$20 million in recreational fishing havens. I am yet to see a business that would be treated in terms of how we have been treated in the past eight-odd years through Minister Macdonald. Things are changing, and I thoroughly agree that there are some issues that we are dealing with at present, but certainly we hope to see further change regardless of who is in Government. Fishing was put on the agenda under the previous Government and Mr Obeid and certainly recreational fishers enjoyed some areas.

We had an interesting time—I would not say enjoyable—when recreational fishing havens were declared and a licence was brought in and there were new reasons why a licence was implemented. We have since seen the rights of recreational fishers eroded with marine parks. The legislation we currently have under the Fisheries Act indicates very clearly that the department and the Government are to try to provide an enjoyable experience for recreational fishing. The Marine Parks Act erodes that right. We have heard today and on previous occasions that our recreational fishing rights are not there—they are in common law, but they are not there to be engaged in terms of providing recreational fishermen with good rights.

I have heard comments in the past about environmental assessments and fisheries management strategies. The Recreational Fishing Trust set aside several million dollars several years ago and on the good advice of the department and the Minister we were told it was not necessary that the recreational fishing sector had to go through a fisheries management strategy, so we put that money that was put aside back into our revenue funding and redirected it to other projects. In essence, recreational fishers have been at the forefront of trying to do the right thing in terms of being environmentally responsible even though they are as fishers are. Our aquatic environments are very important to us. No fish habitat: no fish. It is a simple equation.

Certainly the Recreational Fishing Trust has put our money into the restoration and rehabilitation of fish habitat in our coastal streams and in our inland waterways. Core funding is a classic example. As I indicated, \$80 million-plus has been invested in recreational fishing in New South Wales from fishers. We are yet to really see a thorough and clearly defined budget that has come out of Industry and Investment Fisheries to identify their input at a core funding or consolidated revenue funding level. That is very questionable to some extent. The provision of super entities has changed things greatly. Our access to a Minister who has a number of portfolios has reduced greatly too. There are numerous things and 45 minutes is a very short period of time to discuss a lot of things around recreational fishing, so I will leave it to the Committee to ask questions and we will go from there.

CHAIR: On page 1 of your submission you state that many fishers are not even aware of the existence of the current advisory committees and the trusts, are confused by the overlap and duplication of activities and suspicious of the same individuals as chairs and members of bodies. The majority of fishers are not members of fishing clubs or associations. If an alternative structure for recreational fishing representation was established how should its existence be communicated to the general fishing public?

Mr POOLE: Engaging the fishing community in New South Wales, regardless of whether it is the commercial fishing sector or the recreational fishing sector, is one thing that I do not think anyone has grasped very clearly and concisely in Australia. It has and does work well in other places, such as the United States and

the United Kingdom, so we need to get up and attempt to engage. The Government needs to have its process where it can engage people with experience and knowledge. Unfortunately, we also need to have people who are there to do things and who wish to participate in supporting their recreation or their pastime in the form of a committee or a council. I know we use both in our submission, but it needs to be something that is set up and organised by recreational fishers who provide advocacy and advice to the Government at the time.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Your submission, which was provided in March this year, proposes a number of improvements to the current advisory and trust structure to be implemented in the immediate term. Have any of the issues you have identified been addressed or do they still need to be addressed?

Mr POOLE: Some items have been addressed. We are looking at requirements. The Recreational Fishing Saltwater Trust has just advertised for vacancies that are occurring over the next period of terms. The appointment process is sometimes delayed. We had some delays caused by political changes that occurred last year, which delayed incumbent meetings coming on board. The trust actually has a number of meeting dates set and we set them 12 months in advance, so there was some delay there. Timely response is a question mark in terms of paperwork going to members so that they can study it, particularly when you need to review the number of applications that the recreational fishing salt and freshwater trusts have to review annually at their major budget meeting. It is about timing I suppose and it is about trying to improve processes. It is about making sure that people are aware of what their duties and responsibilities are. I believe the role of committee members can be extended to their local region so that there is more dissemination of information.

There are potentially issues in terms of the Secrecy Act, where you are unable to discuss issues openly with people, to seek information and input, which hamstrings the ability of a person to make sound judgement on opinions. It is about canvassing thoughts because you are representing recreational fishers of New South Wales, you are not representing yourself or your organisation. You are placed in a position on a government committee to put the views of those people who you consult and who you represent.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: How ideal are the committees that you have? How can you engage the whole State, given its vastness, and obtain people's views all around the State?

Mr POOLE: There are moves afoot where people who wish to engage do engage. Certainly I am one of those people who have been learning about recreational fisheries management and fisheries management in total for about 20-odd years, and I continue to learn because I want to learn. There are people who will engage in terms of knowing about rules and regulations. Then there are those people out there who, in essence, do not wish to know and who potentially flout the laws in terms of criminal behaviour. It is how to improve the process. I do not have the answers.

You can go to a number of people involved in media campaigns and things like that to try to impress on people. Some of the suggestions we have made to the Recreational Fishing Trust and the Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing [ACORF] is that we host workshops or information nights up and down our coastlines, do port meetings, go to local areas and do two or three presentations on our research to date. Some of those ideas have been canvassed. It is very similar to the pattern that is working currently in Victoria where they are having those types of port meetings or regional area meetings. It is something that New South Wales Industry and Investment should consider.

The Hon. TONY CATANZARITI: Should the government committees be appointed or members elected from various committees around the State?

Mr POOLE: It depends how you wish to look at it. The ideal situation would be, in essence, to have a representative organisation as well as the government committees. The Government can do as they choose, and that is obviously to appoint or select people from a panel. I would hope, in essence, that one day there would be one committee that would be utilised by the Government to consult with recreational fishers, be it part of the representative group and part of the Government's group.

At present we have a situation where a number of groups over here do that and over this side here we end up having the Government's position of appointments. It is an expression of interest you apply for based on your knowledge, your experience, where you fish, what you do. That goes through the papers and it is up to you whether you wish to apply or not. It comes back to the need or want. As I said, I am very much a keen recreational fisher as well as wanting to know about our marine environment, our aquatic environment.

have as we have changing demographics. We have to try to meld in and retain some of the activities in those areas.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: I asked this question earlier of previous witnesses in relation to the separate recreational fishing body not being able to deal with the total fishing environment. Is your proposal to have a recreational fishing body feeding into a council process?

Mr POOLE: That is one thing.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: A potential proposal?

Mr POOLE: A potential one, yes. Certainly in the long term it would be hoped that the Government went to a single committee in an advisory capacity and information gathering as well as being representational.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: But recognising they could not sit on their own on the outside in the total fishing environment? They are a component?

Mr POOLE: The mechanism is how to do it. It is one committee. We try to reduce costs, we try to be effective in our communications and we try to make sure that people understand what is being discussed. Talk to one group here, but there may be misinformation talking to another group there. The information is to try to relay the one message at the same time.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: In your submission you talk about the promotion of fishing, Tourism New South Wales and Communities New South Wales. Tourism New South Wales has regional tourism boards that garner the promotional market of their region. Do you think it would be best to work with the regional tourism boards to promote recreational fishing or with Sport and Recreation for the promotion of fishing up and down the coast? A regional tourism board may make the decision that fishing is not a driver of tourism in its region. What would be better for the promotion of fishing?

Mr POOLE: With fishing, it depends on where it is. Promotion is something that can be taken on board by nearly any department. In simple terms, we looked at promoting fishing. Certainly other States have family fishing days, for example, in Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland. That is something we try to encourage New South Wales Tourism to take on board. We have changes, in essence, in the utilisation of our national parks through policies where we try to encourage people to go and enjoy our national parks. The Government should instigate the same thing through tourism—fishing events, family fishing days or no licence days where people go out and enjoy and experience fishing.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Do you have any contact at all with regional tourism boards?

Mr POOLE: Yes, we do. I have some fairly extensive contacts in tourism.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: In the regional tourism boards as opposed to Tourism New South Wales?

Mr POOLE: Yes.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: The National Parks and Wildlife Service has its own tourism budget separate from Tourism New South Wales. The service promotes national parks independently of Tourism New South Wales.

Mr POOLE: Fishing encompasses a lot of things when you go on a holiday. You just do not go there for the fishing. That is why fishers go there but families, in simple terms, do enjoy other activities. Tourism potentially has a lot of avenues that they can utilise to try to encompass that and encourage tourism in their local regions.

The Hon. LYNDIA VOLTZ: Have any of the regional tourism boards explained to you their strategy about promotion in their regions?

Mr POOLE: Yes, and it is fairly low on the agenda in a lot of areas apart from regional towns like Port Macquarie and Ballina.

The Hon. LYNDA VOLTZ: Places like Coffs Harbour where they have the big clubs?

Mr POOLE: Yes.

Mr IAN COHEN: You were critical of previous Ministers. Can you see directions where that could be resolved in terms of your organisation's relationship with the Minister's office?

Mr POOLE: I think it was said by Martin Salter earlier, fishers need to take a leaf out of the United Kingdom's book and the United States in putting their requirements to Government, regardless of which party it is. One of the things I welcome about this Committee and inquiry is that the information they have received, apart from misinformation, would provide a healthy platform to attempt to understand recreational fishing. Recreational fishing is understood not very clearly in New South Wales at all, and also nationally. Certainly discussions we have had at a Federal level, it is fair to say it is very unknown as to what the capacity of recreational fishing is from the point of view of what fishermen do, how they engage, what they do in a volunteer capacity in fisheries management.

Mr IAN COHEN: You list a number of methods that could be used to protect marine biodiversity and habitats in marine parks. Can you elaborate on these methods, in particular, the suggestion to rotate sanctuary zones once regeneration is complete? I say that in light of a lot of confusion where people say when they go to a coastal area they are not sure where the sanctuary zones are even though there are signs and maps available. Would rotating sanctuary zones or having seasonal changes to areas add to the problem of identification and perhaps even get more people into trouble with the authorities?

Mr POOLE: Potentially you are right or potentially you could be wrong. Marine protected areas need to be put in place in scientific terms. As I said before, having poor fish habitat relates to poor fish production. That is a pretty easy equation to take on board. Having poor water quality in a marine protected area does not indicate that it is going to be a great natural biodiversity to protect. The fact is it is water that drives our aquatic environment. When you start considering rotational changes, yes, there are opportunities there and that is something that has been flagged. It works elsewhere in the world. In the United States, Florida, for example, has rotational sanctuary zones.

Some of the things that are done here include having clearly defined areas where there is continuity between access, such as a national park. We have one on the Central Coast. Booti is a classic example where you have a 2½ kilometre walk to get down to it and it is a fairly arduous walk back up again. It is a lovely place to go and snorkel. I have got to say it is a nice area to look at, a little bit like other locations at Port Stephens, for example. It is a great place to go and visit and check it out but you also want to do other things and same time when you visit such areas. Yes, I agree marine parks are there at present and we need to be cognisant of how we manage them. Having sanctuary zones in estuarine environments is a question mark to the terms of how much degradation we actually apply it from a human footprint?

Mr IAN COHEN: Is it more to protect the fish stocks in those sanctuaries?

Mr SALTER: The fish stocks are there. A class example is on the Great Barrier Reef we have a number of sedentary species that are very small: they are not very big fish. What we talk about here in New South Wales our fish species tend to be a lot more highly manoeuvrable and certainly move up and down the coastline. Yes, we have other species such as groper and drummer and fish like that that will stay there. But we do not have the diversity of fish species as the Great Barrier Reef. Again, it is not one rule fits all. We have issues that need to be dealt with in New South Wales. I think we start with the land and we start to work down, in essence, to the water channels.

Mr IAN COHEN: On page 14 of your submission you say, "The banning of access without reasonable consultation to many marine parks and national parks is unacceptable." Will you give examples of where access to recreational fishers has been denied? Will you explain what you mean by "reasonable consultation"?

Mr POOLE: Consultation is a great word. To try to find the correct activity as to how it should be carried out, and to obtain the correct results is something. In some terms it has been said that consultation is just a box on a form, that a government department has, to fill out and tick and other terms is that you actually go out and seek reasonable consultation from those people involved. I think it has been said before that recreational fishers are out there, they understand their environment because they engage in it all the time, the same as

commercial fishers. They are there, in essence, to ensure that they have fish for the future. They are not there to get up and rape and pillage and take away anything that is not going to stop them doing it from tomorrow.

I think as custodians of an environment they need to be consulted a little bit more and their opinions taken on board in those terms. You seek advice, you should listen to it and hopefully take on board the anecdotal evidence that those people can provide, as well as comparing the scientific evidence as provided to provide, I suppose, the two levels of win or lose.

Mr IAN COHEN: On page 12 of your submission you list a number of issues that have suffered from Fisheries no longer being a stand-alone department with no fisheries Minister at the Cabinet table. If we return to having a Minister for Fisheries for which issues that you have listed would you expect to see different outcomes? Would you answer that in terms of the issue of marine parks and boundaries and protected zones compared to the issues of often what is agriculture produced degradation of fisheries, particularly nursery environments?

Mr POOLE: The latter one first. The scenario is that agricultural run-off certainly is one of those question marks. It is not so much agriculture, it is land management practices, is a good term regardless of whether it is agriculture or not. We have seen a lot of changes in recent times from agriculture to local councils' maintaining areas around our waterways and the utilisation of glyphosates, for example. Is that having an impact on our waterways? Is it destroying fish habitat, for example? There are a number of things that flow onto that. Obviously, as I said before, good habitat produces good fish populations. Where we go to from having good government, I think, is that there is potential, I suppose, for the Government to consider having junior Ministers. I think this is trying to have a Minister to understand all his portfolios fully, and be fully aware and cognisant of the decision-making process that are involved, and where they seek their advice from—and that is what we are hopefully trying to build here through a representational process so that the Minister can go to a group and seek some solid information.

Yes, the Minister in the past has listened fairly clearly to recreational fishers. We have seen some decisions that were certainly, I believe, potentially questionable because of core government activities and non-core government activities. I break those down into things such as compliance and some forms of educational awareness and management as core activities, and non-core activities I believe are education awareness, and volunteer type processes and sort of fishing workshops and information sessions et cetera, some of those other items. I think we could improve some areas in those portfolios by having those patterns set up, and certainly having some advisers that sort the information that they desire.

Mr IAN COHEN: Has your organisation taken on any of those other fish-related environmental issues?

Mr POOLE: Fish habitat restoration?

Mr IAN COHEN: Yes, wetland restoration and working with government agencies on that matter. There is a lot of talk about the fact that it is the loss of estuarine habitat that is as much a problem for the loss of fish stocks. Would you comment on that?

Mr POOLE: New South Wales Fishing Clubs Association used to go down the process of acquiring matching funds dollar for dollar for fish stock when they fished empowerments and actually replenished through fingerling funds fish that they sort of, in essence, removed, we shall say, a larger fish. So there was an ongoing process there.

Mr IAN COHEN: Was that in freshwater areas?

Mr POOLE: Yes. And certainly that relays opportunities to other fishing events occurring and similar activities happening once we have a marine stocking policy in place in New South Wales which is underway at present. The alliance at present is fairly heavily involved in fishing safety because we believe that is a major core activity that needs to be dealt with. Again it is something that sits at the forefront of a number of our members. We are now into freshwater areas, trying to make sure that we reduce the number of fishing mortalities in the freshwater area, and we are moving into other saltwater areas such as spear fishing and boating. That is a fairly heavy thing but, again, it takes a lot of people and resources and time and effort. Recreational fishers these days are volunteers. We do not get paid. We seek to do things that we believe are high priority items such as fishing safety.

There are a number of other groups and I would like to encompass those groups in the future such as Landcare groups or dune care groups or coastal care groups that look after our bush regeneration and our riparian vegetation belts. They are some of those people who I think are our future partners in working to improve fish habitat.

Mr IAN COHEN: Is there room for fish care?

Mr POOLE: Fish care volunteers. The trust fund funds several hundred fish care volunteers around New South Wales and they pass on the messages of, be it in conservation or environmental issues, what the fishing trust is doing. They are our voices that we currently have getting out there in the community but, as I said before, more can be done.

Mr IAN COHEN: Is there any role for those sorts of people in your organisation to take on—I am not saying policing like actual officials—an observation role in terms of fishing activities on the coast?

Mr POOLE: I think fish care volunteers, we have two issues on hand: number one is compliance, and compliance is a core government activity. We try to segregate those two issues of education awareness versus compliance. I would be really loathe to see fish care volunteers who are the educators and the people who make people aware of things become compliance enforcement type people or advisory type people under those rules. I think that would be a no-no. The issue is education awareness followed by compliance which is the strategy we have adopted for the cleaner safe waters in New South Wales.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: I refer to your discussion and comments about the condition of catchment areas in coastal areas, and the impact that has on fish stocks and fisheries generally. Do you believe that we can still have a viable primary industry in coastal catchments and also have healthy fish stocks and fisheries and waterways in those areas?

Mr POOLE: I think we can. It has been very much "This is your nominated block of land" and farmers in essence have farmed right down to the water's edge. We have taken away the riparian vegetation belt. We have allowed stock to get up and destroy mangroves and salt marshes because we have not indicated what this little area of vegetation actually does. I think that has been a little bit understood in terms, even our Fisheries Act does not really deal with it very clearly so we legislative problems. I think that overall that, yes, we can have a productive primary industry as well as a recreational fishing industry.

The other thing about it is you also need to consider the water flows and the environmental flows when you talk about inland waterways. So there is a culmination of things. There needs to be a balance struck. At present when times are flush and we have a lot of water we tend to get up and I suppose stockpile it. In other times when it is very poor we need to conserve it but certainly there needs to be a number of initiatives put in place to conserve and utilise our water we currently have in better terms. The classic example, I suppose, was the Brooklyn Sewage Treatment Plant that was put in in recent years in the Hawkesbury. Sydney Water looked at the issue of reticulation systems for used water. We found that it was just too costly to put in. Well, what is cost when you consider the cost at a point in time, such as five years ago versus 10 years' time when you are in the middle of a drought? Some of those decisions need to be made there and then to actually do things and I think it needs to be government policy that water re-use is put high on the agenda.

We have the desalination plant sitting at Botany. Its outflows have basically, I would not say decimated, but certainly changed the aquatic environment where the high-saline solution is deposited back into our waterways. It sits outside a recreational fishing haven that recreational fishers paid \$10 million to acquire. What protection do we have? We have sought in the past compensatory habitat such as artificial reefs to be installed in other areas. It is not a no-go zone at present but what it has carried out is that the high-saline plume has basically destroyed the rocky seabed and very little growth occurs there now. It was a fairly productive commercial and recreational fishing area. That is a classic example of some of the issues that we need to deal with. Yes, we do need water but we can certainly use water in more improved terms.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: You referred to a council type process from your organisation. In your submission you propose the establishment of a new independent authority which you tentatively call "Recreational Fishing NSW". Will you explain how that body would operate? What would its responsibilities be? How would people be appointed to it? How would it be funded?

Mr POOLE: I will take that question on notice. In essence the scenario is that we would attempt to adopt a regionalisation of smaller committees reporting up to a larger authority or council. I will not put a name to it at present but I certainly think there is room for movement. That would be the advocacy representational type block of people. The Government, as I said before, would be welcome to have its committee and hopefully one day those two committees would join and you have cross-representational issues occurring.

The election process, again it is about how do you go about that? Do you go down the cost of an election procedure such as we have with the State, Federal and local elections? Do we go down a process of expression of interest or inviting people to attend and then go through a selection criteria to meet those things? There are a lot of things around the committee but overall there are a number of recreational fishers from whom you have heard that would form a fairly good committee, council, whatever and represent recreational fishers across the board from freshwater to saltwater, including industry as well as conservation, and potentially Landcare people.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: If that body were to come into existence do you believe the Government would need to have a separate advisory board or council on recreational fishing or would the body to which you refer essentially replace that body?

Mr POOLE: I think that change will certainly show that you will initiate with two committees. I think the Government needs to be able to consult their people. Whether those people actually sit on the newly formed committee would be entirely up to the Government whether they chose that to be an exclusion or an acceptance of their process. I think that would be good partnering in terms of having that sort of relationship. I think that the Government will certainly gain benefit from having such a committee. I think that it will allow a lot more broad-based experience, certainly coming from a regional scenario, up to the main committee. Time can only tell. I think it needs to be tested and tried. Sunfish Queensland run a fairly good representational organisation and they have regional groups that meet very regularly. Unfortunately, what it needs to power this along is funding and resourcing and that is one of those big question marks that we have at present, that at present the organisations in Australia are very much volunteer-type operations.

The Hon. RICK COLLESS: In regard to your comments about trustee rights and the establishment of Crown reserves for recreational fishing havens and so on, how would that operate? Is there any parallel to a land-based system that you are modelling that on?

Mr POOLE: Yes. The Recreational Fishing Alliance has just been successful in terms of receiving around \$180,000 from the Recreational Fishing Trust to look at establishing Crown reserve trusts as well as engaging fishing clubs who wish to take on board iconic fishing areas; for example, some of the surfing zones, I suppose, up at Lennox Head and other places here in Sydney that we are looking at doing. Having those public fishing reserves I think would be one of those assets that we have. Recreational fishing havens, in essence, under that sort of terminology need to have more security over what we have acquired, so that would be part of it.

The other scenarios around that we would be looking at is we have a lot of public land in New South Wales that is currently being considered to be sold off and disposed of. Whether that is under various lease arrangements that farmers have or unnamed roads or unmade roads in New South Wales, some of these areas lead to waterways and fishing access is very paramount to making sure that we can gain access. Again, it is no different to having buffer zones in place, as I said before. We have the issue of private land down to the water's edge in a lot of areas, particularly our inland areas, and gaining access up a river system is considerably difficult when you consider you have to traverse the middle of the waterway or across the waterway. Yes, there are fishers who will do the right thing and there are fishers who will do the wrong thing. It is a matter of courtesy. Accessing private land, it is always a courtesy to go and ask the landowner for access first. You do not have a right to get there just yet.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Poole, I will conclude this session of the hearing. Thank you for your evidence today. Along with any questions that you took on notice during your evidence would you agree to receive additional written questions that members of the Committee may not have had the opportunity to ask of you today? If so, could you return the answers to those questions within 21 days of receiving them? Before you go, one of the Committee members asked if we could have some information on the Fish Care Volunteer Program. Is the RFA able to provide that or should we ask the Government?

Mr POOLE: Industry and Investment are the lead agency that looks after our fish care volunteers. I suppose in my eyes it is deemed to be a non-core activity. But certainly they would be the prime people to

UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT

provide that information. The trust pays for all fish care volunteers and the supervision of those fish care volunteers through our education office in New South Wales. So, again, Recreational Fishing is doing something in terms of education awareness.

The Hon. CHRISTINE ROBERTSON: It would be good to have your perspective as well as the Government's.

CHAIR: The Committee may write to you and ask you to provide the RFA's position on fish care volunteers.

Mr POOLE: Certainly, and we can also relate to that other activities in Western Australia, Queensland, et cetera, too.

(The witness withdrew)

Attachment 2

Mal Poole and Martin Salter (UK)



Martin and Mal discussed the UK model, "The Angling Trust" over a friendly international carp fish that England won 2 - nil

The Angling Trust - Our Mission:

Promote angling

Campaign for anglers' rights and the environment

Lobby governments and agencies

Protect our waterways and marine environment

Develop angling as a sport for young and old

Support angling interests

Read more and JOIN NOW at www.anglingtrust.net

The Angling Trust, Eastwood House, 6 Rainbow Street, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 8DQ

Attachment 3

Todd Young from PFIGA and his first tagged Parklands carp captured after the RFA meeting.

