

General Discussion—Day one

Chairperson: R.D. Tilzey

Recorded by K.J. McLoughlin

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Chairperson Richard Tilzey summarised the main points made during the Session and expressed his disappointment that a national recreational fishing licence had apparently been abandoned as a management option. Revenue from such a licence could be returned to the State of residence on a *pro rata* basis, with pressure being applied to the Commonwealth to contribute funding proportionately. It was generally agreed that there was very little chance of obtaining direct funding from Federal treasury.

Ross Winstanley indicated that there is no national recreational fishing licensing in the USA. There are inland licences in all states and various marine licences in the coastal states. The national recreational fishing policy developed in the USA, however, was used as a model for the development of Australia's national recreational fishing policy (due for release at the end of 1994). In the consultation that took place in drafting Australia's recreational fishing policy there was conditional support from many sectors for some form of licensing, but widespread cynicism about the introduction of a national licence. He indicated that in Victoria, where there is a licence requirement for amateur inland fishers and rock lobster fishing, there is support for licens-

ing. Discussions have taken place with the Victorian Minister in respect of establishing a peak body for recreational fishing. Ross Winstanley is of the opinion that if general recreational fishing licensing is to come about in Victoria, then it will come about through such a peak body demanding it and demanding a say in how the funds raised are spent.

Richard Tilzey, from the Chair, urged that any funds raised through national licensing should be paid into a trust fund of some description rather than into consolidated revenue.

Barry Pollock pointed out that there has been a dramatic turnaround in the attitude to licensing in Queensland, to the extent that the recreational fishing sector now supports the implementation of a general licence and that a State licence could soon be seriously considered. There has already been a recommendation that all private pleasure vessels should be licensed, with a portion of the funds raised going towards funding recreational fishing.

In support of Ross Winstanley, Baden Hopgood suggested that many recreational fishers in Victoria, especially those in organised clubs etc., are in support of licences. Although many individuals are opposed to

licences when first asked, if time is taken to explain the reasons for them and the benefits they could bring, then support usually follows. Kim McClymont added that from his experience in Western Australia as a fisheries inspector, when the message was given that licence fees are to be used directly for management and research then there was strong support for licensing. Richard Tilzey indicated that in NSW a recent survey had shown strong support for a freshwater licence. He felt that this was not the case with saltwater anglers and that overall licensing in NSW continued to be seen as politically unpalatable.

Albert Caton questioned whether the discussion was about a licence or a research levy. The Chair thought that calling it a research levy might be a good idea, but added that no matter what we call it, we need to communicate that the key issue is finding out about recreational fisheries and sustaining them.

John Garvey was supportive of the idea of more feedback being given to fishers to gain support for licensing. He maintained that a positive approach would be to use licence fees to produce catch reports that could be used by anglers. The Chair agreed, suggesting that the best data collection systems are those with the best feedback.

Richard Tilzey raised the lack of a common purpose and inability to speak in one voice on major problems facing both commercial and recreational sectors. In the South East Fishery, for example, the situation has been described as boat against boat, port against port, and State against State. He was supportive of Frank Prokop's comment on devolving decision making to client groups. However he was wary of devolving too far, as it may lead to a rash of

splinter groups. Frank Prokop responded, suggesting that we are going to have to try it. The consequences of not doing so may be that decisions are made completely out of the control of fisheries departments, resulting in a win-lose situation for one or other of the client groups. This is happening increasingly in inshore areas where there are low value commercial fisheries and highly prized recreational fisheries. As recreational client groups are gaining an awareness of the direct benefit that being involved in management can have on their fishing experience and quality of catches, greater demands are being placed on politicians, managers and scientists for real-time information. In a lot of cases this process cannot be slowed, even if we would like it to be, because external forces are driving it. What we need is to work closely with the recreational community to come up with agreed priorities that are mutually beneficial to them and the stocks, whilst being in accord with the philosophies of fisheries management agencies.

Richard Tilzey ended the discussion for the day by thanking contributors. He closed by pointing out that there were other users of the resources that had not been touched upon in the discussion to date.