

# Discussion of Session 6

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## Recorded by F.B. Prokop

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Peter Rogers, Session Chairperson, thanked the speakers for their informative presentations. He then offered a challenge to recreational fishing communities and government—to empower clients to help the process. Funding for recreational fisheries will be insufficient in the proposed National Recreational Fishing Policy which needs addressing.

The question is: How do you do more with less?

Peter Doherty opened the comments from the floor, speaking as a Queensland boat owner and recreational fisher. Regarding the research levy, he wanted to know if there were any revenue targets and if matching funding from the government was an option?

Laurie Gwynne replied that this funding mechanism was a political decision. Revenue targets have not been planned but it is hoped that \$1.3m will be available after the second year. The plan is for a \$6 levy in the first year on all boat registrations and then a \$12 levy from the second year. There was no mention of matching funds.

David McGlennon commented that management of the largely recreational fisheries such as jewfish and tailor in WA, and snap-

per and whiting in SA appears to have failed. He asked David Hall why he thought this had happened and how the decline is measured.

David Hall responded that he was speaking from his own experience. There was overwhelming anecdotal evidence of stock declines in inshore marine scale fish species around Australia. Keith Jones has shown that catches of King George whiting and snapper in South Australia are down. David Hall did not know the reason for the decline, which is complicated because there is no measuring stick to quantify declines of recreational catches.

David McGlennon added that he was not happy with catch rates. Under free access for recreational fishers catch rates will decline. He wanted to know what constitutes a satisfying recreational fishery?

David Hall felt that stewardship and ownership of the resource should be taken by the recreational fishing community. Tailor management is particularly interesting.

Andrew Sanger felt it appropriate to give a plug for recreational fishing licences as a communication mechanism with recreational fishers.

Peter Rogers expanded on David Hall's point about tailor. There is some evidence of growth overfishing for tailor. This leads to the question of how to manage the species. There is no database. Government agencies are trying to get improved recreational catch information on tailor in WA and Queensland.

Barry Pollock wanted to know the panel's views on recreational licensing given that there is significant opposition to any licence and a high rate of non-compliance with the licence requirement.

Andrew Sanger replied that the non-compliance rate was in the low hundreds compared with 28 000 recreational licences bought. A significant factor is the perception and feeling of maybe being caught.

Kim McClymont drew upon his experience in WA, Queensland and New South Wales. Education is getting better, but much more effort is needed including schools-based programmes. The question is, how much extra is needed? There have been some attitudinal changes to education, especially in the enforcement area.

David Hall observed that we are operating in a climate of declining budgets. There are high operating costs for fisheries programmes. For example, a 15% staff reduction in SA makes it hard to shift resources to education. However, an emphasis is needed on extension and education.

Laurie Gwynne added that a specific programme in Queensland—EDFISH—targets schools. FISHCARE programmes are an initiative from the Burns Inquiry. They have not been implemented to date but are being developed.

Peter Rogers provided a Western Australian perspective on education and extension. Western Australia spends around \$2m on recreational fisheries education, research, operations, etc. The question is how to get better value. There is a need to re-examine the existing use of resources. As an example, there were 35 Volunteer Fisheries Liaison Officers (VFLO's) last year in the metropolitan area. 150 are planned this year for the entire State. These volunteers will talk about the recreational fishery and management objectives to establish ownership of the resource. This will create self managers for change to reflect increasing community valuation of fisheries resources and their management. With 300 000 fishers, the Fisheries Department needs help.

Andrew Sanger sounded a warning regarding research staff undertaking work for education which takes them away from research programmes. There is a need to allocate time for researchers to adequately undertake this education and extension work.

Dennis Reid returned to the funding issue. He asked Andrew Sanger if they have a more flexible system such as 5 or 10 day licences in Tasmania.

Andrew Sanger described the range of licence categories currently in use in Tasmania, including:

- \$38 full season
- \$10 junior (14-17)
- \$16 pensioner
- \$20 14 day
- \$12 3 day
- \$7 one day

Ted Loveday warned not to get carried away about recreational licensing. The gov-

ernment is trying to pass on its funding obligations. Commercial fishers don't mind paying their way but not everyone else's management costs and fees. Regarding recreational licences, recreational fishers need to know what the fee is to be used for. The angling media should be responsible in their reporting. He warned that some licence money would be used for what should be funded with core consolidated money. Recreational fishers should keep expectations reasonable in a number of areas.

Rob Day returned to the education theme and advised that for education, there was a need to work with education establishments. An opportunity exists to cooperate for increased effectiveness.

Stephen Malvestuto gave his perspective on US funding sources for recreational programmes which include a tax on equipment. These funds are re-allocated to States for specific programmes. 10% is used for public education, which targets recreational fishing education at secondary school level.

Julian Pepperell felt that a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) on the recreational sector was not possible through bag limits. This issue was debated in New South Wales with the concept of a Total Allowable Recreational Catch (TARC) being removed from the property rights legislation. There is a problem monitoring real time recreational catch. He posed the question—Do recreational bag limits really limit total catches or do they just shift the emphasis and balance of the total catch to the commercial sector?

Laurie Gwynne believed that an option for the future would be to put a limit on the number of anglers who get access to the fishery through mechanisms such as tag

times for access. This type of management won't happen tomorrow. Recreational fishers will first try to move commercial fishers out but the recreational sector can expand to fill the void and could still need increased management.

Alex Julius asked two questions. Firstly to Andrew Sanger. How much does it cost to administer licences in Tasmania? Secondly, to David Hall. Angler's evidence based on experience is dismissed as non-scientific. How important is this knowledge?

Andrew Sanger replied that administration costs were modest. They include the Commissioner, a secretary and three assistants involved in administration. The only direct cost of licence administration is the 5% commission paid to agents.

David Hall responded that the value of anecdotal information depends on the context, particularly if the information is not consistent with known science. If anecdotal evidence is the only information that is available, it must be given weighting depending on its context. Managers need to run with the best information and can't wait the lag time for definitive information. Anecdotal evidence can be highly important. There is a need to make better use of this information.

Murray Johns was interested in the chart on Landcare presented by David Hall and commented that the adoption of a Fishcare program would mainly benefit the recreational sector. A more holistic approach for all users may be to adopt Marinecare.

David Hall commented that a Fishcare approach would be useful from two perspectives:

1. Regulation of recreational fishing and the needs of recreational fishers.

2. General marine/ocean care type of approach. South Australia has a programme called Coastwatch which is being coordinated by the Environment and Natural Resources Department. The Fisheries Department is talking to the Landcare people on a regular basis. The SA Fisheries Department has had input into the schools curriculum of the Ecologically Sustainable Development programme. Secondary schools are trying to develop a fish programme, but the holistic marine habitat environmental approach will be closely linked to the Landcare programme.

David Hall believed that we need a specific recreational fishing education programme separately from that but he was not sure how the two would be combined. The link between the Fishcare group and the Landcare groups is dollars and therein lies the problem. Fisheries somehow have to get government recognition of the responsibility for aquatic based education including recreational fishing and to get funding to kick start the whole thing.

Roland Griffin commented that education was important in the Northern Territory. However, magistrates don't consider fishing offences to be serious. People fish to get away from it all. They don't want too many regulations. Managers need to be careful not to over-regulate.

Laurie Gwynne agreed that there is a need to educate magistrates. In Queensland a statement from the prosecutor giving the reasons for management regimes is handed to magistrates. This serves as an education tool for magistrates. It has been successful and has resulted in a doubling of the amount of fines.

David Hall added that there was a commonly held view among recreational and commercial fisheries regarding the low levels of fines. The Canadian sanctions board has used input from benefactors and industry in the determination of fines. However, magistrates generally don't want to be educated.

Lindsay Harbord, Chairman of the Western Australian Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee (RFAC), provided information on the cost effectiveness of Australia Post as a licensing collector in WA. It costs \$1.30 for each renewal of licence and \$1.75 for each new licence issued. \$5 all up would include all administration costs within the Fisheries Department.

Peter Rogers gave a run down on WA annual recreational licence fees. It costs up to \$50 per annum for an umbrella licence for all 5 licence categories. There is currently high compliance, at 96-98% for marron and 92% for the recreational abalone fishery.

John Smith reiterated the common view that there is a need for improved education. Landcare has some coastal groups which can be built on and used.

John Millyard from the Australian Fishing Tackle Association stated that there are 2000 tackle outlets Australia-wide available for education which can be better used.

Peter Rogers then closed the session by thanking everyone for this session and invited everyone to put hands together for the speakers.