

Australian Fishing Trade Association

Protecting Australia's Fishing Future



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Community Group Call For Netting Ban Strikes Chord With Recreational Fishers

The recent one page media advertisements by a central coast community group calling for a ban to commercial netting in the Hawkesbury River and Tuggerah Lakes has struck a positive chord with the recreational fishing community across New South Wales.

“The community group has expressed a view that reflects the thinking of an increasing number of recreational fishers – there needs to be a rebalance between commercial fishing and recreational fishing in many estuaries across New South Wales. The Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) supports this view and advocates the establishment of net free recreational fishing havens throughout the state in achieving a better balance.” Allan Hansard Chief Executive of AFTA said.

“The evidence of the significant economic benefits of recreational fishing is clear. In NSW recreational fishing is worth \$3.4 billion a year and employs over 14,000 people¹. In contrast, estuary netting and estuary prawn trawling contributes around \$23 million a year and is estimated to employ less than 1,000 people².

“Commercial fishing groups understandably oppose the central coast community group’s call. They argue that their practices are sustainable, and that a move to ban netting will hurt traditional fishing families and will impact on local seafood supplies.

“However, the current commercial fishing system in NSW allows commercial fishers to move about the state and accumulate in key and popular fishing areas. This has resulted in situations where overfishing can occur and local fish stocks can become depleted, leaving little to no fish for recreational fishers to catch.

“It also means that even with sustainable fishing techniques, continual over netting can cause damage to vital fish habitat and fish stocks. As a result many traditional fishing families in these areas are struggling to make a living or have been pushed out of business.

“We all love our locally caught seafood but this should not come at the cost of important marine habitat, local fish stocks or the significant community benefits that can be derived from recreational fishing. That’s why a rebalancing between commercial fishing and recreational fishing in NSW is required.

“The Government is aware of issues with the NSW commercial fishing system and has established a comprehensive review of the system. We would like to see this review brought to a conclusion with recommendations including the establishment of a network of recreational fishing havens for NSW.” Mr Hansard concluded.

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1. McIlgorm, A. and J. Peppereil (2013). Developing a cost effective state wide expenditure survey method to measure the economic contribution of the recreational fishing sector in NSW in 2012. A report to the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust, NSW Department of Primary Industries, November 2013. Produced by the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security (ANCORS), University of Wollongong.

2. <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/commercial>