

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON RECREATIONAL MARINE FISHING IN TASMANIA MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON 4 APRIL 2008.**

---

**RECREATIONAL MARINE FISHING IN TASMANIA**

**Mr RICHARD DAX**, CONSULTANT EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ANGLERS ALLIANCE TASMANIA INC., WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Harriss) - Richard, thanks for your submission. We have had the submissions for some time now so members have made themselves familiar with the detail of those submissions. At this stage, we have allocated 45 minutes for your presentation and then some questions as well and, if at the end of that we draw a conclusion that it would be necessary or important to have you back, we have the flexibility to do that so do not feel too rushed about the whole process. You are familiar that all of this is being recorded on *Hansard* so if there is anything at any time that you wanted to share with the committee in camera that can be accommodated and it will not appear in the report or be publicised anywhere.

**Mr DAX** - Thank you. I think that is probably unlikely -- I certainly hope that it is unlikely.

**CHAIR** - Please speak to your submission and then we can ask questions.

**Mr DAX** - Mr Chairman, my interest is recreational fishing. I head up Anglers Alliance Tasmania Inc., which was an organisation formed out of the writing of a recreational fishing development plan.

Another person and I put this plan together with a grant from the Commonwealth Government. That has been generally accepted throughout the State by government departments, clubs, independent anglers, tackle dealers and the whole gamut of people who are interested in recreational fishing. It is accepted as the definitive plan and the plan has allowed us not only to put together a representative body but also enabled us to help the Inland Fisheries Service particularly to move forward.

The Inland Fisheries Service has a great deal of difficulty in the way it is set up with government in that every time a State Service award rise comes in they have to find that out of licence fees. It is the same with their other money that comes in from government for things such as threatened species and foreign objects of one sort or another. They are always in a somewhat precarious position in as much as there is a spin somewhere in the recreational fishing in freshwater of about \$70 million. They do that on an income of \$1.4 million, which is gradually diminishing in effectiveness all the time. You could argue that the Inland Fisheries Service over a period of time will grind itself to a halt, or bankruptcy. That is unlikely to happen, but you can argue that.

I have a great interest in not only the maintenance of the fishery as far as anglers go but also in the survival of the Inland Fisheries Service, which in the past has done a

somewhat doubtful job in management but is now well managed by the Director of the Inland Fisheries Service who really knows the problems. We are a great supporter of all those things. To put that in perspective, in the last 18 months or so we as an organisation have raised somewhere around \$860 000 from the Commonwealth Government coffers and we have about \$2.6 million worth of programs under way at the present time. Many of those are done with the Inland Fisheries Service, by which their contribution is the implementation.

I can see my friend, Mark, here, who is a recent addition to the TARFish scheme. We have had a somewhat fractured relationship with TARFish over many years, since basically they imploded some five years ago, I think. We are hopeful now that Mark has been appointed that that is going to change. Our major difficulty in the past has been - and it is a peculiar situation - where the present minister, Minister Llewellyn, and the previous minister, Minister Kons, both insisted that TARFish represent the interests of all recreational anglers in the State. Up until the present time they have neither been able to do that nor had the organisation to do it. We are hopeful that things will change with the new administration. It is a matter of some concern to inland fishery anglers - I do not know if any of you are anglers but they are a traditional and outspoken lot who guard their facilities and rights very closely. The claim by the minister that TARFish represented freshwater interests as well as saltwater was never well received. It makes my job a bit more difficult. I should add, as a matter of interest, that the formation of Anglers Alliance was well helped by the Inland Fisheries Service. They are given an administration fee, or a fee to help the administration on an annual basis, and I get most of that - just declaring an interest - on a consultancy basis, which helps me not delve into my savings. I am not unknown for doing work in tourism and around the State. I sit as a director of the peak industry board. Now that I am retired I do not have a business to absorb it any more. I am able to do that, but I guess that I am working for about \$25 an hour in total - that is just declaring an interest. It has enabled the organisation to get up and get off the ground.

Given this considerable matter for harassment from my members, and in speaking to Minister Llewellyn about it, he has stated in writing that he accepts Anglers Alliance as the voice of freshwater anglers. On the one hand he insists that TARFish represent all recreational anglers and on the other hand he accepts Anglers Alliance as the spokespeople for inland waters.

**CHAIR** - Was that in recent correspondence?

**Mr DAX** - I guess that it would have been within the last 18 months or 12 months even, I am not quite sure. I could certainly dig that out should you be interested in it.

There is no great argument between TARFish's present administration and ourselves; in fact quite the opposite. The new CEO of TARFish and I have had a number of conversations and those have included that there may well be, in the future, an avenue to get the two organisations together and perhaps even form them into one. But as I explained, at the present time there is absolutely no hope of that; it would cave in my organisation if I were to take steps to do that. I have no objection to working towards that into the future, but at the present time it is not possible and I think that the whole recreational fishing industry would be better serviced by the minister accepting that TARFish represents the saltwater section, that AAT represents the freshwater section and

that we perhaps are working towards, in an unspecified time, how we might get together into the one body.

It is further fractured, and I am sure that Mark will tell you later, by the change in government federally. The fact is that funding for the peak recreational body, Recfish Australia, has changed, the outlook has changed and nobody really knows whether that is to the chagrin of the organisation or to the betterment of it. That is yet to be established.

That, too, in the past has been something of a fractured organisation. It certainly has not been representative of all recreational anglers, which has made the situation more difficult. So the whole thing is a bit up in the air in terms of saltwater and its organisation, whereas for freshwater we think we have the matter pretty much under control - as much as you can.

The organisation goes ahead and is working well. It is just that we would like to see that separation. In one of the conversations I had with Mark, we agreed that that might be a preferable way to go at the present time, unless that has changed and I do not know.

**Mr WILKINSON** - So you are saying that for freshwater, Anglers Alliance is the peak body and for saltwater, TARFish?

**Mr DAX** - Yes. I think that is a better way to go at the present time. If you tried to amalgamate them, I suggest that AAT might well collapse and the thing would go backwards, whereas in time I would probably be able to persuade everybody that it is a better way to go. Good sense would say that one peak body is better than two, but it is not likely to happen in the short term. Freshwater anglers are very possessive. They have been running their own affairs for 130-odd years, they have been involved in the management of the resource itself, quite apart from fishing, and they have some very definite ideas. I can tell you that getting them together under one freshwater organisation was nothing short of a miracle. I am still shaking my head that it actually happened. To start changing that again would be very difficult indeed.

That was the major interest in my submission to you. There are perhaps other things which could be a subject of discussion for your group. At the present time we have a program marketing to both overseas and interstate people who are interested in recreational fishing. It is difficult to do that on the basis of marketing Tasmania.

Perhaps I should say that the government view has always been that angling is a recreational pursuit, so let them pay their licence fees and have a nice time and we will not worry about them from a Treasury perspective, and so on. It is more than that. It is a resource that is diminishing elsewhere in the world. It belongs to this State and to every person in this State. It is a resource that ought to be operated for the good of Tasmania, not just anglers and fishermen, for the good of Tasmania.

That is what this marketing plan sets out to do. I did send a disc of the whole plan, which no doubt you have, but it is a fair read. The marketing section basically says that if we could get 5 000 freshwater anglers from outside Tasmania to visit the State, we would get a tourism spend of \$35 million, and that is considerable. It is time that government as a whole began to look at the resource as being to the good of Tasmania. To some extent I am driven by tourism as much as fishing, and I am a keen fisherman.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Who is your competition, Richard? I was visiting one of my boys in America and I was in a lift with a person who said, 'I am going fishing in New Zealand.' I said, 'Where are you going?' They wanted to go fly-fishing for trout in New Zealand. I said, 'What about Tasmania?' He had not heard about Tasmanian fly-fishing but heard about New Zealand fly-fishing. It seems to me that New Zealand is where the competition is.

**Mr DAX** - There is a fair amount of that and it is quite interesting. This plan is backed by very considerable research by BDA Group on the mainland, which do most of the research for Tourism Tasmania, Federal Hotels, the TT-Line and so on, and they are known as extremely reliable forecasters. Their research for us showed that of all the anglers that leave New South Wales alone, which is the main State because of popularity of the eastern seaboard, to go fishing, 52 per cent go to New Zealand. In that way, yes it is a major competitor. We have never really bothered to sell our fishery, as such. I would not like to think that it was unknown, and it certainly is not. But our visitation is very small and that is where the growth should come from. I suspect that the 30 000 to 35 000 local anglers is somewhere around the number that you are going to get and that, very much like the tourism industry, the expansion we are looking for will come from outside Australia. There is an enormous amount of interest in that.

I came back from New Zealand about six weeks ago. I generally go every year. I go not because it is a better experience but because it is a different one. You fish very large, forceful rivers. I am starting to get a bit old for that; my days are numbered for wandering around in those New Zealand streams. They have big rivers and big fish and I usually come back with an average size of six pounds. I will have hooked about eight a day and I will have landed about five of them.

I can go down to a place like the Russell River here and have 35 hook-ups in an afternoon of small fish, but by myself in an atmosphere which nobody else is interfering with, where there are platypus, the odd sea eagle and also tiger snakes - all those things New Zealand does not have. It has high alps, but it is very stark country with its own beauty. But if I had to pick between the two experiences and only be able to do one, I would pick the 35 hook-ups a day of small fish at the Russell River and putting them back. They are beautiful fish in lovely condition.

The experiences are very different and New Zealand has always survived on the American market. Their American market has dropped considerably and their licence fees have dropped by over 20 per cent this year. Driving fees are down about 35 per cent in New Zealand. They have their own difficulties. They also have didymo, an algal disease which is somewhat rife in New Zealand. That has had an effect and the bottom has dropped out of the American market, which has always been their bread and butter.

I do not think that we want to go about marketing our fishing in the same way as they have done. We do not have the water of New Zealand. But yes, to some extent, they are a competitor. We have quite a number of millions of people just over the water and that is really where the market is, plus to some extent the international one, which gets to the more specialised methods of fishing, particularly fly-fishing. That is generally what those in the high-spend area want to do. We have quite a number of lodges, which are coming up now, matching New Zealand. New Zealand has always been based on the

expensive and exclusive lodges. It is a competition but I would not go into marketing of fishing saying that we are going to knock New Zealand off. We are clearly not going to. We have our own experience and that is what we really should be concentrating on.

My problem at the moment with the marketing plan is that it is worth about \$720 000, which in Tasmanian terms is a fair sized plan. Much of that, approximately half in round figures, comes from in-kind support. Much of that from government agencies of one sort or another so it would not be true to say that the Government had not put any money in, but that they have not put any revenue money into thing. I do not offer that as a complaint; that is just the status quo.

It is a \$750 000 project and we will be marketing Tasmania as a whole, including sea fishing - as obviously you cannot market the State without sea fishing. We have some difficulties up until the present time that may not be ongoing with the new administration but we have some difficulties, including sea fisheries in that overall marketing. I have made a number of attempts with the old administration of TARFish to effect that but without any success at all, in fact rebuffed by them pretty much, so that has been awkward.

It will still go ahead. I would like to think that we would get more from the sea fishing fraternity into that marketing plan. It has been exacerbated by the sea charter boat operators, who are the main people in terms of tourism probably, although diving has some attraction, by their ability to stick together as a group. We had considerable input into their formation as a group some years ago - the sea charter boat operators - and they really just fell by the wayside with TARFish, which left us without that main group to market. They are a very difficult group, it would seem, to get together.

**CHAIR** - Richard, you mention in your submission that very issue. Your words are 'that you are disappointed that the organisation has become operationally defunct and that TARFish has allowed one of its constituent members to reach this end'. Do you have any understanding of the reasons for that? You helped with the establishment of the group.

**Mr DAX** - We did. It is going back so far, I am getting old and there are so many bits and pieces to it. We needed a fishing guide. I am not unknown in government circles, particularly in the bureaucracy, and most of that emanated from a huge argument that I had with them about a development at Lake St Clair. That gave me a very good network. We both respect each other and that respect has been held through thick and thin despite the fact that there has been enormous trouble at one time or another.

We got a booklet which, with the help of government, we put out at a cost of about \$50 000. We put in all guides, all charter boat operators and what-not at virtually no cost. We did that with a grant from Sea Fisheries of \$10 000 and the rest we raised from one place or another. We got all 20 or 22 charter boat operators accredited through the tourism industry scheme - or the government scheme of accreditation - and we got them together pretty much as a group. We encouraged them and they all went into the booklet but since then they have not been able to hold themselves together as a group. The reason is, firstly, that quite a number of them really do it as a tax dodge. They say it is a charter boat but it is actually their own boat and they are having a nice time on it but they take the odd charter out and therefore they qualify. Secondly, there is not a large number

of really serious operators. I do not know how many serious operators there are - probably 10 or thereabouts.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - For the whole State, Richard?

**Mr DAX** - Yes. There might be a dozen; I don't know exactly. They are individuals; they are not companies. Many of them have a second job and they find it difficult to be part of an organisation. That organisation hasn't been led by anybody with either knowledge or passion so it has been very difficult for them to stay together, because they can push it aside very easily by being too busy. We are all too busy, but we all have the same number of hours in a day. It has fallen aside through a lack of leadership. I have just done a reprint of that particular booklet and out of the original 20 there are three that came into it. This is a booklet of 75 000 copies that goes all around the world. It was quite interesting with the trout fishing guides. We had to force them into it. I think they paid \$50 to get into it but this year we had to beat them off for \$350. That shows that there must have been some success in it.

So that was how, to some extent, the sea charter boaters came into operation and became an organisation, but since that time it has gradually dropped off. When we get to this marketing plan - and we are in the process of putting that into play - we will take sea fishing with us because it is part of the mix.

I have written with some trepidation that in other States there has been some success by having one recreational fishing licence. At the present time the only ones here are for the nets and the pots and the abalone and so on. The ordinary recreational fisherman doesn't have anything in the way of a licence, whereas in New South Wales and Victoria there is one licence which includes sea and freshwater. I am not advocating that that should be the case, but I am advocating that it is something that ought to be looked into. I approached that with some trepidation because if you look at the figures as they are now, if you took the whole lot of the licence of \$30 or \$40, then it makes the Inland Fisheries Service probably worse off, not better. If that were considered then it would have to be considered on an equitable basis, and for that to be quite clear. It would have some advantages, I think, in the preservation of the fishery and would help bind everything under the one following. I have not come here to say that that is what we ought to do; I am saying that that is what we should perhaps be looking into. It may well be that I am completely wrong and I am happy to stand corrected. I suspect that intelligently and cleverly done it might well be a good thing for all and sundry.

I did bring, purely as a matter of interest, a list of the things that AAT has achieved, and all those things are well under way. We have had other successes in changing things around with the Inland Fisheries Service as well. There is a lot of work on. I would like to think that we were very successful and I would like to think that we were recognised in our own right and perhaps in a more official way by the relevant minister. I would also like to think that into the future we could work towards one body, but I don't know the time frame for that. I couldn't see that in less than five years, but I am certainly not averse to that way.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Richard, you wrote in your submission about accessing the grants, about \$850 000 or \$860 000; what input do you have? You said that you didn't administer those grants so what input do you have into the programs that you put out?

**Mr DAX** - We rate the programs. For a lot of the in-kind support that makes up the difference between the cash money and the amount that we have actually put into them, Inland Fisheries have put on a person to implement the access programs. The access programs are very time consuming. There are signs and interpretation to be done, besides looking at land tenures beside rivers - who owns what and how you can access a bit of this, that and the other. We have this system by which old titles often own into the middle of the river. That river may well have a reserve on it but you cannot get to the reserve because it is bounded by private land, so you need to find a negotiated way by which people can get to the reserve and so on.

So the Inland Fisheries Service is actually paying for the guy. It is fortuitous that he is the guy that helped me write the whole plan in the first place. He is actually implementing it, but the money is in our bank. We have more money than I could believe in the bank at the moment. So we administer that, we have to report on it and we actually pay for it. I do not personally see us in separation from the Inland Fisheries Service, but we are able to do outside the public service system a lot more than the Director of Inland Fisheries can do within it. There are obviously a whole lot of things that they are not able to do, whereas I can do things outside, both in speech and in action, so it a very good partnership. I really see AAT almost as part of the Inland Fisheries, and vice versa. We are really there to bolster them up, not to give them a belting; they need support.

The plans and the submissions are very detailed. They are tied down very tightly as to what you can and cannot do with the money. The audit report, and everything is done under audit, at the end has to reflect that you spent the money on exactly those things. So it is not a free-for-all. You do not get the money and then think you will do this, that or the other. You do not get it until you say exactly what it is for. It is very well controlled.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - You have to report on the outcomes as well? It is okay to have spent the money but if you have actually not encouraged the 200 people that you envisaged would take up that particular program, then that could be a problem as well.

**Mr DAX** - We have to give a report to the Commonwealth at the end of each one of those programs and to some extent it is more onerous than the original application. For instance, we have to put into the audit all the in-kind support - the number of hours, who they were, where they came from and so on. We have to fulfil our KPIs in all those things. The applications say that this will result in so and so; these are our figures and this is what we are looking for, so we have to fulfil those and if we have not fulfilled them then there needs to be a very good reason why. It is pretty tight.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Richard, have you done any costing at all on the socio-economic impact on the State of inland fishing?

**Mr DAX** - Yes, and no. There has never been a decent survey done and it is really something that the university could work on. There is some CRC stuff of one sort or another that has been done and there is a report by Adrian Franklin that is now a bit old. There a number of things but nobody has actually tied them together. We know clearly how many people come into the State and fish. We have a pretty fair idea of the number

of people who come into the State to fish, and there is a considerable distinction between those two. In fact, the people who come into the State and go fishing but do a lot of other things too have twice the length of stay and twice the spend of the person who comes in just to fish only. We know all that. We also know that we have a market on the mainland of 90 000 people who the last time they left home went fishing as a recreational pursuit and we know that they leave home 5.6 times a year - not necessarily to fish but on a recreational pursuit. Therefore we know we have a special market of half a million people that we can appeal to every year.

That research is complete. We know their demographics. We know their age. We know what they drink. We know what movies they go to. We know where they get their advertising from - we know all that. The complete socioeconomic thing, we do not really know and it would be nice to get that, but you have to prioritise what you are doing and how. This organisation is run by myself and the Inland Fisheries Service. We basically have 30 000 members. We have to create a whole new aspect of fishing. The marketing program is really built around what we have called a club, but it should not be club because it gives the wrong connotation. It really is a portal by which when you become a licensed angler you also are a member of this portal, club or trust or whatever it may be and I am still in the process of fixing that. It sounds as if it would be easy but it is not.

So that might have bookability. It has accommodation and it has clothing and it has all these things which are available. It also has the availability of you contributing towards the upkeep of the fishery by which there is a special licence that might be \$500. You are not going to sell 10 000 of those but you are going to sell some and you are going to involve some people in the fishery itself. That, too, is a pretty interesting way to go about things and it keeps my nose to the grindstone because there are not a lot of us.

**Mr WILKINSON** - So that report - it's Adrian Franklin, is that what you are saying?

**Mr DAX** - All those things that I just told you?

**Mr WILKINSON** - Yes.

**Mr DAX** - No, it is the BDA marketing group on the mainland. We do not show that around very freely. I would be happy to share it with the committee but it is 98 pages and I do not know whether you have seen any BDA reports. You need a whole new way of looking at graphs - they are quite individual. I would be happy to show that to you. We do not flash it around because it is a commercial-in-confidence document. But it is pretty interesting and it does have a lot of interesting figures on both sea and freshwater fishing.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Would we be able to use those figures if we put out a report? Or are you saying you would have to get the authority to do that?

**Mr DAX** - No, the authority is me. Perhaps I should not say that. I guess the authority is Anglers Alliance, but the members of the committee have not spent a lot of time on that detail. They spent some time on the plan and I push the plan with them all the time, but they have not gone into that detail because it is a big read. But I would be happy to supply you with the report and you could perhaps just refer back as to what you might



like to publish. I do not think that there is likely to be a problem. It is only that I would not like Victoria or New South Wales to share in the same - where it gets everybody laid out, the demographics and everything. I just would not like them to be able to get hold of those 90 000 people in the market with most profitable prospects.

**Mr WILKINSON** - I understand that.

**CHAIR** - Clearly, Richard, based on that, we would need to consider it in relation to the relevance of our terms of reference.

**Mr DAX** - Indeed.

**CHAIR** - As you note in your submission, AAT has a passing interest in where we are heading, primarily, because of the differences of opinion that have arisen in the past between your organisation and TARFish and the challenges that have confronted you. So, if you could provide that for us we could make some value judgments.

**Mr DAX** - Yes, I am happy to do that. I must add, Chairman, that I have not come up here to belt up TARFish or anybody else. Our wish is to have the recreational fishery as good as possible. That is going to get better through tourism. There is not great integration from government in terms of recreational fishing. Perhaps in the past they have not understood it or perhaps we have not persuaded them well. But we are working on that too. We have a Treasury submission in for the way that the Inland Fishery Service is funded and run. We will try anything to make the thing better, but on the basis that it's better for Tasmania. That is really what I'm about.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Any further questions of Richard?

**Mr DAX** - Do you want a hard copy of that BDA report, or shall I just send it on? I am sure your printer is probably better than mine. Shall I will forward it on to you?

**Mr WILKINSON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for your time.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Mr DENNIS KEATS**, CONSULTANT, SPORT AND RECREATION TASMANIA WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Dennis, I have your submission in front of me. As I said to Richard, we have had the submission for some time and members have had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the detail. You are probably familiar with the process of a select committee: everything is recorded, but if there is any matter that you feel is important and should be communicated to the committee in camera, we can facilitate that if that is the wish of the committee at the time. With that, do you want to speak to your submission and then we can proceed to ask questions?

**Mr KEATS** - I will speak to the submission and put some context around it. I initially forwarded an e-mail more in the interests of ensuring that within Sport and Recreation Tasmania we were linked to and associated with the outcomes. Frankly, at that point I hadn't thought beyond attending the select committee, but I am pleased to have the opportunity now to be here, so I will reiterate some of the stuff in there for reasons of context.

The three key points I submitted indicate that Sport and Recreation Tasmania supports the lead role of DPIW in planning and directions as the lead agency in the provision and management of saltwater/marine, but also, as I have heard your earlier speaker talk, about freshwater. The input suggested that both an appropriate business balance and an environmentally conscious and sustainable approach are mandatory for recreational activities such as angling/fishing. Finally, we indicated that Sport and Recreation Tasmania recognises fishing as a recreation/sport activity - and I will explain why I put all these - and fishing groups are eligible, subject to criteria, under Sport and Recreation's grant programs.

I also commented in the material that in recent months - and those recent months in effect cover a period now of approaching 18 months in total - I have had contact with people who appeared at least to be directly relevant to this select committee hearing, and others. So in that sense, I just reiterate that I had most recent contact with Mark Nikolai of TARFish, the new CEO whom you have heard about and will hear more from and about; Grant Pullen, the new person associated with the management of the Wild Fisheries Management Branch in DPIW; and John Diggle, Neil Morrow and Richard Dax, more so in relation to angling in freshwater. I say all of that because, the context being Sport and Recreation Tasmania's interest, I do not have the approval or a mandate to make a policy comment so I want to put that on the record. Rather, I am commenting on Sport and Recreation's general approach to how we handle sport and recreational organisations, fishing being such a one.

My interest and involvement that has evolved to today is that in association with the former general manager of the Central Highlands Council and other parties, I consulted and wrote a basic municipal sport and recreation development plan for the Central Highlands Council. That was in approximately January of last year and, as best I can get confirmation from the Central Highlands Council, it was confirmed either in the period of January-July 2007 as their basic municipal sport and recreation plan.

An interesting convergence of things was happening at a similar time with not all the players being aware of what was happening. So let us say the angling developments through the Federal Government with the Anglers Alliance and so on, was coming down a path that was not altogether available at that point in time. There were developments happening in relation to the Department of Economic Development and Tourism about an economic plan and tourism plan for the Central Highlands.

What has all that got to do with this? By evolution of that, the various consultations and stakeholder interests that I dealt with expanded out. In that process, with the recent appointment of Mark Nikolai, I of course thought that they were out on the saltwater side of things, as I understood it. I thought I would make contact with this chap, find out who he is, what they are and where they are going or where they hope to go. Through that evolution of 18 months, it became clear to me that Sport and Recreation Tasmania over time had not had - and that is mutually - a lot of interaction with the recreational fishing, whether it be angling or saltwater, for a variety of reasons.

It became clear that there were different perspectives on who is or is not the umbrella non-government body. The good news I have is that in my association with them, on behalf of Sport and Recreation, there are no problems, difficulties or issues at this moment, as I understand it.

How I, on behalf of Sport and Recreation, handled that and why: in general our role and function is that we attempt to deal with the non-government, let us say, umbrella and community organisations that handle sport and recreation. We are not nowadays the pure deliverer of specific sport and recreation activity although there is a lingering perception that we might be, so in that sense we attempt to work with those non-government organisations in the development, evolution, education, access to opportunity, grants and so on.

That is by and large why I am here today - firstly, for an ongoing learning experience; secondly, to provide the input I have provided at the moment and I can provide more under questioning. I do not think that there is more worth adding right at the moment.

**CHAIR** - Are there any questions of Dennis following that overarching comment and further explanation of his written submission?

I guess the only thing that I see flowing out of all of that, Dennis, is that it appears to me that Sport and Recreation has not had a huge involvement in either the freshwater angling or saltwater marine fishing but that you have indicated there a grant opportunity is available. Have many been taken up over the years?

**Mr KEATS** - I would not be able to give you a definitive answer. To go back there was limited interaction with what was the former Anglers Alliance of Tasmania and I am not sure up until what period that would have happened under people other than myself. They may have had minimal access to grants and I will explain that in a moment. In terms of the saltwater recreation, no. By and large the portfolio spread of what we have, we have not ignored freshwater or saltwater fishing, but in the end the amount of involvement we have with some activities is generated by their initiation - let us put it that way.

In terms of grants in recent times, I couldn't give you a definitive answer. The department would be able to print it out. I would say that since 2000 there would have been few grants for fishing of any description and I doubt whether there have been many applications. In effect, there have probably not been many applications and of those who have applied there might not have been many who were successful.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Would it be right to assume that the angling fraternity are in an older age group so they don't need as much support from Sport and Recreation, or is that just a perception?

**Mr KEATS** - That is not an assumption we make. Across all sports we don't make assumptions on the demographic and age of participants. Having heard the earlier speaker, I guess the perception of that group by themselves is that they're a fairly self-contained entity. If I were asked today, I would say that is probably the perception I and others have. I would say it is similar of saltwater anglers. Because both of them operate in an environment that is a blend of commercial and recreational, by and large other government agencies predominantly have the lead role. In that sense my assumption is that they see themselves in such a vein and they probably interact more with other government agencies. As stated in our submission, we support that. We are not the lead agency and we always have issues about how to fund, who to fund, under what conditions and why, looking for balances in working in partnership across whole-of-government and in cross-subsidising other agencies. The age demographic doesn't enter our thinking.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Given your comment about not being in the policy area, do you - personally and in your role - envisage having a larger input into the angling side of Sport and Recreation?

**Mr KEATS** - I think for the safety of the committee meeting -

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - It is on *Hansard*, so there's no point in looking around.

**Mr KEATS** - I would indicate that until our operational and strategic planning for 2008-09 and beyond is finalised and confirmed - and that is a whole-of-agency process - I shouldn't really comment. We will continue to give fair and equitable input, as we do across all sport and recreational activities. Has that answered your question?

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - I don't want to put you under pressure.

**Mr KEATS** - I am not trying to be evasive but I have to respect the fact that I am not here in a position that has the power, authority or the approved mandate to make comments in that area.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - I appreciate that.

**CHAIR** - Your focus, as your submission indicates, is you consider both freshwater and saltwater angling as a recreational/sporting pursuit and in that wherever you can play a productive role you can and will do so. What sort of liaison, if any, does your organisation have with TARFish?

**Mr KEATS** - As I understand it, it has only been initiated by myself in recent times, in approximately February, when I became aware of the appointment of the new CEO. This recent activity in relation to fishing was initiated by myself, as I indicated earlier, partly through the evolution of doing the Central Highlands recreation plan. We have three regional agencies and there might be intermittent contact but, as far as I am aware at the moment, I am the one person who has had contact with the angling movement that you have heard represented this morning, and the saltwater marine fishery that I believe you will hear later. There have been some intermittent inquiries from people in the field interested in fishing asking who, where, how, why, what they might do, who they can access and so on.

**CHAIR** - Dennis, I don't see anything else flowing from either your verbal presentation or the written one that I have any further questions about. Clearly you have recognised a need to let the broader fishing industry know that Sport and Recreation is available, for a range of reasons, and that you're interested in what goes on there as well.

**Mr KEATS** - Yes. In that context, if the committee wants more definitive information I am happy to try to source that through our management. As indicated earlier, I would be interested in hearing a number of key presenters.

**CHAIR** - We will get the list to you of the witnesses who will be appearing, when and where. Some will be out of Hobart.

**Mr KEATS** - My interest is predominantly for DPIW, being the overarching department so I am aware of cross-agency stuff.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr KEATS** - I want to be confident that I can attend some sessions.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Dennis, I have a final question and if you cannot answer it I understand. Given your role looking to support the association, but not necessarily the funding and that type of thing, do you see opportunities to support Sport and Recreation on that basis? For example, I am thinking about somewhere on the east coast which needs a jetty upgrade to enhance opportunities to use the facility for fishing. Would your department be willing to go to MAST and say, 'We don't have any funds but we think this is a great opportunity for young people to start learning how to fish and that is a plus for the recreational side of their health and wellbeing'? Do you see your role as that more than as a funding arm?

**Mr KEATS** - Well -

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - It might be policy.

**Mr KEATS** - No, you are right. You have asked about three questions - the first one was in relation to jetties and other things. I commented earlier on the need for cohesion in whole-of-government interaction and that over the period of the interaction between MAST, DPIW and so on, there should be either recognised or perceived jurisdictional responsibilities. The one that you mentioned, jetties, generally does not lie in our jurisdiction.

On your next point, yes we do totally support continuing the organisation but part of what we are about is not just funding for facilities, open space, environments or programs, it is advising, assisting and trying to integrate what happens. In the earlier submission, I heard talk of whether there should be one overarching body or two. Our general opinion across all sports and recreations, including this one is that the cohesion of a sporting or recreation undertaking is usually improved when either the constituent parties or a unified party can lead, guide and direct. I do take note of what I heard from the Anglers Alliance and I think something similar might be said for TARFish that the slightly different natures of each of their industries may benefit from their being separate. But in that sense yes, we would be very interested in the evolution and that is part of the reason I am here to see where it goes, and whether we do play any role or part in it, recognising that we are not a lead agency. I guess I might be overstretching it. I think all the things mentioned are important and relevant to this.

As you might guess, the community and others can claim that almost any activity taking leisure time is a recreational activity and therefore should either have a human resource or funding or whatever. As you know, Sport and Recreation Tasmania is a fairly small group with a finite role defined within the now context of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Thanks. That was a terrific answer. I am very hopeful now.

**CHAIR** - For today's proceedings, Dennis, we have the Tasmanian Conservation Trust coming in at 10.45 and then we have Neville Perryman, a recreational or commercial fisherman at 11.30. At 12.15 p.m. we have Wes Ford and I think Grant Pullen is coming with Wes.

**Mr KEATS** - That is one I would be interested in.

**CHAIR** - That is at 12.15 p.m.

**Mr KEATS** - With no disrespect to any other presenters, predominantly I am interested in hearing DPIW, MAST, TARFish and Anglers Alliance. All other input and opinion is important but in my role I have a fairly clear and defined role.

**CHAIR** - We have TFIC this afternoon - the Fishing Industry Council. That is Neil Stump at two o'clock.

**Mr KEATS** - I might try to attend the 12.15 and two o'clock.

**CHAIR** - You are more than welcome.

**Mr KEATS** - Was I correct in thinking that on Thursday 14 Mark Nikolai from TARFish will be presenting?

**CHAIR** - We will get that to you.

**Mr KEATS** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - With that, Dennis, we thank you for your time.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Mr JON BRYAN, TASMANIAN CONSERVATION TRUST, WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.**

**CHAIR** (Mr Harriss) - Jon, we will hear verbal evidence from you and then there will be some questions flowing not only from that but also from the submission you have already given us.

**Mr BRYAN** - To introduce myself, I work very part-time for the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, and through my involvement with them, on marine issues, which is my primary interest with the trust. I am a member of quite a few fishery advisory committees and management advisory committees. I have listed them on my submission. They include the Abalone Fishery Advisory Committee, the rock lobster and crustacean FAC, scale fish, and recreational scallop FAC. In the Commonwealth arena, I have been a member of the scallop MAC and the small pelagic MAC, the resource assessment group, and before it was amalgamated, the shark MAC.

I have also been on quite a few other committees over the years since mid-1994 when I began doing some work for the Conservation Trust. I guess I feel that that gives me some experience of how fishing-related committees operate, and I have brought that experience to TARFish since the beginning of 2007. Prior to 2007, I had no direct involvement in TARFish at all, and I can offer no useful information, I believe, on that period of TARFish's history. My understanding of TARFish is that since I became involved at least, the committee that I am a member of has operated pretty much the same way as the other fishery advisory committees, the other committees which, by the way, are statutory committees which are operated under the auspices of the State or Commonwealth governments.

With that in mind, I would again like to say that TARFish seems to be operating in much the same way, the meetings are conducted in a professional manner with agendas and outcomes and all the appendages of committee activities which I have become used to over the years. I would suggest that over the last year or so TARFish has been consolidating its activities, and with the appointment of a new CEO has now reached a point where it is going to be a very effective group for representing recreational fishers in Tasmania.

One of the points I made in my written submission was that I believe it is quite difficult to represent interests of recreational fishers in Tasmania simply because it is such a fragmented group of people. Most fishers do not belong to structured organisations; many people undertake the activity as individuals or as small groups. To try to represent those people and their interests I think is very difficult to do.

I guess from the point of view of TARFish, because it is made up of member organisations which at least represent parts of the wider recreational fishing community, it does have some claim to representativeness. It is probably the most effective group in that role in Tasmania at the moment.

Speaking to the other points, the second point being the suitability of the current licensing arrangements, I would suggest that these are inadequate at the moment simply because line fishing is not a fishing activity that requires a paid-for licence. I believe that



licensing all fishing activities for adults would be of benefit for three reasons. It would provide revenue for more research and management, it would provide straightforward data collection on at least fishing participation and, piggybacked on the licensing process, one could attach survey forms and perhaps gather other fishing data which is important to management decisions in this fishery.

I also think that there is a more intangible value on putting a cost to fishing in Tasmanian waters and that is that it is going to give an actual monetary value of participation and perhaps indicate that there is a value involved with taking this resource out of the water.

Probably the suitability of the recreational fishing licences trust fund is an area in which I do not have a great deal of personal interest or experience. The only thing that I could perhaps add is that, as I have seen it administered through the department, I do not see any major problems with it. There seems to be quite a bit of government oversight in the way that that money is spent and I do not believe that there is any evidence of that fund being unsuitable and poorly administered.

The next point, the socioeconomic impact on the State, is of great interest. I would suggest however, again, because the recreational fishery is such a fragmented group of people with a wide range of values and desired outcomes, that it is, firstly, quite hard to get any sort of representative sample or to try to distil down into any sort of simple, practical and useful document the socioeconomic needs and impacts of that fishery. I would like to point out that a simple collation of economic returns to businesses that derive income from recreational fishing would probably ignore many of the more intangible values that people put on recreational fishing.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Such as, Jon?

**Mr BRYAN** - I think that a lot of people do recreational fishing just to sit out and be quiet and by themselves and take in the environment. The fishing is often secondary. The financial value of that is quite hard to quantify. I know economists do place values on it by using indirect methods, such as the money that people spend on their cars for petrol and for boats, and the other ancillary things involved in fishing can be used as an index of economic value for those sorts of intangible values. But I would suggest that those links may not represent all the 100 000-plus people and their views on fishing in Tasmania. What I would suggest, though, is that if a socioeconomic investigation is to be carried out, it is not some fairly simplistic study which would have to be done; it would have to be done by professional people and require significant resources to provide useful information because of those sorts of complexities.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Looking at that, and endeavouring to get some type of figure, I hear what you say about the intangibles, but as you say, you are looking at petrol for cars to get to and from fishing spots, likewise boats, likewise places like marine shops to purchase boats and motors and the servicing of those, fishing licences, fishing equipment, diving equipment. What else would there be? I am just trying to encapsulate.

**Mr BRYAN** - An interesting way of looking at this is in fact opportunity costs. People may decide, for example, to give up overtime to go fishing and that can be incorporated in those sort of calculations. As I have said, there are mechanisms to take some of those

things into account and economists do that but it is certainly not a trivial exercise and I would suggest that if it was to be undertaken, and I am sure this committee would seek and find the appropriate people if you wanted to encourage that -

**Mr WILKINSON** - Do know of any figures that have been done?

**Mr BRYAN** - Not directly, no.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Any reports at all?

**Mr BRYAN** - I cannot quote from any reports at the moment. I am aware of these sorts of studies that have been done around the world. I cannot put a name on them but they have been done. There has not been any comparable study done in Tasmania at this point.

I think the most interesting topic in the terms of reference is biomass sustainability in management. I guess that is the main reason I have been involved with fisheries management. I have a direct interest in conservation issues in the marine environment and sustainable fishing. In the past I have been a very active recreational fisher and I have to say that one of the reasons I became involved in marine conservation was that all the places I used to go fishing in the 1970s and 1980s have basically been fished out. I see that as a real problem.

**CHAIR** - What are those areas in particular, Jon?

**Mr BRYAN** - Around Tinderbox, Blackmans Bay, the Blowhole at Pirates Bay, Fortescue Bay and north of Triabunna - a few sections along the coast there - and all around Bicheno up to Long Point. These are areas in which I started snorkelling as a teenager and I went diving as a uni student, and, as I said, I used to go and collect and spear and line fish for a whole variety of things. I go back there now as a diver and underwater photographer and I basically see that there are no size target species and, in many cases, no target species at all of the kind that I used to target when I was younger.

**CHAIR** - Do you know if those observations of yours can be confirmed by scientific research and data?

**Mr BRYAN** - I do not believe they can because at the time I first started fishing, there was not that sort of data being collected, and of course that sort of anecdotal evidence has to be taken with a grain of salt. I think that rigorous science is a much more useful tool but, unfortunately, in this instance and in another instance which I will talk about in a minute, there simply is not the scientific observations to back up that statement.

However, I do think that if you talk to many recreational fishers who have been involved in the marine environment and were actively fishing in the 1970s and early 1980s, they will say similar things. I can give you a couple of very specific examples. I can remember doing a dive at Waubs Bay in Bicheno in 1984. I jumped in off the break wall, I swam out, I saw numerous crayfish and I decided I would like to take two sized crays and that is what I did. Here we are, 24 years later, I regularly dive at Waubs Bay - it is an amazing dive; there are lots of interesting animals to see, sea dragons, seahorses - but there are no crayfish at all in the areas where I used to go diving. That small part of

the coastline has changed from an area where one could jump in and select the crayfish that one wanted to take to one which is now a complete waste of time from the point of view of diving for crayfish.

**Ms THORP** - They are all hiding out in the reserve.

**Mr BRYAN** - There are certainly a lot out in the reserve and they are monstrous ones, bigger ones than I ever saw when I was taking crayfish, I would have to say, and they will even come out and say hello to you and swim past. Fortescue Bay is another -

**CHAIR** - Just before you get off that one, though, and pick up Fortescue Bay, you have indicated your personal experience and observation. Have you made any assessment or any inquiries as to the reason for that depletion? Are you saying that it is as a result of recreational fishing or are there other reasons that you might be aware of?

**Mr BRYAN** - There are potentially all sorts of reasons for it but the most likely reason, to my mind, is fishing and it does not have to necessarily be restricted to recreational fishing. My view of fishing pressure is that commercial fishers tend to fish down stocks as whole, but when stocks get so low that they become economically extinct then they leave them alone. Recreational fishers are not motivated by the same economic factors and so will continue to fish an area well below that point. Clearly, in the case of the Waubs Bay area, not only do we have people taking legal crayfish but even under-sized crayfish are being removed from the area. That may not be the only contributing factor but when you see the number of people who use the area and attempt to fish in the area, one would have to suggest that is the leading cause. When you look at the changes in the nearby marine reserve at Bicheno, for example, there are many large crayfish, or rock lobsters as they are now called, as well as juveniles in the reserve, yet just outside the reserve there are practically no crayfish along the coast to Waubs Bay. It has been years since I have seen any crayfish at all. You have to draw the conclusion that the one variable which is different, the most significant variable, is that one area is protected from fishing and one is not. So that, I think, is a fairly strong indication as to the cause.

Environmental variation populations and cause are often difficult to understand and determine with scientific rigour. There is a lot of ecology and statistics debated to doing those things. Again, because of my information being so anecdotal, I would suggest that would be difficult to do at this stage. However, there has been quite a deal of research by scientists at TAFI looking at the impacts of marine reserves. They suggest that there are significant differences in target species populations inside reserves as opposed to outside reserves.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Technology in relation to fishing, especially with line fishing, has that played a real part too in the reduction of fish. You have your technology now and you pull a lot of fish out of a certain area and you can go straight back into that area and hopefully pull them in again.

**Mr BRYAN** - I do not have direct experience of that as a fisher. I have certainly been aware of technology. In fact, I was luckily enough to drive a 20-metre cray boat where I navigated from just east of Maatsuyker Island to somewhere off the Acteons. It was like playing a computer game. I do not drive fishing boats for a living but I managed to find, in low visibility, a lobster pot within 50 metres of where we could pick it up. The

technology is out there to assist fishers with colour sounders and GPS plotters. These certainly assist fishers and may increase the fishing effort in particular prime areas.

The other thing which I think has been noticeable over the past 30 years is the size and number of boats involved in recreational fishing. When I first started diving and cray fishing and so on, a 15-foot tinnie was quite a good boat to have. If you go to the boat ramps at Bicheno or Pirates Bay you will see six- to seven-metre fibreglass sharkcats and very large, very seaworthy boats which can go a long way. That extends the reach of recreational fishers to areas well beyond where they were 20 or 30 years ago. I guess one the motives for that is what I have just described. There are some local areas which are completely fished out and people who want to continue fishing successfully for things like abalone and rock lobster have to travel further afield. That economic cost of buying a larger boat is justified to those people because they feel that they have to travel further to get a feed of crayfish. Coles Bay is another situation. Again, 20 years ago small boats were the norm and now it is quite a regular thing for people to use large boats going to Schouten Passage and around Schouten Island. They may well get the same number of rock lobster as they did 20 years ago but the effort and expense of getting those rock lobsters is much greater because they do not just have a 15-foot tinnie which they can drive down to Hazards Beach. They have to go much further in a much bigger, much more seaworthy and much more expensive boat.

Fortescue Bay is a similar situation to Waubs Bay; it is an area I was very familiar with. Throughout the early 1980s it was an area I regularly dived and I collected crayfish, rock lobster and abalone. In fact a favourite place is just off the boat ramp. One could go for a dive, swim out into the kelp forest and collect crayfish - basically as many as you would want to collect. I usually would get one or two per dive. Recent dives in that same area have basically shown me that there are no sized rock lobster at all. The last dive I did there I did come across a couple of undersized rock lobsters. The change in those sorts of areas has been really very extreme. I think there is evidence to suggest that it is mainly due to fishing; whether it is recreational or commercial is hard to say. I refer back to what I said earlier; recreational fishers do not have an economic link to their fishing whereas commercial fishers are limited more by economic imperatives.

There is really not very much biomass information available for any target species. There is some modelling on rock lobster but even for a very well resourced fishery like the abalone fishery there is no practical way of collecting information on biomass. I would suggest, though, that for both rock lobster and abalone the fisher management processes in place are very effective and certainly from the point of view of fishing they are in no danger at all of disappearing in the near future.

Scallops are managed in a very good way. I would suggest that the paddock opening system involved with scallops, both commercial and recreational, is world class. While there are environmental and biological reasons why scallop stocks vary considerably over time, the management of the fishery is world class.

Scale fish are in a different situation. The Department of Primary Industries and Water recognises this, as you may see if you go to the web site. You will see statements such that scale-fish catches have declined from more than 2 000 tonnes annually in the early 1990s to around 1 000 tonnes annually. Some species have increased in catch, some have declined, but there are real concerns for a few target species: banded morwong,

stripey trumpeter and bastard trumpeter appear to me to be in quite a poor state. I have written down the details which would back up that claim in my submission.

I would like to mention a couple of things to flesh out that concern. Bastard trumpeter, for example, were once incredibly common around the State of Tasmania. I could go snorkelling as a kid or diving later on in the early 1980s and wherever I went swimming around the shallow rocky reefs in Tasmania I would come across large schools of bastard trumpeter. From the mid to late 1980s that changed very significantly to the point where now we can go diving and are lucky to see one or two individual bastard trumpeter.

The assessment of bastard trumpeter by DPIW is based on rigorous data which unfortunately does not stem back to the 1980s and 1970s when these fish were once very common. While their assessment is of great concern, if they were able to bring in the huge change in population of fish species which it appears to have undergone then I believe that their assessment would be even more dire. This was a wonderful resource for Tasmania. It was a great eating fish and is now practically absent from inshore waters along the east coast of Tasmania, which is the area I am familiar with.

Banded morwong and stripey trumpeter are both valuable resources, commercially and for recreational fishers, and both populations appear to be under major pressure. A recent review on banded morwong and calamari may go some way to rescuing the banded morwong, but even so that is a species that has suffered greatly from the impact of fishing. Banded morwong is part of the live fish trade. The great increase in interest from commercial fishers in the early 1990s, before basic information was available about the population structure and biology of banded morwong, went a long way to driving that population down. When you looked at the catch figures and the increasing number of entitlements to catch banded morwong in the early 1990s, it rang a lot of alarm bells for anyone with an interest in fisheries management. I don't believe that the situation we are in now would have developed if people had been a little bit more cautious at the beginning and applied basic fisheries management approaches.

When the banded morwong were first exploited people thought that they were a relatively short-lived, productive reef fish. Subsequently it turned out that these fish live in the order of 70 years and were not quite as productive as was once believed. We have no idea at all about the ecological impacts on the marine environment of removing these quite large and important reef species.

The upshot of all that is that I and the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, which I work for, believe that the available information suggests that there is an urgent need for research to allow for better management of recreational fishing. In particular this is true for the scale-fish fishery. Rock lobster and abalone fisheries, simply because they are such important commercial fisheries, are very well resourced fisheries. The recreational fishery can piggyback on the information that is collected for the commercial fisheries in a very effective way. Having said that, there are local depletions of those species, in the south-east and the north-east, which are recognised by the Government. It is difficult to see how management will deal with those but it is a widely accepted observation that fishing has caused localised depletions of both rock lobster and abalone, despite all the research, information and quite intense management of those species.

Scale fish is the poor cousin. It doesn't get much money; it is a low-value fishery and it is very difficult to see how the management and research resources that go into abalone or rock lobster can be applied to scale fish. There are clearly problems. In the case of some fairly important recreational species, particularly bastard trumpeter, stripey trumpeter and banded morwong, the recreational fisher in Tasmania is losing out because those species have been in decline for some time and are now subject to local extinctions.

**Mr WILKINSON** - In the 1960s flounder was very easy to get and now it seems to be much more difficult to get. They seem to be a dying breed as well.

**Mr BRYAN** - I would agree totally. I could go on with other species as well but I thought I would restrict myself. I had exactly the same experience. I remember as a kid going fishing for flounder in the 1970s. I remember diving in areas where flounder were a common sight, and they subsequently appear to have disappeared. It is quite a rare thing to see flounder on dives now.

**Ms THORP** - They're hiding from you.

**Mr BRYAN** - Well, they don't hide all that effectively. Unlike a lot of fish they don't swim away; they tend to sit on the bottom and pretend they are a bit of sand. It might fool some of their predators, but it doesn't fool humans so well.

**Mr WILKINSON** - They seem to be, along with the bastard trumpeter, far less prevalent than other fish when you go back, say, 40 years.

**Mr BRYAN** - Yes, and that is a great shame. I guess my two favourite eating fish in Tasmania would be bastard trumpeter and flounder. I think that a lot of people agree with me and that is why we do not have so many now. I cannot really shed any light on whether it is the commercial or recreational responsibility for the green-back flounder decline, I suspect that both are involved, but again, there is a lot of information lacking and I think that the main decline probably occurred in the 1980s before that sort of data was collected.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Even at the wharves at Easter time there would be a lot of flounder for sale years ago, but no more.

**Mr BRYAN** - Yes. In fact I think that most flounder in Tasmania comes from New Zealand now. There are still some caught commercially of course but most of the flounder that we see on fish-shop shelves is imported from New Zealand. That is what I have been informed in scale fish fishery advisory committee meetings previously.

**CHAIR** - Jon, I am conscious of the time. How long will the PowerPoint presentation that you wanted to make take? We have about 12 minutes left.

**Mr BRYAN** - I think in five minutes I can whiz through it. It will just show a couple of diagrams.

**CHAIR** - Can we do it now?

**Mr BRYAN** - Yes, and that will tie in quite well with the last point that I want to make.

While that is loading, I can introduce the last section. I took the liberty of perhaps going beyond the spirit of the terms of reference and pointed out a more general concern that I have developed over the years of my experience of the marine environment in Tasmania. I really believe that Tasmania's fisheries are very well managed on a world-class basis. However, they tend to look at and focus on just target species. The success of management is variable according to the type of fisheries so rock lobster and abalone are better resourced and therefore, as a result, not because of any shortcoming in the department other than resourcing, are better managed than scale fish on which a lot of information is unavailable and it is also more difficult to manage a suite of species rather than just one or two target species, as is the case with abalone and rock lobster.

But there are serious environmental issues which seem to be becoming more and more apparent and these seem to be slipping through the cracks of management. We are seeing major habitat changes so the giant kelp has declined significantly along the east coast of Tasmania, north of Tasman Island at least.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Is that because of the farming of that?

**Mr BRYAN** - Not at all. I do not believe that is the case at all. There was farming, as you would remember, from Triabunna and the alginate factory but this plant is very quick to colonise the bottom. It grows at a rate of upwards of 80 centimetres a day once it becomes established. In fact I think it is the fastest-growing plant on the planet, *macrocystis pyrifera*, and certainly after the alginate factory closed down on the east coast the kelp beds were, to a casual observer at any rate, very healthy and certainly very widely distributed and thick. So I believe that there are other issues involved with that. We also have the urchin barrens which you might have heard of, with the *centrostephanus* urchin particularly on the upper east coast, but the urchin itself has become quite common even in Fortescue Bay. Urchin barrens, again you may be aware, reduce the productivity for abalone and rock lobster fisheries alone by 70 per cent. They are a serious threat to our commercial fisheries and also the recreational fisheries, and who knows what they are doing to the marine environment as a whole.

I thought that I would use this PowerPoint to introduce myself a little further and also highlight a couple of the points that I have made. This is a list of some of the committees that I am on at the moment. I would also like to point out that I have had quite an experience of the marine environment around the world, taking underwater photos. This is Antarctica. I have dived in Canada, the tropical north of Australia, of course - the Great Barrier Reef, the Coral Sea - north of Australia, in places such as New Guinea and Indonesia and in the Maldives.

Having had that wide experience across the world and coming back to Tasmania, I have to say that we have a lot of amazing things. This is the red handfish. It is found nowhere else in the world except Tasmanian waters. There is a lot of amazing scenery in the Tasmanian marine environment, but this sort of thing is more mind-blowing than anything I have seen on the Great Barrier Reef or in the Coral Sea. It is a superb experience to go diving in the waters off Tasmania.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Where's that, Jon?

**Mr BRYAN** - That previous photo was in deep water off Bicheno in the marine reserve. Deep reef is a favourite of mine where you get amazing colours and shapes and forms. Every square inch of the bottom is covered by things like sponges and colourful anemones. While not directly useful to people who go recreational fishing, certainly for a recreational diver, from the point of view of tourism, it is something which I think is not well recognised. Certainly again it is a world-class part of Tasmania's environment.

There are lots of fish, red velvet fish and sea dragons which are found only in southern Australia. Our seahorses are one of the largest species in the world and are very common. In most places in the world, seahorses are such an exciting thing to see; here we see them on just about every dive over a reef. There are giant cuttlefish, the largest cuttlefish in the world, nudibranchs, marine mammals like our seals and dolphins and whales. Even the commonplace, such as the little shrimps you find in rock pools, are quite beautiful things to see under water, and the more you look at the marine environment, the more I guess you see. This is the detail of a little fish called a cow fish which is common around our coastline.

As I said earlier, my interest in diving was first involved with collecting these sorts of creatures for eating - trumpeter, abalone and rock lobster. A typical scene in the 1980s, this is something I literally haven't seen for probably 18 or 19 years. Once you couldn't get in the water along the east coast of Tasmania without seeing a school of trumpeter like this. I think they are very susceptible to net fishing; they tangle up and they don't survive very well if you let them out. There is some information on why that might be the case.

Basically all the bastard trumpeter that you will see along the coastline in Tasmania are immature fish, they haven't had a chance to reproduce, so we are targeting juveniles. Given that there are no large areas free of net fishing, with the possible exception of Maria Island marine protected area, that may well be having an impact on the population of these animals.

To illustrate the impact of recreational gill nets, this is from figures from 1998 and 1999, two papers that were published and cited at the bottom. Derived from data from those papers, the amount of recreational gill nets targeting the east coast is over 370 kilometres of net, which is represented approximately by that red line on the graphic. There have been some management changes since then, but you are still looking at, I would imagine, in the order of that amount of net on the east coast of Tasmania.

The data is from that time because the survey indicated what proportion of netting was targeting the east coast, and I am unaware of any data since then which would allow me to transfer current licensing processes onto this sort of graphic. But the licences are in the same order of magnitude and one would expect the proportion of targeting to be the same.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Is that the same now because of that change in legislation which forbids night netting?

**Mr BRYAN** - I think the banning of night netting has been a great step forward. One of the big problems with recreational gill netting is waste. If people leave fish in overnight,



they get eaten by sea lice, they die in the net, they are wasted. Unwanted species can't be released even if they would survive being released, with perhaps the exception of draughtboard sharks which are hardy little sharks which tend to survive netting fairly well. A lot of the other reef species will die if they are trapped in nets. Night netting stops a lot of waste but because we still have extended soak times, it doesn't prevent mortality of unwanted fish, undersized fish. I believe that netting is a significant problem for the coastline of Tasmania.

**Ms THORP** - It is true to say, though, that nets are the only way you can catch some fish.

**Mr BRYAN** - I think it might be interesting for you to ask some active recreational fishers. I would suggest banded morwong and bastard trumpeter are probably the two species which would be targeted by nets and would be claimed by many net users to be unavailable by any other method. I have heard, and it is just hearsay, you would have to ask a fisher, that people are using flies to catch bastard trumpeter and of course both species are accessible to spear fishermen.

The current situation is that both of those species are largely removed from many areas that were once frequented by recreational fishers and in the case of bastard trumpeter, they are practically absent now, so I guess one of the big justifications for using nets is simply removed because the fish that they were once used to target are no longer available. Of course there is a bycatch of things such as seabirds and marine mammals, and this is a dolphin which was killed in a net in D'Entrecasteaux Channel. The shot is actually staged. I borrowed the dead dolphin from Parks and Wildlife but it had been caught in a net in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and I think it just illustrates the point.

A recreational net user is rarely in a position to save a dolphin or seabirds caught in nets because, firstly, they either are not there or, secondly, are not capable of safely removing an animal from a net.

The banded morwong I have talked about. I think they are a really nice fish to eat. A lot of people do not agree with me in Tasmania but the live fish trade certainly think they are a valuable resource and I believe they are highly prized in Asian communities in Sydney, for example.

There is a whole suite of other species - the bore fish, the marble fish, leather jackets - and no-one really knows what impacts recreational fishing are having on them. Some of these fish are quite nice to eat. The marble fish probably is not. I guess I am using this slide to remind me to say that there is a whole range of species which we do not know anything at all about which are being targeted by recreational fishing in particular and, to a lesser extent, by commercial fishers. What the impacts on the wider marine environment and the ecosystems which support the target species are we can only guess.

Rock lobster was once very common, and I think I have probably said enough about rock lobster except for one point. This is likely to be the most important predator of the centrostephanus sea urchin and really it is the large rock lobster which are the important predators, not the small ones. Knife-edge fishing throughout the 1980s basically removed most large rock lobster from the east coast of Tasmania and that is fairly well accepted, I think, by industry and managers and scientists. That meant that large rock lobster capable of eating centrostephanus urchins were basically removed from the east

coast. As rock lobster came up through the size stages, they were removed once they reached the legal size and we have quite a big change in the ecosystem processes on the east coast.

I guess some things have changed for the better. People no longer catch garbage tins full of flathead but things are not rosy. This is a typical reef scene and you will see the rocks are covered by macro algae. This is a section of urchin barren with a *centrostephanus* urchin. You can see the difference - a rock covered by filamentous algae; a very different sort of habitat, very unproductive for target species and other species.

As I said, rock lobster are likely the best predator for *centrostephanus* and the correlation between the decline in rock lobster and increase in *centrostephanus* barrens is firstly highly suspicious and, secondly, being explored at the moment by researchers so we should have a firm answer on that in the near future but, at the moment, it looks like rock lobster fishing is the prime culprit.

Another problem is the decline in giant kelp. These were amazing places to go diving and you may also remember, if you were like me, running along the beach as a kid and jumping on the little bits of kelp which went pop, that was *macrocystis*. If you go running along the beach and looking for things to jump on now, you will find that there is a big scarcity of these on the east coast.

Obviously a whole range of animals is associated with kelp.

The spotted handfish has been in decline in the Derwent and we are not sure why. If that fish were to become extinct it would be the first marine fish species to become extinct in recorded human history. Marine species have obviously gone extinct in the past but it has usually taken an asteroid, an ice age or something like that to kill off marine fish species. If this occurs it will be a rather unfortunate first for Tasmania.

I just thought I would illustrate the giant kelp decline, from my own experience. This was taken in 1984, these are kelp forests I regularly dived at that point. This is last year. A couple of kelp forests remain but they are nowhere near as dense or, in simple terms, as healthy as they once were.

**Ms THORP** - Is that Lagoon Bay?

**Mr BRYAN** - Yes, Lagoon Bay is one of the remaining areas. Just looking at that in more detail, the shaded areas I have not included. I am looking at areas north of Tasman Island where I have direct experience. I think there were lots of other kelp forests in those waters but I am not prepared to put a dot on the map. What I can say now is that when you look at that area, what is left is a bare remnant of what was once an important part of Tasmania's marine environment. Again, we do not really know what this means for the rest of the marine environment. A lot of people will tell you that the kelp was a very important place for juvenile rock lobsters to settle out from the plankton and perhaps that has some bearing on productivity of the rock lobster fishery.

**Ms THORP** - Is the next one down Waterfall Bay?

**Mr BRYAN** - No, the next one down is Fortescue Bay. I have not seen a stand of kelp at Waterfall Bay for many years. At Fortescue Bay, while there is kelp, it is nowhere near as dense or as extensive as it once was. I remember in the late 1970s, early 1980s, there was just a channel through the kelp in Canoe Bay.

**Ms THORP** - What do you put that down to?

**Mr BRYAN** - There is a strong correlation between centrostephanus and the kelp decline. I think that the kelp decline maybe a bit more complicated. Perhaps it is due to weather patterns. A lot of people put it down to temperature. I do not think it as simple as temperature because you will find kelp doing very well in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and the Tamar River where water temperatures get very high over summer. But temperature relates to movement of water and there are big bodies of water in the sea and -

**Ms THORP** - Lagoon Bay is still pretty full, isn't it?

**Mr BRYAN** - There is still kelp there but it is not nearly as thick as it used to be and it does not extend to all areas. There is a little patch left where there once was -

**Ms THORP** - Only a patch?

**Mr BRYAN** - I think so, yes, compared to 20 years ago.

**Ms THORP** - It plays havoc with your prop, I can tell you.

**Mr BRYAN** - Yes, if you drive through the middle of it, absolutely. If you were a casual observer in Fortescue Bay and looked off the boat ramp you would see a big kelp forest and think there is a lot of kelp there. But when I remember 1979, when I first dived there and swam out under the kelp, the kelp was so dense you had to use a torch to find your way around. It was incredibly thick so forget about driving through with a boat. You would drive in and stall the motor.

**Ms THORP** - Right.

**Mr BRYAN** - So big changes have occurred.

To carry on from what I was talking about before, I think fisheries management is great in Tasmania. I think it does very well, except it tends to concentrate on target species. The wider marine environment issues such as centrostephanus and macrocystis decline are not well understood. I think scale fish research and management is probably the most difficult fishery to deal with and understanding ecosystem processes is also quite a difficult and, I guess, the forgotten challenge in Tasmania.

Finally, I think that one of the tools which would be very useful to understanding some of these problems are marine-protected areas. They would provide a reference area so that we can understand what the actual impacts of fishing are and if you remove fishing impacts you can start to look at things like climate change or pollution and other factors as well and try to quantify the impact of these variables. With scientific approaches it is always good to try to remove as many variables as you can and test the variable that you

are interested in. MPAs do that and are a very good way of understanding what fisheries impacts are doing to the marine environment. That obviously feeds back into the management because if we understand what fishery activities are doing we can better understand how to manage them to make sure that they are sustainable.

That is really the end of my presentation. If there are any questions - I have raced through a lot of these things -

**CHAIR** - We have gone a bit over time, Jon, but we will be flexible because it is important at this stage to gather the information as best we can. Any questions?

**Ms THORP** - May I take you back to the first term of reference, the suitability of TARFish? You made some quite positive comments about the way it is functioning. I would like your comments on the membership of TARFish because, as you probably know, the criteria are pretty restrictive in some cases. Are you familiar with what they are?

**Mr BRYAN** - I have read through them; I would not like to quote them to you but I -

**Ms THORP** - It has been suggested, through evidence given to us, that the first two rules for this association are that it is open to any organisation with a combined membership of 40 or more incorporating at least four clubs and second, an incorporating club that has 75 members. Both of these are very restrictive. Then also, it is open to a State organisation representing charter boat operators, fishing tackle or other support industries which makes it very easy for the commercial operators; and fourthly, the five inaugural members none of whom - from what I gather - represent recreational fishing. I do not pretend to be an expert on this but this suggests to me that TARFish membership is very questionable in terms of whether or not it genuinely represents the interest of recreational fishers.

**Mr BRYAN** - As I said, I think it is a difficult thing for any organisation to represent the interests of recreational fishers in Tasmania. We have estimates of well over 100 000 people who claim to be, or see themselves as being recreational sea fishers. I guess the TARFish model, which I was not involved in developing, I might add, and so I cannot give its history, is just one approach. One thing I would suggest though, is that if there are shortcomings in that I would be surprised if the current membership of the committee wouldn't be interested in doing something about it.

We had a meeting last night and the view of the people sitting around the table was that it was better to be inclusive and not non-inclusive. For example, the Australian Underwater Federation, which has a representative with TARFish, I do not believe meets all the criteria needed for membership. I think the situation would be that TARFish would probably rather modify its terms required for membership rather than exclude those people.

**Ms THORP** - Do you think there is a possibility of conflict of interest in that?

**Mr BRYAN** - In what way?

**Ms THORP** - For example, it might be in the interests of commercial entities to make decisions that satisfy the commercial side when, in fact, they are a member of a recreational representative organisation.

**Mr BRYAN** - Okay. First, I think most of the people sitting around the table at TARFish do not have commercial interests so commercial interests do not have a majority voice and I think that is a great safeguard. Second, with most fishery management committees, whatever their make-up, there are always people with their own agendas and interests. If you exclude people with interests in these issues you are also excluding the expertise. It is quite a fine line to try to follow and I would suggest that TARFish has fewer reasons to fear conflict of interest than many of the other committees I am on simply because there are so few members with direct commercial interests in the fishery. Second, for example, if we were to look at the Abalone Management Advisory Committee I am probably the only person sitting at the table who does not derive some sort of income through the fishery. You have the fishing representatives, the processors, the divers, all of whom clearly relate directly to the fishery; the managers who indirectly rely on the fishery for funding; and the scientists who are getting funded by the fishery. So what do we do? I think what is more important is the approach of those sorts of committees is open about conflicts of interest, recognises them and takes them on a case-by-case basis.

Some committees will have a declaration of interest at the beginning of every meeting and when issues arise that directly relate to someone's interest that person may be excluded from voting if it is a voting type committee or they may be asked to leave the room or they may simply take part in the discussion with the understanding that their interest is there and people can use that as a way of judging their responses.

I guess the short answer is that I do not see conflict of interest at the moment being a significant problem with TARFish. I would hope that, if that issue arises, we will be able to deal with it in a mature and responsible way. Given the behaviour of TARFish, as I have seen it since the beginning of last year, I would have every hope that that would be the case.

**Ms THORP** - Thank you.

**Mr WILKINSON** - With regard to your PowerPoint presentation, Jon, could we get a copy of that? Especially those last points that you made.

**Mr BRYAN** - Yes, sure. Would you like me to print off a copy? I can provide a hard copy.

**CHAIR** - Do you want to e-mail it to us?

**Mr BRYAN** - I can e-mail it for sure.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Good. Thanks.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Jon. You have covered the matters that I wanted to go through regarding your views about TARFish, stemming from your written comment.

**Mr BRYAN** - Just one thing: I have gone through quite a large range of information and I have tried to steer a fine line between too much and too little, so I would ask that if there

are questions about the credibility of the statements you ask me further evidence to support them. Obviously some of the information is anecdotal and you just have to take my word for it; I guess you can test that by asking other people, but a lot of the information can be verified and I can provide verification if required.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Is that you on the diving or is that a mate diving with you?

**Mr BRYAN** - I think all of those were of someone else; all the photos were taken by me.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Jon.

**Mr BRYAN** - Thank you.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Mr NEVILLE BRUCE PERRYMAN**, COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FISHER,  
WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Harriss) - Thanks for coming along, Neville. We have your submission which provides the background for your wanting to appear here today. Would you like to give further support to your written submission? For the purposes of *Hansard*, could you indicate your specific interest in the matter?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Firstly I would like to thank members for the opportunity to come today and speak to my submission. My submission is fairly self-explanatory. I am on two sides of the fence - I am a commercial fisherman and also a keen recreational fisherman with my family. I have served on a lot of boards over the years since moving to Tasmania in 1990. The reason I do this is that I believe there is a need for the sustainability of our State resources, although having been around and been involved in boards in Tasmania for a long time, I have found that sometimes it takes a bit of pain and a lot of beating bums to get things introduced. I find is that there is a lot of divisiveness in Tasmania and people taking their bats and balls and going out and chipping away from the outside instead of becoming more involved themselves.

I think when you are managing a resource for the betterment of the State it has to be managed holistically. On the commercial side of things, if I put that hat on, over the years we have been restricted. We have had sustainability in lobster and abalone down pat. There are a few issues with some of our smaller fisheries but with the value of the socioeconomic side of local scale fish and such, I think you have to maintain them and the access for people, especially with the scale fish. Having said that, it is not a perfect art and there are lot of questions on how to keep things sustainable. I was at a marine park forum this morning, which took a bit of getting an invite to, and it was quite interesting, especially some of the data being 10 years behind.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Would you mind just saying what type of boards? You said you have been on various industry boards.

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Even though I am doing this as a private submission, I am a director of the Fishing Industry Council. I am also currently director of the Rock Lobster Council. I was on the RPDC into the introduction of marine parks for the Kent group and the Port Davey group. I could go on and on.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - No, that's fine. It was just to get an idea.

**Mr PERRYMAN** - I have a lot of corporate history since I have been in Tasmania about what we've been through. As a recreational fisherman now - I will divorce myself from the commercial side - I think we face a few challenges. I will address the suitability of TARFish. From what I have written there, I think it was a good step forward. The thing I like about is that it is inclusive, it is open to everybody. I don't think there are too many commercial interests on the board. I can see the possibility that it might be handy to have a representative there, but you really need someone without an agenda and with the best interests of the industry at heart. Having said that, I think there is good dialogue between TARFish, the Fishing Industry Council and other peak industry bodies. I would like to congratulate TARFish on what they have achieved. It is never easy sitting on a

board and accommodating everyone's interests and coming out with outcomes that take you forward for the betterment of the marine resource. At the end of the day we would like to see it there for our kids and our kids' kids, and that is what I see this committee as being about.

One thing probably more to do with number 5, the biomass sustainability and management, I think we are lacking in good data of recreational catches. There has been some work done which involves telephone polls. I would question the quality of the data that you get because even though you are taking a certain amount of the industry, everyone is different in how they operate. Also, I think you have to have reservations about their memories. When you get the phone call - and I have been involved in these surveys - you have to think, 'What have I done?' and sometimes the further away you get from when you last went fishing, the better your catches were because you forget about -

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - I have heard that, I have heard how fish grow! Being a non-fisherperson myself, I haven't had the experience.

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Yes. Things do get a bit bigger.

**CHAIR** - We might just have an interchange like this, because it's productive. As you are producing the evidence, members can jump in - I think Lyn has a question along that line.

**Ms THORP** - Thanks. With the recreational fishing - the scale fish in particular, because I think most people recognise that there's a lot of control over rock lobster and abalone - would you see the introduction for recreational fishers of limits on take for some of these fish? Perhaps tagging would stop black market stuff. Do you see any of those techniques as being worthwhile?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - I thoroughly recommend tagging of rock lobster. With the scale fish take, and limits there of netting, it is a contentious issue, actually. I think it is something we have to face down here. We're the last State in Australia with recreational nets, and I will be popular with Michael over here in a minute, but my personal opinion is that if you ban your nets, you are going to find it easier to catch a fish on a hook. I come from South Australia originally, and I remember going through it there. I was a recreational netter at the time there when I was a kid, but now there's a lot more fish available to be caught on rod and line, so to speak.

**Ms THORP** - It has been suggested to me that there are some Tassie fish, though, that you just don't get any other way.

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Bastard trumpeter is one of them.

**Ms THORP** - What about the idea with the netting, for example, of only allowing it, say, between December and March, during that summer time when people are at shacks?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - I think that could work, because there's not a lot done through the winter, anyway, unless it's a hard-core thing. The thing with netting is the method itself, and with the grab-all that is used in Tasmania, it's a pretty destructive piece of equipment, I think. Probably if you are going to keep maintaining mesh nets, have a larger size or a



better made net that wasn't so tangly, which would let your small fish through. Once something is in the net, if you're not there right at the time, it will die, so your bag limits aren't going to count there, anyway. I think it would be a waste if you've got something there that's dead and you've got quite a few of them, you might as well take it and use it and get some enjoyment out of that instead of throwing it back.

**Ms THORP** - What about being in full attendance by nets in the water?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - That is what commercials have to do, but I think the no night netting that we have here has worked and people are a lot more conscious. They don't have to be there, but the net is set through the day, and if you're targeting bastard trumpeter and snotty trevally, for instance, you can have quite good catches of a day if you know what you're doing there. It is always better probably if you leave it overnight, but then you seem to pick up a lot more by-catch. That's what I've found through my experience over the years.

**Ms THORP** - What about the limits on the number of fish?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - As I said, with netting -

**Ms THORP** - Are you saying that with the netting you can't really control what you catch?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - No. If it's dead, you might as well bring it in. With the amount of time over a day that a net is in the water, the fish will drown and it's dead then, so it's no use to you. You'd be making criminals out of honest people, I think, in a sense there, but I think you could look at the gear that is used. If you are going to maintain nets, having something that is a lot more robust and doesn't tangle everything and won't roll up. That would be one way around it, I think, is looking at the gear design.

**Ms THORP** - Okay, thank you.

**Mr WILKINSON** - What about the size and length of them? Some are quite significant and others -

**Mr PERRYMAN** - They can be quite significant too, Jim. Yes, you could look at shortening them down but I think you have to give people a chance of catching something. If you go too short you are not very efficient and if you have too much you are not efficient either. I would be looking more at the mesh size if you are going to maintain nets, probably something like the commercials use. The meshing net has a lot thicker mesh and the fish can swim through it because it does not just grab and tangle it. It keeps something that is a bit bigger and it lets the smaller fish go through.

**Ms THORP** - You would have been following the developments in relation to marine protected areas in the Bruny bioregion.

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Yes.

**Ms THORP** - It is significant in the use of MPAs to try to control the sustainability of certain fisheries. I just wondered if you have any thoughts on no-take zones, for example?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - I have lots of thoughts on no-take zones. Everyone is entitled to their opinion. I think we are not getting a lot of the latest science involving MPAs. I was at a talk this morning with Neville Barrett and Dr Graham Edgar and a lot of the data they are using is from 1997. Since then there has been a lot of other work done by people from the Aquiculture and Fisheries Institute that contradicts what they have there.

I think small no-take zones can be useful but we have trouble with enough resources being allocated to what we have to protect. There is anecdotal evidence that they cannot police the research area down here at Taroona. I have seen some pretty rampant poaching there at the Tinderbox reserve.

**Ms THORP** - I have too actually.

**Mr PERRYMAN** - The marine police say they just cannot police what they have at the moment. I do not think we have had enough time with some of these areas to get good data from them.

**Ms THORP** - You would be aware, too, that the international classification of marine protected areas actually has six categories, and no-take is only one of them. Do you see value in other forms of restriction, whether it be gear type as you suggest or -

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Yes, I think so. I am not real keen on anything that rips the bottom up. I have had some good arguments with trawler friends of mine, too, because it can be an indiscriminate way of doing things. Having said that, they are into gear technology so that a lot of the trawl is so far off the bottom, but I still do not think it is a good way to bring quality product into the market.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Over what sort of time frame do you believe adequate data could be useful? Is it over a three-year period, or a five-year period or is it longer?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - I think you would need at least 10 years of data. I guess that ties in with what I was saying. The latest figures that Dr Edgar and Dr Barrett had down at the meeting this morning were from 1997 but then that is probably because bringing that data through takes a lot of work.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - It is almost a moving feast, isn't it?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Yes, it is. We have all vested interests in things, whether you are recreational, a scientist or whatever. I think Jon Bryan alluded to that before. We have all got our own self interests, but it is finding that balance. That is the challenge for us in Tasmania. We are an island State. The fishing industry, whether it is recreational or commercial, has fed a lot of people here since it was settled. I would like to see that carry on. I have a vested interest in the environment as well because if everything goes pear shaped then there goes the value in my licence - which is virtually my superannuation. That is why I sit on a lot of these boards and take the time to come and give evidence here. I think we are going the right way as long as things do not get undermined. I think it is better if you have different peak bodies where everyone is included that can come and talk to the Government. You know where you are coming from and whether you are recreational, commercial or conservationist there are always

people you will not agree with. You have to respect their judgment and try to do what is best. That is the challenge before you.

**Mr WILKINSON** - I mentioned something in relation to trawlers and the Mercury Passage. A number of people complained about them. You just said that you have a bit of an issue with the trawling, especially those that vacuum the bottom. Are you saying the equipment is better than what it was previously, that they do not vacuum the bottom as much as was previously the case?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Probably more damage to the bottom. If the bottom and environment is intact then you have your habitat for your fish to breed. In Tasmania there are openings there to go to other methods of fishing. I just note that the Commonwealth Government did have a \$260 million buy-out; that is why you do not see so many trawlers down here now. You do not see a lot of other hook fishermen as well. Over the last 10 years, though I do not have any figures on it, there has been a definite decline in the number of people fishing for one reason or another - buy-outs and just natural attrition. It's hard to keep people interested or to stop people getting disenchanted with it. At 43 I am one of the younger fishermen in the industry. That is another challenge. We are an ageing population.

Whatever we do has to be properly resourced and you have to have a plan. TARFish, I think, have a plan and they have the interests of recreationalists at heart. I think so far they have done a good job. It is inclusive. They have dialogue with other peak bodies and they are becoming more and more professional. You only get what you pay for, but if you have enough work being done then people dig in and pay for representation. So I commend the way TARFish are going and I would like to see them continue.

**Ms THORP** - You would have been present when I asked John that question about the criteria by which membership of TARFish is determined and whether he thought that was equitable and fair and resulted in a good representation for recreationalists or not? Do you want to add anything to that?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - I think it is but you have to keep people interested. It does not matter whether you are commercial or recreational - you can go and become a member of TARFish. That encourages good communication, instead of having a them-and-us mentality. Being inclusive is a good thing - and working together because we share a resource. So you have to be there for its betterment and at the end of the day it is up to the Government to manage that in the interests of the State.

**CHAIR** - You would be aware that the Winstanley inquiry or review of the operations was undertaken. One of the matters flowing out from that was representation and whether the group had been sufficiently representative up to that stage. Steve Kons, when he was minister, indicated that the forward funding of the group would be contingent upon a number of things, and you listed what they were. One was that it will be an effective peak body. John Bryan, in his submission to us, indicated that the group imploded at an earlier stage. Are you aware of the reasons for that? Then Steve Kons has said there needed to be a representative and effective peak body. You are indicating to the committee that you consider it now is that, but would you consider that it wasn't prior to that review?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - I could not comment on the early days but I think what did happen earlier on is what happens in a lot of industries in Tasmania; strong personalities get involved and get distracted with their own personal issues. I blame a lot on that. It is really coming on as a body but like anything there is always room for improvement. You look at the web site. They have just employed their own executive officer to represent it. When you have a full-time person you are going to be able to come up with more of a strategic plan. There is a strategic plan on the web site. I am quite confident that with a bit of planning, help and support they will be effective enough to meet the needs of the recreational sector. So I look forward to a few arguments on the side.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Can I ask your opinion about a fully licensed fishing scenario for all persons.

**Mr PERRYMAN** - I think that it would be a good way to keep track of how many people are out there and involved in the recreational side, if we can collect some more data to back up things. One thing that does worry me about recreational fishing is the move to bigger boats and off shore, but a lot of our recreational fishing is around our popular centres and there is a lot of pressure on there. You are getting 18 and 20-foot runabouts running past you at Maatsuyker Island chasing tuna. The weather that can change so quickly there so you wonder how long it is going to be before we are going in another search. Even south of Pedra Branca, which is 18 miles south of Recherche Bay, you have 14-foot dinghies out there fishing for striped trumpeter or tuna. It is a bit of a worry. People are pushing off because things are a bit quiet closer to the local population centres. There is a management issue here.

**Ms THORP** - Could you see that being exacerbated by the imposition of no-take zones around the coastline?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Yes. People are hunting for fish now, so if you close off large areas they are going to be going further out and that is where the safety issues come in. I am not sure if Marine and Safety Tasmania have submitted anything in but when you speak to the guys personally they do have concerns.

**Ms THORP** - In the Bruny bioregion zone, particularly down to Fortescue Bay, what would be benefited or preserved if you like by the removal of recreational fisherman from the area?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - I do not think that you would be preserving anything that could not be done with management. A lot of the threats that will impact on the environment there will either be climatic or, of course, run-off from land-based sources. I would like to see more studies done into the impact of fishing gear on the environment. There have been some done and the information is out there. We do not seem to hear that lobster pots have minimal effect but we know trawlers used to have a lot of effect on things, even though there are fewer of them now and they are more concerned with their image as well. It gets back to what I said about recreational mesh nets. You look at the design of gear that would have less impact. It is like no night fishing now, so you are not getting your seabirds caught in mesh nets or anything like that.

**CHAIR** - I am just looking at the notes I scribbled on your submission to see whether the things I wanted covered have been covered. Yes, they have.

Thank you for your time.

Once we have concluded our deliberations, written our report and tabled it in Parliament, do you want a copy of the report?

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Yes, I do.

**CHAIR** - Okay.

**Mr PERRYMAN** - Thank you.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**

**Mr WESLEY BRUCE FORD**, GENERAL MANAGER (PRIMARY INDUSTRIES DIVISION) DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER AND **Mr GRANT PULLEN**, MANAGER, WILD FISHERIES MANAGEMENT BRANCH, DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Thank you and welcome to this process.

**Mr FORD** - Rather than going through the submission point by point, I will make some opening remarks about management of recreational fisheries, what I believe to be some of the key points in our submission for the committee and the things the committee might want to question us about. I will field questions as people have them.

In opening on the issue of the management of recreational fishing in Tasmania, I think it is important to recognise that the department, on behalf of the Government and the community of Tasmania, is responsible and required by law to manage fisheries in Tasmania for a number purposes. We manage fisheries for recreational and commercial purposes. We need to balance the interests of the recreational and commercial industries in the management of those resources. Principally, the legislation requires us to manage the resource in a sustainable manner for current and future generations of Tasmanians, taking into account the factors associated with economic benefit, sustainability and social benefit. Through the sustainable development mechanisms of the Resource Management and Planning system of Tasmania, they are our principal objectives for managing fish stocks and we do so in that context.

I think it is vitally important to recognise the value of recreational fishing in Tasmania. It is very hard to pin down and any exact figure and data on the true value of the fisheries is difficult to find. Our estimate is that it is potentially worth about \$50 million a year to the economy of Tasmania in terms of having a viable and vibrant recreational fishery for the community to participate in.

In terms of future management challenges, the Government and the community face an increasing challenge about resource sharing between commercial and recreational fishers and increasing interest in environment management to ensure that fish stocks are managed in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development, not just for the sake of managing the fish themselves. We recognise very strongly that there are competing interests between commercial and recreational fishers and the environmental side. From a management point of view, we need to take those into account in the recommendations that we provide government and the minister needs to take those things into account in the decisions he makes.

In terms of the specifics of your inquiry, one aspect that we paid particular attention to in the submission is the management of funds associated with the FishWise program. We are aware that this has been of interest to a number of members of the Legislative Council and the lower House over a number of years. We are certainly happy to address any specific questions on the use of those funds. We have information we can supply to the committee in terms of particular investments in that program.

I think the important thing to recognise in the FishWise funds is that they are collected from the community. They are public funds, they are not funds that are held by the industry. They are not a trust fund in the sense of what a true trust would be. It is consolidated revenue that has been collected by the Government through the sale of licences and, as part of that process, the Government has determined that it is appropriate that rather than being paid into the consolidated revenue account, these funds are held in an account within the agency, thereby removing the disbursement of those funds from the normal budgetary processes. In terms of expenditure from the FishWise fund, it provides increased certainty to the department and the stakeholders that the funds that have been collected from recreational fishing licences will be used for the purposes associated with the management of recreational fishing and not subsumed into the general consolidated revenue.

**Ms THORP** - I wanted to ask you a question about term of reference 5, the biomass sustainability and management. I was wondering what the position of the department was in terms of using MPAs and no-take zones as a fisheries management tool.

**Mr FORD** - The department and the minister have a view that no-take MPAs are not official management tools. We have consistently made the comment that the provision of MPAs is about biodiversity conservation, not about sustainability for fisheries management. In the absence of any MPAs or any no-take MPAs, we would still manage fisheries from the sustainability point of view. I think you only need to look at the fisheries closures we have put in place over a number of years to protect breeding stock, shark nursery area closures, closures for breeding stock, the closures of places such as Great Oyster Bay over the period of September-December for the taking of calamari. We actively use closures for fisheries management in that they are actively used and managed in accordance with the needs of the biology of individual species. It is our view that no-take MPAs are not needed for the management of fish stocks in Tasmania.

**Ms THORP** - Given that the ecosystem is a holistic thing, whilst we might have management plans for specific fish types, do you see any value in the biodiversity that would be potentially preserved by no-take MPAs having impact on the wellbeing of fisheries that are currently managed, such as crayfish and rock lobster, for example?

**Mr FORD** - There are a couple of issues around the MPAs. Firstly, a no-take MPA process does protect biodiversity. That is useful from a reference point of view so that over a period of time a no-take MPA will give you information that you can compare to a fished area that will allow you to determine what sort of impact fishing might be having on an area.

We know from the work that has been done in the Maria Island area that in an area where fishing is prohibited, you get a change in the distribution of the animals. For example, in rock lobster you see fish stocks returning to a more natural biomass where there are a lot more large animals. That's useful to understand, but not necessarily from a fisheries management point of view. The same with things like abalone, you see the relationships between the animals reverting to what they might be in an unfished situation.

That is useful for providing information about management, but it doesn't necessarily mean you have to have a large suite of no-take MPAs to get that information. If you get that information, it gives you a useful point in time and a useful reference. In achieving

that sort of effect, the no-take area needs to be large enough so that fishing around the perimeter does not influence what you see inside. There is a worldwide debate about the appropriate size of an MPA.

It does come back to what you are trying to use it for. If it's as a scientific reference area, it does need to be large enough to be able to give you information. On that point it's also worth noting that we recognise the value of scientific reference areas, and have closed a number of areas around the State for the purposes of doing scientific research into particular species. For example, George III Rock in Southport is closed to allow long-term study of abalone; there are further closures on the east coast dealing with being able to do abalone research. There is value in having closed areas from a study point of view.

In terms of whether these areas were having a long-term effect on an industry or biodiversity, I think the answer is no, depending on why you are trying to create a no-take area. If you have a relationship where you are protecting the breeding stock of a particular species in a marine protected area that's a no-take zone, the animals can breed and the eggs disperse beyond that area. For that to be effective, you need to understand the biology of the species you're talking about. In the case of abalone we know that the likely dispersal of juveniles is over metres, not kilometres. So protecting one reef will protect that reef, but do absolutely nothing to support the next reef down the coast.

A good international study looked at a lobster fishery. They saw the fishery had two major areas, and they locked up one as the breeding stock. After about three or four years they found the whole fishery had collapsed. They had locked up the wrong one. It was the source and sink-type process; for the one they locked up while they were breeding, the eggs were not returning to the area they had protected.

The significant outcome of that was they didn't take any fisheries management action and the fishing effort increased in the other area. This is one of the risks from a no-take point of view. Large no-take fishing areas do mean there has to be a corresponding reduction in fishing effort, because we can't relocate fishing effort to be able to accommodate an increased catch in other areas. Work by TAFI and others has clearly demonstrated that to do so would put a whole fishery at risk.

**Ms THORP** - Thank you.

**Mr WILKINSON** - The document that you provided was an interesting one, Wes. Was it done for this committee or for another, because it doesn't seem to follow the terms of reference in the -

**Mr FORD** - No, it was done specifically for this committee. We addressed it in terms of the range of issues that we thought that the committee really needed to deal with in the general context of the terms of reference rather than trying to address every term of reference.

**Mr WILKINSON** - I was just wondered whether it was one for something else that you thought could be rebadged

**Mr FORD** - No, it was done specifically for this.



Are there any parts of the report that people want me to talk to or to take questions on? I suppose I see the benefit of this process is that you can all read the report and there is no need for me to go through it and recite what is in the report. I imagine you have a range of questions that you would like to pursue.

**CHAIR** - With regard to the TARFish matter - and you would have heard me when Neville was in front of us a moment ago - and the history of TARFish, Jon Bryan from the Tasmanian Conservation Trust in his submission to us indicated, I suppose because of some conflicts within TARFish in the earlier days, that it imploded. That is his observation. There is the Winstanley inquiry, which made a raft of suggestions as to a better way going forward. Can you give the committee some of the history of the difficulties that existed prior to the Winstanley inquiry?

**Mr FORD** - I can, and I think it is worth stepping back a little into history and further to get an appreciation of why TARFish came about. Going back to the early 1990s and even before, it was recognised that there needed to be value from having a representative community organisation to provide advice to government about the management of recreational fishing. In the 1980s and the early 1990s a number of organisations provided advice to government, principally the Australian Underwater Federation and the Tasmanian Amateur Sea Fishermen's Association.

As we moved into the creation of the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995, the view of the Government of the day was to formalise the arrangements and to develop a range of fisheries advisory committees in accordance with the act to provide advice in a statutory way to government about the management of fisheries. One of the early creations under that process there was the Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee which provided advice to government about the management of recreational fisheries.

It became increasingly apparent in the early days of that committee that it was effectively trying to do two things: to provide advice to the Government but also be a lobby group. It was representing the interests of the community both by providing advice to the minister but also in wanting to lobby the minister. Then Minister Llewellyn, between 1998 and 2002, saw that the need for some greater autonomy in that process so he moved, in consultation with the Recreational Fisheries Advisory Committee, to form the Recreational Fishing Council. That was given some resources and an independent executive officer with a view of trying to separate it from government to give the council a role in starting to become a peak body.

What became clear through that process was that it was not necessarily the right mix because while the group did very well in terms of starting to formulate issues around self-management and self-governance and providing support for the recreational community, their ability to provide advice to the minister was starting to become clouded. When Minister Green became minister he looked at this matter quite seriously and was of a view that it needed to be separated into two distinct functions. Those two functions were: a body to provide the advice that the minister was seeking under the provisions of the legislation; and a peak body that could represent the views of the recreational fishing community in Tasmania in a lobbying sense. Hence, it was Minister Green, in consultation with a number of organisations in the recreational fishing area, who moved to establish TARFish. Minister Green appointed a committee to formulate the terms of reference and a constitution for TARFish, which was how the whole process kicked off.

I suppose like any new organisation with a new constitution and a range of different views about how they should be pursued, it was likely that there would be some teething problems from the outset and it was a small core group of people, all volunteers, who took responsibility for trying to pull this together. The Government recognised the value of that and continued the funding arrangements to provide a full-time executive officer to support that. In doing so, it indicated that we would review how they were travelling. It was a result of some of those internal discussions between members of the various organisations that went to make up TARFish that a number of things probably did not go as they had originally planned or their time frames were slipping. When it came to a point of needing to do a review, it was very much our view that we needed to have some independence from government in the review process because we had been very closely involved in establishing TARFish. So the view was that by getting Ross Winstanley to do an independent review, we would have somebody able to look at with a clean pair of eyes and without any vested interest in the particular outcome. That is what led to the Winstanley recommendations.

The Government's objective in this process - and the minister's - has been to ensure that there was an opportunity for the recreational fishing sector to be represented by a peak body. So our principal objective in providing the funds to support that was to allow an opportunity to develop. We recognise there were always going to be some issues. But, from a day-to-day point of view, the TARFish needed to resolve those themselves because our process was to try to separate any direct government influence in terms of the day-to-day operations of TARFish.

**CHAIR** - When Steve Kons was minister, as I also indicated to Neville, the forward funding was conditional. Was that a recognition by the minister that things had been deficient, hence the conditions which he placed on the forward funding?

**Mr FORD** - It was a recognition I think in two parts: a recognition in a general sense that these are taxpayers' dollars and the Government needs to be mindful of how it makes grants to community organisations with taxpayers' dollars in terms of ensuring that the community is getting a benefit from them, but recognising that TARFish had been going through a difficult period and had been looking at some restructuring. In light of that, the minister believed it was entirely appropriate to provide some constraint and some limitation on the ongoing nature of that funding. I think we would still continue to take the position that it would be not appropriate in the use of public funds to guarantee that these funds would be provided forever and a day without subject to being reviewed or without people being able to address particular performance criteria for which the funds are served. So hence, Steve Kons, as minister of the day, and subsequently Minister Llewellyn had seen fit that it was appropriate to ensure that TARFish did seek to deliver in the direction for the purpose for which the Government provided funds.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If I can go back to the Winstanley inquiry or review, one of the significant issues there in restructuring was that he suggested the South Australian Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee was a pretty good model. What account was taken of that structure in rejigging TARFish?

**Mr PULLEN** - Some of the detail is beyond me, but my understanding is basically that the model that Ross Winstanley was trying to put forward as a proposal for TARFish

essentially was on the South Australian model. I could not give you the actual details of the South Australian model but my understanding from Ross is that what he was basically saying, 'There is a model there and it is working pretty well over there. These are my recommendations for TARFish'.

**CHAIR** - Any particular overarching principles applicable to the South Australian model which were recommended for those very reasons?

**Mr PULLEN** - Without going into detail on the South Australian model, I suppose the fundamental challenge for any of those models is how you have one group which is able to provide a cogent, reasonable and professional voice for the recreational fishery when it is such a diverse sector. The recreational sector is hugely diverse and its views range widely and yet we are looking to get one body, supposedly, to represent that diverse group. The challenge is how you bring the diversity together. I guess the way it is done in TARFish is to have the different groups - their members within TARFish - and try to get the diversity of the members in TARFish who do represent that diversity - the Australian Underwater Federation, the tackle people, I think the charter people are coming on board - through the process of trying to bring that diversity under the umbrella. With any representational groups there is a tension inside the tent. In other representational bodies - the Abalone Council for example - there is tension inside the tent but I guess the challenge is to bring those ideas and that diversity into a single voice and then sort out the problems inside the tent and then go to government and say, 'This is the view of the recreational sector'. I am not sure if that really answers your question in terms of the actual nitty-gritty of the South Australian model. I guess that is the challenge which any organisation looking to represent views, particularly when it is staffed by volunteers essentially.

**CHAIR** - I guess I was interested in any particular overarching principle which was so good about South Australia.

**Mr PULLEN** - I can't claim to be an expert on the South Australia model, sorry.

**CHAIR** - Is there anybody in the department who is?

**Mr FORD** - I suppose that is the problem of engaging a consultant, the consultant brings to you what their past experiences have been. Ross Winstanley, I think, was of a view that the representational approach in South Australia might have had some value. Why we are a bit fuzzy on this is that the challenge for us in the Winstanley process was that this was not a process about us trying to impose upon TARFish what was an appropriate outcome, so how they chose to identify the recommendations and why they chose to either deal with or not deal with the recommendations is an issue for TARFish. Our decision at the outset was that our role was to keep this at arm's length from government. Our interest was in having an organisation that would be able, as reasonably as possible, to deliver a representative organisation. Our interest was also in providing funds to provide an executive officer to support that organisation, but then how the organisation works itself is a matter for it to determine. To a very large degree we have let that be the case. We have let TARFish find its own way and try to find its own solutions to its own problems.

**CHAIR** - I guess it is not unfair to make an observation and pose the question that within the department there was concern about the direction of TARFish as well.

**Mr FORD** - We had concern and I particularly had concern about how an organisation like this establishes, is resourced, generates on one hand the freedom to be able to do what it needs to do as an organisation but on the other hand both attracts people to support it and also brings people with it when they are trying to come to a consolidated view. That would continue to be a challenge for an organisation like TARFish in that the views would be wide ranging. There might not be a consistent view amongst people who may help TARFish in whatever form TARFish might be but when TARFish does represent the views of recreational fishing it has to try to apply a balanced view.

On top of that we wanted to see, and our interest was in ensuring, that the public funds were being used to the benefit of the broader recreational fishing community. One of the challenges in that sense is how we ensure from a government point of view that a small organisation is not capturing public funds to drive the agenda of a few people. Our interest is not to support an organisation that is driving the agenda of only a few people and that is a real challenge - both for us and for TARFish.

**CHAIR** - Are you aware of any tensions with regard to the structure now, either within or without TARFish?

**Mr FORD** - I think that we are more comfortable now that TARFish is finding its feet and starting to deliver on a range of services to recreational fishing. I think from our point of view the focus that TARFish has taken with the appointment of a new executive officer is setting a new direction for that organisation. I think that is important. If there are internal issues within TARFish, they are managing those in a way that is keeping them away from our desk or the ministers' desk.

**Mr PULLEN** - The question is how does TARFish, or any business for that matter, demonstrate to the Government and the community that they are effective and one of the ways they do that is by providing transparent, clear, strategic documentation of exactly what they are going to do and how they are going to do it and then show that their activities align to those strategic planning processes. Certainly one thing that I have been pleased to see is that TARFish now has been producing explicit, strategic planning directions for a number of years; it is putting down in black and white exactly what its objectives are, what it is going to do and how it is going to achieve them. So I suppose that gives milestones which both the Government and the community can judge the success of TARFish. If it does not meet those strategic objectives you can ask why, or what is going on? Conversely, if you can see that those objectives are being met and you gauge that those are worthwhile objectives, you might say that TARFish is doing a reasonable job.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions on the TARFish matter? Can we then go to a broader issue, I suppose, of drawing some comparisons between the Tasmanian fishery management and somewhere, say, like New Zealand. We can talk about places in Australia as well with regard to gill netting bans or whatever. Is my understanding correct that in New Zealand they approach fishery management in the reverse way to that which we do? That there is predominance given to recreational fishermen in the first instance and then total

allowable catches in the various regimes allocated to the commercial fishery after that? Can you help me understand that?

**Mr FORD** - Yes, to a degree. In fact, as I understand it their starting point is Maori allocation. Their whole Maori Treaty of Waitangi process deals with the access to fish in a way that is not dealt with in Australia. So their notion in terms of any allocation starts at a point of Maori need and then the needs of recreational fishers and then the balance of the reserves that are available to harvest is allocated to the commercial fisherman.

I understand also that it was probably an explicit policy decision that was taken around some of the fisheries resolutions around the Treaty of Waitangi that go back to when New Zealand introduced a quota system and the Maori were suddenly disadvantaged. It is only a fairly recent explicit policy decision.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - When you say recent, are you talking 10 years or 20 years?

**Mr FORD** - Yes, 20 years, or 15 to 20 years. I can certainly recall having discussions with New Zealand fisheries managers 15 years ago when they were having these debates and there was a lot of antagonism in the commercial fishery about the Government actively making explicit statements and legislating for recognition of recreational fisheries as having primacy over commercial fishing. So it is recent in terms of a policy approach.

**CHAIR** - Your submission has given us an indication of the various regimes around the nation and what is banned or not banned. I was at a forum this morning where one of the speakers indicated that most fishery managers around Australia are gobsmacked when they find out that we have broader gill net access for recreational fishers than anywhere else in the nation. Where are you heading with that form of management? I would like you to cover the Northern Territory where there are no controls to speak of.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Queensland is the same.

**CHAIR** - Yes, essentially.

**Mr FORD** - The starting point is there is no explicit government policy about the direction for recreational gill netting. I think there is no government policy that says they are moving to prohibit recreational or commercial gill netting. If you look at the diversity of views across the State, there are people who are very much in the camp that this has been part of our traditional heritage in the last 200 years and you should not take away our rights to recreational gill netting.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are the views that recreational gill netting or gill netting in any form is totally indiscriminate and should be banned, as per other States.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Is there a middle ground, such as size of mesh to allow the smaller fish to swim through?

**Mr FORD** - There is. If you look at the management approach that was taken in relation to gill nets, clearly what government has done over the course of the last 20 years is actively take management steps that have significantly reduced the amount of gill netting and increased the mesh sizes of the gill nets. We have seen a significant winding back of

both the theoretical amount of gill netting that can be used plus the real amount of gill netting that is being used. If you look at the steps in the 1980s to create shark nursery areas and introduce no-netting restrictions around shark nursery areas to protect breeding sharks, by the mid to late 1980s we were increasing the mesh sizes that people could use in their gravel nets, both commercial and recreational. We moved to provide restrictions on how people can net by introducing more no-netting areas, introducing restrictions and prohibitions on fishing at night, removing unattended netting, reducing the amount of recreational netting by removing the opportunity to have a second gill devices. So the Government has taken a range of active steps to significantly reduce recreational gill netting.

**Mr WILKINSON** - An interesting statistic we heard a short time ago concerned the east coast where 370 kilometres of netting would be in use from time to time. If you added all the nets together and looked at the effort it pretty well covers the majority of the east coast.

**Mr FORD** - That is the difficulty, if you look what is theoretical in terms of the number of licences that are allocated against what is used. We know from survey work that TAFI has done that you can generally apply the 80:20 rule - 80 per cent of the recreational fish are caught by 20 per cent of the fishers. Yes, you do have recreational gill netters where three or four guys go out in a boat to set 300 or 400 metres of nets in a day, as well as those who have their net in the shed and it comes out once a year, if they're lucky, and everything in between. You have to be cautious in terms of saying that if we have this many nets we have a certain total length of net being used because it's clearly not being used in that quantity.

I believe that over the last 20 years, people's attitudes to netting have changed significantly. People who use nets tend to be more responsible with the use of those nets than they have been in the past. By and large there has been general acceptance of a reduction in netting. Of course there are a number of people who are adamantly of a view that they should be allowed to continue to do what they've done. In fairness to the department, we have made a number of attempts to get initiatives to reduce netting pressure, and we have in the past been frustrated by members of the Legislative Council who had taken a very strong view that recreational netting should be allowed to be continued.

The Council has changed considerably since then, but I think you come back to a point now that there is no explicit netting policy. Where we are going to end up in five or 10 years' time I can't tell you because in the absence of any policy that says, 'We are going to shut down recreational gill netting' we will continue to look at it on an area-by-area, case-by-case and management need-by-management need basis that may see a tendency to reduce netting pressure.

Certainly it's within the marine protected area debate because in any debate about the significant question of what is appropriate fishing activity to use in a multiple use but low-impact marine protected area, the question very much comes back to gill netting. You only needed to read Colin Buxton's article in the *Mercury* yesterday to see that it is a debate that will continue.

**Mr PULLEN** - Can I make the point that when you are considering a particular fishing method, it's not just that fishing method that you are looking at, it is the totality of the fisheries management measures in place and about how that gear is worked. For example, as Wes says, in terms of netting there are a number of places you cannot use them. The night netting provisions were introduced to address issues of by-catch and the interaction with birds. A whole range of issues arising out of a particular fishing method can be addressed by a range of management measures.

Take the issues around by-catch. For example, in the southern shark fishery, you intuitively would believe hooking is a more environmentally friendly method than the gill net, but in fact the data suggest the converse. If you use nets properly with particular shark mesh size for school shark and gummy shark, your by-catch is less than it is for the hooks because on the hooks they're dead. What I am suggesting is for each gear type, a full understanding of how it interacts with the environment, and all the other management measures associated with that gear is important when trying to assess your position on policy concerning the continued use of gill nets, for example.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Do you, as a department, continually look at the type of gear that is available? Obviously they are improved on a daily basis, almost. Do you look at that and say, "This is obviously going to give it more benefit, it's got to impact on the biomass and so we need to address that"?

**Mr PULLEN** - It depends on the fishery and the gear, and how specific a gear type is to a particular fish. For example, if you want to consider the mesh size for shark netting, you can do that because it's one species. Conversely, for graball nets you probably should have a different size net for the north from the south to manage the use of mesh nets on a fine scale in Tassie, because in the north you have long, skinny fish, and in the south you have short, fat fish. The ideal mesh size for a short, fat fish is different from that for a long, skinny fish because you can actually kill more fish with a bigger mesh size if it is inappropriate for smaller fish. Particularly in the recreational sector you have to have management measures which in general are the most effective. That is what we are finetuning all the time. You have to be able to educate people about the rules, enforce the rules and give recreational fishers a realistic opportunity to abide by the rules, knowing what the rules are.

A lot of the gear types in our fishery are fairly set now - the rock lobster pot, the graball. For recreational fisheries we banned mullet nets a number of years ago and once again reduced the impact. Mullet nets, particularly in the south, probably were not a good fishing method whereas the use of mullet nets up north are probably still a pretty good method. You probably should have got rid of the graball. On average across the State, the graball was seen as a more appropriate fishing gear than the smaller-mesh mullet net. You might say that the northerners lost out a little bit in that process.

**Mr WILKINSON** - When you look at the comparisons with other States, a lot of the industry would depend upon science, I would imagine, and the ability to get the information that you require. How is the department funded, as opposed to other departments around Australia?

**Mr FORD** - In percentage terms, comparatively, it is a very hard question to answer. If you look at the funding we get, for all agencies nationally their funding core is essentially the

Consolidated Fund. South Australia in its commercial fishery has moved to more of a cost-recovery mechanism. In Tasmania we do not have a cost-recovery mechanism but for those fisheries that cost more to manage and in which we invest more in research, we collect more in licence fees. We collect approximately \$3 million a year in licence fees out of our rock lobster fishery but we would be lucky to collect \$500 000 a year out of the scale-fish fishery.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Therefore are you saying that what could well be an appropriate method is a licence, like you have in Victoria and New South Wales where scale-fishing is licensed?

**Mr FORD** - In a recreational sense?

**Mr WILKINSON** - Yes.

**Mr FORD** - It depends on what your objective is. We have a recreational licensing system that is returning around about potentially \$1 million a year to the public fund. We are probably spending somewhere in the vicinity of \$1 million a year to manage the recreational fishery in Tasmania, so does the Government need to introduce a licence to increase revenue to support fisheries management? Probably not. There is a range of political considerations. Certainly the licences in Victoria and New South Wales were very much political introductions around imposing a fee on everybody who wished to participate. Successive ministers and successive governments take the view in Tasmania that that is not appropriate. They do not wish to see a general recreational licence imposed and it is not about revenue collection.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Do you believe that the scientific knowledge that you have in the department is as good as anywhere else within Australia?

**Mr FORD** - I would say that in many fisheries it is much better. In other fisheries it might be poorer. If you look at a general pool of scientific information that we have about our fish stocks, then in comparison to other States it is on par. If you look at things such as abalone, for example, we know far more about our abalone fishery than Victoria and South Australia do. We know far more about our rock lobster fishery than Victoria or South Australia do but they might of course dispute that.

In terms of, say, scale-fish fisheries, Victoria might know far more about its snapper fishery than we know about our banded morwong fishery but in a general I think the comparison across the States is fairly even.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - It has been suggested that there is not adequate data to really assess the biomass that is available and hence a licensing system would give more opportunity to expand on that data. Do you believe that is a fair comment, given that you just said it is almost cost-neutral for recreational fisheries?

**Mr FORD** - You can never have enough data. In some fisheries we have really good data sets and really good knowledge. In other fisheries we do not have good data sets and we much poorer knowledge. So any increased resourcing to fisheries data collection, research and development is a significant advantage to us in terms of understanding the fine scale issues around management. If it is important to fund those activities, does it



have to be funded out of a licence fee or is the Government prepared to fund it out of a consolidated process? They tend to be very much political questions around what government is prepared to put funding into.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - That is a very diplomatic answer.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Years ago, with your trumpeters, flounders and other fish, you would be able to catch many more than you do now. What do you believe has happened for that to occur? That is, there is not the same amount of those fish in the waters around Tasmania as there were 40 years ago.

**Mr FORD** - Quite simply it is over-fishing. There are aspects around environmental change, habitat change and loss of habitat that might have affected recruitment. Changes in water temperatures and in abundance of feed stock and feed species do influence populations. However, by and large the single biggest determining factor about fish stocks is over-fishing.

**Mr WILKINSON** - We cope with that by bag limits or closures if it gets really bad?

**Mr FORD** - Yes.

**Mr PULLEN** - The trumpeter is really interesting. I have talked to a lot of people about the bastard trumpeter, and 15 years ago there were just swarms of them - and there are not now. It is hard to attribute that to a single cause. Some of this complexity comes from fish having a juvenile phase in Tasmania and an adult phase off-shore, such as the trumpeters tend to do, and big variations in their recruitment. You can get a recruitment in one year that might support the fishery for five years or more after that. You are seeing very large fluctuations in those processes, particularly when some species are open to fishing. Perhaps a number of years ago in Commonwealth waters they were fishing relatively unconstrained and that can have long-term impacts on what is happening. Blue wahoo would be another example. We are on the edge of the distribution in Tasmania. They get fished by the gill nets and the trawlers in Commonwealth waters, and their distribution is affected by the ocean currents as well, so we are going to get the dribs and drabs which happen to come down on the currents and run the gauntlet of other fishing. For a lot of our fish, particularly our scale fish, there is a really complex range of issues that make answering even a relatively simple question quite difficult sometimes.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Have you noticed an improvement in the return of stock?

**Mr FORD** - Yes and no. If you look at flathead stocks, they are doing really well, but look at the recreational pressure on flathead. I was up at Great Oyster Bay at Easter, out with probably a hundred other people taking flathead. I worked out that over the course of Easter potentially there could have been 50 000-100 000 flathead taken out of that area, and not a single commercial boat was in sight. For a long time the attitude of some in the recreational community has been that recreational fishing doesn't impact on the stocks. I think it was a real wake-up call when people started seeing the figures coming out of TAFI. An estimated 350 tonnes of flathead were taken by recreational fishers as opposed to 60 tonnes taken by commercial fishers. There has been significant pressure and there continues to be significant pressure on stocks. Our objective is not to lock up

stocks so that people can't use them; our objective is to manage stocks so that they can be used. The legislation requires that resources are there for use in a sustainable manner. Then it becomes a real challenge. What you do about some of those fishing pressure and how you manage them? We certainly have seen declining fish stocks right across the board. It is right across Victoria and New South Wales. There have been substantial changes in fish stocks over the last 40 or 50 years, coinciding with significantly increased fishing pressure. The challenge for us as stocks get lower is how you effectively manage those stocks so that they remain biologically viable. They might never reappear as they were 30 years ago but as long as they keep reappearing each year and there are stocks of the fish then that is what we have to manage.

**CHAIR** - With reference to Fishwise, there have been suggestions that some grant applications come up short. Is there any assistance provided to people? Your own submission indicates that there is a fair degree of complexity required - and there ought to be accountability. We are talking about public money here. Is any assistance provided by the department to make things a bit more robust for the applicants?

**Mr FORD** - Yes, but in an ad hoc way. It is an area we recognise we need to do more with. We started this process in terms of the community grants program. You need to remember that there are a number of funds within the Fishwise program. If we are talking quite specifically about that community grants program, we started from a premise that we would just call for applications, people would apply for funding and all would be okay. We soon discovered challenges in that. Firstly, people weren't skilled in writing applications to a standard that we needed to apply from a probity point of view in expending public funds. People didn't have time and they didn't know what we wanted, so over the last couple of years we have been putting more effort into helping people to put applications together. It is pretty difficult when we are also the judge and jury. If we help somebody to get an application together and they subsequently get funded, then we get accused of writing the application for them.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Or the alternative.

**Mr FORD** - Yes. If we help somebody with an application and they are subsequently knocked back, then they say, 'That was a complete waste of time. It's your fault'. There are issues there that we have to carefully manage. But by and large if people come to us, particularly recognised groups where we can see that there is value in them participating in this process, then we will provide them with some assistance.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Is there a new path to take in the future? Have you looked at a new model?

**Mr PULLEN** - For getting people to put their applications in?

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - For getting the money distributed in a fair and equitable way.

**Mr PULLEN** - I am still not sure which bit of that process you are questioning. However, I was at a meeting in Melbourne yesterday and this very issue was raised. If you recall, the Commonwealth Government recently had a grants process. John Cleary and Ross Winstanley were both on the panel assessing those applications. This was a meeting to look at revenue streams for recreational fishing and that was exactly the point that they

were making, that some of them were abysmal, some of them were great and getting ordinary people with good ideas to be able to put in something that is going to fulfil your probity requirements in terms of spending the money but by the same token not making it too onerous on the applicant is a tricky balance.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - At least an independent process then?

**Mr PULLEN** - I think we would agree that there is scope for some more independence in assessing the applications, not just from the Government's point of view but also from that of the other people. We get advice from the recreational advisory committee on that with the very objective of trying to make it a bit more at arm's length from government in getting a more unbiased, transparent way of assessing those applications. But the problem is that in a small pool in Tassie you get a lot of the same people around the table doing the same job again and they might also have put applications in. So there is a little bit of a challenge there in how can we try to get a more independent, transparent assessment of those applications.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Bring them up to the Legislative Council. Just a suggestion.

*Laughter.*

**Mr FORD** - We might take you up on that.

**Mr PULLEN** - Exactly. We try to get 'experts' to do that for us. Perhaps we need to get rid of the experts that are involved and get people who know absolutely nothing about it in. I don't know.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Or who know their communities.

**Mr PULLEN** - Yes. Once again, though, you say we are calling for people from the community to come on this panel. Who puts their hand up? The same people again. In all these fisheries you tend to get the same people always putting their hands up to do these jobs. It is difficult to get those people from the community to come and do that because there is not that much in it for them.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - Because you get bashed up if they think you get it wrong.

**Mr PULLEN** - Exactly.

**Mr FORD** - One of things that we have to be very mindful of, Tania, is the cost-benefit process because we are talking about \$200 000 to \$350 000 a year. So it is not a large amount of money in terms of a program. If we go to set up a corresponding funded process of very high rigour, highly independent, to do that assessment and, say, we put it out for a consultant to deal with, we might spend \$80 000 a year to get a consultant to do it and where does that \$80 000 a year come from? It comes off the bottom line. So instead of having \$350 000 to spend you have now only \$270 000 and we are spending 20 per cent of our resources to do the assessment process. We have to be very mindful of those challenges because we know that the community at large does not appreciate government taking large amounts of administrative funds to administer programs. We see it all the time in any government program. If we say our administrative fee is 20 per

cent, people are appalled by it. People are appalled by 5 per cent administrative fees, whether it be the Cancer Council, the Red Cross or humanitarian aid, so we have to be very mindful about how much money we spend to do an assessment process. We know we need to work better, closer with the community to ensure that we get better-quality applications, that we get applications that are targeted in what they are going to deliver and we also have to manage those to make sure that people do what we have given them the money to do. Sometimes that is very hard. If somebody says that they want an application to run a take-a-kid-fishing day then if the money is to put signage up or if it is to put fish-measuring boards up in locations, they can be seen. If it is to do something a bit more esoteric, it is sometimes very hard to measure. So there are a lot of challenges in managing what is really quite a small funding program.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - So it is a work in progress?

**Mr FORD** - Yes, and it always will be. This is the application process for this year. Probably three years ago we provided very little in the way of information and background support. This is the package that will be going on the web for this year's allocations. Included in that process we have provided a list, and this is in fact a useful resource for the committee as well and if you want more copies we can provide them, or we can send multiple copies of the package over to you.

**CHAIR** - Yes, let's do that please, Wes.

**Mr FORD** - This provides people with a list of all the projects that were funded between 1997 and 2008 and it means people can start to look at it and say, 'These are the sorts of objectives that people did get funding for and these are the sorts of bodies that people got funding for', and it gives an indication of the sorts of things that are funded. So we have taken a far greater level of management over these funds because it was very apparent that by just putting an ad in the paper and saying, 'Please apply' it was the same people who were funded. This is Tasmania and we are a small State and a small population where everybody knows everybody else and by the time those people who were involved in the assessment all declared a conflict of interest and left the room, you would not have anybody left to do the assessment.

**CHAIR** - Wes, it may be that as this inquiry proceeds we will get evidence from other people and we may need to test that back with you so it may be necessary to get you back, and that obviously will not be a problem.

I want to try to understand a bit better the funds from licences - specifically, I suppose, the additional licences and the process there; about \$250 000, in round figures, in the Consolidated Fund. What is the overarching purpose for that?

**Mr FORD** - The starting point from the Treasury point of view is that by and large Treasury officers, the Secretary of Treasury and the Treasurer are not overly supportive of trust funds and so on. The principle of government is that government collects funds through various regimes and this forms the basis of consolidated revenue. Consolidated revenue then is allocated to the Parliament to spend in accordance with government authorities. At the time that the new licensing system was developed when Robin Gray was the minister, following the introduction of the new act we did have a recreational licensing

system and those recreational licences were sold and they were principally licences for netting and for lobster potting. They were at a much lower level than they are now.

**CHAIR** - They probably raised about a quarter of a million dollars.

**Mr FORD** - \$255 000 I think was the consolidated revenue allocation that was made and went into the Consolidated Fund as a result of the sale of those licences. The revenue from licences was around \$250 000 but consolidated expenditure for the management of recreational fishing, off the top of my head, at that stage would have still been around about \$1 million because the Government was investing in a recreational research program. Those licences had to still be allocated. They were principally sold through Australia Post. On one hand like at an agency level we would \$250 000 in the Consolidated Fund but as part of our consolidated allocation we got about \$50 000 or \$60 000 which we paid Australia Post to sell the licences.

We have had fisheries officers and marine police who do the enforcements so to work out what the cost is, it is always one of these difficult things with government expenditure because you have to take it back to if there was no recreational fishing then there would be a whole lot of things that government does not do and that is around \$1 million, potentially, worth of expenditure. Going into the new system the minister of the day fought very hard to protect the funds from the increased sale of licences, and this was through negotiation with the recreational community. It was a trade-off process. The minister got the recreational community to agree - and again, who are these people who were agreeing? - that there could be an increase in licensing costs, there could be additional licences, but those funds would need to go back into recreational fisheries management.

In that process, Cabinet agreed that the additional revenue collected over and above the \$255 000 be held in the special deposits and trust funds system within the department. That's where there is a common misconception about a trust fund. Many people feel a trust fund means the money is owned by the person you are holding it in trust for. For example, I have a trust fund for the apple and pear research area. That money was crop protection insurance money that was owned by the industry, that was vested in a trust for research and development. It has a piece of legislation that drives how it can be managed and how it can be expended. That is a trust in a true sense.

The funds that we hold are not a trust, all they are is consolidated revenue that is not held by Treasury but is held by the department. Then the minister determines how that expenditure will occur, so we get somewhere around about \$750 000 a year in revenue into that account which we have determined we are going to spend on a range of things. We get very little in the way of a consolidated allocation for recreational fishing, I think if you pare it back it's probably around about \$100 000 of your budget, so about \$100 000 of the grants budget is recreational fishing consolidated allocation. The rest of our expenditure we incur through spending the funds that are collected in the Fishwise fund, so we pay for the licensing system. We have to pay to have the licences printed; we issue people with booklets; we pay for plastic rulers. There's a blurring between what is licensing material and what is general communications material. We have to fund the cost of research and assessment. We don't fund enforcement; mind you, we fund some enforcement activities. We pay for the cost of the Fish Watch phone because that's not in the consolidated allocation for police.

We have laid out in our submission how we have those funds broken up, and so those funds go back to administer our recreational licensing system. The message that we continually give recreational fishermen is that by doing it this way you can see transparently where the money is spent and we don't have to fight Treasury every year to maintain an allocation. If a budget cut is applied to my division, I don't have to apply that budget cut to the application of these funds, and that's the advantage from the department's point of view in being able to manage the funds in this way. That's why Treasury don't like it.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - A very enviable position.

**CHAIR** - Gentlemen and committee members, I am conscious of the fact that people have made arrangements around our original schedule for a one o'clock break so I think it would be appropriate to call a break now. I am pretty certain that we will need to get you back at some stage. Thank you for your contributions thus far.

**Mr FORD** - There is a huge amount of information available within our system and within our personal experiences. Many of us have been involved in this now for 10 or 15-plus years, but you need to give us some guidance as to how we can best help you address the questions you have.

**CHAIR** - That would be productive. That is a good suggestion, thank you.

**THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.**

**Mr NEIL ERIC STUMP**, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, TASMANIAN FISHING INDUSTRY COUNCIL WAS CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WAS EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Harriss) - Welcome, Neil, and thank you for your written submission and your preparedness to come before the committee today

**Mr STUMP** - I am appearing before the committee as the Chief Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Fishing Industry Council.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. As I said, we have had your submission for a while now s as you are speaking to it to bring out in particular points we might ask questions along the way if you are happy with that?

**Mr STUMP** - Yes, more than happy with that.

In relation to the terms of reference of the committee, there are two areas in particular that we wish to address; the suitability of the current licensing arrangements for recreational marine fishing activities and the biomass sustainability in management issues. We believe the other issues are more for recreational fishers to determine. I suppose there are also some questions about the socioeconomic impact of recreational fishing in Tasmania, which I will touch on briefly.

How to value the socioeconomic impacts of recreational fisheries has been a perplexing question around Australia for quite some time. There are a number of papers that go into that issue that can better inform the committee than I am able to. But I do think it is important that there is some regular estimate of the benefit of recreational fishing to the State and I believe that cannot be discounted.

In relation to the suitability of the current management arrangements, it would be fair to say that commercial fishers strongly support the need for recreational fishers to be licensed. We closely link the need for this to the sustainability and management of the resource as a whole. When looking at the management of any fishery, be it rock lobster, abalone or scale fish, we clearly see the need to account for all extractions from that resource. We believe unless you have a pretty strong idea of how many recreational fishers there are and what their activities are, you cannot input that into the decision-making process in regard to assessing the sustainability of marine resources.

To be fair too, we believe that there is a public good aspect to the management of fisheries, both recreational and public, that the Government should and currently does fund. We also believe that extractive users, because there is some form of exclusivity in their rights, should have to contribute to management and compliance costs through the payment of licence fees. We believe, from that perspective as well, the recreational fishers should make a contribution. I do note that there are trust funds set up for some of the moneys that recreational fishers pay by way of licence fees to look after some of their interests in regards to fishing.

One of the things that we are looking at as a shared resource and responsibility, and that we may be asking of recreational fishers, is that there is a proposal before us to put in a

new waverider buoy on the east coast which measures swell height. It has important safety aspects for recreational boaters, recreational fishers and commercial fishers and we believe that some of the money in such a fund could be contributed towards the ongoing maintenance of something like a waverider buoy. That is our perspective; others might have different perspectives on it. We believe how those funds are expended is largely a matter for recreational fishers but I do believe there are some research activities that could be undertaken using some of those funds, and some of those funds should be contributed towards addressing sustainability issues.

That brings us to sustainability. We have what we believe are pretty good records and data in relation to things such as the amount of fish we take, our catches, the amount of effort we put into fishing to take that given amount of fish et cetera. However, unfortunately surveys of recreational fishers' activities - and that is not the fault of recreational fishers themselves - at present do seem to be done on a bit more of an ad hoc basis as adequate funding does not allow surveys to be undertaken as regularly as required to assess the impact of recreational fishing.

I believe the committee has a copy of a report put out in 2005 by Dr Jeremy Lyle from TAFI which provides some detail on the Tasmanian section of the 2000-01 survey of recreational fishing in Tasmania. Other ongoing smaller surveys have been conducted, such as for rock lobster, abalone and some krill surveys but we do strongly believe there is a need to have more rigorous data on recreational fishing.

An argument has been put forward by some people that recreational fishers do not have an impact. Individually, that is most likely the case. But when you look at the activities of all recreational fishers collectively, clearly they can have an impact in some areas. To cite an example, in shallow waters, which I believe are defined as under 20 metres or 10 fathoms, in the south-east around the Tasman Peninsula it is estimated the recreational fishers take approximately 50 per cent of the legal sized rock lobsters. That cannot be considered to have an insignificant impact there. We do need to have data on what goes on so we can input that information into our overall assessment of the health of the fishery.

**Mr WILKINSON** - With the licensing and the 'policing' of that, the data would be there, wouldn't it, in relation to recreational fishers taking the crayfish?

**Mr STUMP** - The numbers of recreational fishers is there, yes. There is a survey system in place and I have had discussions with TAFI about how rigorous it is and suggested there may be a need to collect additional data for areas like that. How accurately that captures what goes on may be open to some question. There is not a strong link between the number of fishers and fish stocks and, as I said, these surveys are done on a spasmodic basis.

**Mr WILKINSON** - When we say that take 50 per cent, is that an accurate figure?

**Mr STUMP** - It would have margins for error up and down, undoubtedly. I fully concede that. That was just, I believe, the estimate that came out of that particular study.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Was that the 2005 study?



**Mr STUMP** - It was published in 2005 but I believe it was conducted in 2001. That was the last comprehensive national survey which Jeremy Lyle was a key driver of and there is a fairly big time gap between 2001 and 2008. There are some ongoing surveys but how much they capture is questionable. I am not laying any blame or anything like that. It is just a statement of where we see some potential deficiencies.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Sure.

**Mr STUMP** - Another example, which is very topical at the moment in the north of the State, is the supposed trawling in Ringarooma Bay and Anderson's Bay taking all the flathead. I would like to draw the committee's attention to some of the data published in this report and, if my memory serves me correctly, in the scale fish assessment last year. This indicated that commercial fishers in Tasmania took an estimated 50 tonnes of flathead, for example. The catch of recreational fishers was estimated at 350 tonnes. There is a fair difference and we find it a bit distressing to being continually labelled as the people taking all the flathead when there is documented evidence from Tasmania, and I must stress Tasmanian-licensed fishers. I believe there are five or six boats licensed to use a gear method called Danish seining which is how the majority of flathead are taken around Tasmania. Their catches have been fluctuating between two species, flathead and whiting, depending on what the market is. One will go up and down a few tonnes which is not usually related to stocks, it is more market driven given the number of boats.

I was just using that as example and I am not saying recreationalists are seriously depleting the stocks of flathead, but I believe it is a matter of record that they do take substantially more of the resource than commercial fishers do. Then it becomes difficult for us when we hear things like, 'There is guy fishing in Anderson's Bay at Bridport and Ringarooma Bay and taking all the flathead'. In fact, one boat works up there spasmodically, I do believe. He is not the hardest working fisherman in Tasmania but he does take advantage of the markets around Christmas and Easter.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - He doesn't need to, his wife works as well.

**Mr STUMP** - I think I will leave that well enough alone. I think it can have a localised impact for a short period of time. But I think to lay the inability of recreational fishers to catch flathead in that location at the moment at the doors of commercial fishers, and one commercial fishing operation in particular, is drawing a very long bow. We simply do not have the data or the information on recruitment patterns and things like that for that species, which does make some of those things difficult. There was also some mention of long-line fishing in talking about flathead. Long-line fishers in that area catch shark, not flathead, so I can't understand how people make that association.

In a nutshell, that is the majority of our submission. We are concerned about the need to get better data for the sustainable management of the resource as a whole. We really consider that to be the key element for all extractive users, that it is managed sustainably.

**CHAIR** - In your submission you made some opening reference to TARFish, essentially because it is a recreational body. You have indicated that your prima facie view is that it is all right but there is not much more you can say about it.

**Mr STUMP** - The only comment I should make is that I think you have to be pragmatic. All bodies such as ourselves or bodies representing recreational fishers, horse riders or marble players, if that is a public activity, need to have a strong representative body that can speak with one voice. I am just making that as a general comment from experience because it does make dialogue between different groups of people and accessing the one resource and the Government a lot easier. I think it gives the Government a much clearer picture of what the overall views area. Again speaking from experience from our industry, trying to listen to 100 different views makes it very difficult. I am not discounting the right of people to hold different views than the majority but when trying to make a collective decision it helps to have a body that you can confidently say is speaking for the majority.

**Mr WILKINSON** - As an individual, am I allowed to join TARFish?

**Mr STUMP** - My understanding of the structure of TARFish - and I stand to be corrected because I don't belong to the organisation - is that it is made up of a number of member organisations. How they then elect their board and how that operates, I am not really sure.

**Mr WILKINSON** - Do the member organisations have to be of a certain size?

**Mr STUMP** - On the web site I believe there is a statement relating to the number of members a particular organisation must have before it can join TARFish. What that number is and if I am actually correct, I am not quite sure, but I do recall seeing that on their web site.

**Mr WILKINSON** - So as an individual who fishes a fair bit I couldn't knock on TARFish's door and say, 'Can I become a member?', from your knowledge of it?

**Mr STUMP** - As I say, I think that would be my interpretation. You cannot become a member of TARFish directly. That could be true, but I am not involved with TARFish and this view is only from what I read on the web site.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - What about discussions with the department about the things that you have raised with us? Is that an open dialogue that you have as an organisation?

**Mr STUMP** - To be quite blunt, sometimes we find our attempts at getting open recognition that everybody extracts something and has an impact at some level fairly frustrating. Getting government to sign off on that understanding at times can be difficult. One of the things I know - and I am sure the Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association won't kick me for saying it - is that for quite some time they have pushed the suggestion that people who access rock lobster recreationally should be required to have tags. They have seen that as one way to get a more accurate estimate of how many rock lobster recreational fishers are taking. You get so many when you purchase the licence - 20-30 or whatever it is for the year - and then if you run out of those tags you can go to Service Tasmania and get some more.

We believe some sort of system like that would possibly be more cost effective, and effective from a compliance point of view as well. Any rock lobster sold in Tasmania by a commercial fisher has to be tagged, so purely from a marketing and a compliance point

of view it may have those benefits. However, having a reasonable dialogue about those issues seems to be quite difficult at times.

**CHAIR** - In regard to biomass, I acknowledge that your evidence to the committee today has focused on that as well as the licensing arrangements, but in essence the two are connected. What is your association's view of sustainability with regard the current consideration of the Bruny bioregion.

**Mr STUMP** - If you look at the no-take areas that are being proposed, and it is purely no-take that impacts on management, for at least two species for both recreational and commercial fishers there will be some impact - rock lobster and abalone. Abalone do not move very quickly or very far. It is spurious argument to say that if we only lock up 1 per cent it is not impacting on anybody. That does not hold water. If that is a gold mine and you close the gold mine then you have taken everything. So you have to be very careful. People are saying 1 per cent, but the whole of the Bruny bioregion has only a limited amount of habitat for rock lobster and abalone. More than 80 per cent holds no rock lobster or abalone habitat. So in closing 1 per cent you get a more realistic picture of what the potential impacts might be. Going back to those two species, if you close up an area of coast and then do not make some adjustments to the management arrangements for adjacent areas or other areas of the coast then you will impact on the sustainability of the resource outside those areas. There is some quite clear documentary evidence in recent research from TAFI that demonstrates that. You have to be aware, if you are locking up no-take areas, what potential external impacts can be on sustainability as a whole - unless you make other adjustments.

**CHAIR** - Does TAFI or the department share that point of view?

**Mr STUMP** - I would say that any responsible fisheries manager within the department would have to share that view, otherwise you do not understand the basic biology and ecology of fish species. It is a fairly basic premise that has been widely accepted within fisheries management, particularly for those sedentary species with fairly limited movement.

**CHAIR** - If the so-called no-take zones were to proceed would you see that a species dispensation ought to be applied?

**Mr STUMP** - Definitely for abalone and rock lobster if it was a no-take zone,.

**CHAIR** - Both commercial and recreational?

**Mr STUMP** - Well, you would have to. The recreational fishers wouldn't be fishing that zone. If we want to use the example of Waterfall Bay to Fortescue Bay, their activities would be more restricted. People coming out of Eaglehawk Neck, for example, would be restricted. There would be greater effort on that area closer to Eaglehawk Neck and for people within Fortescue Bay there would be greater localised effort on the southern shore and along there. One of the things with recreational fisheries is that we are a more affluent society. There are not many people these days with the 10-foot dinghy and the Seagull outboard. A lot of people have more disposable incomes; they are better equipped, have better boats and they disperse their activities a lot wider. If you contract them then there is going to be an impact on that contracted area. An area like Fortescue

Bay is extremely popular over the summer and Easter holidays. A lot of people go there so if you can disperse their effort well and good, but if you contract it then it is going to have an impact.

**Mrs RATTRAY-WAGNER** - This morning we did get a suggestion that perhaps there should be seasons for all types of fishing. Have you had that discussion?

**Mr STUMP** - There are seasons in place for rock lobster and abalone at the moment. I know a lot of commercial scale fishers and one of the things they bring up is the need for spawning enclosures. There are some quite proactive people saying that, for this species that spawns in these locations at these times, to ensure their sustainability surely we should have a spawning enclosure. Some species aggregate and that is when they are catchable, but these guys are not just looking at their hip pocket or ability to access fish stock right here and now; they are looking at the longer term. They realise that by protecting spawning stock when they are spawning you are enhancing the sustainability of a fishery. You will get some fishermen, not all, who will openly push such management measures.

**CHAIR** - Neil, thank you for your written and verbal submissions today.

**THE WITNESS WITHDREW.**