



Fishing families under considerable psychological distress

THE Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) is shocked and distressed by research findings of high levels of psychological distress amongst Australia's fishing industry – levels almost twice that of the general population.

QSIA President Keith Harris said today he was very concerned with the findings of Dr Tanya King, an anthropologist within Deakin's School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

"The data uncovered by Dr King supports the view I have held for some time: industry is under enormous external pressures and this is leading to (1) depression, (2) anxiety, (3) substance abuse, (4) body pain and (5) suicide.

"From a Queensland perspective, imagine you are working in my industry. You wake up and like millions of Australians you prepare for work. The difference in this industry is a lack of certainty regarding regulation change, access to the marine environment, resource reallocation, pressure from environmental non-government organisations (eNGOs) and a small percentage of the recreational fishing lobby.

"So, I head off to commercially fish thinking about whether or not I will maintain my access to local fish stocks or thanks to a new coastal development I may have my access cut off to an area I fish that could generate half of my income.

"Why so pessimistic?

- Queensland commercial fishers have been impacted by the introduction of marine parks starting with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and later State based parks eliminating access to around one third of seafood stocks.
- Port developments with the Port of Gladstone as the model for poor consultation, marine ecology impacts and ongoing impacts of dredge spoil.
- Politically charged fisheries management.
- Ongoing regulatory change.
- Resource reallocation processes such as the net free zones.

"The community expects access to fresh local seafood and this industry is committed to meeting that need. My industry continues to work under the pressures that it does in most cases because it is all some of us know. I and other commercial fishers and my colleagues along Australian seafood supply chains have a passion for this industry.

"Dr King's research is a sad indictment on government and non-government stakeholders. We are human beings under considerable pressure which need not be the case if government lost its fear of recreational fishing groups by ensuring that

fisheries management is not used to take access from us and providing it to 5-10 percent of recreational fishers that catch 80 percent of the recreationally caught fish.

“Industry might be in a better place if fisheries management was driven by science not the fanatical bleating from eNGOs and recreational fishing lobbyists.

“Everyone is aware of the psychological harm that can be done by vilification of minority groups, yet some recreational fishing lobbyists, environmental activists and even politicians feel it is okay to attack commercial fishers on a regular basis.

“It’s no wonder commercial fishers and their families suffer psychological stress.”

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Further Information:

Keith Harris, QSIA President, Mobile 0427 713 445
Eric Perez, QSIA Chief Executive Officer, Mobile 0417 631 353,
eo@qsia.com.au

The QSIA is the peak body for the State’s wild catch fishers.

Commercial Fishing Pressures

	Local Government	State Government	Federal Government	Environmental Non-Government Organisations (eNGOs)	Recreational Fishing Groups
Seeking the introduction of net free zones	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Provision of no financial assistance during the White Spot outbreak	-	✓	✓	-	-
Constant regulatory change	-	✓	✓	-	-
Use of arguments based on no scientific evidence to reduce fishing activity	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use of media to vilify commercial fishers or fishing methods	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fear of green agenda and / or eNGOs influencing fisheries management policy	-	✓	✓	-	-
Fear of recreational fishing groups that leads to influencing fisheries management policy	-	✓	✓	-	-
Increasing regulatory cost	-	✓	✓	-	-