



21 November 2017

Scott Spencer
Deputy Director General Fisheries and Forestry
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
GPO Box 46
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Scott

Re: Fisheries Working Group Membership

On behalf of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) I would like to raise serious concerns regarding the membership of conservation groups in the ongoing fisheries reform process.

Of particular concern to industry is the ongoing membership of the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Their ongoing membership is extremely problematic. QSIA's view is simple – AMCS and WWF want to undermine the viability of our small and large-scale fisheries. These organisations are seeking a net free northern Queensland which is unacceptable.

Industry have been continually asked to bring an open mind to the reform process. This has been made impossible by the publicly stated position of AMCS and WWF, see attached media statements.

There are other concerns regarding the deliberations amongst working group members which include:

Confidentiality: How can working group members expect confidentiality? Why would any commercial fisher wish to discuss concerns/issues amongst individuals with an agenda to undermine this industry?

Trust: The recent media statements made by AMCS and WWF vilify the commercial net fishery and gives away their position on commercial overall – they don't want commercial fishing activity in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR).

Net Free Zones (NFZs): The NFZs policy caused significant pain and distress amongst commercial fishing communities throughout Queensland. This policy continues to exist

despite a commitment to developing a resource allocation policy. History proves that commercial fishing can exist alongside other uses of the marine environment.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) operate under a multi-use marine park model. Calls from AMCS and WWF to ban net fishing are contrary to this principle and reflect their political ideology rather than a balanced approach to using the marine resource.

Threats facing the GBR: There are multiple threats (see Table 1) facing the GBR and commercial fishing is not amongst them.

Table 1. Issues facing the GBR

<p><i>Coastal Development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of harbours and ports. • Dredging and 'reclaiming' marine areas. • Increased aquatic recreation, including boating. 	<p><i>Modification of Catchments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearing of terrestrial habitats (forest and riparian). • Destruction of seagrasses. • Water extraction and alteration of salinity.
<p><i>Pollution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban run-off. • Agricultural chemicals • Industrial discharges. 	<p><i>Poorly Informed Decision Making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate identification of threats. • Failure to align actions with effective conservation priorities that do not undermine existing uses of the GBR.
<p><i>Modification of Tributaries</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrages and weirs. • Flood gates. 	<p><i>Introduced Organisms, Shipping and the Aquarium Trade</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish, invertebrates and aquatic plants. • Pathogens (including viruses).
<p><i>Vessel Movement</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing number and size of recreational fishing vessels. • Increasing vessel movement from the mining sector. 	

- Mental Health: Research undertaken by Dr Tanya King, Senior Lecturer in Anthropology at Deakin University surveyed 1,000 registered commercial fishers nationally and found the following:
 - Commercial fishers are enduring levels of psychological distress almost double that of the general population.
 - Only 9 per cent of respondents said they had experienced no bodily pain in the month prior to the survey.
 - 58 per cent stated that they had experienced moderate to very severe pain.
 - 39 per cent reported they had been dissuaded from addressing their physical and mental health problems because they felt their GP did not understand the pressures of the fishing industry.

The mental health of my industry is not helped by knowing that AMCS and WWF (as members of various fisheries working groups) have an agenda that is toxic to the long-term viability of

commercial fishing businesses. Any will to work with these groups has been undermined by their stance on commercial fishing.

QSIA is seeking the exclusion of conservation groups from the fisheries reform process and if this cannot be accommodated, what is the rationale for keeping these organisations involved in the reform process?

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence please contact Eric Perez, QSIA Chief Executive Officer on M: 0417 631 353 or E: eo@qsia.com.au

Regards,



Keith Harris

President
Queensland Seafood Industry Association

Cc:

1. Hon Dr Anthony Lynham, Acting Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries.
2. Mr Dale Last, Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
3. Secretariat, Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel.

Attachment 1: Australian Marine Conservation Society

Title – Queensland's rare snubfin dolphins and dugongs drown in Great Barrier Reef fishing nets, Sat 18 November 2017.

The Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) today expressed deep concern over the deaths of two snubfin dolphins drowned in legally set gillnets in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

Snubfin dolphins are incredibly rare, exist only in Australia, and are listed as vulnerable to extinction.

With four dugongs also recently killed, conservationists are now call for netting bans in high value dugong, dolphin and turtle habitats.

Tooni Mahto, AMCS Senior Marine Campaigner said, “Queenslanders will be shocked to learn that gillnetting in the Great Barrier Reef is drowning our rare snubfin dolphins and dugongs.

“With the Queensland election just a week away, this is a stark reminder of the need for all parties to step up protection for our threatened marine life.

“These recent dolphin and dugong drownings are likely to be the tip of the iceberg. The reality is that gillnet fisheries have been killing Queensland’s dolphins, dugongs and turtles for decades.

“Gillnets are invisible walls of death for some of Queensland’s precious marine wildlife. We should be moving away from these deadly fishing methods towards more sustainable fishing, particularly within the Reef’s World Heritage waters.

AMCS is calling on all Queensland parties to commit to ending gillnetting in high conservation value areas.

“As a priority, gillnets should be removed from the marine park waters north of Cooktown. This would protect Queensland’s snubfin dolphins, dugongs and turtles, as well as enhance the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef.”

Background:

- The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has confirmed two snubfin dolphins were drowned in legally set gillnets in October. Four dugongs have also recently died, with one death confirmed as drowning in a gillnet.
- The two snubfin dolphin deaths and confirmed dugong death were reported appropriately by the commercial fishers operating the gillnets.
- Snubfin dolphins were identified as a new species in 2005.
- Snubfin dolphins are Australia’s only endemic dolphins and live in small isolated groups along Australia’s northern coastline, from the Kimberley to Gladstone. They live in riverine, estuarine coastal waters.
- Snubfin dolphins are listed as vulnerable to extinction in Queensland waters.

- One of the main threats to snubfin dolphins is ‘incidental capture from netting, especially gill nets and ghost nets’.
- Sustainable fisheries management is listed as the first recovery action for snubfin dolphins by the Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. To access the plan, visit https://www.ehp.qld.gov.au/wildlife/animals-az/australian_snubfin_dolphin.html

Attachment 2: WWF-Australia

Title – Snubfin dolphin and dugong deaths must lead to 85,000 sq km net free north Queensland, Sat 18 November 2017.

WWF-Australia is calling on the next Queensland government to establish an 85,000 sq km net free North Queensland and other net free zones following the deaths in gillnets of two rare Australian snubfin dolphins and suspected deaths in gillnets of four dugongs.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has only just revealed that on 21 October a fisher caught and drowned two snubfin dolphins in a commercial gillnet and reported the incident. WWF-Australia believes this occurred near Bowen.

GBRMPA has also just revealed that in September and October, the deaths of four dugong were confirmed in Bowling Green Bay near Townsville.

A fisher caught and drowned a dugong in a commercial gillnet and reported the incident. A second dead dugong was found floating near commercial gillnetting operations about a week later.

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A fisher caught and drowned a dugong in a commercial gillnet and reported the incident. A second dead dugong was found floating near commercial gillnetting operations about a week later.

Two further dugong carcasses were found in Bowling Green Bay with the cause of death unable to be determined due to decomposition.

Snubfins and dugongs – both listed as vulnerable – take a long time to reach breeding age and females do not produce offspring every year, therefore the loss of just one individual can be devastating to their local population.

“Gillnets are invisible walls of death which can indiscriminately kill whatever swims into them,” said WWF-Australia CEO Dermot O’Gorman.

“These gentle creatures suffered horrific deaths, held underwater until they drowned.

“WWF recognises that none of these incidents were intentional and that two fishers correctly reported the entanglement and drowning of these threatened species.

“However, WWF has long suspected that the gillnet deaths of many turtles, dolphins and dugongs are not reported for fear of bad publicity.

“Queensland cannot afford to lose one more snubfin or dugong to commercial gillnets.

“In 2015, three net free zones were introduced in Cairns, Mackay and Rockhampton and they have been a great success.

“WWF-Australia is calling for the major parties to commit to more net-free zones to protect these vulnerable creatures starting with the creation of an 85,000-square kilometre Net Free Far North Queensland,” Mr O’Gorman said.