

Raymond Yukich

W.A. Legislative Council Standing Committee into property rights.

Dear Members,

My personal experience has been shattering to both myself and my family. Where I thought I was conducting a business for the foreseeable future, it was devastated by Fisheries Department actions.

I began fishing with my father even before I left school in the late nineteen fifties.

I left school on my fourteenth birthday in nineteen sixty-one and have been fishing ever since (although in semi-retirement while my sons take over).

Like other fishermen, I was under the impression that my Rocklobster licence belonged to me and I was almost put out of business when the first pot reductions were introduced.

I had started out as a wet line fisherman and was still fishing for sharks and snapper until my licence was cancelled.

I fished for seventeen years in Cockburn Sound and also further along the west coast including Shark Bay. I had fished there for many years. When licence restrictions were introduced for Shark Bay and Cockburn Sound, (on advice from the Fisheries Research Department, because of my long history there) I applied for a licence to continue fishing in Shark Bay. It was reviewed by the Director, Bernard Bowen personally and because of my long history I was granted fishing rights in the lower portion of Shark Bay. My methods were different to most other fishermen. I used a dinghy to lower costs and to make fishing viable with a lower catch. (Fish for the future?)

Some years later, The Fisheries Department told me that my licence did not fit their idea of how the fishery should be run and they wanted to get rid of this type of licence. When I spoke with someone in the Fisheries Department and explained that I was issued a licence because of my long history; I was told bluntly that the "Fisheries Department didn't give a F--- about my history".

The Fisheries Department's lawyer Karen Lavinge, looked at loop holes to get rid of me.

First, she said it "was an oversight", that the Fisheries Department had made a mistake and I should not have been granted a licence. I proved this to be incorrect.

Next, she said that I had "exceeded my quota". I did not have a quota and my average catch was consistent with my history.

Next, she said that I had exceeded the timeline for appeals, although my lawyer had been in constant discussions with the Department.

Eventually after paying my lawyers a fee every month for several years, I was mentally distressed and financially being drained. I decided to give up and return to fishing out of Fremantle.

I Made a settlement with the Fisheries Department, which just covered my legal fees, and I was left with nothing.

Next the Fisheries Department decided to restrict fishing along the west coast. The criteria was based on catch history for the last five years in "particular zones" that had "suddenly appeared".

These zones did not exist when I was fishing and I was also licensed to fish in Shark Bay.

Because my catch history was broken up between zones, (including fishing in Shark Bay) It was deemed that I had insufficient history and received nothing.

After about forty-six years of continuous wet line fishing (where I probably caught more fish than most), I AGAIN RECEIVED NOTHING.

I believe that this should be rectified so that other people in similar circumstances, should have some recognition and security.

Ray Yukich

23/7/2019