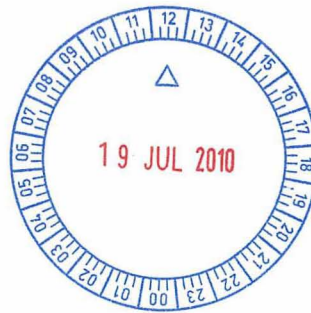


PUBLIC



Linda Omar
Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

16 July 2010

Dear Ms Omar

INQUIRY INTO SHACK SITES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The WA Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) is the peak industry organisation for the State's commercial fisheries and aquaculture industry. WAFIC would like to thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs, responding to the Inquiry into Shack Sites in Western Australia.

In response to this inquiry, WAFIC sought comments from its members across the State on whether they owned or accessed shacks, the location of these, how often they were utilized for the purpose of their fishing activity and the fishing authorizations that are used in relation to those shacks. While we appreciate the extension on the submission deadline that was provided to WAFIC, it is evident that more time was required to receive advice from our more remotely based operators.

The advice we did receive from our members indicates that shacks are widely used by a number of commercial fishing licence holders in various parts of the State. Their use of shacks is integral to their fishing operations by providing temporary accommodation in remote fisheries and safe moorings close to their fishing grounds.

It is our expectation that fishermen will be able to continue to operate in the future from their shacks without exclusion, disruption or destruction of their shack utilisation.

WAFIC is aware of the following fisheries that rely on access to shacks:

- Western Rocklobster Managed Fishery- Shacks located at the Abrolhos Islands and a considerable number of locations along mid-west coast (Rocklobster collection depots have been located where these shacks are located);
- South Coast Salmon Managed Fishery- Shacks located at south coast extending east and west of Albany;
- South Coast Wetline Fishery- Shacks located at Windy Harbour
- Spanish Mackerel Managed Fishery – Shacks located at Point Quobba, Gascoyne
- South Coast Estuarine Managed Fishery – Shacks located in close proximity to estuaries extending between Esperance and Augusta.



- Kimberley Gillnet and Barramundi Managed Fishery – Shacks located in Kimberley

WAFIC expects there are a number of other fisheries that have access to, and rely on shacks, who haven't been able to respond to us within the allocated timeframe.

The key benefits of shacks for commercial fishing operators include:

- Allowing commercial fishermen to operate within fisheries in regional and remote parts of WA. It puts them within close proximity of harvesting areas, which in some cases are far removed from the convenience of town centres and associated infrastructure. As an example, shacks used by licence holders in the South Coast Salmon Managed Fishery are strategically selected at a particular point along a coastline where migrating salmon come in close to shore. These particular 'salmon beaches' are defined in the fishery's management plan. A call would go out from a spotter on high ground and then the whole fishing operation would begin. When the catch is brought in and processed and the gear reset the whole fishing operation starts anew. Being in close proximity to the fish stocks and fishing gear is essential.
- Fishing shacks provide some comfort and respite for fishermen rather than living on board their vessels.
- Reducing on land and at sea travelling costs to and from fishing grounds. We note that some licence holders in the Spanish Mackerel Managed Fishery own entitlement to fish the Gascoyne region. They operate from shacks at Point Quobba in the Gascoyne region for parts of the year. Their key fishing areas are adjacent to this area, a long way from Geraldton, their place of residence, and Carnarvon the nearest town to these fishing areas.
- Providing financial relief to otherwise expensive accommodation arrangements. Licence holders and crew would need substantial financial resources to house themselves whilst on operations, which would seriously limit or decrease any profit or income they could make from their fisheries. The ever-increasing costs of licensing and other associated expenditures when added to accommodation costs may force commercial fishermen from the industry.

In the broader context, commercial fishing shacks in Western Australia provide a living cultural history and serve as a reminder of people carving out livelihoods on the brink of existence; livelihoods which are hard to imagine in an age of convenience and leisure.

Fishing shacks are also deeply rooted in family history with many fishermen tracing their ancestry back over generations at a particular shack site. There are some commercial fishermen who can trace their family's use of fishing shacks over six generations. New fishers who are sons, grandsons and great grandsons are now utilizing shacks for their fishing operations.

The State's commercial fishing industry supplies seafood to the 80% of people who buy it, rather than catch it. The continued supply of local seafood at an affordable price is dependent on matters such as maintaining close proximity to the resource.

It is vital from our perspective that access to these shacks be maintained for the reasons outlined above.

Given the importance of this particular issue to the fishing industry, we request an opportunity to be involved in any further matters relating to access to shacks in WA.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Anna Cronin', followed by a horizontal flourish.

For
Anna Cronin
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER