
Hon. Adele Farina MLC

Member for South West Region

Unit 4
31 Victoria Street
(PO Box 381)
BUNBURY WA 6231

Telephone: (08) 9721 1165
Freecall: 1800 077 677
Facsimile: (08) 9721 1167
Email: adele.farina@mp.wa.gov.au

Hon. Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman

Standing Committee of Environment and Public Affairs Committee
GPO Box A11
Perth WA 6837

Dear Chairman

Petition No. 88 - Opposing South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery Management Plan 2015

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in support of Petition No. 88 - Opposing South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery Management Plan 2015.

I have received representation from operators within the South West fishing industry expressing significant concerns regarding the likely impacts of the South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery Management Plan 2015 on the viability of the industry. Central to their concerns is the fundamental unfairness of the plan and the impact it will have on individual operators with the likelihood that many will be driven from the industry. On this basis, I support the favourable consideration of the petition.

A key flaw in the plan is the proposal to reallocate current lobster pot licences, prior to their expiration, with no compensation to the current licence holders. I understand an operator holding a licence for 175 pots, due to expire in December this year, will, from 1 July 2015, have their allocation reduced to 30 pots. They have not been informed of any compensation available to them for the remaining 145 pot licences that would have remained valid for a further six months if not for the new management plan. Another operator currently licenced for 90 pots will have their allocation reduced to just five.

This proposed reallocation is unfair. In addition to the effective cancellation of paid, valid licences, there appears to be little consistency in the reallocation. One operator will retain a little over 17% of their pots while the other will only retain 5.5%. The rationale for these reductions has not been adequately explained. If the intention is to reduce the take from the fishery by an established percentage, the burden of this reduction should be shared equally amongst the licence holders yet this has not occurred. This appears to be an ad hoc approach that is undermining confidence in the sector and will affect future investment in the sector.

For operators to remain viable, they will need to purchase additional licences from others looking to leave the industry. The precedent set by this plan, effectively cancelling valid licences prior to their expiration with no compensation, will deter such investment. The current environment created by the Plan is one of uncertainty

and is preventing participants in the industry from making confident commercial decisions. There is no avenue of appeal within the Plan. The combined potential impact is that those operators left with a very small number pots that renders their business unviable may experience difficulty on selling those licences as people avoid further investment in the sector resulting from a concern regarding future unfavourable decisions and no right of appeal should that occur. Operators will be driven from the industry having suffered a heavy financial loss through no fault of their own with no compensation available.

The constituents that have approached me agree with the principles of a scientifically managed sustainable fishery. Their complaint is not that the overall take from the south coast crustacean fisheries is reduced but instead is about the manner in which that reduction is being managed. I agree that such reform and restructuring must be managed equitably and with transparency. The lack of consistency and fairness in the plan should be opposed, and a process that protects the sustainability of the fishery that recognises the impacts on current licence holders should be implemented.

The sustainability of the fishing industry is dependent on a variety of factors, and the health of the fishery is predominant amongst these but, never the less, is it just one factor. The sustainability of the sector also relies on trained, skilled employees to work in the sector, a number of successful operators to ensure competition and the capacity of the industry to attract investment to support innovation and development. The South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery Management Plan 2015 will see current workers in the industry lose their jobs as operators leave the sector, competition reduced significantly and it will undermine future investment. The plan must address all factors contributing to sustainability if it is to be fair and supported by the industry.

The fishing industry has long been an important contributor to the diversity of the South West economy. Culturally, it has underpinned the development of many coastal communities in the region. No-one disputes the need for changing frameworks to protect fish stocks and the environment and the need for the industry to innovate, however the continuation of the industry should be supported. It is the responsibility of government to support the viability of the industry while protecting the natural resource that is the fishery. The South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery Management Plan 2015 fails to do this.

I urge the Committee to give favourable consideration to opposition of the South Coast Crustacean Managed Fishery Management Plan 2015.

Yours sincerely,



Hon. Adele Farina MLC
MEMBER FOR SOUTH WEST REGION

31 July 2015