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NSW COUNCIL OF FRESHWATER ANGLERS Inc.

ABN 22 497 104 592
PO Box 537, Paddington NSW 2021

18th April, 2011

Inquiry Chairperson
Windsor Inquiry
The Standing Committee on Regional Australia

Dear Chairperson,

NSWCFA Submission to the Inquiry into the
Impact of the proposed MDBA's Guide to the
proposed Basin Plan on Regional Communities

The NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers Inc. (NSWCFA) in representing the interests of all NSW freshwater fishers⁽¹⁾ and drawing attention to all the rural community business economy related thereto⁽²⁾, submits the following matters of concern for the Inquiry's attention regarding the impact of the proposed MDB Plan.

In doing so the NSWCFA draws the Inquiry's attention to the MDB Native Fish Strategy Action Plan 2011-2021 in which we have been involved in recently. While the NSW Department of Primary Industry's Action Plan is still at the pre-public consultation stage, the NSWCFA commends your consideration of this strategy given its significance to achieving the objectives of the Water Act.

- Opportunities for Economic Growth & Regional Diversification:

In addition to fish playing an important role as an indicator of a healthy waterway, and having regard to the nature of our iconic Murray Cod together with the uniqueness of our native species, fish provide for recreational fishing which is one of the most, if not the most, significant recreational pursuits in inland NSW. Not only is this a healthy pastime, but it generates a significant amount of employment and income for our rural communities. A sustainable and well provided for fishery is also a major attraction for our tourist industry.

When compared to the New Zealand tourist attraction in its fishery, Australia has considerable potential for growth in this regard.

⁽¹⁾ The National Rec. Fishing Survey (2000 GW Henry et al) recorded 999,000 NSW fishers of which 54% were freshwater fishers. Many coastal fishers also fish freshwater. The figure for Victoria was 550,000.

⁽²⁾ Attributable fishing expenditure of related community business for NSW in 2000 was established as \$554.2M; the figure for Victoria was \$396.27M.

(2)

- The Role of Government etc:

The absence of consideration in regard to fish stocks and the impact on aquatic habitat in the Plan is an oversight which the NSWCFCA respectfully requests be corrected. The attached draft of the MDB Fish Strategy 2011-2021 provides recommendations on this matter for the Inquiry's consideration to aid the improvement of this important natural resource.

The NSWCFCA understood the Water Act and subsequent Basin Plan came into being to address major community concerns over declining river health. The focus now appears to be about water and the use of water by extraction for agricultural purposes. The NSWCFCA suggests that it would be most embarrassing for Government if this process was only to promote one avenue of human consumption at the expense of another. For the preservation of our freshwater fishery to occur river health issues need to be addressed.

For this to be achieved there needs to be a strategy for getting people to be engaged with their rivers again. A perfect example of this is included in the MDB Native Fish Strategy and its Demonstration Research Projects where communities are engaged in restoring their rivers to improve fish populations.

- Options for Water Saving Measures:

The draft Action Plan uses no extra water, delivers outcomes that improve river health, engages regional communities in their river and requires expenditure in regional communities.

Conclusion:

The potential impact of the Plan upon fisheries, as referred to above, has been the topic of discussion by the NSWCFCA at recent meetings. With more than 6000 members of clubs and societies throughout NSW the NSWCFCA is a voluntary organisation concerned with the development and maintenance of the freshwater fisheries in the State of NSW and the Australian Capital Territory. NSWCFCA is recognised by the NSW Department of Industry and Investment (Fisheries) as the peak representative body for NSW freshwater anglers, contributing as it does to fisheries policy, legislation, and habitat restoration.

Should the Inquiry require further information on this matter please contact

Rodney Tonkin
President, NSWCFCA

Attached please find & refer to the NSW Draft Murray-Darling Basin Native Fish Strategy Action Plan 2011-2021.