

SUBMISSION NO. 40
Inquiry into the Role of Science for
Fisheries and Aquaculture

Kevin & Vicky Baker – Queensland Fishing Family

Submission to the Inquiry into the Role of Science for Fisheries and Aquaculture

I would like the Inquiry to submit the current scientific regime, regarding any research that involves or has implications for the Commercial Fisheries of Queensland, to close scrutiny.

Australian seafood is a resource that belongs to all Australians and Commercially Fishing Families harvest it for our communities. Queensland seafood has never been fished to capacity, let alone extinction. Our fishing methods can be compared with farming methods i.e. husbandry of resource, also the seasons, moon phases, tides, time of year and weather dictates what we do when. If we weren't looking after the marine environment, we would not have been fishing for generations. We are also at the forefront of world-wide cutting edge developments in by-catch devices, gear design and fishing practices.

The Queensland Fishing Industry has long been under continual assault for decades. With the use of out of date data, (there is no new actual knowledge, only reports that justify the governments actions), extrapolation of overseas activities (implying the same is happening here), flawed reports
and a compliant media, the green direction of our government is well entrenched.

Our fisheries managers follow the current political trend very well with every new law seemingly designed to make it more difficult, expensive and very near impossible to survive. Often, those making the laws have little knowledge of and negligible consultation with industry, usually with consultation recommendations being ignored.

With the help of the scientific community, the government prides itself on being one of the best-managed fisheries in the world. We, the Fishing Industry, are being reduced to an unsustainable level. Due to the loss of Industry members, down from around 830 vessels in the trawl in 2000 to around 430 now (230 currently working) we are losing our infrastructure, jetties, moorings, unloading facilities and wholesalers. This causes a multitude of problems, from not being able to work when the weather is good due to lack of crew, inability sourcing tradespeople to work on vessels, to uprooting the family to move (or our men being away from the family a lot more often). Along with the burden of red tape, costs of production (fuel, management, stores and maintenance) it all has its effect on the mental welfare of all members of our Industry, women and children too. There is great personal, family and community anguish out here. Suicides, broken families, stress related illnesses, loss of homes and vessels are commonplace now. Along with the locking away of Prime Marine Food Resource Areas, backed up by scientists, they can be truly proud of the best management in the world.

Also of great concern to me is the science of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

Authority as reported by W. Stark, excerpt below:

Several matters of ethical concern have been exacerbated by publication in a prestigious journal (PNAS) which has strict requirements for authors. These include:

- A requirement that authors declare no conflict of interest; yet, all 21 of them are employed by or have benefited from substantial funding through GBRMPA and any other research they do on the reef must also be approved by GBRMPA. To maintain that this situation entails no conflict of interest is simply not credible.
- There is also a requirement that authors must declare sources of funding; yet, this cannot be found in the report.
- It is further required that authors acknowledge and address any conflicting evidence. Not only was this not done in regard to a number of key claims, the conflicting evidence is clear, convincing and, most extraordinary of all, authored by some of the same researchers as those in the report.

Important matters of factual discrepancy include:

- A major claim of a doubling of fish on protected reefs which appears to rest on a single example (Fig. 1, McCook *et al.*). This is inconsistent with abundant other evidence including that which is presented in the report itself in the very same figure. Only one reef area of the 8 featured in the figure showed a 2-fold increase in numbers and that area had the lowest level to start and lowest difference between fished and unfished reefs, both of which show a similar increase. In 5 of the 8 reef areas featured the protected reefs actually showed a decline in fish numbers. On fished reefs, three areas showed increases in biomass while 5 showed declines. This is hardly the “*extraordinary*” 2-fold increase in protected areas being bannered in both the report as well as news releases.

The full report is on the website of W. Stark at www.goldendolphin.com -

[Extraordinary Claims in Great Barrier Reef Assessment Require Evidence](#)

In light of all of the above, I feel that:

a) the relationship between scientific knowledge of fish species, ecosystems, biodiversity and fish stock sustainability; **is woefully inadequate or partially reported only to reflect current government trends. Requires more research by accredited, non-government funded scientists.**

b) fishery management and biosecurity, including but not limited to:

- the calculation and monitoring of stock size, sustainable yield and bycatch, as well as related data collection **is under funded, inadequate or partially reported only to reflect current government trends. Requires more research by accredited, non-government funded scientists.**
- the effects of climate change, especially relating to species dispersion, stock levels and impacts on fishing communities **is woefully inadequate, or partially reported only to reflect current government trends . Requires more research by accredited, non-government funded scientists.**

- pest and disease management and mitigation **is under funded, inadequate and poorly monitored. Requires more research by accredited, non-government funded scientists.**
- minimising risks to the natural environment is **currently out of control, out of proportion and detrimental to our Food Security** and human health is **adequate**
- cooperation among Australian governments on the above is **inadequate and detrimental to our Food Security.**

“c) research, development and applied science of aquaculture, including:

- transitioning from wild fisheries to aquaculture in individual species **no adequate research and is under funded.**
- improving sustainability and lifecycle management practices and outcomes **no adequate research and is under funded.**

pest and disease management and mitigation” not enough monitoring of dispersal of ponds is occurring and research reports reflect current government trends. Requires more research by accredited, non government scientists.

“d) governance arrangements relating to fisheries and aquaculture, including the implications for sustainability and industry development; “ **partially reported only to reflect current government trends. Requires more research by accredited, non- government scientists.**

e) current initiatives and responses to the above matters by state, territory and Australian governments; **is woefully inadequate, traditionally under funded and it looks as if future funding will be drastically reduced due to previous Queensland government mis-management and Federal and State government fisheries management ignorance and hypocrisy relating to the Queensland Commercial Fishing Industry and its families.**

f) any other related matter. **Refer back to Page 1.**

Yours truly

Kevin and Vicky Baker