

22 February 2018

Mr G McNally
Committee Secretary
Senate Select Committee into the Political Influence of Donations
PO Box 6100, Parliament House. Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr McNally

Re. Further submission to previous submission of 25/11/17 and Committee appearance on 30/1/18

It is possible from the above evidence that it may not have been totally clear that the donation had nothing to do with exerting any influence on a government on any issue, or in general. While such Committees should rigorously question witnesses – it seems to us that the evidence given, equivalent to being under oath, should be respected, and we hope that there is no other imputation in the final report.

Since I worked temporarily as a ***technical*** expert in Canberra in 1983-1985 and left to start my current role, I have no real idea how professional lobbyists operate. To put it in context, our Association has an annual turnover of less than \$500,000 – the bulk of which is spent employing professional scientific researchers and their projects.

Some of the Committee's questioning could have implied that somehow the Tuna Association pays for greater access and political outcomes. The facts reject this. Since quotas started in 1984 the tuna industry has not sought or received one dollar of government funds – including in:

- (1) The quota cuts of 67% in 1990 and 24% for 2011.
- (2) The industry in the 1990s being all in either formal or de facto receivership.
- (3) The storm loss of 70% of the fish in 1996.
- (4) The loss of 15% of the fish in a disease event in 2009-2011.
- (5) Periods of very low prices – eg 2013-2017.

This is a question of principle – we do not want or receive any government assistance. All we expect from governments is they do not mislead us – and where there is a change of mind, they tell us. As I mentioned, when this happened we found out about the change of mind from the Korean Government.

This principled approach may seem odd, and deserve questioning, but is evident from all the facts. At the function referred to below, a Port Lincoln councillor questioned a State Minister on the contrast between the absence of assistance to Port Lincoln and the assistance to areas such as Whyalla and Port Pirie. The response

was that even in the bad times, Port Lincoln never projects a sense of crisis to government. This is because we still believe that it is not up to the Australian community to help us through difficult periods – no matter what the cause.

What is the reason behind this? The industry is strongly migrant-based, and has built the industry by themselves – based on just hard work, risk-taking, a loyal staff and operating by “your handshake is your contract/bond.”. They saw what happened with the quota cut as unconscionable – and that a donation to the other major political party as the only way they could make their protest clear. The industry is only in one seat, and a safe seat.

In retrospect and with greater knowledge, we understand that the then Government broke their commitment to us so as to pursue what were seen as more important national priorities. That is the way government sometimes operates and why we distance ourselves as much as possible from the political process.

I confirm again that we have as little as possible to do with any Government Ministers or Shadow Ministers, and with other MP’s and Senators. On average, I meet a Minister or Shadow Minister once a year. I never meet another MP or Senator, except at rare social occasions (eg Tunarama).

At the Labor Party function referred to in evidence – it was the first time I had ever met the Premier of SA or any State, and there was no discussion of tuna. I responded to a friend’s request to attend.

Regarding access for community groups as mentioned by the Chair – I do not know how that works. All I know is that we rarely seek any meeting and deliberately avoid contact with all levels of Parliamentarians or their staff.

Yours sincerely

Brian Jeffriess
CEO – Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association
PO Box 1146. Port Lincoln SA 5606