

24 April 2012

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson, MP
Minister for Primary Industries
NSW Trade & Investment
Level 47, MLC Centre
19 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Ref: GT4139
Enquiries: Tanya Cross

Dear Minister

Request for Amendment to NSW Fisheries Management Act in relation to the Common Carp

Greater Taree City Council recognises that there is a growing threat of the release of the noxious fish species, common carp, into the many NSW rivers that have so far avoided invasion by this damaging pest fish. It is beyond dispute that there is sound scientific evidence that carp have severely degraded inland rivers in the State, as well as those coastal rivers that it has already invaded. As you are no doubt aware, in the Murray-Darling Basin, carp often constitute between 80% and 90% of the total biomass of all fish. A large proportion of these carp invasions, perhaps the majority, have originated from facilities breeding the ornamental koi strain of carp. Carp damage waterway ecology by feeding amongst waterway sediments, making the water turbid and uprooting aquatic plants, and their enormous numbers can overwhelm native fish and other aquatic animals, as well as degrading water quality. Their impact on wetlands is particularly severe.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries' *Control Plan for the Noxious Fish Carp*, released in November 2009, suggests that the Manning catchment is believed to contain carp, but Council has been advised by senior Fisheries' scientists that this is incorrect. Anecdotal sightings purporting to be of carp have in fact involved the ubiquitous feral goldfish. Repeated scientific surveys of the Manning River by NSW Fisheries and by MidCoast Water have never recorded carp.

The *NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994* lists carp as a Class 3 noxious species, but this provision does not prevent people possessing, trading, transporting or selling them. Although most Australians now know of the havoc caused by carp in rivers and wetlands, and because the Act makes it illegal to release any fish into waterways without a permit, deliberate release may be a lower risk than accidental escapes from koi carp hobbyists' ponds and farm dams. Greater Taree City Council's *Manning Wetlands Steering Committee* has been advised of situations in its area where this is a significant and immediate threat, but the facilities concerned do not meet the size criteria specified for local government control over aquaculture facilities. Last year's incidence of flooding in the Mid North Coast only emphasises the urgency of this threat of koi carp escape into rivers from dams and ponds.

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All NSW's neighbouring states have also declared carp to be a noxious species, but their regulation is far more effective than that in NSW. In those states, carp possession, transport or trade are totally banned, as is appropriate. Responsible agencies in Queensland and Victoria experience considerable difficulty in managing the threat near their borders with NSW because of this legislative inconsistency and have requested action by the NSW Department of Primary Industries to resolve the problem. To date, this has not occurred, despite commitments to bring noxious species management into line with new, more-stringent national guidelines.

Due to the significant and immediate threat the common carp poses to the ecology of our local waterways, as well as other coastal rivers in NSW, Greater Taree City Council believes it is necessary to seek your intervention, in your role as the NSW Minister for Primary Industries, to bring the *NSW Fisheries Management Act 1994* in line with the other State's legislation including Victoria, South Australia and Queensland, which make it illegal to possess, trade, transport or sell carp. Additionally, NSW Fisheries should be encouraged to provide and actively promote a service to eradicate carp from private ponds and small dams at the request of landowners.

Thank you for your consideration of what we believe to be a very important environmental issue for the region and I look forward to receiving a favourable response from you in regards to this matter.

If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact Tanya Cross from Council's Environmental Services section

Yours faithfully

Gerard José
General Manager