

Christine McDonald
Secretary
The Senate
Environment and Communications References Committee

Dear Ms McDonald

Thank you for the opportunity to make a further submission to the re-adopted **Inquiry into the environmental, social and economic impacts of large capacity fishing vessels**. My apologies for the slightly late submission and we trust that a few hours of delay will not prevent this information from reaching the Committee.

After consideration of the information provided by Environment Tasmania initially to the Inquiry and upon reflection of the considerable stakeholder engagement that we have conducted, it seems that the statement from a recreational fisher and tourism operator of the South Coast of NSW, may well represent the current state of the community's concerns to the Committee most effectively.

We respectfully submit the following statement sent to Environment Tasmania this week by

"As a tourism business operator on the South Coast of NSW and an avid recreational game fisherman I am gravely concerned about the continued presence of the Geelong Star working on this coast.

The Geelong Star is now in its second season of fishing the small pelagic fishery and has come back to the South Coast of NSW where it fished intensively throughout this year.

This fishery has never been fished so hard before and it seems that the Geelong Star is only concentrating on a small area of the total area that they are allowed to fish for their quota.

Our concern is that with all this fishing effort going on in a small area, we will have localized depletion therefore effecting other professional fishing and the big recreational game fishing, that occurs all year round now, on the South Coast of NSW.

Many businesses rely on the visiting anglers and their families who choose

our part of the Australian coastline to have their holidays. They choose to have beachside vacations and their favourite past time hobby is catching a fish. If the Geelong Star removes all the bait from our waters the pelagic gamefish will not be drawn to our waters. Instead they will go elsewhere - where there is food. This will affect the tourism businesses and other retail businesses that service these holiday makers.

Also of concern to the general public is the fact that the Geelong Star can turn off their A.I.S. tracking system, so that their movements can not be monitored whilst AFMA can track, supervise and verify where this vessel is with its V.M.S. yet does not reveal this information to the public. How closely are the fishing efforts of this "large capacity fishing vessel" monitored to stop localized depletions? Why is the total allowable catch not spread out over the entire fishable area? Details need to be published to verify that all the effort is not going into one small area.

Of further concern with the Geelong Star is the records of gamefish by-catch. In the 2015 -16 season there is a discrepancy in the observer data to the log book data. When you look closely at the individual species in 2015-16, a total of 16 Thresher Sharks were recorded as a by-catch and now for the 1st quarter of 2016 -17 (1/5/16 to 31/7/16) it shows a total of 32 Thresher Sharks have been captured. This discrepancy needs urgent investigation, as a percentage of the by-catch of sharks, this species seems to be over represented.

We are continually being confronted with data on the depletion of shark species world wide and on the numbers of by-catch from midwater trawling. This method of trawling also seems to be a very effective way of catching and killing sharks!

Also the question needs to be answered as to what happens to all the bodies of this by-catch? Do they get processed for consumption or are they simply discarded?

Whilst Seafish Tasmania has offered some voluntary concessions to the public regarding the conduct of their fishing operations for the 2016-17 season, which is very nice of them, - they did make similar offers prior to the game fishing tournaments earlier this year but were seen fishing on the day prior to the Merimbula Yellowfin Tournament directly in the tournament vicinity.

There are still a lot of holes in their fishing practices that will have severe negative impacts on recreational angling and tourism on the South Coast of NSW. These large capacity factory fishing trawlers are simply too effective at what they do. The S.P.F. has only been fished very lightly for many years

with the quota licences spread around the country. Now we are experiencing a consolidated effort by one vessel to fulfill its T.A.C. quota in a small area of the total allowable fishing zone.

Common sense tells you that something will give, and that will be the demise of the bait fish stocks, and the fish and sea mammals that rely on this food source.

This is not just my opinion as a local tourism business operator and recreational fisherman. Three Regional Shire Councils (Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and Bega Valley) have condemned the use of the factory freezer fishing trawlers in the waters off their respective coastlines, acknowledging the effect on tourism and recreational angling.

We are also gravely concerned that the AFMA S.P.F. By-catch and Discarding Workplan 2014-2016 mentions sea mammals but does not consider other pelagic game fish and sharks which are being impacted upon.

There are so many questions about this fishery to which the answers are not being provided. This is despite the fact that AFMA observers are on board and technology exists to monitor and reveal all the details of the fishing activities and by-catch. These details need to be published to confirm that intensive localized fishing is not occurring and that protected and vulnerable species, game fish, sharks, whales, dolphins, marine mammals and whale sharks are not taken or interfered with as part of the fishing effort."

We trust that the above statement will help to provide the Committee with the current community perspective and grave concerns that extend out beyond the normal key stakeholders and industry representatives that generally feel comfortable or experienced to make submissions to such an Inquiry.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions

Ginny Gerlach

Marine Campaigner

Environment Tasmania

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