

SUBMISSION NO. 39
Inquiry into the Role of Science for
Fisheries and Aquaculture



25 June 2012

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry

Dear Committee Member

Inquiry into fisheries and aquaculture science by the House Fisheries Committee

The Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) is a national organisation that represents the interests of over 800 wholesale and retail providers of goods and services to Australia's 5 million recreational anglers.

Though there are no comprehensive studies on the economic contribution of recreational fishing to Australia's economy there are estimates that the contribution could be as high as \$10 billion a year through direct expenditure associated with the activity of going fishing. A number of regional studies confirm that recreational fishing is a significant contributor to the economies of many rural and regional communities. For example, a study by Ernest and Young for VR Fish Victoria revealed that the Murray Cod recreational fishery in Victoria contributed \$2.3 billion in direct expenditure, \$825 million to Gross State Product (GSP) and 5,200 jobs in Victoria.

The access to Australia's fisheries for recreational fishers is increasingly being regulated at the Federal and state levels. Currently, the Federal Government is undertaking a process of developing bioregional plans for Australia's Commonwealth waters. Plans are being developed for five regions, the Coral Sea, East Temperate, South West, North west and Northern regions. As part of this process the Government aims to develop a system of marine reserves that when finalised will form part of the Australian Government component of the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas (NRSMPA).

AFTA is concerned that recreational fishing activities are being excluded from Marine Reserves (Marine National Park Zone (IUCN II)) without a sound scientific justification. As a result there is likely to be unnecessary economic and social impacts on Australia's rural and regional communities. AFTA's policy position on the determination of Marine Reserves is a simple one – 'Don't lock us out' unless there is a sound scientific reason to do so (see www.afta.net.au).

However, we are finding that our request, not an unreasonable one, is being met with an answer that the science on the implications of recreational fishing is incomplete or unavailable. We see this as an untenable answer to our request when thousands of kilometres of Australia's oceans are being determined to be 'out of bounds' for recreational fishing – apparently because of the impact of recreational fishing on the marine environment being protected.

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AFTA would value the opportunity to address the Committee on this issue and other key issues relating to science and the formation of policy that affects Australia's 5 million recreational anglers.

Yours faithfully

Allan Hansard
Chief Executive