



Submission:

Scalefish Fishery Tasmania

ISSUE: Sustainable fishing in Tasmania

SUBJECT: Opportunities to help guide the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (DNRE) and its management of the Scalefish Fishery in Tasmania

INTRODUCTION:

The Boating Industry Association Ltd (BIA) is the peak industry body in Australia that represents the interests of boating which includes designers, manufacturers, importers, brokers, insurers, retailers, charters, yacht and boat clubs, marinas, events, surveyors and trades from boat builders to riggers, and more. BIA is an advocate for boaters and the boating lifestyle and supports safe, responsible, and enjoyable boating. BIA has members in all States and Territories, including Tasmania. It should be noted the BIA Victoria is a stand-alone, State-based and separate entity.

The national boating economy generates significant benefits through employment. Last year the industry reported national turnover of \$9.55 billion, directly employed more than 26,000 people with more than 8000 contractors.

For context, a snapshot of Tasmanian boaters is as follows:

- 1:17 have a registered boat; more likely 1:5 have a craft of one type or another for fishing
- 1:8 Have a boat licence
- 79% use their boats for fishing*
- 90% of boats less than 6m used for fishing*
- Average sized Tasmanian boat 5.20m

*Source, MAST surveys

This opportunity to comment is open until midnight **Monday 29 May 2023** with submissions able to be sent via email to: scalefish.review@nre.tas.gov.au

SUBMISSION:

BIA welcomes the call by DNRE for comments on its proposals on the management of the Scalefish Fishery in Tasmania.



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BIA however shares with TARFish, AFTA and a number of key marine businesses in Tasmania a general concern regarding DNRE's troubling proposals. We support in general the wider comments by TARFish and this paper is focused primarily on proposed changes affecting Sand Flathead as this is the fishery that will most affect recreational fishing for majority of Tasmanians.

BIA supports sustainability and that includes not only environmental factors related to the fishery but boating participation, boating businesses, boating jobs and participation in all forms of boating, across paddle, power and sail.

When it comes to legislative, regulatory or significant government strategy and policy, BIA supports long-term evidence-based, objective analysis of relevant data considered against a quadruple bottom line approach to achieve a true balance of social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits. Less than satisfactory data/ analysis and/ or a lack of balanced outcomes can and does lead to stakeholder and community concern.

Fishery Management

DNRE is proposing drastic reductions in bag limits such as cutting Sand Flathead from 20 to 2 fish. This new reduction is just one part of the sweeping changes proposed which have the appearance of being made with less than satisfactory disclosure and transparency regarding data quality, analysis and assumptions.

The DNRE proposal under the current Scalefish Fishery Rule Review is causing alarm within the sector.

BIA is concerned the process and proposals raise questions regarding DNRE management of the fishery through time.

Social Benefit

Boating is a way of life for many residents of Tasmania. You only have to walk the waterfront of any major centre to realise the importance of Tasmania's connection with the waterways.

With more than 85 per cent of the population living within 50km of the coast, it is little wonder that almost 1 in 5 households can have a boat or watercraft. It is important to note, people of all ages, gender and ability can participate in boating. That includes boat-based fishing which represents more than 75% of the reason why people go boating.



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Award-winning marine biologist Dr Wallace Nichols is internationally renowned for his study into Blue Mind which, though a scientific evidence-based approach, has shown getting out on the water in a boat promotes rest, with significant physiological and psychological benefits. He has found that with our lives getting increasingly busy and stressed, boating is the perfect way to unwind and relax.¹

On a boat, feel-good hormones (dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin) go up, while stress (cortisol) goes down.²

Dr Nichols says: “Being on a boat is one of the best ways to access the wellness benefits of the water”.³

Through his research work, Dr. Nichols has identified that the mere sight and sound of water promotes wellness by lowering cortisol, increasing serotonin and inducing

relaxation. Being on the water promotes physiological and psychological benefits that help manage trauma, anxiety, sleep, autism, addiction, fitness, attention/focus, stress, grief, PTSD, build personal resilience, and much more.

DNRE’s proposals will cause: distress amongst the fishing public; people to give up boating and choose not to get into boating; and disrupt families.

BIA is concerned for people who are poised to buy new boats and gear, but who will cancel those plans if the DNRE proposals are implemented. This is reinforced by feedback from dealers at AGFEST who had customers saying they would “sell their boats” if it was not viable to go fishing.

BIA is also concerned people who enjoy fishing (more than 75% of all boats are used for fishing) may be forced to head further offshore to look for other species; and that 90% of all boats used for fishing are less than 6m in length which raises safety concerns of relatively small craft forced to head further offshore therefor putting more people at risk.

¹ <http://www.wallacejnichols.org/122/bluemind.html>

² <https://www.discoverboating.com/sites/default/files/downloads/YourBrainOnABoat.pdf>

³ <https://www.discoverboating.com/your-brain-on-a-boat>



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Economy & Jobs

In Tasmania, the boating and marine industry is deeply connected with the fishing sector which collectively contributes close to \$1 billion to the State economy and supports more than 9000 direct jobs in Tasmania. Seventy-five per cent are in small family businesses, employing local workers and supporting local communities, along with State and National economies.

The above does not factor in the \$1.11 billion Tourism directly contributes to Tasmania's economy and of course boating has a significant impact on this sector due to the high-value Tasmania places on getting out, on, by and in the waterways of the State.

DNRE is already causing distress to boating related businesses and threatens job security and growth.

BIA is concerned there is little evidence that appropriate modelling has been undertaken on the potential economic and jobs impact by DNRE.

Compliance of Flathead Catch

DNRE intends to apply what appears to be an ill-considered Flathead compliance plan based around people handing over wholefish or as fillets with heads and frames at boat ramps for Marine Police to 'enforce species-specific size and catch limits, which cannot be accurately applied to fillets'; and is looking at the banning of spearfishing which is hardly a major activity in Tasmania.

The fish frame compliance plan which is said to have a budget of \$2million is surely impractical and ill-considered when there are more than 300 boat ramps in Tasmania and an expectation that 'Marine Police' can and should be tasked to count fish and or heads and frames. Just how many Marine Police are needed to count fish frames at every relevant boat ramp and what will they do with the frames when inspected? Should these Police be taken off other priorities to count fish bones? Are more Marine Police going to be appointed in order to be stationed at boat ramps waiting for fishers to return with their catch?

BIA is concerned that a considerable force of Marine Police will be required to cover the geographic spread of ramps and the hours required to travel and inspect, and that surely the Marine Police have more than enough existing key priorities such as Crime, Security and Rescue to deliver on behalf of taxpayers.



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Waste Bins

DNRE also has flagged the extraordinary idea of installing waste collection bins at ramp sites for the fish frames, which in all likelihood, will most likely not be able to be inspected due to lack of compliance staff. These bins will be filled with inspected/ non-inspected fish frames and be left to rot until such time as the council can organise to collect and dispose of them, or local residents demand an end to the Department's ill-considered plan.

BIA recommends a more innovative, digital solution to monitoring catch (see under).

Spearfishing

And why ban spearfishing when it is such a small sector of the recreational fishing, and spear fishers are arguably more targeted in their approach to catch. It seems like the Department has included this activity because they think it is an easy target rather than applying a robust, long-term evidence-based objective analysis to the matter.

BIA calls upon DNRE to provide transparency to the long-term evidence, objective analysis and assumptions that underpin this proposed restriction.

Data Collection

DNRE appears to have fallen short of the required level of foundational work to demonstrate and or warrant the scale of their changes and compliance measures proposed under their plan.

BIA supports sustainable fishing but it also supports and encourages the application of robust, long-term evidence based upon objective analysis relevant to the subject matter; and analysis that is able to withstand independent peer review.

The DNRE data collection methodology is troubling regarding its duration and scope.

BIA recommends the application of innovation and technology to monitor catch. Furthermore, we recommend DNRE and the Minister consider the DECKEE App which is already the official endorsed app of Marine and Safety Tasmania (MAST), and is also partnering with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on incident reporting (marine pollution and marine farm debris) initiatives.



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DECKEE is an award winning, Australian-made free mobile app that supports Australians with their activities on the water (deckee.com). See **Appendix A**

It can enable anglers to easily log their fishing catches as a way to generate low-cost research data at scale, which can be analysed to help to ensure the long-term sustainability of fisheries.

DECKEE can support engagement, participation and empowerment of fishers in a citizen science project capturing valuable data from a real-time experience that can have long-term benefits in sustainability, including education of fishers. The data can enhance government collected data.

The DECKEE App already reaches 29,000 users in Tasmania spending time on the water for boating and fishing activities. This is equivalent to approx. 1/3 of estimated rec fishers in Tasmania. A preview of the functionality available via the app is at Appendix A.

Marine Police would be relieved of the duty to conduct compliance checks at every ramp but rather could do unannounced and random inspections to validate the DECKEE count.

RECOMMENDATION: To note the above and ask that the Tasmanian Government adopt the following:

1. Set the Sandy Flathead bag limit at 10 and no less than 350mm in length, and no longer than 450mm;
2. Set this requirement, and all other restrictions resulting from this Scalefish Fishery review, to be put in place for a period of 5 years;
3. Delivery transparent reporting of the collective annual data informing this work with interim annual reporting;
4. Engage DECKEE to enhance the DNRE data, for a genuinely robust data base from which to make well-informed analysis of the fishery; whilst encouraging shore-based and boat-based fishers to participate in the opportunities to support the sustainability of the fishery;
5. To use the app to send dedicated messages to recipients on any priority information related to the program;
6. Deliver a comprehensive review at the end of 5 years using all available and relevant data, delivered objective analysis and assumptions;



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7. Deliver Independent peer review of the report prior to finalisation;
8. Consider how to make most appropriate use of the Flathead breeding seasons to help recovery of species biomass; and
9. Deliver a sustained and funded education program to engage and inform the fishing public and stakeholders.

Declaration: BIA is a not-for-profit member association and has more than 600 marine businesses as members, one of those is DECKEE.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Neil Patchett, General Manager Government & Public Relations, e. neil@bia.org.au or m. 0418 279 465 on this matter.

References include:

<https://fishing.tas.gov.au/Documents/Scalefish-Rules-Review-Public-Consultation-Paper-2023.pdf>

<https://www.imas.utas.edu.au/news/news-items/economic-contribution-of-fisheries-and-aquaculture-in-tasmania>

<https://www.tourismtasmania.com.au/industry/facts/>

Issue date: 26 May 2023



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APPENIX A

In Tasmania, DECKEE App is already the official endorsed app of Marine and Safety Tasmania (MAST), and is also partnering with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on incident reporting (marine pollution and marine farm debris) initiatives. A preview of functionality is:

