



The Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP

Minister for Primary Industries

Minister for Small Business

MEDIA RELEASE

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COMMERCIAL FISHERIES REPORT RELEASED

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, today released the Independent Report into NSW Commercial Fisheries Policy, Management and Administration.

The Report meets the NSW Liberals & Nationals pre-election commitment to comprehensively examine policy, management and administration practices related to our State's commercial fishing industry.

"The NSW Government welcomes the Report, and I can announce today that as part of the first stage of the reform process, the NSW Government will:

1. Roll out a comprehensive structural adjustment program to address the problem of excess/poorly defined fishing rights and ensure ownership of fishing entitlements is more closely linked to the level of access to the resource;
2. Reform governance processes to achieve a proper balance of responsibilities and accountabilities within Government and industry to restore confidence in decision making; and
3. Reform consultation mechanisms to deliver effective processes and structures that will promote co-ordinated advice, communication and feedback between Government and industry.

The Report was very clear – it found that "industry frustration with the "stop/go" history of share management and structural adjustment, and constant changes to the reform process, caused by many Government policy reversals over 15 years, led to a breakdown in trust, respect and working relations between the industry and government and even within government itself".

"Numerous previous reviews were conducted by the former Labor Government, yet none were fully implemented due to a lack of political commitment and financial resources, leaving many commercial fishermen struggling financially.

"The structural adjustment reform announced today will address the former Labor Government's failure to not implement share management properly, resulting in the over-allocation of access rights in most fisheries.

"Shares within each share class will be linked to resource access (i.e. catch or fishing effort) by the end of 2014.

"Today's announcement also meets the original intention of share management of NSW Fisheries, as was envisaged when the *Fisheries Management Act* was originally

enacted under the former NSW Liberals & Nationals Government in 1994,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“Unless this Government takes action, and brings about positive reform for the commercial fisheries industry, things will continue to worsen and as Minister for Primary Industries I am not prepared to stand by and allow that to occur,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

“This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and viable commercial fishing industry in NSW which provides sufficient supply of high quality local seafood to local consumers, while maintaining the sustainability of the State’s fishery resource,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

Ms Hodgkinson said the NSW Government will establish a new Industry Liaison Position which will be key to implementing the review outcomes. Recruitment for this new position will commence shortly.

The NSW Government has committed \$16 million prior to the last election to assist in restructuring the commercial fishing industry and it will honour this commitment.

“There will be an 18 month industry consultation phase to determine the detail of the new arrangements set to commence by the end of 2014,” Ms Hodgkinson said.

As part of the second stage of the reform process, the NSW Government will develop a detailed final response to the Review Report’s 22 key recommendations.

The Report has been made publically available and can be found on the DPI website

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries/commercial/reform/review

ⁱ Stevens, R. et al. March 2012. *Independent Review Report into NSW Commercial Fisheries Policy, Management and Administration*. Page ii.