

Mr. P. Blencowe
Secretary,
Legislative Review Committee,
Parliament of South Australia,
Parliament House,
North Terrace,
ADELAIDE SA 5000

14 August 2000

ROCK LOBSTER FISHING REVIEW

Dear Mr. Blencowe,

Advice has recently been received to indicate that a Parliamentary Review has been initiated into aspects of Rock Lobster Fishing activities in South Australia.

Although the Boating Industry Association of South Australia (BIASA) is not necessarily directly concerned with the actual fishing processes (either recreational or commercial) we are vitally concerned with initiatives related to light commercial and recreational boating activities in this State.

I hope that you and your Parliamentary colleagues will find the following material of some assistance in your deliberations.

By way of introduction we present the following synopsis of our own industry interests:

An Introduction: The Boating Industry Association of South Australia

The Boating Industry Association of South Australia Inc. (BIASA), one of five stakeholders of the national body, the Australian Marine Industries Federation Ltd., is a not for profit industry association incorporated in the early 1960's.

BIASA is structured into a number of operating Divisions each having specialist interests as follows:

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| — <i>Boat and Engine Retailers,</i> | — <i>Houseboat Hire,</i> |
| — <i>Boat Builders and Naval Architects,</i> | — <i>Marina Operators (Coastal and River Chapters),</i> |
| — <i>Boating Industry Environment Group,</i> | — <i>Sail Industry Group,</i> |
| — <i>Boat Sports Group,</i> | — <i>South Coast, Alexandrina Operators and</i> |
| — <i>Charter/Hire Operators,</i> | — <i>Technical Equipment Suppliers.</i> |
| — <i>Chandlery Retailers,</i> | |
| — <i>Heritage/Historic Wooden Boats,</i> | |

The Association has a total membership of approaching 200 bodies, which together, represent the interests of around 2,500 separate parties and through the South Australian Recreation Boating Council, another 49,000 (approximately) powerboat owners.

All members are required to abide by a strict Code of Ethics, in terms of their commercial dealings and also in guaranteeing "best practice" in matters affecting the natural environment.

BIASA "owns" and manages the annual "Adelaide Boatshow".

The essential objective of the Association is to maintain/improve the sustainability of the Recreational and Light Commercial Boating Industry in South Australia.

The Association believes that the Boating Industry is of substantial and growing importance to this State.

BIASA promotes holiday and recreational boating and related marine/riverine activities as safe, environmentally sound and responsible past-times for all members of the community.

In the pursuit of its objective, BIASA aims, by expanding the number of private holiday and recreational craft in use and by increasing the usage and occupancy levels of existing hire and charter craft, to encourage the development of additional worthwhile marine facilities and to assist in the evolution and management of sound environmental practises.

In the conduct of its daily business BIASA shares constructive relationships with organisations from all three levels of Government in Australia and in this State has contact with and, on behalf of its membership, lobbies organisations positioned within the following State Portfolios:

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| ↪ Aboriginal Affairs, | ↪ Premier and Cabinet, |
| ↪ Consumer Affairs, | ↪ Primary Industries, |
| ↪ Environment and Heritage, | ↪ Recreation and Sport, |
| ↪ Education, | ↪ Tourism, |
| ↪ Emergency Services, | ↪ Treasury, |
| ↪ Local Government, | ↪ Transport and |
| ↪ Police, | ↪ Water Resources |

BIASA provides policy advice and consulting services to a number of these agencies.

In addition BIASA serves a number of public and private sector working parties and policy groups including several tourism bodies at Local, State and National levels and a range of other policy groups which enfold: Ramsar, the South Australian Recreational Boating Council, the South Australian Recreational Fishers Advisory Council, River Port of Goolwa Authority, the SA Boating Facility Advisory Committee (SABFAC) and others.

It is SABFAC which is responsible for making recommendations to Minister of Transport, Diana Laidlaw regarding the expenditure of funds which accrue from contributions annually made by the owners of powerboats registered in South Australia and supplementary State Treasury funds, totalling, with Local Government support included, around \$3million each year.

BIASA, through its own operating Divisions is actively pursuing the development of major, capital, projects in a number of locations including:

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| ↪ Kingscote, | ↪ Edithburg, |
| ↪ Middle Beach, | ↪ Kingston, SE, |
| ↪ St. Kilda, | ↪ Renmark, |
| ↪ Wallaroo, | ↪ Victor Harbor, |
| ↪ Port Adelaide, | ↪ Murray Bridge and |
| ↪ Port Vincent, | ↪ Goolwa. |

Every State in Australia and the Northern Territory, too, is serviced by similar "BIASA" organisations and each of these contributes to the operation of a National/Federal Office, the Boating Industry Association of

Australia (BIAA), which also operates as the Australian Marine Industries Federation which is based in Sydney.

The industry was the subject of a Federal Government funded national survey, conducted by ERG Australia, in 1998. In 1999 a wider study was undertaken to provide statistical data on both the National and State scenarios.

Although the results of the latest study have not been finalised an analysis of the "National Figures" provided in the 1998 review suggests that the South Australian "Recreational and Light Marine Industry" "boasts":

- An annual national retail turnover of approaching \$90 Million,
- An annual "boat and accessories" production value of nearly \$35 Million,
- Capital investments totalling in excess of \$100 Million,
- Total Number of "directly employed" persons is approximately 1800,
- An annual payroll exceeding \$40 Million and
- The number of recreational boats plying SA waters exceeds 55 000.

A number of industry sectors, particularly in regional South Australia rely largely for their livelihoods on the pursuits of recreational boaties/fishers.

A recent study effected by PIRSA, "South Australian Fisheries Management Series, Paper No. 36: Review of Recreational Fishing in South Australia:

A MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF RECREATIONAL FISHING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA",

..... provides an interesting set of statistics/ a profile of the recreational fishery in South Australia:

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| 1. Number of Recreational Fishers over 5 years who fish at least once annually: | 453 000 |
| 2. Number of fishers living in the metro area: | 268 000 |
| <i>Extrapolation #1: 185 000 fishers reside in country/regional areas</i> | |
| 3. Proportion of metro based fishers who fish mainly in country regions: | 68% |
| <i>Extrapolation #2: 182 200 metro based fishers fish in country regions</i> | |
| 4. Proportion of country based fishers who fish mainly in the country: | 93% |
| <i>Extrapolation #3: 7% of country based fishers fish in metro areas: 12 950</i> | |

This table suggests that over 180 000 metropolitan based fishers visit country venues and nearly 13 000 country based fishers visit metropolitan areas at least once each year in pursuit of their recreation.

That is; a total of nearly 200 000 recreational fishers "take a "short/s" holiday (to adopt SA Tourism Commission nomenclature) annually. The largest proportion of these 180 000 (90%) are annual visitors to country localities in SA.

The positive economic impact of these holidays in South Australia is enormous: probably the essential sustenance for many coastal/River/Lakes communities.

The report also provides:

1. The replacement value of boats owned by recreational fishers aged over 15: \$893Million
2. The total capital investment in recreational boats and tackle: \$1.112Billion

The BIASA, which represents the Recreational and Light Commercial Boating Sector, together with representatives of other (connected) sectors, including those associated with Recreation and Sport, Tourism, Local Government and others would, we are certain, all be pleased to see further development rather than decline in these impressive numbers.

Whilst there have been some benefits introduced during the last few years, particularly in the development of improved boating facilities, the implementation of a number of initiatives by Federal, State and Local Government agencies have been to the detriment of this important "Recreational Fishing/Boating Industry".

Such demerits include

- Increases in Registration Fees for boats,
- Increases in the Registration Fees for trailers,
- Introduction of the Recreational Boating Levy (which has, to its credit, delivered some magnificent and worthwhile facilities"),
- Introduction of "Launching/Retrieval" Fees at ramps etc,
- Introduction of the Emergency Services Levy,
- Extension of "Closed Seasons" on some species,
- Reduction in Bag and Boat (Catch)Limits,
- Increases in fuel costs for boats and tow vehicles...

...have all led to spiralling costs and/or depressed conditions which do tend to encourage the Recreational Fisher to stay at home rather than to enjoy the touring/cruising/recreational opportunities offered in abundance in South Australia.

In addition to the downturns reported by many businesses reliant on "tourism income" the opportunities available to businesses in the marine and other related sectors (which include tackle and bait suppliers and a range of service organisations involved in the provision of services and supplies to those with boats etc) have also been reduced.

The BIASA is of the opinion that, to reverse the downward trend the State Government should, at the earliest opportunity, offer some form of "assistance" to encourage the optimum level of activity in this "Recreational/Tourism/Boating/Fishing Industry".

The provision of some form of "modest" access to Rock Lobster fishing, for the recreational fisher would be a very welcome initiative.

Further to this "tourism/recreation function" the BIASA has its membership distributed throughout all regions that enjoy a Coastal, Riverine or Lakes environment. Our close network of members and our rewarding relationships with the various, relevant Local Government Offices confirm that, many such rural centres are experiencing;

- A significant, incoming drift of once metropolitan based "families",
- These "families" are often retired couples seeking a new more relaxed lifestyle,
- The age of these couples is often under 60 years,
- They enjoy (seemingly) self provided retirement incomes,
- Many enjoy fishing/boating as a recreational pursuit,

- They make substantial use of existing (regional) service providers (hospitality and other industries),
- These "families" encourage increased weekend long/vacation visitation from urban based friends and relatives,
- These "families" have decided on a South Australian retirement rather than an emigration to Queensland or other interstate destinations,
- They make a significant positive impact on the economy of the local community,
- The largest proportion of these "retirees" is to be found in coastal locations,
- Country communities appear to welcome such "new" residents.

As outlined above, a number of initiatives taken at Local, State, and/or Federal levels encourage the utilisation of small craft but the majority have had a serious, negative impact.

The BIASA recommends that additional considerations should be extended to Recreational Fishers in South Australia.

For the purposes of this Parliamentary Enquiry, the BIASA recommends that:

Recreational Fishers be provided with access to the South Australian Public Resource: the Rock Lobster Fishery.

From our research we believe that the introduction of this initiative:

- Should not have a dramatic impact on the operations or the viability of Commercial Fishers, but
- Will provide significant benefits to Recreational Fishers and to the Local Communities where they reside/where they visit.

We are aware that the new arrangement is likely to herald the introduction of a number of administrative routines/management controls.

BIASA may be able to assist in the development and management of such controls.

I would be pleased to discuss this paper at any time.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Glen Jones
General Manager