

Our Fishing FUTURE

- a healthy marine environment enjoyed by all
- taking pride in an abundant and healthy marine environment where our community extends manaakitanga over our fisheries and oceans
- unity and inclusion within the recreational fishing community
- equity of access through stakeholder engagement
- understanding and valuing our marine environment and its resources so we can all be responsible for a better future

31 May 2017

Media Release: Bold decision reaps benefits

A bold political decision ten years ago in Western Australia may provide a roadmap for fisheries management reform in New Zealand. When the Western Australia fisheries minister backed the formation of statutory organisations to represent both recreational and commercial fishers, the risk of political backlash was high.

Although there was a bit of controversy at the time, all sectors in Western Australia are now supportive of the changes that were made.

Our Fishing Future president Geoff Rowling has just returned from a fisher exchange in Perth where a series of presentations was made by the key Western Australian groups. The group from New Zealand, supported by the New Zealand Initiative, included participants from customary, commercial and recreational fishers along with a Ministry for Primary Industries representative.

“We heard about the battles that used to take place between the sectors and how now the more professionally structured groups achieve much better outcomes. This particularly benefits the fish, with both recreational and commercial fishers being viewed more favourably by the wider community for their much improved stewardship of the marine resources. Commercial fishers have been funded to willingly retire some fishing licenses and some areas are now recreational only. “

With commercial fishers being represented by West Australia Fishing Industry Council (WAFIC) and recreational by Recfishwest, a much more level playing field has been created. Problems are discussed and solutions sought. Whenever possible these are jointly presented to the Fisheries Minister, rather than forcing the minister to take sides.

These organisations receive funds to operate, with commercial via a levy system and recreational via licensing of some fishers. In New Zealand commercial and customary fishers are well organised and adequately resourced. If we aspire to having collaborative fisheries management similar to Western Australia, recreational fishers need similar capability.

“Recfishwest is a very capable organisation assisting with good information gathering to back allocation discussions along with being active in fisheries enhancement directly, including through the building of artificial reef structures. Recreational fishers are generally happy with their organisation as they enjoy the benefits of improved representation.

Two key decisions have been the catalyst for change. These were the original decision by the Minister to deal only with the recognised groups and payment to commercial operators when their fishing rights were diminished on agreeable terms.”

Our Fishing Future looks forward to recreational fishers playing a more active role in fisheries management decision making in New Zealand, with the support of an adequately funded representative body.

Geoff Rowling
President

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ourfishingfuture.org.nz