

14<sup>th</sup> March 2016

Australian Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture  
Productivity Commission  
GPO Box 1428  
Canberra ACT 2601

## **AMPTO Submission**

### **Background**

AMPTO has been actively involved in several commercial fisheries licence buy back schemes and in lobbying to have net free areas such as the Trinity Inlet off Cairns.

In the last 12 years we have seen dramatic reductions in commercial fishing with the \$250 million structural adjustment package provided when the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) was rezoned, the reduction in licences to fish in the Gulf of Capricorn, the fin fish closures on the GBR, the fisheries buy back scheme by the QLD Government and the latest net free zones being declared in QLD.

There is a concerted lobbying effort to further restrict fishing in QLD waters and to prohibit fishing in the Coral Sea.

AMPTO feels that enough is enough! It is time to provide some degree of certainty to commercial fishermen so that they can get on with their future.

### **Cost Recovery**

While one would expect that the reduction in the number of commercial operators would mean that the remaining operators were more financially viable with larger catches, this has not proven to be the case across the board and while some fisheries might be profitable and able to sustain a cost recovery, most would be pushed to the wall if full cost recovery was applied.

The other issue with cost recovery is that recreational fishers use the same resource but pay nothing. This is clearly inequitable.

AMPTO believes that the cost of managing indigenous fishing, conservation and consumer interests is a public good issue and should be funded from government funds not as part of cost recovery from commercial fishing.

### **Coral Sea**

The proposal to cease both commercial and recreational fishing effort in the Coral Sea is another example of over protection that will result in minimal, if any, benefit to Australia. AMPTO supports zoning the Coral Sea as a marine park but it must be a multi-use park.

With only a hand full of commercial fishermen, there is no possibility that those fishermen could pay cost recovery for fisheries management of the whole of the Coral Sea. Illegal fishing by foreign fishermen must be stopped and this is clearly a government responsibility, not the commercial fishermen.

Putting laws in place with no ability to enforce them does not show common sense.

Recreational effort in the Coral Sea is so small owing to the size of vessels needed to access it that there appears to be no logical reason to stop recreational fishing and QLD bag limits would apply once the vessel returned to QLD waters.

The game fishing industry needs access to the Coral Sea and given that this industry is largely catch and release, again, it is hard to see the gains in prohibiting their activity.

Yours sincerely,

**Col McKenzie**  
**Executive Director**