

Notes on Productivity commission draft report

With the exception of the brief mention of implementing tagging for high-value recreational take, I read many of the points conveyed in the draft report with dismay.

It just goes to show how little the layman understands about wild harvest fishing and why so many disastrous decisions are made. It just goes to show why small business is being crippled in Australia. Not long ago Tony Abbot encouraged us to 'Have a go, Australia was 'open for business''. Since then we have seen more burdensome regulation and such a spike in costs that even big shipping companies are closing down let alone small business operators.

The enquiry should have been focused on improving our profitability – not re-inventing harvest strategies. Isn't that the role of fisheries managers?

1. The idea that Quota is the best way to manage a fishery is simplistic and dangerous. The MRAG recommendations to Quota Queensland's inshore multi target gill net fisheries was preposterous. It is obvious to me that the authors are out of their depth and should refrain from making such ridiculous claims. What answers do the authors have to a multitude of complex questions that would arise if we had to consider quota in some fisheries? Do the authors have any idea about what it is we actually do out on the fishing grounds?
2. If third party accreditation does not remove the requirement for EPBC accreditation then it is a total waste of time for many inshore fisheries. Third Party Accreditation needs to be economically rewarding. Until it is then do not impose it on us
3. It is preposterous for the authors of the draft to think that we would be stupid enough to believe that the commissioner believes that the general public will be satisfied when they can see the level of interactions with threatened and endangered species. I do not think the commissioner can be this stupid. I smell a rat! Consequently I am suspicious about the whole draft and what it is designed to do.
4. When will people accept that the commercial sector supplies fish to those who can't catch it themselves? When I stop commercial fishing I don't want to have to catch a fish I want to be able to buy good quality local seafood. If Govt and community continue to bow to the minority of people who can afford to catch it themselves then one day the general community will not be able to enjoy local seafood anymore. Govt needs to start working with us to try to help our bottom lines and to reassure community that there will be long-term access to local healthy seafood.
5. *The Commission would value feedback on approaches for setting catch limits.* What? Why would the Commission want to know about this? Queensland is currently examining this. Just reading the draft I recommend the commission stays right away from this.
6. Qld already has a resource allocation policy. Jim Groves signed off on it in 2002. Please don't say we need one because it implies you are not aware of the current policy's existence. Sure, review it but it seems pretty good to me. Trouble is, no one takes any notice of it.
7. Transferable quota systems between resources will be a disaster. You say that the resource will shift to those who value it most. What you don't consider is

each sector's ability to pay (among a raft of other very serious implications). And I hope your not talking about making existing commercial quota available to other sectors. There are many complex questions the commissioner must have answers for if in fact this is what is being suggested. This is getting worse paragraph by paragraph.

8. Forget about latent effort removal that has been done already. There are ways of reducing platforms that the commissioner is not aware of. I don't think this productivity report is the place to have this type of discussion. That's for fisheries managers isn't it?
9. *Some industry participants asked that the Commission recommend that mandatory country-of-origin labelling be extended to seafood sold for immediate consumption. This is unnecessary for public policy (food safety and consumer protection) reasons, which are adequately dealt with under existing law.* I did not think that the commissioner should make this observation, which dismisses the push for CoOL. Consumers have a right to know and are currently being ripped of because Govt refuses to act.
10. Very disappointed about the comments on Safe Food Accreditation.

Sorry I give up.

Is it any wonder our fisheries and stakeholders are heading for the bottom of the barrel. It is just amazing that Govt agencies can keep imposing restrictions on our nations producers and handicapping small business to the point of poverty. Where on earth will our countries revenue come from after you guys sell us out?

No more comments from me. And not interested in working with you guys on this any more. It's a waste of time.

Robert Pender