

1 September 2020

The Hon Adam Marshall, MP
Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Delays in review of recreational fishing access to Sydney water impoundments

Dear Minister,

The NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers, formed in 1958, is the peak representative body for the State's freshwater anglers, focusing on fisheries management, conservation and regulatory matters, angler access, angling ethics, animal welfare and politics.

For decades, recreational fishers have lobbied NSW governments for fishing access to water impoundments around Sydney. Recreational fishing access to those impoundments is very restricted, but careful relaxation of restrictions would provide a significant recreational benefit, as well as an economic boost to businesses on the fringe of the metropolitan area.

In 2016 your predecessor Niall Blair agreed to a review and requested a study and report. Consulting Firm Pulse Environmental, led by Mr Danny Simpson, was commissioned to undertake the study. The study was paid for with \$30,000 from the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust. Pulse Consulting consulted widely with various stakeholders, including NSW DPI Fisheries, WaterNSW, and recreational fishing representatives from the Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council and the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust.

The study was completed in 2018 and at the end of that year a report was supposedly handed to Niall Blair, the minister at the time. The Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council meeting minutes from 22 November 2018 note that "DPI informed Council that the risk assessment into recreational fishing in Sydney water supply reservoirs has been peer reviewed and will be sent to stakeholders for comment before being sent to the Minister for consideration." Unfortunately, it was NOT sent to stakeholders at all. Then the 4 February 2019 meeting minutes state that "DPI advised the risk assessment report has been finalised and is being provided to the Minister for consideration."

Since then we have made enquiries to various managers within NSW DPI Fisheries but have been unable to find out the progress of the report. Instead we have been fobbed off with obfuscatory responses, including from NSW DPI's Mr Jim Harnwell on 28 May 2019, "The Department is currently facilitating a report on the risk assessment process, including some of the issues raised in the risk assessment, for the consideration of the Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW, the Hon Adam Marshall", and in a phone conversation with our Hon Secretary Radge Diakiw on 29 May, Mr Harnwell advised that DPI Fisheries refused to release the report or state when it would be available.

In May 2019 and again in June 2019 the President of the Recreational Fishing Alliance also asked the chairs of the Recreational Fishing NSW Advisory Council and the Recreational Fishing Freshwater Trust to release a copy of the report. These requests were ignored.

On 18 June 2019 the NSW CFA received an email from Mr Cameron Westaway (NSW DPI) stating “it is appropriate for the risk assessment report to be submitted to our Minister for his consideration before it is made publicly available. I can assure you that the report will be provided to all relevant parties of interest as soon as possible.”

The study was funded by recreational fishers’ licence fees held in the Recreational Fishing Trusts. The long delay in revealing the recommendations of the report and any response by the NSW government is unacceptable—it renders the Trust’s expenditure a total waste of anglers’ licence contributions.

Can you please update us on when that report will be considered by you and when its contents will be made public?

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Gibson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter Gibson
President, NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers