



The Hon. Dugald Saunders MP
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Western New South Wales

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IM22/16308

Mr Radge Diakiw
Secretary
NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers Inc
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Dear Mr Diakiw

Thank you for your letter regarding netting of Australian Bass in the Macleay River. I appreciate the reasons that have prompted you to write, and I apologise for the delay in responding.

I assure you the NSW Government is committed to a sustainable and viable commercial fishing industry that supplies the community with fresh local seafood and bait. Changes to access arrangements for different sectors will generally only be made where there is information to suggest change needs to be made to protect fish stocks, or there is consensus between the relevant harvest sector groups to make changes for some other objective, such as social benefits.

The use of meshing nets by licenced commercial fishers in the Macleay River is governed by a suite of strict regulations including effort quota, gear restrictions, and temporal and spatial closures. For example, from the Smithtown Bridge upstream to the Kempsey Railroad Bridge a meshing net can only be used by the method of splashing during the months of May to August. From the Smithtown Bridge to the Jerseyville Bridge a meshing net can only be used by the method of splashing or set for a period of two hours during the months of May to August.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI), Fisheries informs me the report of Australian Bass being caught was not an illegal fishing event. It was an accidental catch related to the fish being further down the estuary than normal for this time of year.

The net was being used by a licenced NSW commercial fisher authorised to take fish via the method of a meshing net. The area in which the net was being used is an area known for splashing. This is where a commercial fisher sets a net and then runs back along the net splashing the water to encourage fish to swim in the direction of the net prior to immediately retrieving the net.

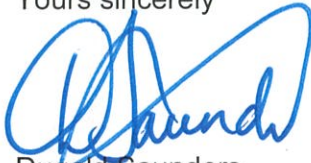
In the process of retrieving the net, the commercial fisher came across a section of the net in which Australian Bass had been caught. The commercial fisher made efforts to remove the Australian Bass alive, including calling in assistance from other commercial fishers. The commercial fisher reported that very few of the Australian Bass in the net were dead.

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I trust this is of assistance, however, if you have any further enquiries, I have asked Dr Andrew Moriarty, Director Fisheries Compliance, to be available to answer any questions you may have. Dr Moriarty can be contacted on 0407 295 879.

Thank you for taking the time to bring this matter to the Government's attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Saunders', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Dugald Saunders
MINISTER