



ENJOY FRESH LOCAL WILDCAUGHT SEAFOOD...WHILE YOU CAN

18 December 2014

Make everyday special by enjoying fresh, local caught seafood this festive season. Our local NSW fishing fleet is bringing in high quality, fresh fish, prawns, crabs and lobsters that will help make this time of year even more special.

And it might be your last festive season of enjoying locally caught seafood before it becomes a luxury item.

Tricia Beatty, Executive Officer for the Professional Fishermen's Association today said "for some of our fisheries, it may be that there just won't be the number of fishermen around anymore to bring a steady, reliable flow of local seafood for our NSW community."

"Our fishing industry is currently going through an intensive reform program aimed at restructuring our industry. Let me emphasise from the outset that this is not about sustainability of our fishing but about the structure of our industry," said Ms Beatty.

"Government over allocated the number of fishing shares in our industry and now is restructuring the industry to take up these inactive shares. Unfortunately, to do this, the Government will force our active fishermen to buy up the many inactive shares. This is a far cry from when Government first introduced share management to our industry as a strong property right" Ms Beatty said.

Our fishermen are trying to work with the Government to find ways to restructure the industry and ensure our economic viability. But, our industry is facing an insecure time with increasing concern that there will be no future for many. Although the restructuring may work well in some of our fisheries, it has the potential of decimating others. The draft restructure options provided by the Government to the industry leaves us in serious doubt about whether there will be any industry left" Ms Beatty said.

The objective of the Reform Program is economic viability for the industry, unfortunately the burden will be placed on the fishers who are active and viable. It requires our active fishers to "buy-out" the non-active fishers. The Government has put \$13.5 million on the table, together with \$2 million of the industry's money, to assist those wishing to exit the industry to sell their shares to other fishers. However, even Government will acknowledge that \$15.5 million is not enough to neither fix the situation nor give any compensation to the industry for their investment.

Ms Beatty said "when you consider that the average age of our industry is 59, it is unlikely that a bank will approve loans for most fishers to invest further into this industry, forcing many to leave

our industry. No one can predict what the true impact of this restructuring will have on our industry and many fishers will simply cease to exist. It is devastating to see the 5th and 6th generational fishers no longer teaching their children to fish as they see no future in our industry anymore.

We are still working with the Government to reduce the burden on industry for the over allocation of shares and to assist the active fishers to stay in their fisheries. As you can imagine, it is a very uncertain and stressful time for our fishers with many facing significant mental health issues and working in unsafe conditions to increase their capital.”

Ms Beatty said “We call on the Minister and the Government to review the actual impact of these models on some of our fisheries and the likelihood of achieving fair economic viability without destroying livelihoods. Surely alternative fishery management tools can be employed where it can be demonstrated that the harm of the proposed model outweighs the benefits achieved.”

Enjoy your local seafood now in this festive season as the industry is very unsure of its future capacity to deliver fresh local seafood in the future. The NSW seafood industry wishes NSW seafood buyers a very merry Christmas and trust 2014 will deliver a viable healthy seafood industry for the future.

For media enquire please contact Tricia Beatty, Executive Officer of the PFA on 0429 303 371 or email eo@pfai.com.au.