

## **NSW Commercial Fishing Community Condemns Central Coast Taskforce Inaccuracies and Campaign**

9 February 2015

The NSW commercial fishing community condemns a new campaign by the Central Coast Taskforce seeking to close the livelihoods of commercial fishers and their families, and reduce the supply of fresh local seafood to NSW and Australia.

Tricia Beatty, Executive Officer of the Professional Fishermen's Association of NSW says, "The stance taken by the Central Coast Taskforce has the potential to be devastating for commercial fishing families, seafood consumers, seafood restaurants and retailers of New South Wales."

The Taskforce, in a full page advertisement taken out with the Daily Telegraph today, slanderously portrayed the commercial fishing community as illegal operators causing damage to fish nurseries and tourism alike and therefore calling for the banning of operators from Hawkesbury and Tuggerah Lakes. These statements are completely false and harmful. The commercial fishers who operate across NSW do so legally and under heavy restrictions and regulations.

"The lie purported by the Taskforce that millions of fish are killed illegally in the region is not only factually incorrect but also irresponsibly damaging to many hard working families, says Ms Beatty.

The Taskforce claims that tourism will be "killed" however; there are examples of when tourism has been damaged when commercial fishing operations have been removed from the region. Fresh local seafood is the main focus of many successful restaurants and cafes across NSW. Tourists and locals want to access fresh local seafood. To remove those who supply this resource creates a negative experience for tourists and locals. It also creates sourcing problems for our restaurants and cafes. People want to eat fresh, locally produced seafood but the Taskforce seems to want to drive people away from this crucial experience.

Ms Beatty says, "The Taskforce also implies that fish nurseries are "killed" by commercial fishers; yet another unfounded and disparaging claim. Recent studies prove that the major damage to fish nurseries is caused by urban runoff, pollution and development. NSW commercial fishers are fighting hard to protect fisheries habitat with significant time and monetary contributions. Furthermore, all commercial fishers pay an additional levee of 5c per box of any seafood sold through the Sydney Fish Market. This levee goes towards the funding of OceanWatch Australia, a Natural Resource Management group focused on restoring habitats and fish friendly practices."

"These are not illegal operators out to harm the environment – these are hardworking fishing families who significantly contribute to their regions and provide a flow on benefit to local employment and business ownership within NSW communities. To remove commercial fishing from this region will cause significant loss to our communities and on our industry's ability to provide local fresh prawns, fish and crabs to the seafood loving public of New South Wales and Australia," says Ms Beatty.

"We need to balance the various needs of the regional communities, but this should not lead to the closure of jobs and forcing families to move from our regions. We support conservation of the marine environment more than anyone. After all, our livelihoods depend on a healthy marine resource for generations to come, but we want this conservation based on real threats and scientific evidence, not misinformation and stereotyping.

**PFA providing effective representation on NSW commercial wild harvest fishing to all levels of government and other key stakeholders**

Australian fisheries are recognised globally for world-class sustainable seafood production. In New South Wales alone, millions of dollars are invested every year in research, management and policing to ensure fishing opportunities are sustained for current and future generations.

"We strongly reject the Taskforce's lies and stance and urge all New South Wales people who want economically thriving coastal communities and a healthy, sustainable seafood industry for generations to come to also reject their campaign of misinformation," said Ms Beatty.

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