

Commercial Fishers' Frustration and Fear for the Future

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Members of the Professional Fishermen's Association of NSW (PFA) reaction to the NSW Government newly revised recommendation for structural adjustment are highly mixed.

Ms Tricia Beatty, Executive Officer of the PFA said "As promised the NSW Government and SARC have delivered their recommendations which have taken into consideration the different share classes and regions. However, some fisheries have been hard hit and some relatively unscathed. While others have been put in an apparent "hold pattern" for another 2-5 years."

In some fisheries, such as Ocean Trawl, Ocean Trap & Line East, Hand Gathering and Purse Seine, the SARC has recommended that they go to a quota arrangement with the detail of the quota allocation to be worked out by an Independent Panel anywhere from 2016-2018. The NSW Government stated that this reform was about assisting fishing businesses to either exit or remain in the industry – how do some fishers know what they should do when they will not know what their shares will let them access until sometime in 2018.

"How can we, as an industry, make comment and decisions regarding the future of our fisheries when many of the recommendations have no detail? The detail is being left to an Independent Allocation Panel which industry cannot predict the outcome of," said Tricia Beatty.

"In other fisheries, especially our estuarine fisheries, the recommended allocation of quota are so low that the PFA fears it will create such an exodus of fishers from those specific fisheries that seafood production will be reduced and fishing families forced to move."

"There are also share classes who are very happy with these recommendations and hope that they can now just concentrate on just fishing once this process is finalised. However, the PFA is very much aware of those who will be negatively impacted and must now concentrate on working with those share classes and presenting evidence to the SARC on problems with their recommendations," said Ms Beatty.

Ms Beatty advised "We want a strong and viable industry. The PFA will be meeting with its members across NSW to discuss concerns and alternatives. We will then meet with the SARC and our political representatives to put our industry's concerns forward and negotiate a pathway to ensure the future and viability of all our fisheries.

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