

To the committee for Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Bill 2018

I Attila Feher-Holan wish to add as evidence to the hearing held in Cairns on the 10th October 2018 the following 3 points that I have uncovered during my 6 months of discussions, investigation and dealing with the commercial fishermen which haven't been adequately presented to the committee. I am not a commercial fisherman and was asked by local fishermen to assist them.

- I have noticed an increasing level of stress and psychological anguish akin to PTSD symptoms amongst a high number of fishermen and their families. As a veteran have seen the devastating effect PTSD has had on veterans first hand and I can clearly identify the dangerous emotional state some fishermen are currently in and endeavouring to get support to them. These stresses are having an effect on relationships and families with industry members having to provide support and guidance. I see a direct relationship between these increased stresses and VMS. The industry has an inherent stress that is proportionally higher due to the amount of monitoring, searches, communication and documentation recording already required by commercial fishermen to provide to various government departments. There must be proper consultation and research conducted into these social and health impacts and whether the increased associated work load is practicable and reasonable in order for fishers to meet compliance objectives before VMS is introduced through the bill. Failing to do so would be negligence.
- The working relationship between commercial fishermen and Fisheries Queensland is on the verge of being irreparable due to the methods used during inspections and enforcement. The bill needs to be amended to reflect administrative and clerical errors and minor offences as an opportunity for retraining and guidance not monetary fines and prosecution. I do not have access to reports on the types of infringement's and fines issued but through my discussions with individuals in the commercial fishing industry there seems to be very few who have fished illegally but due to all offences major or minor bundled into the same data set this gives an unfair and unbalanced statistical mindset. This would go a long way to restoring a healthy relationship between commercial fishermen and Fisheries Queensland, encouraging communication whereby fishermen could provide intelligence on illegal activities thus working together to ensure sustainable fish stocks are protected and achievable.
- If after reviewing the evidence supporting abolishing the VMS provided by commercial fishermen, the government elects to proceed with the introduction of VMS it should only be mandatory for new licences issued and acquirers of licences through sale or lease after the bill is passed. This would work to address the above two points I have raised while still allowing the government a progressive path forward and an amicable way to meet the needs of both commercial fishermen and relevant government departments.

With thanks,

Attila Feher-Holan


