



Australian Underwater Federation – Queensland Inc.

Hon. Peter Douglas **BEATTIE**
541 Boundary Street,
Spring Hill
QLD 4000

20th June, 2003

Dear Minister or Councillor

There are almost one million skindivers and recreational fishers in Queensland. We are very concerned and disappointed with the current proposals by the state and federal government which may close coastal areas we traditionally fish, may protect species we traditionally catch and value highly, and reduce take which will severely impact our enjoyment, recreation, sport and catch.

This letter primarily concerns proposals made for management of coral reef fish by the Queensland government and in particular the proposed *Fisheries (Coral Reef Fin Fish) Management Plan*. We have made numerous submissions to the draft plan and also had meetings with the Minister for Fisheries and his advisers. However, despite our major concerns and public opinion there appears to be no real empathy for change. In one of the most ridiculous cases of not listening to the community, a Queensland fisheries proposal to totally protect barramundi cod was **OPPOSED** by 80% of people, yet appears to still be on the agenda for change. A previous version of this management plan has failed because of the inflexibility of the Queensland Government.

The *Fisheries (Coral Reef Fin Fish) Management Plan* will be discussed in Cabinet in June/July 2003 and we suggest that you specifically ask questions about the assumptions and validity of some of the science concerning protected 'iconic' species (reason for protection is emotional and contradicts science which shows fisheries are sustainable), maximum size limits for bluespot coral trout (not needed as this species is NOT overfished and large individuals are NOT targeted) and seasonal closures (not needed as GBRMPA's Representative Areas Program will close at least one-third of the reef and protect many fish and their habitats).

We can support some parts of the above plan (such as reduction in commercial catch of coral trout) because this is based on scientific research and declines in catch and catch per effort. However, we strongly recommend the following three changes for a rational plan that balances recreational and commercial fishing interests, industry, conservation and sustainability.

1. No seasonal closures for recreational fishers (as total area closures are proposed by federal government)
2. Minimum size limit of 50cm for blue spot coral trout and take by recreational fishers only (no maximum size).
3. Bag limit of 1 for barramundi cod and Maori wrasse (not total protection).

Our organisation comprises scientists, managers, industry, fishers and the community and we have presented scientific research that substantiates our proposals to the Government (see "Spearfishing – is it ecologically sustainable? www.spearfishing.com.au). Also see the press release "Queensland Fisheries proposals ridiculously complicated").

AUSTRALIAN UNDERWATER FEDERATION – QUEENSLAND INC.

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If you require further information please do not hesitate to contact us on the telephone numbers below.

We ask that you carefully consider our views as this will have important implications for the current and future generations of Queenslanders

Best fishes



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Please find enclosed a mousepad with a message that spearfishing is Sustainable, Selective, Safe and provides fresh Seafood and is "a breathtaking experience".