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Mr. Danny Simpson
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19 December 2017

Dear Danny,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to RecFish SA's document *Making SA a Great Place to Fish Again*. As the State Liberal Spokesperson for Primary Industries, I am pleased to respond on my team's behalf.

I will respond to your policy actions in order of appearance in the document.

Better Fisheries for All

If elected in March 2018, a Marshall Liberal Government will dedicate PIRSA resources to investigating and implementing key reforms in South Australia's marine scale fish industry.

To initiate the reform process, a senior PIRSA officer will be allocated to work with industry in developing a reform package. The range of initiatives will have the key aspects of zoning, fleet rationalisation and a quota managed fishery. The reform package will be guided by the MFA's Marine Scale Fish Fishery Strategic Review Report.

These commitments will enable the reform process to be initiated and negotiation with the industry on the timeframes and implementation of voluntary licence buybacks.

Buy backs would be voluntary and based on the principles of co-contribution by government and industry, fairness for those exiting the industry, affordability for those remaining and expenditure based on a prioritisation.

The proposed transition of the licence holders remaining after the buy backs from an open access fishery to an Individual Transferable Quota system will improve stewardship of the resource, allowing catch allocations to be dealt with on a regional basis.

The reform would of course include a review of the allocation of key fish stocks between the recreational and commercial sectors.

As I mentioned in my recent letter to you, there is no current policy to ban marine scale fish netting and longlining in Gulf St Vincent. Should that conversation be pursued, it would be prudent for that to occur as part of the reform, not from the confines of Opposition.

Havens for Recreational Fishing

My understanding of your suggested Recreational Fishing Haven network is that it would be based on restriction of certain commercial fishing practices and a concentration of investment in facilities. The concept is sensible and should be accounted for as part of the commercial reform process and any

associated discussions on use of nets and longlines.

I have recently been advised that there are a few fishing spots in the Port Pirie/Port Germein area where there are local agreements for commercial fishing not to be undertaken. I am unsure how many of these agreements exist throughout the State but believe that it is positive if such agreements can be reached by the fishing community, rather than requiring Government intervention.

We have previously discussed the State Liberal policy on the Boating Facilities Fund - to reduce the co-contribution needed by communities to apply for access to the fund (from 50 to 20 per cent). Reducing the co-contribution to apply for this funding will assist communities in accessing more money for establishing and improving boating facilities in South Australia's coastal and inland waters.

I appreciate your earlier comments that the Fund is focused on supporting commercial fishing operations and we have acknowledged in our policy that the boating and fishing community needs to be better consulted on how to spend the Fund which they have contributed to.

More Great Places to Fish

The State Liberals agree that there are many untapped recreational fishing opportunities in our reservoirs. We have committed to bringing the Happy Valley and Myponga reservoirs online for fishing and associated leisure activities. We also want to reinitiate the stalled work on Beetaloo and Hindmarsh Valley, along with the Tod, Warren and Bundaleer Reservoirs, which are yet to meet their potential. The South Para Reservoir had very successful trial some two decades ago and is yet another promising candidate.

There is no doubt that boat ramps and jetties around the State need work. I am eager to converse with the recreational fishing sector on the priorities for investment.

I share your views on developing urban fisheries and our capacity to use stocking programs as a fishery management tool. Our office is investigating the potential for some policies in this area and I hope to be able to provide further information in the coming few months.

Recreational Fishers Working for the Environment

I indicated in my recent letter to you that RecFish SA has, and continues to, carry out some excellent projects. I fully intend that these projects would continue under a new arrangement and see no reason why that cannot be achieved with some transitional provisions. Likewise, where there is the capacity and sense to *build* upon work and investment in certain areas (such as the key initiatives mentioned in your document), I will look to do that.

I hope that you can appreciate that the Government is not forthcoming on information regarding its financial investment into projects and from Opposition, it is very difficult for me to make well informed judgements about the plethora of projects supported by PIRSA. From my initial assessment, I cannot see a reason not to continue (and perhaps build upon) these worthwhile projects.

An Investment in SA

I agree that there is a major shortage of data regarding the fishing activities and investment made by recreational fishers. You are correct that this not only makes it difficult to quantify the economic value of the sector (and therefore meet this with the deserved Government investment) but it also causes problems with regard to implementing effective recreational fishing management policies. I believe that the last recreational fishing review demonstrated that.

It is easy for me to attest that recreational fishing is critical to our cultural and social fabric and to economy in general - I spend a good portion of my time speaking to people about the fishing sectors. However, you are correct in saying that it is imperative that the incumbent Government and the wider community share that appreciation.

I wholeheartedly agree that the peak body for recreational fishers should be an independent incorporated association, despite our opposing views that RecFish SA should be that peak body. From within Government, in consultation with the new recreational fishing body and PIRSA, a decision will need to be made on the funding level and arrangement for that body. That decision will need to be reflective of the value we place on recreational fishing and the ability of the body to act independently of the Minister. As mentioned in my recent letter, all current Government funding to RecFish SA would be redirected to a new peak body.

Recreational Fishing Grant Program

From the outset this appears to be a very worthwhile program which is supported by the recreational fishing sector and has delivered tangible benefits to South Australian fishers, our tourism market and to local communities. I believe that the program falls under the DEWNR budget however we are not sure whether the Government has provided funding for it to continue within the budget forward estimates.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to respond to RecFish SA's policy agenda and I look forward to the release of further policies of interest to the fishing community.

Yours sincerely

Hon David Ridgway MLC

Leader of the Opposition, Legislative Council Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Regional Development and Tourism