

FROM THE CEO

“Reform” process stressing fishers

THE so-called “reform” process has been the biggest source of stress for commercial fishers I have seen in my nine years with the Association.

The engagement process used by the State Government has failed industry – so much so that Fisheries Queensland has initiated a review of how they consult with industry.

The feedback I have received across the State is that industry is being talked at, and advised of what will happen as a result of the reform process, as opposed to being genuinely able to shape the process.

This is the perception amongst industry and it is unfortunate that trust between industry and fisheries management and our political elites is at an all-time low.

The Government’s fisheries advisory committees and expert panel have served to galvanise the view that the “reform” process has no basis in real negotiation or science but is a product of predetermined outcomes – the

introduction of quota being a key issue.

If the way our coral trout and spanner crab quota-managed fisheries are any example, quota will not lead to better fisheries management outcomes.

Vessel monitoring systems (VMS) is another source of ongoing stress as part of the reform process.

Not content with treating industry like criminals, Fisheries Queensland have not attempted to fully quantify the financial impacts of VMS, which can also be said for the overall costs of the reform process.

VMS is not about stock sustainability – our stocks are sustainable. The reform is about securing fisheries management arrangements that suit the Government, not the industry.

The reform process is about placating the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and conservation groups.

These groups do not trust

commercial fishers, so a reform process is a politically sanitised way of removing more commercial fishers from Queensland waters.

Finally – and this is the elephant in the room – the reform process is about making sure the Government doesn’t upset recreational fisher groups.

Industry feedback suggests that the average recreational fisher has some concerns about management but are in the main supportive of commercial fishing activity.

The real danger for consumers’ access to seafood is the advocacy efforts of recreational groups.

The key issue for industry is “cost” – the reform process will impose costs, potentially lead to less commercial catch and mean greater importation of seafood. The reforms will cost recreational fishing groups or conservationists nothing.

The Association is continuing its work on news posts and podcasting covering a range of issues of interest to commercial fishers. Keep an eye on these for the latest up-to-date information and views.

**Eric Perez
CEO, QSA**

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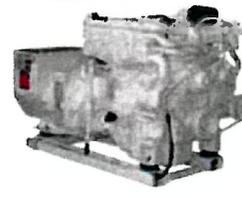
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