



PO Box 187
Grange Qld 4051
Phone/fax 07 3356 1111
Email ceo@recfish.com.au
ABN 87 547 561 663
www.recfish.com.au

For Immediate distribution 30 March 2009

MEDIA RELEASE

So long and thanks for all the fish - a crisis for recreational fishers

Australia is in crisis with bushfires, floods, cyclones, oil spills and stock market crashes. These have affected everyone and cost billions of dollars. Amidst all this chaos, recreational fishing is the most recent casualty due to a lack of support by the Australian Government. It may seem a small crisis but recreational fishing representation at a national level is almost gone thanks to lack of government funding.

The peak national body, Recfish Australia has been told that the government will not provide any funding in 2008/9. Formed in 1983, this peak body has existed on a government grant of \$100,000 per year to represent a \$2 billion plus industry with diverse interests and major challenges. This is the same federal government that has just handed out billions of dollars to jump start the economy and spent over \$100 million on elite sport. This begs the question of why several hundred elite sports people are supported by the government but over 3.5 million recreational fishers have no national support or national voice.

Recfish Australia has a proud 25 year history and many achievements. It continues to represent Australia's 3.5 million recreational fishers at a national level on issues as diverse as loss of access; shark recovery plans; management of Commonwealth fisheries and the development of best practice guidelines for recreational fishing. Recfish Australia has also been at the forefront in battles over Marine Parks, protected and threatened species and sustainable management of fisheries resources and many more issues that impact on the future of recreational fishers.

One of the major national issues is climate change and its impacts on recreational fishers. The lack of funding means that recreational fishers will have no coordinated body to represent them and no peak body to meet with government on climate change implications and the impacts arising from natural

resource management, competing user groups and many other issues. "Without a strong, coordinated peak body, it's inevitable that recreational fishers will be railroaded when it comes to natural resource management" said Len Olyott, CEO of Recfish Australia.

Recfish Australia has managed the role of peak body through a combination of government grants, membership fees, project management fees and sponsorship funding and a huge volunteer commitment for 25 years.

A small government investment of \$100,000 a year from 2004-2007 supported professional staff and allowed Recfish Australia to deliver a high level of service to grass roots recreational fishers, its member organisations and the Australian Government and achieved positive outcomes for the community.

In a media release from October 2008, the Federal Minister for Fisheries, the Hon. Tony Burke MP stated "The Rudd Government supports the recreational fishing industry, which generates jobs and tourism in rural and regional areas," The Government also committed to a three-year, \$2 million Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy. So, one of the questions that Recfish Australia has continued to ask the Minister and the Rudd Government is how the \$2 million will be spent and why is the peak national body not supported with any Government funding.

Recfish Australia has recently developed a sponsorship and donations policy and is asking organisations and individuals to help where they can. Assistance from \$100 to \$100,000 or more will be gratefully received and there is a range of benefits and rewards for becoming involved with the work of Recfish Australia. A Supporters Club has also been formed to allow individual fishers to directly contribute and ensure that their voice is heard.

The short-term goal for Recfish Australia is an annual core funding of \$400,000 per year to allow the organisation to effectively represent the recreational fishing sector. "Fishers are quite happy to spend hundreds of dollars on fishing tackle so surely \$20 to support a national organisation that will ensure their rights are recognised is not a big ask." said Olyott. Details of the policy and how to become involved can be found on the Recfish Australia website www.recfish.com.au or by contacting Len on 0427073356.

ENDS

Media Contact Len Olyott 0427073356 or Adam Smith 0418726584