




TARFish

Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing Inc.

www.tarfish.org



*Looking after the
interests of recreational
marine fishers*

State Election 20th March 2010

TARFish approached all three political parties in the lead up to the state election requesting their response to a range of issues which the TARFish Committee consider need to be addressed by the state government following the election this Saturday.

TARFish is an apolitical association and has no affiliations with any political party and has no preference on which party forms government but recognises it must work with the state government to improve recreational marine fishing in Tasmania. In providing the following information we are not attempting to guide you in your party selection but provide the information so that you are aware of each parties position on the 13 strategic issues TARFish considers important for Tasmania's 128,000 recreational marine fishers.

We have received formal responses from the Labor and Liberal Parties but not from the Greens Party. Detailed below are the 13 issues we put to the parties and the responses we received.

TARFish have not provided additional comments on some points raised by both parties preferring to provide you with the exact response received from each party on each of the issues.

We hope you find the information useful in your deliberations and you can rest assured we are working hard to ensure your interests as a recreational fisher are heard and considered by all political parties.

Regards



Mark Nikolai
Chief Executive Officer

1. Base Marine Fisheries Management on Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management.

EBFM is world's best practice fisheries management program recognised by the Australian Government Fisheries Research and Development Corporation. EBFM looks at marine environment impacts across connected and related fisheries rather than looking at individual fisheries independently of each other. EBFM considers the entire food chain effects from the top predators, such as sharks and whales, to the smaller species such as anchovies, sardines and krill. EBFM is a complex process to consider, manage and implement and a reasonable level of work has been undertaken by federal agencies with input from state government departments. National uptake has been slow to date as a different perspective and structure needs to be applied when considering ecosystem based fisheries management.

Labor Response:

Labor will continue to consider ecosystem based fisheries management as a fundamental principle of the sustainable management of important target species. The Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute – now IMAS – is the fisheries research arm of Government and has for many years based its research upon the interaction of species at an ecosystem level. Although the legislative nature of fisheries management characterises one target species, these species are not managed in isolation but concurrently with all other species. I believe that you would agree that the Scalefish fishery by its nature cannot be managed without consideration of the ecosystem and the spatial distribution of fish species rather than as a homogenous State-wide resource. Similarly, the current rock lobster review is also considering the regional distribution of fish and the centrostephanus threat at an ecosystem level. Labor will continue the good fisheries management by recognising that ecosystem based management is the practical reality for sustainable fisheries development.

Liberal Response:

This does appear to be world's best practice and we would therefore consider this complex process as being an aspirational target, following reconsideration of many of the public policy settings regarding the whole fishing industry and sustainability issues.

2. Structure Marine Fisheries Management on Co- Management Structure

Co-management has been established around the globe and significant marine environmental benefits have been derived by structuring the management of marine fisheries resources with all key stakeholders having a direct involvement. The current system in Tasmania provides non government individuals and organisations with the ability to comment on government proffered options, but no ability to have involvement in the decision making process. The current system is poorly perceived in the community with constant feedback that the decisions are made before any public consultation process is started. It is perceived that feedback is sought as a mandatory requirement and ignored, rather than an opportunity for the community and key stakeholders to have an influence over, and in, the fisheries management decision making process.

Labor Response:

Labor strongly supports the role of industry, the community and organisations such as TARFish in the policy process and is disappointed that community perceptions in relation to consultation and stakeholder engagement with the decision making process are negative. TARFish is in a position to dispute such comments given its direct involvement and understanding of the process. The recreational fisheries questionnaire related to the various management tools for rock lobster is a recent example of the Tasmanian Labor Government openly and without prejudice seeking input from the recreational fisheries sector into what tools would work for them and where.

Labour will continue to encourage and assist the community to be involved in all aspects of fisheries management. A re-elected Bartlett Labor Government will continue to:

- support a Recreational Fishery Advisory Committee that provides direct advice to the Minister on challenges and issues in that sector,
- support an independent peak recreational fishing body which actively engages with fishers in education on responsible fishing, and contributes to policy in both commercial and recreational fishing sectors, and
- support the FishWatch, Fishwise Volunteers and Fishwise Community Grants programs.

Liberal Response:

Agreed, we will act decisively on the current limitations.

3. Develop a Recreational Marine Fishing Policy

Tasmania has no specific government policy in relation to recreational marine fishing. There are a host of regulations, legislation, and management plans that control marine fisheries and the marine environment but none clearly sets out the rights of recreational marine fishers and the obligations of government to the recreational fishing community.

A recreational marine fishing policy will look after the long term interests of the recreational marine fishing community. TARFish met with all political parties in 2009 advocating the development of such a policy and have provided all parties with thoughts on a basic framework for such a policy as a way of encouraging political thinking and action for the development of a recreational marine fishing policy for Tasmania.

Labor Response:

Labor supports the development of a recreational marine fishing policy. The Tasmanian Labor Government, through it RecFAC, already has this as an actionable item for 2010. A Re-elected Labor Government will continue to support the development of appropriate policy for the recreational fishery.

Liberal Response:

We agree to develop this policy.

4. Implement long term core funding commitment for the peak body

Recreational marine fishing covers a broad range of unique fisheries such as Rock Lobster, Scalefish, Tuna, Abalone, Scallops and Sharks. The marine environment covers estuary, coastal and deep sea fishing activities in both state and commonwealth waters. The recreational marine fishing sector have a keen interest in the management of, marine farming, commercial fishing, marine research, rule changes being considered by state and commonwealth governments. The recreational marine fishing sector would like to see research and public debate regarding long term issues including climate change, marine pests and bio-security protection.

TARFish has representation on key fishing ministerial advisory bodies, research advisory groups and boards, steering and compliance committees, and maintains currency across the issues by attending public meetings, information days and responding to fishery management plan reviews. This activity requires significant human and physical resources.

Effective representation of the recreational marine fishing sector requires sufficient revenue to ensure full time, professionally trained and experienced personnel. All peak bodies need the security of a long term funding arrangement based on the provision of agreed services and performance levels, and TARFish would seek a commitment from a new government on this issue.

Labor Response:

The Tasmanian Labor Government has provided TARFish this security for several years now and has committed further funds until 2012. Labor is happy to facilitate a transition arrangement for TARFish beyond 2012 if member financial support for the organisation could be demonstrated.

Liberal Response:

Agreed, our policy recognises and ensures that the recreational fishing sector needs a well resourced peak body to represent it, with democracy available for all fishers. This will ensure the sector has a united voice that is better heard when it comes to government policy making and decisions that impact the sector.

5. Publish an Annual Licence Fee Trust Fund Expenditure Report

When recreational marine fishing licences were introduced it was on the understanding that the revenue would be held in a trust fund and the monies would be redirected back for the benefit of the recreational marine fishery. Each year around \$1.2 million is collected by the state government from licence fees which go to providing a level of benefits for recreational marine fishers.

TARFish seeks transparency concerning the allocation of the income raised from the recreational marine fishery. It acknowledges that there are demands on this revenue including peak bodies funding, research, the Fishwise Community Grants program and the Fishcare Volunteer program but believes that allocations should be identifiable and accountable.

The Legislative Council's Select Committee Inquiry into Recreational Marine Fishing in Tasmania, which has yet to report, was seeking similar transparency in recreational marine fishing licence fee revenue distributions. Transparency and accountability of licence funds received must be the cornerstone of a government which is recognised and trusted by the community.

Labor Response:

Labor believes the current process is already open and accountable but should the sector require greater certainty, we would be happy to consider another reporting mechanism through the Budget Estimates process.

Liberal Response:

We agree with greater transparency in recreational marine fishing licence fee distributions.

6. Licence Fee Trust Fund to be used for recreational marine fishing

Currently \$250,000 from licence fee funds are channelled into government consolidated revenue each year with no direct benefit to recreational marine fishers. These funds must be directed to agreed activities that benefit recreational marine fishers

In July 2009 the Minister Llewellyn advised that due to the “serious nature of the challenge facing the Tasmanian budget, I have directed that all the activities in my Department that involve recreational fishing will be funded by the monies collected from recreational fishers. I have decided that it is appropriate that the management of recreational fisheries should be supported from those monies currently collected from recreational fishers through the recreational licensing system. That is, the staff and management activities within Wild Fisheries in the recreational section currently funded from consolidated revenue will be funded from those monies, an amount in the order of \$150,000.”

Recent state government announcements have stated that the impacts of the global financial crisis have not been as great as at first thought, and the federal government have advised that the global financial crisis has officially ended. TARFish call for the return of the \$150,000pa that was allocated to the Wild Fisheries staff and management activities from the recreational marine fishing license fees. Recreational marine fishing license fee revenue should be used for the direct benefit of the recreational fishery and not offsetting core government service provision.

Labor Response:

The full cost to the Government of providing services to manage and support recreational fishing amounts to about \$2.5 to \$3 million – this includes the provision of services by Tasmania Police and DPIPW and Government support of TAFI. Of this, \$1.17 million was recovered last year through licences.

As a response to the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) \$150,000 of this money was transferred to support fisheries management. A re-elected Bartlett Labor Government will restore this amount to the Trust Fund in the 2010/11 budget now that the GFC has subsided.

Liberal Response:

Our recreational fishing policy details a commitment to repatriate the \$150,000 recently taken from licence fees – in the Fishwise Fund – to pay for Department activities – in other words, prop up the Budget. Further rearrangements of funding and disposition of licence fees will continue to be considered.

We will reverse Labor’s decision to take \$150,000 a year from the Fishwise Fund to pay for departmental activities previously funded through the State Budget and re-direct this into peak body representation.

7. Increase funding available for recreational marine fisheries research

TARFish has representation on various Research Advisory Groups with the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute and whilst research priorities are easily identified the funding available to conduct research is very limited. This results in long lead times in commencing agreed research, and is unacceptable.

Coordination and management of research activities should coincide with the review of marine fisheries management plans. These documents should be available for public comment and analysis to ensure informed debate prior to the review of the various management plans.

TAFI is a world recognised expert in marine environment research and recreational fishers would like to optimise the leverage from these world experts. Increased research funding could be derived from redirection of some of the funds noted under Recommendation 6.

Labor Response:

Labor will ensure that Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) will continue to deliver industry and government outcomes as TAFI have in the past.

Labor recognises that although research projects can be scheduled, their outcomes cannot. The Tasmanian Labor Government has legislative commitments that dictate the timing of reviews – this can also be scheduled and is, generally with long lead in times. Through the various Fishery Advisory Committees and Research Advisory Groups, the scheduling of reviews is well articulated and discussed and IMAS has in the past coordinated research in a timely manner to inform those reviews/ Labor recognises that as research outcomes cannot be anticipated, further research is often required. However, Labor believes that management plan reviews have not been compromised in the past through lack of sound scientific advice from IMAS and will continue to ensure this is the case in the future.

Labor will ensure that through the research partnership agreement, Government – and industry-based performance outcomes are a priority of the relevant IMAS divisions, and at all times appropriately resourced.

The Tasmanian Labor Government, through the existing JVA provides an annual grant top the Institute of approximately \$2.4 million. This has remained relatively constant since 1998. By contrast the UTAS reports that its contribution has increased from \$1.7 million to \$4.9 million and the contribution from external research grants has grown from \$1.5 million to \$5.7 million per annum (2007 figures). Labor is confident that through the new IMAS arrangements support for recreational fisheries will be neither eroded nor compromised, but enhanced.

Liberal Response:

Agreed in general, the disposition of licence fee funds to research seems sound policy.

8. Reinstate the Legislative Councils Recreational Marine Fishing Inquiry

The Legislative Council established an inquiry in January 2008 to investigate recreational marine fishing in Tasmania. The inquiry was broad reaching in its terms of reference and was chaired by the Hon Paul Harriss MLC. In 2008 enthusiastic members of the public, government agencies and fisheries managers met around the State to provide input into the inquiry. TARFish prepared an extensive submission to the inquiry and appeared twice before the committee to support and elaborate on its submission. TARFish also attended all of the public hearings that the inquiry held and actively supported the process.

The Chair of the Legislative Council inquiry has advised TARFish that the committee had yet to finalise the inquiry before the election was called and the inquiry has been halted. The new government does not have to reinstate the incomplete legislative council inquiry and the decision to recommence the inquiry is at the discretion of the new government.

TARFish advised the Chair of the Legislative Council Inquiry “that there are significant benefits to be gained for our sector from the committee’s thorough work on the Recreational Marine Fishing Inquiry. It has always been our intention for TARFish to pick up the recommendations of the final report and be the driver for implementing the relevant recommendations with other key stakeholders... It would be a great disservice to Tasmania’s 128,000 recreational fishers if a new parliament did not reinstate the Select Committee’s Recreational Marine Fishing Inquiry such that it could not conclude its exhaustive inquiry and the flow of benefits did not subsequently occur.”

Labor Response:

In relation to this matter I believe you are misinformed. You are correct that the business of parliament has been halted due to the election but upon re-election of a new Government, the Upper House inquiry can be readily re-instated should the Chair of Committee wish to do so. A re-elected Labor Government has no objection to seeing the work of the Legislative Committee continue and is happy to facilitate that outcome.

Liberal Response:

That would of course be a matter for the Legislative Council, but we agree to support this proposal and perhaps add some new terms of reference in line with the Liberals’ policy statement on recreational fishing.

9. Implement a Strategic Marine Infrastructure Management Plan

Access to Marine Structures (jetties and piers) in Tasmania for recreational fishing is coming under renewed and constant pressure. Pier closures at Stanley, Triabunna, Smithton and rumours about other structures around Tasmanian coastal communities have only highlighted the issue of continuing fisher access. Commercial fishing interests have promoted the idea that marine structures should come under a single managing authority such as Marine and Safety Tasmania. Having a single Management Authority would simplify the current approach where ownership of the piers and jetties can be with various bodies including the State Government, TasPorts, Local Councils, Rotary Clubs and private ownership.

The current process has resulted in a number of structures falling into a state of disrepair with subsequent restricted access. The government completed a two year Marine Structures Assessment Project in close liaison with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and local government in 2008. The aims of the project included having a workable system in place to ensure that all marine structures on Crown Land and Reserved land are in a sound and safe condition, properly maintained for the safety and enjoyment of users, and to ensure that all marine structures on Crown and Reserved land are managed within a framework of legal/licence agreements. To date the aims of the project have not been met. TARFish are unaware of any strategic plan or measures to ensure required maintenance is funded, scheduled and undertaken.

Labor Response:

Labor is committed to reform in management of principle marine infrastructure around the State and the reform process would include the structures you name. The Tasmanian Labor Government has been actively considering policy reform that would see principle marine public wharves and jetties in need of repair, up-graded and maintained. MAST, with its demonstrated experience in this area would oversee the up-grade of the infrastructure and provide a single 'shop front' for the users. The 'shop front' for users is considered most important when it is considered that marine infrastructure in the State is managed by MAST, DPIPWE, Tasports or by local councils. A re-elected Labor Government would see this policy reform advanced and implemented.

Liberal Response:

Agreed, Tasmania has a commercial and recreational fisheries sector that covers almost the State's entire coastline. Over the years, various jetties, wharves, pontoons and other facilities have been developed by a range of different agencies. Responsibility for these facilities is often unclear and many have deteriorated to a state of disrepair.

The Tasmanian Liberals believe all public marine facilities not required by the commercial shipping sector should come under single control, and we believe MAST has the track record to take on this new role.

10. Investigate feasibility of implementing Artificial Reefs to enhance recreational fishing

New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria have implemented an ongoing program of deploying artificial reefs to improve recreational fishing opportunities. These artificial reefs are developed through the use of purpose built “reef balls” for estuary and shallow water reef systems and structures scientifically designed for deep water or offshore environments. The use of artificial reefs around the world has seen enhancement of marine fishing activities and support for the development of increased recreational fishing activities.

Whilst there are fisheries management issues and concerns that must be addressed as part of developing artificial reefs the benefits gained overseas and here in Australia support investigating the feasibility of such a program in Tasmania.

Labor Response:

A re-elected Labor Government would be happy to discuss further with TARFish the feasibility of implementing artificial reefs.

Liberal Response:

We agree with such an investigation.

11.Undertake a state-wide Social and Economic Study into recreational fishing

Recreational marine fishing is a major contributor to Tasmania's economy and social fabric through a diverse range of direct and indirect impacts. Communities benefit from significant financial contributions from fishing competitions, our fishing shack culture and our love of the marine environment. It is a proven fact that there are considerable health and lifestyle benefits in recreational fishing and whilst there have been some attempts to quantify the contribution that recreational fishing provides to Tasmania there has not been a comprehensive study that has definitively looked into the many and varied financial and non financial benefits.

Labor Response:

Labor recognises the legitimate lifestyle choices of recreational fishers and the social and economic contribution recreational fishing has on small coastal communities. Tasmanians spend over \$50 million on recreational fishing and one in three Tasmanians go fishing.

Clearly the Tasmanian Labor Government acknowledged this contribution by ensuring that sustainable fishing continued in its recently proclaimed marine protected areas in the Bruny Bioregion.

A re-elected Labor Government would be happy to discuss appropriate investigation.

Liberal Response:

The Liberals' policy commits to an independent socio-economic study into the Tasmanian recreational fishing sector to gain a greater understanding of the value of the sector and ensure its views receive prominence by all levels of government and policymakers.

12. Appoint recreational representation to Marine Farming Planning Review Panel

Marine Farming in Tasmania's coastal environment has been, and continues to be, a contentious commercial activity that has polarised community perceptions. Whilst it is accepted that marine farming does contribute significant economic benefits, making sure the commercial benefits do not override the wider community amenity of the use of public resources and coastal marine environments is paramount in getting the social and economic contributions balanced between all stakeholders.

The Marine Farming Planning Review Panel oversees the Marine Farming Planning process and makes recommendations to the government on marine farming plan reviews and lease amendment requests. TARFish provide comments on marine farm planning reviews and lease amendment requests as part of the public consultation process, however the recreational marine fishing sector seek representation on all government advisory bodies and structures that have a direct impact on recreational marine fishing activities.

Labor Response

The Marine Planning Review Panel is a statutory body appointed by the Governor-in-Council under the *Marine Farming Planning Act 1995*. Its purpose is to make balanced recommendations to the Minister on draft plans after considering written submissions and public hearing from specific interests groups and individuals across the community.

Labor recognises the interest the recreational sector holds in developments in the marine farming sector. As a consequence the Tasmanian Labor Government, through its Planning Authority, ensured that TARFish is consulted during the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement during the development process of a draft plan, and prior to the public advertising of the plan. In addition, the Panel is obliged to take verbal submissions during the public hearing process upon written request by TARFish.

Labor recognises the important role TARFish, as a special interest group, has in the marine farming planning and believes the processes put in place by the Tasmanian Labor Government appropriately provide access by TARFish to the process.

Liberal Response:

We generally agree with this proposal.

13. Guarantee current quarantining of boat registration fees will be maintained

Boat registration fees are paid to, and managed by Marine and Safety Tasmania (MAST). The recreational marine fishing sector is comfortable with the boating facility outcomes MAST achieves through effective allocation and management of the boat registration fees and the subsequent benefits that flow to our sector.

Labour Response:

I can advise that Labor has no plans to change the current policy.

Liberal Response:

A Hodgman Liberal Government agrees to guarantee this.