



Monday, 14 December 2020

Guy Barnett  
Minister for Primary Industries and Water

Via email

Dear Minister Barnett,

I am writing to you on behalf of Tasmania's recreational rock lobster fishers regarding the East Coast Stock Rebuilding Zone (ECSRZ) and the unfair catch share arrangements that have persisted for many years.

Since 2015-16 the recreational rock lobster catch state-wide has been less than half of our allocation. We believe it should be easier for fishers to catch more of the Total Allowable Recreational Catch (TARC).

The recreational sector has made strong contribution to achievement of the interim target reference point (TRP) of 25% virgin biomass levels state-wide through ongoing under-catches of its TARC in the order of 90t per annum over the last 5 years. However there has been insufficient recognition of the needs of the recreational sector as it relates to the East Coast and specifically the ECSRZ.

It is TARFish's strong and long-held view that the current catch share arrangement for the ECSRZ (TAC = 21% (recreational), 79% (commercial)) have effectively prevented the recreational sector from catching the TARC.

The current catch share arrangement in the ECSRZ disproportionately affects recreational fishers with around two thirds of the total recreational catch taken from this region. There is very limited capacity for recreational fishers to redistribute effort safely. This is in contrast to the bulk of the commercial sector that has, through the introduction of the ITQ system, prioritised catch efficiency and resulted in a 'roving fleet' that can readily redistribute effort.

We recognise the difficulties being faced by the commercial rock lobster sector but it is also an opportunity to implement a workable solution, for both sectors, for the next two years before the new ECSRZ management plan is developed and implemented in 2023.

TARFish's position is that the ECSRZ catch share arrangement for 2021/22 should be rebalanced with the recreational allocation not less than 80 tonnes or 50% of TAC, whichever is the greater. The remaining commercial allocation could be prioritised to commercial fishers based in the zone and catch 75% or more of their annual catch from the zone. We believe this strikes the right balance between enabling recreational fishers to catch more of their TAC whilst protecting commercial operators that live and work in coastal communities.

TARFish recently wrote to the Director of Fisheries regarding the TAC for 2021-22 season and our concerns regarding the ECSRZ and I attach a copy for your reference.



In addition, at the recent RecFAC meeting TARFish took the strong position that no recommendation should be made regarding the ECSRZ TAC until the rebalance as proposed above is agreed and implemented. As a result, RecFAC were unable to provide a recommendation on the ECSRZ TAC apart from recommending that there be no deferral of achieving the interim biomass target of 20% in the Zone.

This is an issue that recreational fishers feel passionately about and we recently conducted a survey of recreational fishers that indicated extremely strong support for a rebalance in the ECSRZ.

I urge you to positively consider our request and I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this important matter in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



Jane Gallichan  
Chief Executive Officer