



COMMERCIAL FISHING POLICY



WHAT WE BELIEVE

Commercial fishing in NSW is in crisis.

For years, hardworking fishing families have been squeezed by rising costs, shrinking access, overregulation, cheap seafood imports and failed government reforms that have devastated coastal and regional communities.

The 2016 commercial fishing reforms were sold as a plan to strengthen the industry. Instead, they created a share investor scheme that forced operators out, weakened family businesses and undermined our ability to feed ourselves as a nation.

Independent economic studies have confirmed what fishers already know profitability is collapsing, operating costs are rising and confidence in the future of the industry is disappearing.

At the same time, governments obsessed with symbolic politics have allowed illegal seafood trafficking and organised black-market operations to flourish while legitimate operators carry the burden of compliance and restrictions.

We believe NSW needs a complete reset of commercial fisheries policy.

Commercial fishing is not the enemy. It is a strategic industry that supports jobs, food security, tourism, exports and regional economies.

Our commercial fishers are among the most heavily regulated and environmentally monitored food producers in Australia. They deserve practical management, fair access and a government willing to back local seafood production instead of regulating the industry into extinction.



We believe the future of NSW commercial fishing depends on rebuilding profitability, restoring industry confidence, protecting sustainable access and cracking down on organised illegal fishing operations that threaten both fish stocks and legitimate businesses.



OUR ACTION PLAN

- Launch a full independent public inquiry into the failed 2016 commercial fishing reforms to expose the economic damage caused to fishing families, regional communities and seafood supply chains, and deliver a roadmap to rebuild the industry.
- Legislate a Commercial Fishing Industry Protection Act to stop governments imposing politically motivated fishing closures, licence reductions or access restrictions without independent science, regional economic testing and full industry consultation.
- Establish a Commercial Fisheries Economic Recovery Taskforce to implement recommendations from the BDO industry studies and develop a long-term plan to restore profitability, industry confidence and generational business security.
- Introduce mandatory regional economic impact assessments before any new fisheries regulation, marine closure or quota reduction can be approved, ensuring governments publicly account for the impact on jobs, seafood processors and coastal economies.
- Create a NSW Seafood Security Strategy focused on rebuilding domestic seafood production and reducing Australia's growing dependence on imported seafood from overseas markets with lower environmental and labour standards.
- Introduce a "Local Seafood First" government procurement policy requiring public institutions, hospitals, schools and government facilities to prioritise NSW-caught seafood wherever practical.
- Strengthen country-of-origin labelling laws by mandating prominent seafood origin labelling in restaurants, seafood retailers and hospitality



OUR ACTION PLAN - Continued

venues so consumers can clearly identify imported seafood versus NSW product.

- Legislate mandatory public release of all fisheries science, stock assessments, economic modelling and departmental advice before Fisheries NSW can impose new commercial fishing restrictions.
- Launch an independent review of marine park boundaries, sanctuary zones and exclusion areas to identify regions where sustainable commercial fishing access can be safely restored.
- Create a Regional Seafood Industry Infrastructure Fund to upgrade working harbours, fish unloading facilities, seafood processing infrastructure, cold storage and freight capability across coastal NSW.
- Fix the flawed Seafood Innovation fund to deliver practical support to help commercial fishing businesses modernise vessels, improve fuel efficiency, upgrade safety systems and invest in sustainable fishing technology.
- Declare war on organised illegal trafficking by establishing a dedicated Protection Strike Force targeting black market export networks, organised crime involvement and unlawful harvesting operations.
- Increase criminal penalties for large-scale illegal harvesting, black market seafood trafficking and organised poaching syndicates caught undermining legitimate commercial operators.
- Expand water and marine enforcement capability by deploying additional fisheries officers, surveillance technology and joint-agency operations focused on organised illegal fishing activity instead of targeting compliant



OUR ACTION PLAN - Continued

operators.

- Fund large-scale estuary restoration, and fish habitat rehabilitation projects to improve long-term fish stocks and strengthen sustainable commercial harvesting opportunities..
- Legislate long-term secure access rights for commercial fishing operators to provide investment certainty, protect family businesses and stop governments eroding the industry through policy instability.
- Create targeted apprenticeship, training and workforce development programs to attract young Australians into commercial fishing, seafood processing and maritime industries facing workforce shortages.
- Support regional seafood festivals, seafood tourism campaigns and NSW seafood branding initiatives to promote local producers, strengthen regional economies and reconnect consumers with Australian-caught seafood.
- Ban the privatisation of public working waterfronts, commercial fishing wharves and seafood unloading facilities to stop developers and governments pushing commercial operators out of traditional fishing communities.
- Mandate regular independent performance reviews of Fisheries NSW to ensure fisheries management remains science-based, economically sustainable and accountable to the communities whose livelihoods depend on the industry.