



South West Rocks Fishing Club Newsletter

South West Rocks Anglers Association (SWRAA) President's Report March/April 2024. I have two matters to comment on in this issue of the President's Report- March 23rd Cleanup of the Macleay River. About a dozen volunteers in 3 boats and a jet ski combed the river and banks within a 3km radius of Matty's Flat boat ramp for 3 hours. We were joined by Simon and Jack from Sydney waterways in a purpose-built vessel. Our sincere thanks to Ben, our local Boating Safety Officer and these guys for their enthusiastic support. A variety of rubbish was collected including lots of plastic, discarded crab traps, bagged animal faeces, damaged watercraft and surprisingly, household furniture and whitegoods. Within those 3 hours the pile had grown to 4 metres in diameter and 2 metres high! Special thanks to Kempsey Shire Council for allowing us to dispose of the rubbish free of charge. Reduced water clarity after heavy rains reduced visibility and easy identification of much of the submerged items which we know are still present in the river was made more difficult. We are planning another effort in August when hopefully visibility will be better. Anyone interested in participating please call me on 0478 961 807. Contact with the DPI NSW. On the 6th February 2024, I wrote a letter of concern about the abrupt decline of fish stocks in the Macleay River, most notably Bream, Whiting, Luderick and Mulloway. On the 28th March I received a reply from a senior officer of Fisheries NSW. Basically the reply included all the expected platitudes. According to the Officer, no species in the Macleay are under any threat except Mulloway which he conceded was a species of concern. He further added that fishing efforts from all user groups were continually monitored carefully to ensure continued sustainability. The Officer told me that recreational catch data is collected twice yearly using phone surveys. I have never been phoned regarding my recreational fish catches and I don't know of anyone who has. Apparently, Charter Operators are asked for catch data, but this can differ markedly from general recreational fishing data. One could impute that this could lead to wildly fanciful statistics being used to direct the management of something of great importance to the area. In my letter to DPI, I asked why the Macleay River has been left to bear the brunt of commercial fishing pressure, when other nearby river systems have been declared as recreational fishing havens. This question was ignored entirely. I am not anti-commercial fishing. I was once a professional fisherman myself. I know however, that some fishing techniques are not compatible with sustaining fish stocks.



South West Rocks Fishing Club Newsletter

It would be heartening to see the DPI take positive action to remediate the present situation instead of sticking its head in the sand with the attitude “we have the situation under control, nothing to see here, go about your business as usual...” If you think the DPI’s response is inadequate, I urge you to contact DPI and voice your concerns. If you have had difficulty catching a legal sized Bream in the Macleay over the last year, take a look at the photo of the catch taken in one shot by a beach hauling crew at Trial Bay last week. This might go some way in explaining the reason. These fish will never get into the river to repopulate it. Trapping and mesh netting in the river add to the problem. Recreational fishers are required to pay an annual licence fee for the privilege of fishing. Are we getting value for money?

Damien Ashley, President SWR Anglers Association.

