



Monaro Acclimatisation Society Inc
9 Thompson Drive
Tathra NSW 2550

Sustainable future fishing for trout and native fish

The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for Environment and Water
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I write to express the Monaro Acclimatisation Society's (**MAS**) disappointment about the process that led to the finalisation of the Conservation Advice pursuant to the *Environment Planning and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (Cth) relating to the listing of *Galaxias terenasus* as endangered in New South Wales.

You may not be aware that MAS is a primary stakeholder with DPI (Fisheries) and is recognised as such under the *Fisheries Act 1935* (NSW). The MAS is a voluntary organization primarily concerned with the development and maintenance of recreational freshwater fisheries in south-eastern New South Wales in the Snowy Monaro region. Because this region contains mostly trout water, the MAS has a focus on trout, but it also makes significant contributions to the native fish program throughout the region. However, whether because of oversight or intentional exclusion by government processes, MAS was given no opportunity to comment as the process of listing *Galaxias terenasus* as an endangered species unfolded either at the Federal or State level. We sincerely hope this was because there was no knowledge or understanding of the role of MAS amongst staff managing the process within the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (**the Department**). This lack of open procedure and information-sharing is also a deficiency within the NSW DPI (Fisheries) department.

That said, MAS will continue to work with government to implement the bans in the way that achieves the desired outcome for the fishery. However, we are disappointed that the Department and DPI (Fisheries) has failed to properly inform the public of the listing of *Galaxias terenasus* and the implications thereof. There are many concerned anglers who, in the absence of any public notification, see the bans as more to do with an anti-trout bias than any serious attempt to protect an endangered species. Hitherto, the governmental response to the public anger has been totally inadequate. The fact is that the task of informing the fishing community of these new trout fishery management decisions has been left to the MAS.

We request that in future MAS be considered as a key stakeholder. We believe that – had we been given the opportunity to comment on the Conservation Advice – we might have been able to influence the outcome. In particular, we are concerned that the extent of

sampling in the Snowy River catchment was inadequate to estimate 'Area of Occupancy' and *Galaxias terenassus* numbers as a basis for declaring the species to be endangered. Further, we believe that not enough consideration was given to the fact that *Galaxias terenassus* and trout have now been cohabiting for over 130 years and that the sampling done showed that *Galaxias terenassus* numbers were stable or increasing back in 2016/17. The viable existence of *Galaxias terenassus* – and for that matter, trout – is more concerned with the effects of loss of habitat from poor land use and climate change.

The MAS' view that stocking bans will have a big impact on recreational anglers and the Monaro community. The MAS have been active in the Monaro and Snowy Mountains areas since the 1930s, and since its foundation has developed a profound knowledge of the terrain, the local environment and the local community. Trout angling is deeply embedded in the historical, cultural, social and – to a not insignificant extent – economic fabrics of the Monaro region. Research commissioned by DPI (Fisheries) has shown the significant economic contribution that trout fishing makes to the region; mainly in the warmer months of the year, supporting tourism in the region beyond the peak snow season. Decisions being taken on environmental grounds need to give appropriate consideration to these other important factors.

We know that the issues of climate change, pressures of declining water quality – and let us face it – consideration of endangered species will not go away. New challenges will arise from time to time. But we never wish to see another debacle like this unfold where we are left to pick up the pieces and explain the process to the local and wider communities.

We value and wish to continue the partnership with DPI (Fisheries) and we wish to establish a relationship with the Department, but the MAS believes that a new approach to decision-making regarding recreational fishing, trout and river ecology issues needs to be developed and agreed upon. In particular, it should be an approach that recognises the MAS as an Organisation of Interest and a local manager of the fishery: we need to be engaged and consulted on these issues.

Yours sincerely,

Kerry Pfeiffer
President, Monaro Acclimatisation Society.
15 February 2024