

President MAS response to questions from Queanbeyan branch on recent restrictions on trout stocking.

At their 6 March meeting, the Queanbeyan Branch (QAC) expressed some concerns over the recent changes to trout stocking. While the particular threatened species is not in their local area, the actions still gave cause for concern.

President MAS, Kerry Pfeiffer provided the following response to each of the concerns. Reproduced here as others may find it informative:

I am happy to attempt to give some background to some of the concerns of the meeting. I will go through each numbered points one by one.

*1. There is a general feeling that MAS has accepted these changes and are not fighting them.*

Note: "The MAS is a primary stakeholder with the NSW Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries) and is recognized as such under the Fisheries Act 1935. MAS participates with NSW Fisheries in the stocking of freshwater lakes and rivers, maintenance of habitat, contribution to policy and legislation affecting freshwater fishing in NSW."

This is an email I sent to the MAS Executive Committee soon after we began this struggle:

"Here I am 8 days into the job and up until now it has not been much fun. I seem to be at an impasse. The impasse arises from a fundamental strategic disagreement in direction. This is becoming so bad that I sense aggression within the executive.

The options as I see them for moving forward are;  
To work with DPI in the traditional roles that MAS has undertaken, or  
Begin a new pathway with MAS where it opposes the stocking bans and fall-out with Fisheries and the NSW Government.

I am a staunch believer in the first option and would be happy to work within the system to achieve the best outcome possible for trout fishers. The two draft letters to the DG are a testament to that.

The second option will bring us into direct conflict with NSW Fisheries. You may believe you are written into the NSW Fisheries Act 1935 and that MAS's position is written in stone. This may not be the case. To say that you will comply with the bans this year but oppose them next is not being entirely honest as there will be few fish to stock given the work being undertaken at Gaden this year.

To oppose the bans and attack the science means that you will end up arguing about numbers of Galaxias and look like rednecks. Look what happened to the horse people. You are embarking on a pathway that will peter out and MAS will end up being just another lobby group.

To remove MAS from the Act requires the Minister to write a Regulation relating to the matter and within NSW Parliament there is a regulations table. The Regulation sits on the table for 21 days and then becomes law unless opposed."

So to answer Question 1. In relationship to our role with the NSW Government and our role in the Fisheries Act 1935 we cannot oppose the bans. In relationship to the Federal Government and the Conservation Advice within the The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) we are looking every which way to oppose the Endangered listing of Galaxias Terenus and therefore the conservation advice attached to the endangered listing.

*2. There is a real fear that this is the start of a series of attacks on trout stocking via discovery of more species or more locations*

We absolutely agree with you and we are doing our utmost to get ourselves involved with the process. We are also developing "on the ground" feedback from fishers who observe activities that might relate to new research or surveys.

*3. There are concerns that Branches had not been consulted in developing the policy and the game plan. QAC accepts that the Committee had to develop these, without cause to get input from every member of every branch, but there is a fear of 'group think' and concern over lack of communications down to the branches.*

We are sorry if we have let you down in this regard but we have been posting our work on the MAS webpage and I have been emailing as many people as I have email addresses for. I can assure you all that there is no group think within the exec of the MAS. There is in fact very robust debate about everything.

*4. QAC shares the wider MAS concern that DPI had not come out to the general angling public explaining what is happening.*

Agreed

*5. The message along the lines of "11 sites lost from 115" (eg from Micah Adams) is critiqued as it was 10% and on some of most important streams*

Agreed

*6. Should all members of MAS be encouraged to write personal letters.*

As far as I am concerned all members of MAS can write personal letters. We are becoming quite good at using Facebook and I am hearing from DPI that they do not like the traffic.

Now that I have all your email addresses I will include you all in the newsy things and letters we write, so in future you are all aware of our activities. Likewise you can always email or ring me.

Kerry Pfeiffer.