

Mr Sean Sloan  
Acting Director-General  
Department of Primary Industries  
Locked Bag 21  
Orange NSW 2800

Dear Mr Sloan,

### **Recent Bans on Stocking of Trout in Monaro Streams**

I write to express the Monaro Acclimatisation Society's (**MAS**) disappointment about the process that led to the decision to ban stocking of trout in some of the premier trout fishing streams in the Monaro region of New South Wales.

As you know, MAS is a primary stakeholder with DPI (Fisheries) and is recognised as such under the *Fisheries Act* 1935 (NSW). However, whether because of oversight or intentional exclusion by DPI (Fisheries), MAS was given no opportunity to comment on the draft Federal Conservation Advice declaring *Galaxias terenasus* (GT) an endangered species, despite DPI (Fisheries) declaring they knew of it. Further, we were not given the opportunity to have input into the DPI (Fisheries) response to the final Conservation Advice.

That said, MAS will continue to work with DPI (Fisheries) to implement the bans in the way that is least disruptive to the fishery. However, we are disappointed that DPI (Fisheries) has failed to properly inform the public of these bans. 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. The recent departmental statement on Facebook in response to the public anger is 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.

Looking forward, we request that DPI (Fisheries) reconsider the bans. 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 believe that the extent of sampling in the Snowy River catchment was inadequate to estimate Area of Occupancy and GT numbers as a basis for declaring the species endangered. Also, we believe that not enough consideration was given to the fact that GT and trout have now been cohabiting for over 130 years and that the sampling done showed that GT numbers were stable or increasing. The viable existence of GT – and for that matter, trout – is more concerned with the effects of climate change and loss of habitat from poor land use.

It is our view that stocking bans will have a big impact on recreational anglers and the Monaro community. Trout angling is deeply embedded in the historical, cultural, social and – to a not insignificant extent – economic fabrics of the Monaro region. DPI (Fisheries) commissioned research has shown the significant economic contribution that trout fishing

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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 value the partnership we have with DPI (Fisheries). We have worked with the staff of Gaden Hatchery to ensure that the trout fishing throughout the Monaro is of the highest quality possible. We continually monitor the rivers and streams and the impoundments for fish kills and other issues. We willingly give up our time to engage through the NSW Fisheries Trout Allocation Committee, the Snowy Mountain Lakes Working Group and the Gaden Trout Hatchery Management Committee.

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, and 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 community.

We value and wish to continue the partnership with DPI (Fisheries), but the MAS believes that a new approach to decision-making regarding 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  
MAS  
12<sup>th</sup> February 2024