

## Fisheries Officers & Fish Technicians Consultative Forum: members' update

The PSA and FOVB Executive representatives met with the DDG DPI Fisheries, FCU management and IR/HR representatives of DRNSW on 22 June. The previous March consultative forum had been postponed and re-scheduled due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

This meeting was the first where PSA Fish Technician delegates were invited to discuss their issues as part of the staff consultative forums within DPI Fisheries.

### Items discussed

**Right to Fish (RTF) Bill** The Fisheries Officer Vocational Branch Executive (FOVBE) sought information on the status of the RTF Bill and when stakeholders such as Fisheries Officers and the PSA would be consulted. The new incarnation of the Bill (different to that initiated by the Shooters, Fishers & Farmers Party) is currently still in draft with the Agriculture Minister and Cabinet. The FOVB/PSA was identified as a key stakeholder that requires consultation when the Bill moves out of the cabinet phase. The A/DFC also identified some areas where he believes that the regulations could be modified to deal with investigative shortfalls.

**Promotional Jobs and the Capability Framework** Previous recruitment activities for promotional roles left several very experienced officers overlooked. Despite the FOVB articulating the concerns of members, DPI Fisheries made it very clear it was content with the recruitment processes for those roles, consistent with the capability framework and the *Government Sector Employment Act, Regulation and Rules*.

However, DPI Fisheries has acknowledged that, due to the changes on recruitment practices, some staff require assistance in 'putting their best foot forward' when applying and interviewing for DFO and SFO roles. The PSA advises staff interested in pursuing promotion to take up the offer and invest some time and effort in these processes. The Acting DFC has taken the time to discuss this at length with DRNSW People Partners and has provided the following links to resources:

*I encourage anyone who is thinking of applying for upcoming roles to access some of the background information and resources available as below:*

**Public Service Commission** *Guide to applying for a role in the NSW public sector. It explains the recruitment process, capability framework and some FAQs for applicants.*

[iworkfor.nsw.gov.au/apply-for-a-role](http://iworkfor.nsw.gov.au/apply-for-a-role)

**Linked in Learning** *has a myriad of courses available to help prepare for a recruitment process - Suggested searches:*

- *Resume writing*



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- *Preparing for a job interview*

And last but not least our own **inFOsite** also has some important information on how we recruit ongoing and short term vacancies and any roles currently being recruited.

[sites.google.com/dpi.nsw.gov.au/infosite/recruitment](https://sites.google.com/dpi.nsw.gov.au/infosite/recruitment)

*I also encourage you to discuss accessing any other courses around recruitment or job seeking with your supervisor in your PDPs.*

This takes some priority now that the FCU has advised the PSA that DPI Fisheries is working on Departmental briefings for the proposed filling of some vacant DFO and SFO roles across the state, as well as some other temporary roles.

**Issues with Regard to Staff Investigations** The issue of disciplinary or fact-finding investigations is always one that is vexed and weighed between the standards of the public service and the provision of procedural fairness. There is an apparent difference between what the FOVB and DPI Fisheries maintains is fair process. The FOVB has provided DPI Fisheries with a list of issues to drive what we believe to be a fairer process. Some of those issues relates to timeliness of allegations and matters that should be best dealt with via remedial processes before such time as they escalate.

**Outdated Work Instructions** Members of the FOVB have, on several occasions, provided DPI Fisheries with our concerns with what the FOVBE maintain are antiquated work instructions. A list of those instructions has been provided to the FCU for review and hopefully updating with the involvement of the FOVB. The rationale is pretty simple; a modern compliance and regulatory regime requires regular review and associated communication to relevant parties.

Another example is the work instructions surrounding the use of body-worn video cameras, where the FOVB Chair has provided a considered response to the concerns and practicalities of this technology.

**Fish Technicians** The PSA Fish Technician delegate was given the opportunity to discuss their issues at the consultative forum. Issues discussed included the use of long-term temporary staff (many at 10 years+), the access to training and development, salary/career progression and other employee conditions and entitlements.

**Resourcing & Staffing of the New Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV)** There have been no commitments of new funds but an acknowledgement there will be a requirement for a 'Captain' of the OPV once it finalises its sea trials. The current retained businesses would provide the engineering and technical support required. That works when the boat is in port, but what happens when it is 300 nautical miles off the coast or away from those services?



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The fundamental concern – what should be the jewel in DPI Fisheries Crown could quickly become a white elephant stuck in port with no crew and little resource if DPI Fisheries is forced to take staff from other parts of NSW and resources from other programs.

Yes, it is a fantastic new piece of equipment that is supported by the PSA and FOVB alike. It will provide for considerable levels of training and experience and some FOs will most certainly jump at the opportunity to entertain duties on the OPV. But for how long? What happens to the current duties of staff who are taken off line to enable the crewing of the OPV and what happens to the work not done as a consequence?

**Update On Current FO Work Bans** Members would be aware that DPI Fisheries provided considerable information to the FOVB on the legitimacy of FOs undertaking work in Commonwealth Marine Parks. Satisfied with that advice, the PSA membership subsequently partially lifted the work bans as we awaited further information on the use of prohibited weapons, such as batons and handcuffs, in other jurisdictions. We still wait for that further information, acknowledging the difficulties in dealing with these jurisdictional issues, until further notice those bans will remain in place.

**Intelligence Sharing with NSW Police** The FOVBE raised the issue of the Good Friday shooting incident and there was discussion with the A/DFC on improvements to intelligence sharing on violent and aggressive stakeholders to be considered by management (in and around discussions with other agencies and regulators.) The Acting DFC gave the FOVB a commitment to be kept abreast of negotiations with Police of any MOU that may include improved communications channels with Police – like direct radio contact, somewhat like FOs have had in the past.

**Ocean Hauling Crews** After discussions on threats made to FOs when patrolling Ocean Hauling activities, DPI Fisheries management to consider a direct communication package to OHL commercial licence holders regarding the conduct of their crews and co-operating with FOs.

The Acting DFC also committed to exploring the practicalities of whether OHL crew conduct should also be considered in the development of a definition of 'fit and proper' person as this applies to Commercial Fishing Licence Holders, and whether this area be included in the final Right to Fish package.

**PSA Log of Claims Crown Employees (Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development) Fisheries Employees Award 2019** The FOVB is continuing with the development of our Log of Claims incorporating matters that concern Fisheries Technicians directly as they are part of the *FO Award*.

The PSA has spoken to members at length on the difficulties in renegotiating Awards whilst under the current draconian Wages Regulation of the NSW Government. The PSA/FOVB seeks to modernise this



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Award to provide for conditions that actually reference the work facilitated by FOs now, not that of a generation ago.

**Re-Alignments Mooted** There were concerning discussions on a proposed re-alignment that involved the creation of senior roles (Program Leaders) potentially at the expense of FO, DFO and SFO roles that currently remain vacant. With all of the new work that has been thrust upon DPI Fisheries over the years, the PSA/FOVB think it high time that DPI Fisheries turn towards the NSW Government and ask them to consider what extra money should be afforded to DPI Fisheries staff budgets before the agency is tempted to again rob Peter to pay Paul.

**Next meeting** Wednesday 2 September 2020

