

## Media Release 22 April 2003

### Fair cop for Swan River crabs.

Recfishwest has again called on the Fisheries Department to equitably apply its fisheries regulations to Swan River commercial fishermen.

Before Easter, Recfishwest called on the Fisheries Department to apply its regulations to commercial fishermen in the interests of fairness while future management is worked out.

The Fisheries Department has responded by saying that because the fishermen have not been complying with the regulation for a long time, then they shouldn't start to make them fish to the rules now.

"This kind of response is totally unacceptable to Recfishwest. The Department has had many occasions when it could have changed the rules but chose not to. To knowingly allow anyone to operate outside of the regulations sends the wrong message to the community and should be examined by the government." Executive Director of Recfishwest Frank Prokop said.

"To allow commercial fishermen to clearly operate outside of the rules in the Swan River where more than 1 million people live shows that Fisheries have their priorities all wrong. Recfishwest is asking the community when the last time was that they were able to go to the Swan River and get a decent feed of crabs."

Mr Prokop said that it was outrageous that Fisheries was defending their own inability to manage the minor commercial fisheries.

"We are concerned that these cosy little arrangements exist throughout the state. Fisheries appear to be legalising these operating procedures which are clearly outside of the rules, to give the commercial fishermen a greater share of the catch when resource sharing arrangements come into place."

"If half of the effort of the Swan River fishermen was not legal, how can it be recognised when allocation decisions are being made?" Mr Prokop asked. "We want our crabs back but the Fisheries Department seems content to ask the community to buy back their mistakes. The public shouldn't have to pay an inflated price for entitlements that never really existed in the first place."

"The Swan River is a special place and recreational fishers have had enough of being discriminated against by the Fisheries Department. This is not the first instance where we have suffered because of the close working relationship of the Department with other stakeholders. The Department recently issued a new herring trap entitlement even though other licenses had been bought out."



“From a Derby mud crab licence to south coast herring traps, the Department is coming down against recreational fishing whenever a tough decision needs to be made.”

“Recfishwest is also very disappointed in the Minister for Fisheries for failing to insist that the Fisheries Act be equitably applied. The Minister for the Environment recently had to overhaul Departments under her control because they were not prosecuting for breaches and here we have the Fisheries Department apparently doing exactly the same thing.” Mr Prokop said.

“The government has said that it wants to implement fair management yet does not seem to apply even-handed rules to commercial fishing in inshore waters. It’s time for the government to walk the walk about equitably managing our fisheries resources.” Mr Prokop concluded.

ENDS

Media Contact

Frank Prokop, Executive Director - Recfishwest 9387 7864  
0419 949 118.

Recfishwest is sponsored by **Healthway** and this is a **Sunsmart** event. Recfishwest encourages responsible, **Sunsmart** behaviour at all times.