

Dear Sir

I am Vice President of the Kimberley Professional Fishermen's Association. I have attached our submission to the Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services on the adequacy of maritime infrastructure in Broome. Format is Word 97(HTML). The views expressed in our submission are made by fishermen, but also as professional maritime operators would reflect the views of many other mariners. A signed copy from our President will be faxed for authentication purposes.

Thank you for this opportunity to canvass these issues.

Yours faithfully

Alan Fraser

Vice President-KPFA

KIMBERLEY PROFESSIONAL FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION

PO BOX 5117

CABLE BEACH WA 6726

President Secretary

Phone (08) 91921357 Phone (08) 91937937

Fax (08) 91921450 Fax (08) 91922454

Mob 0417 959192

Committee Secretary

Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services

House of Representatives

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir

Thankyou for this opportunity to address the Standing Committee.

Our Association represents members of the Commercial Fishing Industry in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia. The views expressed in this submission will likewise be the sentiment of many that use or wish to access the ocean or waterways around Broome, WA.

In spite of its size and dependence upon the ocean, Broome has very poor infrastructure appropriate to small to medium size craft (up to 50 GRT). Our only landing facility is a shipping wharf that offers no protection to the prevailing easterly winds that blow relentlessly over the winter months.

Our Port Management Authority is anxious to maintain maximum usage of the existing facility for obvious economic reasons while largely ignoring the needs of the smaller boat owner. In an attempt to accommodate small boats, a floating breakwater system was devised and installed at a total cost of \$1.35 million only to break up at the first hint of a storm. No doubt further funds will be expended, if this system is to work, but it is widely believed that this will be throwing good money after bad.

Broome needs a proper boating facility to meet the needs of small to medium boat owners and those that aspire to boat ownership. The reasons and community benefits behind that statement will be detailed below.

Broome is the major port of registry in the north of WA, supporting a wide range of maritime activities, including, fishing, pearl farm support vessels, other mariculture vessels, charter boats (fishing, diving and cruise), pleasure craft, oil industry support vessels, international yachting, Navy patrol vessels, Customs patrol vessels, Fisheries/DOT patrol vessels and general work boats. All of these vessels utilise our port facilities at their peril while jostling for position with larger boats. Vessel damage cannot be avoided, only minimised. The wharf is totally closed during fuel and explosives (fertiliser/diesel mix) unloading, often for two days.

With the increased activities in our northern waters of illegal Indonesian fishermen and illegal immigrants, the Navy and Customs are making ever-increasing demands on the port of Broome and its facilities. The majority of these vessels while in port insist on lying alongside rather than at anchor for periods often exceeding 3 days, thus blocking access to other wharf users. This problem is of particular concern to professional fisherman who are waiting to discharge perishable cargo. The presence of surveillance vessels operating from Broome and between Broome and Darwin is set to increase substantially amid concerns of increased illegal incursions into Australia.

All boat owners in Broome and the Kimberley are aware of the dangers presented to life and property by the unusually high cyclone activity in the area from November through to May each year. At present there is no safe anchorage in Broome to weather a cyclone. Smaller vessels resort to sheltering up mangrove creeks to escape damage and loss. This action would be of limited value during a severe event. Navy and large Customs vessels will be required to put to sea and run from the storm. This action is not guaranteed to preserve the craft and crew under all circumstances, often vessels can become trapped between a system and the shore with nowhere to run. There are some serious safety issues that will be totally resolved by the creation of a landlocked marina. The construction of such a facility is inevitable! Costs will only rise in time.

Australia is a nation clinging to the fringes of our vast land. Our proximity to water dictates that boating and water-based recreation will be a major activity enjoyed by the majority of Australians and sought by tourists alike. Strong maritime infrastructure should not be considered a luxury but a necessity to promote the appropriate and enjoyable use of such a large and valuable resource. Broome represents a minority in Australia with enviable coastline and weather, but sadly deficient in facilities to take full advantage of our maritime assets.

Many have taken up the challenge against seemingly insurmountable odds and prospered. Many have failed. A lack of maritime infrastructure has contributed to past difficulties; its continued existence is not acceptable and stifles proper growth in the maritime sector while discriminating against users.

The community benefit from fishing statewide is estimated at \$1 Billion from a catch of \$350 million, while employing around 12,000 (many in regional areas). At a ratio of 3:1 (benefit to production), the Kimberley would be responsible for community benefit of around \$63 million from fishing (catch of \$21 million) and \$600 million from pearl production (turnover of \$200 million). As an aggregate with the many other maritime industries in the Broome area, the community benefit would be substantial and should not be ignored or hindered.

Our lack of suitable facilities for small/medium boats is famous worldwide, which results in very few Australian and international cruising motor vessels and yachts visiting Broome in spite of the large number of vessels that approach within 200 N.M. of our town while cruising the remote Kimberley coast.

The majority of cruising craft use Darwin as a base to explore the Kimberley coast only to return to Darwin, missing many of the attractions offered from Broome as a staging point. The loss to the local economy from vessels avoiding the town is difficult to quantify but would be substantial. Losses would occur in the following sectors:

- Accommodation
- Public transport
- Tour operators

- Vehicle hire
- Providoers
- Hospitality
- Chandlers
- Repairers
- Repair facilities
- Fuel suppliers
- Retailers
- Harbour dues

The list should go into many other aspects of disadvantage, the least of which is the denial of employment opportunities through real growth.

The growth of oil exploration in our area and the opening of the Browse Basin project will place increased demand on our wharf facilities, which are at times stretched to the limit even now. The creation of a new marina facility will offer small and medium boats an appropriate facility, while allowing the shipping wharf to concentrate on its core business of larger vessels and ships.

If the concept were approached from a commercial perspective, allowing a mix of low to medium density residential, retail and commercial use within the marina precinct, then the sale of adjoining land could offset a substantial part of the development cost. This is now common practice throughout Australia.

The benefits of a marina to the Broome community would be far reaching. Benefits would flow to all members of the community in one form or another. A stark reminder of the deficiencies we face is a simple comparison of moored yachts in Darwin compared to Broome. Broome does not have any! Most boating in Broome at present is launch and retrieve trailerised dinghies. Broome's population is increasing rapidly and peaks at about 25,000 in peak season. We can no longer keep our heads in the sand and say that what we have got is adequate.

This submission was prepared at very short notice. I hope the impact is not lost as a result. Your strong support of the marina concept or just your recognition for the need to improve our facilities will go a long way in our quest for equality with most other Australian ports.

Yours faithfully

David Power

President

15 April 1999