

# AFANT



## AFANT's submission on the NT Governments *Strong Society, Confident Culture Strategy*

---

*Representing recreational fishing in the NT and ensuring the quality of our sport*

PO Box 40694 Casuarina NT 0811

Phone: 08 8945 6455 Fax: 08 8945 6055 Email: [eo@afant.com.au](mailto:eo@afant.com.au)

[www.afant.com.au](http://www.afant.com.au)

## **AFANT's Submission**

The Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT Inc (AFANT) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft *Strong Society, Confident Culture* Strategy which outlines the NT Government's commitments and strategies, providing a framework to build on our cultural and social strengths to connect Territorians.

### **Objectives and relevant Key Strategies**

#### **Priority Area- Community**

It is AFANT's belief that in order to develop active community groups and a strong NGO sector to provide opportunities for individuals to become involved in their community the NT Government needs to commit to reliable funding of NGO's. This including both supporting grant programs for projects run in NT Communities by various NGO's and committing to either fully or partially funding the organisations themselves in the long term. For example, the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT (AFANT) is currently funded on a yearly basis by the Department of Primary Industries, Industry Development Support Program. This 12 month short term funding cycle prevents AFANT from planning and achieving long term goals due to uncertainty around future funding. Instead we are forced to work on short term projects with limited planning capability for the future due to our financial circumstances. It is our belief that funding models should be for a longer term, ideally a four year cycle to follow that of the political cycle and prevent funding being withdrawn from organisations as a result of political backlash due to perceived criticism of government. AFANT is extremely supportive of the measures to develop principles to guide the relationship between the Northern Territory Government and the NGO sector to prevent this type of political backlash from occurring.

AFANT also believes many NGO can and should have multiple funding sources depending on the organisation being supported and its core objectives. For example the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT has traditionally been funded under the Department of Primary Industries as recreational fishing has been seen as an extractive pastime best dealt with under fisheries management. This view clearly ignores the enormous contribution recreational fishing makes to Northern Territory's economy through tourism as many thousands of anglers, both domestic and international visit the Northern Territory each year to partake in our world class recreational fishing. It also ignores the huge contribution of recreational fishing to the sporting and recreational lifestyle of 40,000 Territorians who frequently participate in the sport. Improving funding sources for numerous sporting and

recreational organisations such as fishing clubs which are outside of mainstream funding sources should be a priority for government. Despite the contributions they make to improving community involvement and the lifestyle of individuals fishing clubs are ineligible for all funding sources and grants under the Department of Sport and Recreation apart from sporting vouchers and as such are very limited in their ability to develop effective programs to attract new members. AFANT believes that in order to create opportunities to build supportive connections between Territorians through sport and recreation, as the biggest recreational activity in the Northern Territory recreational fishing clubs and organisations must be funded effectively.

### **Priority Area- Lifestyle**

AFANT believes that sport and recreation activities should be available for all Territorians. This should be regardless of age, sex and socio-economic status. Unfortunately there are limited opportunities for Territorians who suffer from disabilities and low socio-economic backgrounds to participate in recreational fishing as the majority of fishing is done from boats due to the environmental conditions and risk of crocodile attack while fishing from the shore. This is primarily due to the limited number of locations in the cities of Darwin and Palmerston and especially rural areas that offer facilities for land based fishing in safe, easily accessible locations. For example in the City of Palmerston locations for disabled fishermen are limited to the Elizabeth River Jetty. This location is frequently crowded and due the extreme tidal range can be difficult to land fish when the tide is low and the jetty is a significant distance above the water line. AFANT would like the government to commit to numerous suitable fishing platforms for disabled and low socio-economic citizens similarly to the easily accessible Peter Mahony platform located in Rapid Creek, Darwin. We believe easily accessible fishing infrastructure such as this would positively increase the availability of fishing as a recreational activity for all Territorians and through working with organisations such as AFANT and local fishing clubs all proposed infrastructure projects could be sited to ensure they provide maximum fishing opportunities for anglers.

AFANT also believes the government should commit to funding to enhance safety measures on the water for all Territorians through two key projects, a marine radio repeater network for boating safety and the identification and marking of navigational hazards on our waterways.

Firstly, unlike numerous other states within Australia there is no available marine radio safety network for recreational boating and fishing in the Northern Territory. Indeed radio communication for VHF radios is limited to the confines of Darwin Harbour or line-of-sight from boat to boat (8km range). This lack of communication presents a problem in that any

fishermen and boaters in distress are required to activate their EPIRB distress beacons in many non-life threatening situations in order to return to shore or access mechanical assistance. This EPIRB activation results in the use of rescue helicopters and water police resources to locate fishermen and boaters at considerable public expense. For example the Careflight rescue helicopter costs approximately \$7000 per every fifteen minutes it is airborne on a rescue mission. A well-funded and strategically placed marine radio repeater system could effectively cover the majority of the NT's coastline visited by recreational fishermen and boaters and significantly reduce the cost of government funded rescues. This would also considerably enhance the quality of communication and response time in many life threatening situations as well.

Secondly, While AFANT appreciates that many NT waterways are both remote and difficult to access, the majority of fishing and boating activity occurs within several hours drive of population centres. Our NT waterways possess significant navigational hazards most notably in the form of wrecks and rock bars which can result in significant damage to recreational fishing boats including the potential for serious accidents and loss of life. AFANT would like to see the NT Government undergo a systematic program of identifying and marking these navigational hazards in order to prevent boat damage and serious incidents that may occur from recreational fishermen and boaters unaware of these hazards.

## **Conclusion**

AFANT has a strong commitment to ensuring the protection and the quality of recreational fishing in the Northern Territory. Recreational fishing and tourism is a major contributor to the economy and lifestyle of the Northern Territory and must be nurtured and enhanced by the NT Government for current and future generations.

We would welcome the opportunity for greater engagement and consideration of AFANT's views and ideas in the development of a *Strong Society, Confident Culture* strategy in the Northern Territory.

Yours sincerely

Tristan Sloan

Executive Officer  
Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT Inc.

22<sup>th</sup> September, 2015