



## LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

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Via email: [ceo@afant.com.au](mailto:ceo@afant.com.au)

Dear Mr Ciaravolo

### **Response to AFANT's 2024 Recreational Fishing Policy Questionnaire**

Thank you for your correspondence dated 21 May 2024.

The Territory is a unique part of our country, and at the heart of the uniqueness is our great outdoor lifestyle. The ability for all Territorians to enjoy that lifestyle is critical to the future success of the Territory. It is a large part of why people come here and why people stay. There is no question that recreational fishing plays a vital role in enhancing the lifestyle of Territorians and acts as a tourism draw card. It also drives economic stimulus with thousands of Territorians livelihoods connected to a strong recreational fishing sector.

AFANT was supported by the Country Liberal Party government in 1980 when it was first established by a group of keen anglers. This was in recognition of the importance of recreational fishing and has proven to be a successful model from which the management, expansion, enhancement protection and conservation of recreational fishing has developed over the years.

In addition to the questions asked in your questionnaire, we also commit to no boat licenses, no boat registration, no fishing licensing and no blood alcohol limits for boaties.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to your questionnaire and have followed the numbering outlined in your letter of 21 May 2024.

#### **1. NT Barramundi Fishery Reform**

The iconic barramundi is undoubtedly at the centre of the success of our recreational fishing industry. For Territorians and tourists alike, the species is highly sought after. It is our firm commitment that barramundi stocks must be protected and remain abundant.

We take the concerns of recreational fishers, commercial fishing and traditional owners very seriously. This is why in recent weeks we have made significant commitments in this area.

On 18 June 2024, we committed to phasing out the use of gillnets and if elected, we will work closely with industry to find a fair and equitable solution, within four years. I have attached a copy of the media release for your reference.

Our team will always safeguard our lifestyle. In our view, it is unfortunate that the government has let the situation deteriorate to this point and we recognise that it requires urgent action, explicit policy direction and resourcing.

## **2. Fisheries Management**

- 2.1 We commit to appointing a Fisheries Management Advisory Committee to oversee the planning, implementation and review of all fishery management frameworks and harvest strategies. We also commit to maintaining a Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee.
- 2.2 The NT-wide Recreational Fishing Survey is a valuable resource and continue to be funded.
- 2.3 It is clear that a failure in leadership by the current government has not resolved a range of issues regarding access to barramundi and mud crabs and the CLP will appoint an expert technical panel to resolve any outstanding issues.
- 2.4 It is hugely concerning that golden snapper stocks may have reached unsustainable levels. This species is much loved and must be protected for future generations. We commit to allocating dedicated funding to ensure a robust campaign as behaviour change supports a better understanding of how we can reduce mortality rates.
- 2.5 As part of our commitment to ensuring sustainable levels of golden snapper we commit to following best practice to ensure we have additional productive fish habitats. This may include trial habitat enhancement and rebuilding of habitats.
- 2.6 We commit to the development of a fisheries policy which includes clearly stated recreational fishing objectives prior to commencing any review of the *Fisheries Act*.
- 2.7 Enforcement of our fisheries is critically important to ensuring sustainability of for future generations. We know that under this government our police have felt unsupported and due to high rates of crime they have been stretched to their limits. By driving down the high rates of crime through stronger laws and giving our police better powers, we will not only drive down crime, but ensure police can go back to doing proactive policing which includes in our fisheries. On top of this, we commit to a dedicated and appropriately resourced Compliance Unit within NT Fisheries to ensure that Territorians have confidence in the way fisheries are managed.

### **3. Recreational Fishing Infrastructure & Fishery Development**

- 3.1 We acknowledge and will work towards delivering the objectives of the NT Recreational Fishing Development Plan (NTRFDP) 2023–33.
- 3.2 Land-based fishing is also critically important to ensure that all Territorians have access to this iconic part of our lifestyle. You only need to look to the jetty at Elizabeth River Bridge which was built during our previous government to see how popular and important this access has been, particularly for families. We are very focused on increasing all-abilities access at land-based fishing locations. This is why we have committed to building better fishing infrastructure.
- 3.3 We commit to developing and updating the Artificial Fish Habitat policy as outlined in the NTRFDP, and to implement a new Artificial Reef Network Program to support enhanced fishing opportunities in the Greater Darwin region.
- 3.4 Safety at our boat ramps is also of paramount importance, and all-access means more Territorians can enjoy this unique part of our lifestyle. Amenities at our boat ramps also provide greater opportunity for more Territorians to enjoy recreational fishing in safety and comfort.
- 3.5 On 4 July 2024, we announced our Better Boat Ramps policy (refer attached media release) which commits to major upgrades for two of the Territory's most popular boat ramps: Corroboree and East Arm. These upgrades will improve safety and accessibility.
- 3.6 We will also upgrade other existing boat ramps including the installation of lighting, better car parking and disability access.
- 3.7 We look forward to having the opportunity to work with Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee (RFAC) to prioritise the rollout of improved boat ramps and amenities.
- 3.8 We commit to working with AFANT, NT Guided Fishing Industry Association (NTFFIA) and RFAC to develop and implement a Darwin Region Recreational Fishing Strategy.
- 3.9 We also commit to working with AFANT, NTGFIA, RFAC and other stakeholders to develop and implement an appropriately funded Regional Recreational and Tourism Fishing Development Strategy.
- 3.10 Fish stocking presents an exciting opportunity for more Territorians to have an opportunity to catch a barramundi. We have always been drivers of fish stocking in both Manton Dam and suburban lakes like Durack and Gunn over a number of years. We recognise, particularly with our local lakes, that this increases land-based fishing and ensures that people from all economic backgrounds and young people have the opportunity to catch fish in their own backyard.
- 3.11 On 19 July 2024, we committed to expanding the existing fish stocking program to Darwin Harbour and coastal environments (refer attached media release) and will work with AFANT and RFAC, to identify additional locations and new species of suitable fish.

### **4. Access to Fishing Locations and Relationships with Landowners**

- 4.1 Shared access to waterways is critical going forward. The government has dropped the ball on negotiations which is why we will work swiftly and commit to negotiating with traditional owners to provide long-term recreational fishing access agreements that are beneficial for all stakeholders.

- 4.2 We understand that there is additional need for liaison officers across a range of areas, and we look forward to the opportunity to finding a pathway forward to build partnerships between land councils, government peak bodies, traditional owners, and rangers.
- 4.3 I can confirm that we will provide ongoing support for object D of the Pastoral Lands Act. Furthermore, we commit to working with Pastoralists and other stakeholders to ensure the needs of pastoralists and fishers are met. Once satisfactory access routes have been identified, we commit to establishing a working group with AFANT and other stakeholders to obtain and improve public access to fishing and camping locations on government land.

## **5. Recreational Fishing Sector & Community Support**

- 5.1 We are committed to funding AFANT to continue representing the recreational fishing industry and acknowledge that it has been under funded over the last eight years of this government. We look forward to working with AFANT on funding arrangements that better suit the needs of the organisation.
- 5.2 We will consider recreational fishing grants as one way that will allow fishing clubs to deliver programs and initiatives to increase the participation of all Territorians in recreational fishing.

## **6. Water Management, Planning and Governance**

- 6.1 We commit to ensuring that all reviews and new Water Allocation Plans are developed in consultation with Water Advisory Committees that include representation from the community, traditional owners, industry, environmental and researchers.
- 6.2 We commit to maintaining the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework default Top End “80/20 Rule” for the management of groundwater and the wet season default “5% Rule” for surface water in the Top End.
- 6.3 Managing water resources is not only important to ensure a safe reliable water supply for Territorians, but it is also critically important for our environment and to ensure healthy ecosystems for the future. I can confirm that we will commit to maintaining recreational fishing in water supply dams and not damming free flowing rivers. Additionally, we commit to the Adelaide River Offstream Water Storage Project, and we will maintain the Darwin Region Water Supply Program Community Reference Group.

## **7. Environment Protection, Management & NT Parks**

- 7.1 Marine parks will be based on science and developed in consultation with stakeholders and traditional owners. There will be no arbitrary lockouts of users.
- 7.2 The Casuarina Coastal Reserve is a valued community recreational asset and we understand the unique fishing opportunities available at the reserve are not readily offered in other parts of Darwin. We commit to maintaining all current fishing access and activities and will consider adding the Buffalo Creek Management Area into the new Casuarina National Park. We also commit to investigate acquiring land from defence to incorporate the buffalo creek area into the new Casuarina National Park.

- 7.3 We commit to providing recreational fishing offsets to compensate for the loss of access to creeks and to finding an alternate access point to and from Darwin Harbour and Elizabeth River.
- 7.4 In accordance with Section 38 of the *Environment Protection Act 2019*, we commit to maintain prohibition on seabed mining in the Territory.
- 7.5 We commit to more active control of aquatic weeds. We will also commit to reviewing and updating approaches to wetland management. We will work with all stakeholders to investigate the most appropriate approaches to barrage management.

Thank you for taking the time to outline AFANT's expansive agenda and we look forward to working with you in partnership to deliver your aspirations.

Yours sincerely



Lia Finocchiaro MLA  
**Leader of the Opposition**

31 July 2024

**Josh Burgoyne MLA**  
Shadow Minister for Agribusiness and Fisheries

**Gerard Maley MLA**  
Shadow Minister for Recreational Fishing

## **JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

18 June 2024

### **The Opposition Backs Fishing**

The Lawler Government has been forced into a humiliating position to end commercial fishing thanks to its inability to negotiate a future for the industry.

After eight years in government the Lawler Government has at every step of the way failed to give certainty to recreational and commercial fishers.

The Opposition has been working with recreational and commercial fishing and consulting widely with all stakeholders and we will continue to do this to ensure a fair and equitable outcome for all stakeholders.

“We take the concerns of recreational fishers, commercial fishing and traditional owners very seriously,” Shadow Minister for Fisheries Josh Burgoyne said.

“We support phasing out the use of gillnets and if elected, we will work closely with industry to find a fair and equitable solution, within four years.

Shadow Minister for Recreational Fishing, Gerard Maley said, “Our team will always safeguard our lifestyle. Recreational fishing is a core part of the Territory lifestyle.”

Under our team, there will be no boat registration, no boat licensing, no fishing licensing and no park entry fees for locals. We are committed to more opportunities for land based fishing, increased accessibility at our boat ramps and more opportunities to hit the dirt road and explore our vast landscapes.

We will reduce crime, rebuild our economy and restore our lifestyle.

**-END-**

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## **Lia Finocchiaro MLA**

Leader of the Opposition

## **Gerard Maley MLA**

Shadow Minister for Recreational Fishing

### **JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

4 July 2024

### **Better Boat Ramps For Better Fishing**

The CLP will make boat ramps across the Territory safer for fishos and families.

The CLP's Plan for Better Boat Ramps will start with \$500,000 for major upgrades to two of the Top End's most popular boat ramps: Corroboree Billabong and East Arm.

The upgrades to Corroboree will include the installation of a new floating pontoon to ensure fishos can get on and off their boats without having to wade into crocodile infested waters.

Other upgrades will include the installation of solar power lights to improve safety during night time fishing as well as better car parking and disability access.

"Under the CLP's plans for fishing, safety comes first," said Leader of the Opposition, Lia Finocchiaro.

"The Corroboree Billabong boat ramp needs a complete modern makeover, not just band aid solutions that do nothing to improve overall safety.

"We have heard regular reports of damage to boats and trailers, and concerns over crocodile attacks with stories of crocodiles stalking fishos while they launch their boats in the water.

"As one of the closest boat ramps to Darwin, these upgrades to Corroboree will mean even more locals and visitors can enjoy the great fishing in the region with a more modern, safe and accessible facility."

Palmerston Game Fishing Club's Kris Noble, who runs the popular Secret Women's Business Barra competition, said safety was a major concern for fishos at Corroboree.

"We have women of all ages in our competition who struggle to get in and out of their vessels and in croc infested waters that needs to be done better," she said.

"Having a floating pontoon will mean they can step onto their boat safely. We also launch in the dark so having lights will give better visibility of potential hazards."

Shadow Minister for Recreational Fishing, Gerard Maley, said the CLP's Plan for Better Boat Ramps will also see a rock wall installed at East Arm boat ramp.

"We've listened to fishos who say more shelter is needed at East Arm boat ramp. A rock wall will provide protection from the wind when launching and retrieving boats. It will also double as a land-based fishing opportunity with the top of the wall to be capped," he said.

"Not everyone has a boat so this will mean even more Territorians can cast a line where there is great fishing and enjoy our fantastic lifestyle."

**-END-**

**Gerard Maley MLA**  
Shadow Minister for Recreational Fishing

**MEDIA RELEASE**

19 July 2024

**More opportunities to catch a Barra in Darwin Harbour**

Locals and visitors will have more chances to catch a prized barra in Darwin Harbour and coastal environments under a CLP government.

If elected, the CLP will trial a fish stocking program for barramundi to be released in Darwin Harbour.

“People come to the Territory to catch a Barra but in the Harbour and coastal surrounds that is proving harder and harder,” Shadow Minister for Recreational Fishing Gerard Maley said.

“Increasing our Barra stocks will relieve pressure on our remote areas, such as Shady Camp, Corroboree Billabong and Dundee Beach, which are becoming overcrowded.

“It will mean tourists staying in the City won’t have to travel far to catch a Barramundi, great fishing will be right on their doorstep. The CLP plan will assist tour operators in increasing their chances to catch a Barra in the harbour.

“This is part of our Plan to restore our Lifestyle and get the Darwin City economy firing again. It’ll be good news for fishos and good news for local businesses.”

Mr Maley said the news would particularly help land-based fishos.

“You won’t need a boat to catch a barra under a CLP government.”

“Stocking the Harbour with more barramundi will make it less expensive to wet a line down the Esplanade or at Elizabeth River and have even more chance of catching a barra.”

“We want more families to have every opportunity to enjoy our unique lifestyle and spend time together outdoors.”

Currently, barramundi is bred by NT fisheries at the Darwin Aquaculture Centre and released into places like Manton Dam and suburban lakes where natural breeding of barramundi does not occur.

This will be funded from within current budgets as a priority to ensure this program can be expanded to include fish stocking of barramundi in Darwin Harbour.

**-END-**