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Mr David Ciaravolo
Chief Executive Officer
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Dear  Mr Ciaravolo

Thank you for your correspondence providing the Amateur Fishermen's Association NT's (AFANT) election policy questionnaire.

I understand the importance of recreational fishing to the Territory lifestyle, and the corresponding need to keep our seas and waterways healthy. I recognise the need for strong economic development and opportunity, while working to ensure the protection of our natural environment.

I am a straight talker and I take my responses to these surveys seriously. I will not promise you something that I cannot or will not deliver. I will always put honesty and common sense ahead of making empty promises.

Since taking office as Chief Minister I have made decisions that benefit you and your members. In July, in the first major election announcement of the 2024 Election Campaign, I unveiled Labor's commitment to ban the use of commercial gillnets for Barramundi fishing and buy back commercial Barramundi fishing licences delivering a huge boost to the recreational fishing industry. I thank AFANT and others for their advocacy in this space. I was pleased to develop a plan and look forward to fully implementing it in the years ahead.

A re-elected Labor Government will ensure there will be no dams on the Daly or Roper Rivers – a protection we will enact with specific regulations and legally binding measures through our planned reforms to the *Water Act 1992* and related regulations. My Government is committed to continuing to implement critical reforms to better protect our natural environment.

Elections are a time when lots of commitments are made but not all of those can be taken seriously – particularly from those who have no real experience of government.

Thank you for your constructive advocacy and highlighting the policy positions of interest to AFANT and your members which I have responded to in the attached.

I appreciate our working relationship and look forward to continuing it in the next term of government should we be fortunate enough to be returned to office.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eva Lawler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

EVA LAWLER

30 JUL 2024

Topic	Ask Summary	Response
1. Fisheries Reform	Will your party commit to genuine fishery reform and phase out gillnetting for barramundi over the next term of government? (We envisage this to include establishing a new, gillnet-free, strictly quota limited commercial fishery in partnership with Traditional Owners & Aboriginal fishing stakeholders. Putting premium barra on menus)	The Lawler Labor Government led the way in announcing a plan to phase out Gillnets by 2028 in the Barramundi fishery. In the breakthrough announcement Eva Lawler committed \$15 million of new money for these buybacks. Whilst the plan has been opposed by the NT Seafood Council and others, Eva Lawler has committed to working with all stakeholders to develop a sustainable socially responsible Barramundi Fishery that offers the best recreational experience in the country whilst still providing fresh wild caught barra to Territorians. Whilst this announcement was half-heartedly matched by the CLP, they have provided no dollars, no details and have shown no real plan. Only a Lawler Labor Government can be trusted to deliver the best possible recreational fishing experience for Territorians by banning gillnets.
1. Fisheries Reform	If your party will not commit to a phase out / buy out of commercial barramundi gillnetting, how will your party protect the future of recreational barramundi fishing and address the serious issue of displaced commercial effort that has already been formally acknowledged and temporarily addressed with unsatisfactory interim arrangements for 2024? (Please note that addressing this challenge is not part of the current barramundi fishery review, and this is not something that stakeholders can reasonably be expected to agree upon without explicit policy direction and a commitment of resources from the Northern Territory Government).	N/A - see above answer
2.1 Management Advisory Committees	Will your party commit to appointing Management Advisory Committees with members from the recreational, commercial, fishing tourism, and Indigenous fishing sectors to oversee the planning, implementation and review of all fishery Management Frameworks and Harvest Strategies?	Yes.
2.1 Management Advisory Committees	Will your party commit to maintaining a Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee?	Yes, a re-elected Lawler Labor Government will maintain the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee
2.2 Research and monitoring	Will your party commit to ensuring adequate funding for NT Fisheries (estimated at an additional \$1.5M over 2 years) to conduct a repetition of the NT-wide recreational Fishing Survey?	We agree an effective survey of recreational fishers is required and look forward to working with AFANT on developing the best way to do this during the next term.
2.3 Shoal Bay mud crabs	Will your party help to ensure equitable access to mud crabs, either by allocating access for crabbing in Shoal Bay to the recreational, tourism and Traditional harvest sectors, or otherwise ensuring the appointment of an expert technical panel to review the issue?	The Lawler Labor Government will continue to work with all stakeholders in the Mud Crab Fishery as we work to create fair and equitable access across the Fishery.
2.4 Investing in behavioural change	Will your party commit to additional dedicated funding for a campaign of behavioural change (to be delivered by NT Fisheries in partnership with AFANT and NTGFA) to address catch and release fishing for reef fish and help reduce mortality of golden snapper and other reef fish from recreational and tourism fishing?	Outcome 4 of the Recreational Fishing Development Plan (RFDP) is 'A Capable and Confident Sector'. In recent days the Lawler Labor Government has committed \$400,000 to develop and promote Codes of Best Practice for Recreational Fishers and Fishing Tour Operators, including education campaigns around reef fishing and Golden Snapper mortality.
2.5 Innovative approaches to fishery productivity/recovery	Will your party commit \$1M to trial habitat enhancement/reef building in closed areas, and assess the effectiveness of this strategy to support reef fish recovery in the greater Darwin region?	In a recent announcement the Lawler Labor Government has committed to \$2 million over 2 years for the creation of a new Artificial Reef Program. This program will focus on expansion of the inshore artificial reef network. Stage one will deliver new fishing locations in the Darwin region, in closer proximity to boat launching facilities to ensure accessibility to smaller vessels. This will help deliver Outcome 3 of the RFDP - 'Fishing Opportunities for Everyone'
2.6 Fisheries Policy & NT Fisheries Act review	Will your party commit to continuing to develop a fisheries policy that incorporates key specific recreational fishing objectives, prior to commencing a formal review of the Fisheries Act?	The Lawler Labor Government recognise the importance of a vibrant Recreational Fishing sector not just for its economic value but also for its contribution to our great Territory lifestyle. Territory Labor support a holistic view when developing a Fishing Policy, recreational fishing objectives will be considered as part of this process. This will be developed prior to the formal review of the Fisheries Act.
2.7 Fisheries compliance	Does your party commit to maintaining a dedicated compliance unit within NT Fisheries, and will you review their resourcing for adequacy and increase their capacity if required?	Yes, Labor commit to maintaining the compliance unit along with a review of future requirements.
3.1 NT recreational Fishing Development Plan 2023-33	Will your party continue to acknowledge, and work to deliver the objectives of the NT recreational Fishing Development Plan 2023-33?	Yes. The RFDP 2023-2033 is the document that will guide the future development of the recreational fishing sector and a Lawler Labor Government will continue to work to deliver the four key outcomes.
3.2 Land-based fishing	Will your party commit to seeing through the community consultation, design, and construction of the jetty for land-based fishing at East Point (Dudley Point), or otherwise at another suitable location in Darwin?	Public consultation was conducted and closed on 2 July. The results of the survey are being analysed and decision to progress Dudley Point to the next stage will be made in the near future.
3.2 Land-based fishing	Will your party commit to building new, safe, and accessible land-based fishing platforms in the Darwin region (e.g. at Buffalo Creek, Channel Island, and Deck Chair Cinema/lower esplanade)?	The Lawler Labor Government is committed to exploring options for land based fishing, however, the two projects at Dundee and Dudley Point are the current priorities, once completed other options will be investigated.
3.2 Land-based fishing	Will your party commit to investigate, and if feasible, develop opportunities for croc-safe, seasonal, land-based fishing infrastructure in regional locations such as the Katherine River and Mary River?	A re-elected Labor Government will investigate potential land based fishing infrastructure in suitable regional locations.
3.3 Artificial reefs & reef building	Will your party commit to developing an updated 'Artificial Fish Habitat Policy' as outlined in the NTRFDP, and will you implement a new \$4M Artificial Reef Network Program to support enhanced fishing opportunities in the greater Darwin region?	In a recent announcement the Lawler Labor Government has committed to \$2 million over 2 years for the creation of a new Artificial Reef Program. This program will focus on expansion of the inshore artificial reef network. Stage one will deliver new fishing locations in the Darwin region, in closer proximity to boat launching facilities to ensure accessibility to smaller vessels. This will help deliver Outcome 3 of the RFDP - 'Fishing Opportunities for Everyone'
3.4 Upgrades at boat ramps	Will your party commit funding to improve boat ramps through the installation of amenities including toilets, pontoons, fishing cleaning tables, CCTV, shades, or similar, as informed by community consultation and RFAC prioritisation? And how much funding will your party commit to this program over the next 4 years?	In Budget 2024, the Lawler Labor Government unveiled a \$19.8 million investment in recreational fishing infrastructure. This includes funding new land based opportunities at Dudley Point and in Dundee and will continue to support the recreational fishing sector with improvements to existing boat ramps.
3.5 Key infrastructure – a Darwin Region Fishing Strategy	Will your party commit to working with AFANT, NTGFA and RFAC to develop and then commence implementing a Darwin Region recreational Fishing Strategy?	Absolutely, the Lawler Labor Government is committed to the success of the RFDP and will develop a Darwin Region Recreational Fishing Strategy under Outcome 3 'Fishing Opportunities for everyone'
3.5 Key infrastructure – a Darwin Region Fishing Strategy	How much funding will your party commit to invest in the delivery of infrastructure in the Darwin Region recreational Fishing Strategy during the next term of government?	In Budget 2024, the Lawler Labor Government announced a \$19.8 million investment in recreational fishing infrastructure. This includes funding new land based opportunities at Dudley Point and in Dundee and will continue to support the recreational fishing sector with improvements to existing boat ramps.
3.6 Key Infrastructure – NT Regional recreational and Tourism Fishing Development Strategy	Will your party commit to working with AFANT, NTGFA, RFAC and other key stakeholders to develop and commence implementing a Regional recreational and Tourism Fishing Development Strategy?	Yes
3.6 Key Infrastructure – NT Regional recreational and Tourism Fishing Development Strategy	How much funding will your party commit to invest in the delivery of infrastructure in the Regional recreational and Tourism Fishing Development Strategy during the next term of government?	In Budget 2024, the Lawler Labor Government unveiled a \$19.8 million investment in recreational fishing infrastructure. This includes funding new land based opportunities at Dudley Point and in Dundee and will continue to support the recreational fishing sector with improvements to existing boat ramps.

Topic	Ask Summary	Response
3.7 Fish stocking	Will your party commit to continuing funding for the NT Fish stocking program and commit to working with AFANT and the RFAC to review fish stocking policy (including investigating stocking new locations, and new species (if suitable)?	The Lawler Labor Government just unveiled an additional \$600k to the NT Fish stocking program. The successful program has seen hundreds of thousands of Barramundi released into dams and lakes where natural breeding doesn't occur including Manton Dam, Palmerston Lakes, Rum Jungle and McMinns Lagoon.
3.7 Fish stocking	Will your government investigate the suitability and (if deemed appropriate) a trial stocking of barramundi into Darwin Harbour to potentially support enhanced metropolitan fishing opportunities?	The stocking of large numbers of barramundi into Darwin Harbour needs careful consideration and wider investigation into the impact on existing food sources. Introducing barramundi to closed lakes where natural breeding does not occur has already proven to be successful and will be continued.
4.1 Long term access for recreational fishing in Aboriginal waters	Will your party commit to ensuring that long-term recreational fishing access agreements are put before Traditional Owners for consideration in a timely manner? And that the benefits offered by the NTG in exchange for the agreements will be continuously reviewed for adequacy and flexibility, and be improved if necessary?	In a new initiative the Lawler Labor Government has committed \$1 million over two years for the creation of a traditional owner engagement program. This funding agreement is a genuine effort to achieve successful long term recreational fishing access.
4.2 Capacity to build constructive relationships with Traditional Owners and rangers	Will your party commit to funding liaison officers at AFANT, NTGFLA and NT Fisheries to better engage with land councils, Aboriginal Traditional Owners, and rangers on recreational fishing (\$2M over four years)?	In a new initiative the Lawler Labor Government has committed \$1 million over two years for the creation of a traditional owner engagement program. This funding agreement is a genuine effort to achieve successful long term recreational fishing access.
4.3 Access to waters across pastoral land	Does your party confirm ongoing support for Object D of the Pastoral Land Act, and will you commit to establishing a working group with pastoralists, AFANT, DEPWS and NT fisheries, to either inform the development of specific s79 Access Routes, or identify options for legislative reform to enable access routes that can better meet the needs of both pastoralists and fishers?	The Lawler Labor Government supports recreational fishing access on Pastoral Land where agreement can be made with all parties. We commit to working with all stakeholders on a case by case basis where there is desire on all sides.
4.3 Access to waters across pastoral land	Subject to the identification of satisfactory access routes (in conjunction with AFANT and pastoral landowners), will your party commit to providing support to assist with funding the fencing and grading of key new access routes?	All requests for funding will be dealt with on an individual basis as and when they arise.
4.4 Access to fishing across government land	Will your party commit to establishing a working group with AFANT and key agencies/bodies to investigate opportunities to improve public access to fishing and camping locations on, or adjacent to, NT managed parks and Crown Land, as well as lands held by the NT Land Corporation and the Conservation Land Corporation?	Yes.
5.1 AFANT funding – community & industry representation	Will your party commit to maintaining AFANT's core funding for professional sector representation and coordination of citizen science programs at a minimum of current (23/24) levels plus at least the 12.5% that has been eroded by CPI?	The Lawler Labor Government will commit to funding AFANT for 3 years at \$300k per year to continue your important work.
5.2 NT recreational Fishing Grants Program	Will your party commit to continuing the NT recreational Fishing Grants program (up to \$500k p.a.) over the next four years? And will you commit to including AFANT and RFAC in a review of the current program to ensure guidelines are optimised to meet community needs and to provide value?	The Labor Government has committed to continue the NT Recreational Fishing Grants program for the next two years, with a review of the scheme thereafter.
6.1 Community participation in water planning	Will your party commit to ensuring that Water Allocation Plans are overseen by Water Advisory Committees comprised of community, Traditional Owner, industry, and environmental/academic stakeholder representatives?	As committed within the Territory Water Plan, a Lawler Labor Government is committed to delivering an improved water planning program by 2025. If re-elected, this will include reviewing current plans to ensure they are fit for purpose, meet the requirements of national water policy, community expectations and an environmentally sustainable level of extraction.
6.2 Precautionary water planning	Will your party commit to maintaining the default "80/20 Rule" for the management of groundwater (and connected dry season surface water), and the default "5% Rule" for wet season surface water in water allocation planning in the Top End?	We are committed to ensuring all water allocation plans are fit for purpose, and doing so in a timely and transparent manner, and are committed to providing greater transparency and governance to water advisory committees in the region. The Territory Water Plan sets out multiple actions pertaining to community engagement and to ensure views and voices of local communities are represented in the water planning process.
6.3 Water infrastructure development	Will your party commit to excluding the possibility of damming the NT's iconic free flowing rivers?	Progressing this work is a priority to a re-elected Territory Labor Government.
6.3 Water infrastructure development	Does your party commit to maintaining the default Top End "80/20 Rule" for the management of groundwater (and connected dry season surface water), and the default "5% Rule" for wet season surface water in water allocation planning in the Top End?	The Lawler Labor Government has an ongoing commitment to review the Water Act 1992, which would involve amended/new legislation by 2026.
6.3 Water infrastructure development	Will your party commit to maintaining, or including, recreational fishing in water supply dams (like Manton Dam) whenever possible?	This will provide an opportunity to consider matters such as the role of water advisory committees, the legislative framework for water allocation planning and the possible introduction of legally enforceable caps, amongst other matters.
6.3 Water infrastructure development	Does your party commit to the Adelaide River Off Stream Water Storage as the preferred option to meet Darwin's future water supply needs, and will you maintain the Darwin Region Water Supply Program Community Reference Group to advise government on its development?	Territory Labor is committed to fostering sustainable practices, contemporary natural resource management, and the responsible and sustainable use of our natural assets, for the long-term benefit of future generations of Territorians.
6.3 Water infrastructure development	Will your party commit to maintaining, or including, recreational fishing in water supply dams (like Manton Dam) whenever possible?	A re-elected Lawler Labor Government will ensure there will be no dams on the Daly or Roper Rivers – a protection we will enact with specific regulations and legally binding measures through reforms to the Water Act and related regulations. The Lawler Labor Government is committed to continuing to implement critical reforms to better protect our natural environment.
7.1 A threat and risk based approach to Marine Parks: No Lockouts	Will your party commit to maintaining a no arbitrary lock-out, threat and risk based approach to marine park management, including for any new Territory marine parks?	The AROWS Project is a current NT major project and is key to the Darwin Region Water Supply Program. This work is currently supported by the Darwin Region Water Supply Program Community Reference Group, and will also be captured by the to be established Adelaide River Water Advisory Committee.
7.2 Fishing at Casuarina Coastal Reserve	Does your party commit to maintaining all current fishing access & activities within the Casuarina Coastal National Park?	Yes. The Lawler Labor Government has committed an additional \$600k to the NT Fish stocking program which includes Manton Dam. This program sees hundreds of thousands of Barramundi released into areas where natural breeding doesn't occur.
		The Lawler Labor Government remain committed to evidence and science based decision making in the future declaration of marine parks and marine park zoning. Dedicated research on benthic habitats, including seagrass, coral and sponge communities has been conducted by Marra and Yanyuwa people with researchers at CDU and James Cook Universities over the last 4 years. To progress this work the NT Government has signed a Federation Funding Agreement with the Commonwealth Government to develop best practice and effective management area plans for marine parks. The process for developing these plans will see close collaboration between Fisheries and Department of Parks and Wildlife with a commitment to a "whole of government approach" with oversight from the Chief Ministers Department.
		The declaration of Casuarina National Park will not lead to any additional fishing restrictions.

Topic	Ask Summary	Response
7.2 Fishing at Casuarina Coastal Reserve	Will your party commit to investigate acquiring land from Defence to incorporate the Buffalo Creek Management Area into the new Casuarina National Park during the next term of government?	The Lawler Labor Government will continue a dialogue regarding the Buffalo Creek Management Area.
7.3 Middle Arm Industrial Precinct	Will your party commit to providing recreational fishing offsets to compensate for lost access to creeks due to port development, and habitat damage due to dredging for the Middle Arm Industrial Precinct?	Infrastructure NT is currently developing the draft Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct (MASDP) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Program. This will include comprehensive assessment of potential impacts and commitments to protect the environment.
7.3 Middle Arm Industrial Precinct	Will your party commit to providing alternative access to and from Darwin Harbour and Elizabeth River, if the final design results in the mouth of the river becoming impassable to recreational vessels for extended periods as has been identified by Government consultation?	Access will remain unaffected for some time as the development of the precinct begins. NT Fisheries and DPI have begun initial engagement with stakeholders as voluntary offset options are explored. Consultation will continue into the next term as Middle Arm progresses and a Lawler Labor Government will ensure AFANT are comprehensively consulted with regarding any loss of access.
7.4 Seabed mining prohibition	Will your party commit to maintaining a regulatory prohibition on seabed mining in the Northern Territory	Yes, the NT Labor Government led by introducing the prohibition on seabed mining in 2021 and has no intention to remove the prohibition in the next term of Government.
7.5 Wetland Management	Will your party commit to reviewing and updating approaches to wetland management (especially in the Mary River system) and invest in updated management and community engagement about seawater level rises and wetland changes?	The Lawler Labor Government understands that protecting the natural environment is integral to protecting the Territory lifestyle. Recently my Government announced our commitment to consult on, and implement the first Biodiversity Strategy for the Northern Territory. The Strategy will provide vision and define objectives for biodiversity conservation across the Territory. It will also identify key drivers of biodiversity loss, and articulate priority management actions across all environments. Wetlands play a vital role in Territory supporting a wide diversity of plants and animals, and will be considered as a part of this strategy. Public consultation on the strategy will commence this year.
7.5 Wetland Management	Will your party work with fishers and landowners to investigate and implement optimised approaches to barrage management, and where applicable, install fish friendly infrastructure e.g. installing gates or seasonal earthen plugs to let fish pass and prevent mass fish kills as water recedes at the end of the wet season?	The Lawler Labor Government understands that protecting the natural environment is integral to protecting the Territory lifestyle. Recently my Government announced our commitment to consult on, and implement the first Biodiversity Strategy for the Northern Territory. The Strategy will provide vision and define objectives for biodiversity conservation across the Territory. It will also identify key drivers of biodiversity loss, and articulate priority management actions across all environments. Wetlands play a vital role in Territory supporting a wide diversity of plants and animals, and will be considered as a part of this strategy. Public consultation on the strategy will commence this year.
7.5 Wetland Management	Will your party commit to investigate options for more active control of aquatic weeds, like olive hymenachne in rivers and wetlands like Corroboree Billabong?	The Lawler Labor Government understands that protecting the natural environment is integral to protecting the Territory lifestyle. Recently my Government announced our commitment to consult on, and implement the first Biodiversity Strategy for the Northern Territory. The Strategy will provide vision and define objectives for biodiversity conservation across the Territory. It will also identify key drivers of biodiversity loss, and articulate priority management actions across all environments. Wetlands play a vital role in Territory supporting a wide diversity of plants and animals, and will be considered as a part of this strategy. Public consultation on the strategy will commence this year.