



# THE UPDATE

Captain's Blog

## Still fit for purpose – the future-focused Fishing Act of 1996

The Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, Dame Juliet Gerrard, this week completed a substantial report on commercial fishing.

Professor Gerrard's report, running to 366 pages, was brought together with a panel comprised of academics, NGOs, scientists, and leaders from the commercial fishing industry.

In her introduction, Professor Gerrard makes it quite clear the report would not seek to revolutionise the management of fisheries which is predicated on the 1996 Fisheries Act which includes the Quota Management System (QMS).

This would have been deeply disappointing to those who call for the QMS to be radically overhauled or thrown out. To those who know the 1996 Fisheries Act and the QMS more deeply, it was no surprise at all.

Then Fisheries Minister, Doug Kidd and his officials future-proofed the Act by including a range of environmental principles and sustainability measures. These required the protection not only of fisheries, but also of dependent species, wider aquatic biodiversity and habitats.

Some of these sections have perhaps been under-used, however in a world where Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management (EBFM) is at the forefront regarding the marine space, they are about to become invaluable.

Professor Gerrard challenges the current Minister, David Parker and the regulator to use the potential of the Act to catalyse change.

There are some who would prefer vast tracts of the ocean to be tied up in no-take marine reserves and the industry believes that these have their place, but if the aim is to protect biodiversity through EBFM there are less drastic (and potentially more effective) ways to do so, while still allowing the harvesting of seafood.

Professor Gerrard talks about building on the QMS. She points out that for more than 30 years our fisheries legislation has recognised that our fisheries are finite. That the legislation under which the industry operates preserves fish stocks, and the wider marine environment, for future generations already.

In other words, the current fisheries management regime already has mechanisms that can enable an ecosystem-based approach and has already enacted measures to the effect that; protecting 30 percent of our EEZ in Benthic Protection Areas being an example.

Recognition of the world-leading nature of the Fisheries Act and the QMS is heartening but it does not let the industry off the hook for making future changes.

Professor Gerrard's report is comprehensive, considered and thought provoking.

We have work to do.



Director of Fisheries Policy for Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Phil Major (left) and then Fisheries Minister, Doug Kidd (right).

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## The Primary Industries NZ Awards

The Primary Industries NZ Awards bring together supportive and active participants in New Zealand's primary sector businesses, suppliers and government agencies.

The Award categories are as follows:

- Outstanding Contribution to NZ's Primary Industries – sponsored by Massey Ferguson
- Primary Industry Emerging Leader Award – sponsored by Lincoln University
- Primary Industries Producer Award – sponsored by Kotahi Logistics
- Primary Industry Innovation & Collaboration Project Award- sponsored by Norwood
- Primary Industries Science & Research Award – sponsored by Yashili Dairy
- Primary Industries Team Award
- Primary Industries Champion Award – sponsored by Federated Farmers

The Awards are open to individuals, teams and companies from any producer groups working within the primary sector or in support of the primary sector.

For more information, or to make a nomination, visit the [Primary Industries NZ Awards website](#).

Entries close **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021**, with finalists announced on 17<sup>th</sup> May.

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