

# Snag for fish licence plan

NIGEL HUNT



Total catch limit idea also bagged

FEE-based licensing for recreational fishers is unlikely to be introduced because of a lack of community support.

And now a proposal for a total allowable catch for the sector has been criticised by a key fishing group.

The new strategy document from the Minister's Recreational Fishing Advisory Council includes investigating licensing.

But if a licensing system eventuates, it is more likely to be cost-free for anglers. Labor has already ruled out supporting a fee-based system.

Under the Recreational Fishing Strategy for South Australia, the advisory council will also look at introducing a total allowable catch for the sector, registration and electronic diaries.

Other planks of the strategy include:

IMPROVING the participation of recreational fishers in research and monitoring projects;

WORKING with recreational fishing groups to increase fishing skills and best practice handling;

WORKING with schools and the Education Department to identify opportunities to promote recreational fishing as safe, family-friendly and healthy;

SEEKING government commitments for ongoing funding proportionate to the value of recreational fishing, or alternatively, exploring separate funding resources.

Primary Industries and Regional Development Minister David Basham, pictured, said the strategy put together by MRFAC focused on priority areas of sustainable growth for the sector and “ultimately get more people fishing”.

He said 277,000 fishers contributed \$160m to the economy as “people often stay in regional communities, visit the local tackle shop and eat at local restaurants”.

But SA Fishing Alliance spokesman Graham Keegan said the strategy “fails to deliver solid commitments”.

“It also appears that the MRFAC do not understand that setting a total allowable catch for each species, based on dubious data from poorly done surveys, is a recipe for reducing the community’s share of the resource,” he said.

“The MRFAC promised public inclusion in this document. They did not perform effective consultation.

“Recreational anglers were promised a bright future at last election. Sadly that has not happened and this document fails to address this.”

MRFAC chair Sharon Starick said the strategy was looking at key needs of the recreational fishing community over the next three years.

“Incorporating the growth and progress opportunities identified by the 2020 Recreational Fishing Priorities survey, this strategy focuses on both short and medium-term outcomes for the sector to increase stewardship, sustainability and security,” she said.