

Press Release

Frustration at Government's Marlborough Fisheries Discrimination

Local recreational fishers are becoming increasingly frustrated at government's "obstinate" refusal to talk on Marlborough fisheries issues and its latest broken promise to lift the recreational set net ban on Marlborough's east coast.

Tony Orman immediate past chairman for the Marlborough Recreational Fishers' Association (MRFA) said requests to the Minister of Fisheries David Carter for discussions had been refused.

Mr Carter had declined because of a "busy schedule." However Tony Orman said Mr Carter was reported to be a frequent visitor to the Queen Charlotte Sound where the minister owns a home.

"So we're asking him to consider setting aside an hour or two on such a visit to discuss matters which have been festering now for years," he said..

On several occasions, MRFA had requested audiences with the previous minister Phil Heatley but all had been declined. A request to discuss vexed questions on the blue cod fishery such as the slot and transit rules and others with the ministerial Blue Cod Management Group were similarly turned down.

"The accumulation of the uncommunicative attitude has left our committee and its 100-plus members with a growing sense of frustration and annoyance that is reaching anger levels," said Tony Orman.

Government had promised to lift the recreational set net ban along Marlborough's east coast since there were no instances of dolphins caught in recreational set nets. But government has not acted on the assurance.

"We see it as discrimination," said Tony Orman. "Commercial and customary can set nets up to 1000 metres long. Recreational fishers with a 60 metre net cannot."

A recent instance of two dolphins caught in a set net at Amberly just north of Christchurch may have been used as an excuse to renege on the promise. Reports indicated the set netters were customary fishermen and not recreational. No action seemed to have been taken over the dolphin deaths despite the ban being in place. In addition Amberley is a long way from east Marlborough said Tony Orman.

"Besides dolphins do not inhabit rocky, kelp areas where recreational nets have been traditionally set for a century to catch butterfish or moki. By placing a regulation to limit recreational set nets within 100 metres of the shore, then there would be zero potential to catch a dolphin," said Tony Orman. "In short the ban has no justification and is discriminatory in that it affects only recreational fishers."