



## **Complaints and Appeals Procedures**

### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

#### **1. Objective of this Procedure**

This document details the procedure to be followed in the event of Recfish Australia receiving a complaint about its certification activities or about a fishing tournament certified to the Standard for National Environmental Assessment of Tournament Fishing.

#### **2. How to Lodge a Complaint**

2.1 A complaint shall be submitted to the Chief Executive of Recfish and shall include sufficient objective evidence to substantiate the claims and allow for the Action Officer to make an appropriate decision on the action to be taken. The complainant shall be required to demonstrate that the fishing tournament organiser has had sufficient opportunity to rectify the situation.

2.2 Dissatisfaction based on hearsay will not be considered as a complaint.

2.3 It is not always obvious that a piece of incoming correspondence is a complaint. An item will only be considered a complaint if refers directly to Recfish Australia or to a certified fishing tournament. Before considering it as a complaint Recfish Australia will need to be satisfied that attempts have already been made to resolve the issue.

#### **3. Handling the Complaint**

3.1 In the event of a complaint about Recfish the Action Officer will be the Recfish Chief Executive.

3.2 In the event of a complaint about a fishing tournament the Action Officer will be NEATFish administration.

3.3 The Action Officer will open a file on the complaint and ensure that all actions are documented.

3.4 The Action Officer shall send a letter of acknowledgement to the complainant.

3.5 The Action Officer shall confirm that appropriate attempts have already been made by the complainant to resolve the issue with the tournament organiser. Where the Action officer considers that appropriate attempts have not been made to resolve the issue, the complainant shall be advised to take the matter up with the tournament organiser.

#### ***Complaints about Recfish***

3.6 The Chief Executive shall investigate or cause an investigation to be conducted. In resolving the issues the Chief Executive shall consider both short term and longer term actions that are required by the parties concerned.

3.7 The Chief Executive shall write to the complainant detailing the results of the investigation and action taken.



## **Complaints about Fishing Tournaments**

3.8 The Action officer shall, consistent with confidentiality, formally bring the substance of the complaint and any relevant facts to the notice of the tournament organiser, even where these have been already made known by the complainant.

3.9 The Action Officer shall formally request the tournament organiser to respond within 14 days, giving comments on the complaint and details of the actions the organisations proposes or has taken to investigate and/or resolve the matter. There may be need for several rounds of correspondence between the interested parties. A formal audit of records of a tournament may be required.

3.10 Once the Action Officer is satisfied that the matter has been resolved, the Action Officer shall ensure that the parties are officially informed of the outcomes of the investigation.

## **APPEALS PROCEDURE**

### **1. Objective of this Procedure**

1.1 This document details the procedure to be followed in the event of a tournament organiser wishing to make an appeal against a decision of NEATFish administration relating to the NEATFish Standard.

### **2. How to Lodge an Appeal**

2.1 An appeal shall be lodged not less than 40 days after notification of a decision by Recfish Australia or NEATFish administration, by sending a substantiated letter of appeal and a \$1,000 deposit by registered mail to the Chief Executive of Recfish.

### **3. The Appeals Panel**

3.1 On receipt of an appeal, an Appeal Panel shall be established to determine the validity and pass judgment on the appeal.

3.2 The Appeal Panel shall consist of three Directors of Recfish Australia from whom a Chairperson will be elected. No member of the Panel shall have a direct interest in the subject of the appeal in any form. Competence to consider the appeal is considered inherent in all Directors.

3.3 The Chief Executive shall advise the appellant of the identity of the Panel members and seek assurances from members and the appellant that there is no conflict of interest, whether financial, commercial, personal or for any other reason. The declarations shall be documented by the Chief Executive. Any conflicts of interest shall be resolved or the membership of the Panel changed.

### **4. Information**

4.1 If requested by members of the Panel to provide information in relation to an appeal, the personnel involved in making the decision relating to the fishing tournament shall do so. The provision of information will be without prejudice towards all others.



## **5. Confidentiality**

5.1 The members of the Panel are under an obligation of confidentiality concerning anything that may come to their knowledge while performing their function, with regard to the tournament organiser or tournament participants.

## **6. Consideration of the Appeal**

6.1 Consideration of the appeal shall commence within 20 days after receipt of the appeal. The appellant shall be given at least 5 working days' notice of the time and place of the hearing.

6.2 The members of the Panel shall judge in all fairness.

6.3 The Panel may consult experts and make all provisions, which may include meetings or teleconferences, deemed necessary to make a sound judgment.

6.4 The appellant has the right to formally present their case and present witnesses or written testimony.

6.5 The Panel is obliged to make a decision within three months of receipt of the appeal.

6.6 The Panel shall decide on the appeal by a majority of votes and inform the parties concerned not later than ten days after the date of the judgment.

6.7 The judgment shall be signed by all members of the Panel.

6.8 In exceptional circumstances the judgment may be to refer the appeal to a full meeting of the Directors of Recfish Australia, in which case the requirements of this Procedure relating to conflict of interest and confidentiality shall apply to all Directors.

6.9 The judgments of the Panel are considered binding.

6.10 In the event of the appeal being unsuccessful, the reasonable out of pocket costs of conducting the appeal shall determined by the Chief Executive and deducted from the deposit. The balance of the deposit (or the full deposit in the event of a successful appeal) shall be returned promptly to the appellant.