



Submission to the Proposal to vary the Submarine Cable (Southern Sydney Protection Zone) Declaration 2007

Overview

The NSW Wild Harvest Fishers Association (NSWWHF) thanks the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) for providing it with an opportunity to respond to the proposed variation referenced as '*Submarine Cable (Southern Sydney Protection Zone) Declaration Variation 2025 (No. 1)*' under subclause 23(1) of Schedule 3A to the Telecommunications Act 1997.

Under a formal contract with the NSW Government, the NSWWHF has been established as the peak industry representative body for commercial fishers in NSW to represent their interests on any issue(s) of relevance to governments at all levels including to ACMA.

Executive Summary

NSWWHF understands that ACMA is proposing to vary the Southern Sydney Protection Zone over 2 submarine cables landing at Tamarama and Clovelly beaches, NSW. The Southern Sydney Protection Zone is established by the Submarine Cable (Southern Sydney Protection Zone) Declaration 2007, made by the ACMA under Schedule 3A to the Telecommunications Act 1997.

Perch Infrastructure Pty Ltd is proposing to install the Tabua cable in Australian waters by 2026, linking Australia to Fiji and the US. This cable is proposed to land outside the existing boundaries of the Southern Sydney Protection Zone at Maroubra Beach.

The ACMA proposes to move the southern-most boundary of the protection zone approximately 4 km south to extend protections over the proposed Tabua submarine cable. Existing restrictions and prohibitions will be carried over.

NSWWHF Response

Following an initial consultation with commercial fishers operating within the proposed cable upgrade areas, NSWWHF opposes the proposed locations of the cable upgrades as prescribed in the variation as they will result in significant a loss of access to existing commercial fishing areas by licensed commercial fishing operators. This will reduce seafood production and in turn threaten the commercial viability of those commercial operators who are also major suppliers to Sydney Fish Markets.

The NSWWHF appeals to the ACMA to recognise the importance of the area as an historical and valued food source for freshly caught wild harvest seafood for consumers and the need to protect our food production areas – *this is also a food security issue*.

The NSW Government has invested over \$750 million into the redevelopment of the iconic Sydney Fish Market - Australia's home of fresh seafood and the lifeblood of the NSW seafood industry. Similar

to the upgrade in cable infrastructure, this state-of-the-art infrastructure upgrade presents an invaluable opportunity for Sydney Fish Market to transform operations and deliver an expanded business model, that leverages this significant investment from the NSW Government to strengthen pride in the Australian seafood industry. If the commercial catch of wildcaught fishers is reduced then this will cause a 'knock on effect' to the Sydney Fish Markets by reducing the volume of fresh seafood supplies to them and impact negatively in their financial bottom line.

A third 'negative impact' will be to the financial viability of the seafood supply chain including post vessel transport and marketing businesses all of whom are upstream beneficiaries of the 'wildcaught producer'.

Recommendation

1. Following consultation with commercial fishers operating in the SSPZ the NSWWHF Association opposes the proposed variation in its current form as it will result in an unacceptable loss of fishing quota and threaten the commercial viability of commercial fishers operating in the area of the proposed upgrades, economic loss to Sydney Fish Markets and operators within the seafood supply chain.
2. NSWWHF recommends that the 'instrument' the *Submarine Cable (Southern Sydney Protection Zone) Declaration Variation 2025 (No. 1)* not be progressed in its current form, and instead, the ACMA accept an invitation from the NSWWHF to cohost urgent talks with commercial fishers and Perch Infrastructure Pty Ltd.
3. The purpose of this discussion is to address the impact of the proposed cable changes on the commercial fishing industry and to identify alternative locations for these upgrades to ensure the infrastructure cable upgrades can progress and at the same time the significant impacts on the commercial fishing sector can be avoided and/or significantly minimised. Commercial fishers operating in the area believe an alternative route is available that would address the requirements of the ACMA.

The Association recognises the objective of the Protection Zone Declaration in providing protections to submarine cables of national significance and at the same time the NSWWHF seeks acknowledgement from ACMA of the national significance and importance of protecting our food production zones off the coast of NSW for this reason, we welcome your acceptance of our invitation to meet with Perch Infrastructure Pty Ltd and therefore seek an extension of deadline for submissions to 30 June 2025 to enable a mutually agreeable resolution.

Once again, thank you for providing an opportunity to respond to the proposal and I look forward to hearing from you and accepting our invitation to meet. I can be contacted on 0498 227 281.

Yours sincerely

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16th June 2025