

INTRODUCTION

On 5 December 1996 the *Fisheries Management Amendment (Advisory Bodies) Bill* was passed by Parliament and on 20 December 1996 the *Fisheries Management Amendment (Advisory Bodies) Act* was proclaimed. This Act, in concert with the associated regulations, significantly altered the fisheries advisory body structure in New South Wales by abolishing both the Commercial Fishing Advisory Council and the Recreational Fishing Advisory Council and creating a system of four new Ministerial advisory councils and seven fishery-based management advisory committees. As a result of concerns raised in relation to the effect the *Advisory Bodies Act* would have on industry consultation, the Legislative Council resolved on 5 December 1996 that the Standing Committee on State Development inquire into and report on the *Advisory Bodies Act*. The Terms of Reference for the Advisory Bodies Inquiry are set out at the front of this report. This reference was in addition to the wide ranging Fisheries Management Inquiry previously referred to the Standing Committee.

The Committee began its inquiry in January 1997. Public submissions in relation to the Terms of Reference were sought by newspaper advertisement. 29 written submissions were received by the Committee. Public hearings exclusively in relation to this inquiry were held over two consecutive days beginning 13 February 1997. 16 witnesses appeared before the Committee on these days. Further evidence in relation to this inquiry was received during 13 public hearings held primarily for the Fisheries Management and Resource Allocation inquiry between January and May 1997.

The Committee found that, to properly consider the reference, it would require knowledge of the content of at least the draft Regulations associated with the *Advisory Bodies Act*. Neither the *Advisory Council Regulations* or the *Management Advisory Committee Regulations* had been gazetted or released for public comment by 13 February 1997. As a result, the Chairman corresponded on numerous occasions with the Minister to request information in relation to the likely content of the regulations. Draft *MAC Regulations* were received by the Committee in March, but preliminary draft *Advisory Council Regulations* were not received until 8 April 1997. The Committee found it could not complete its inquiry by the original reporting date of 11 April 1997 due to

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the prolonged delay in obtaining these Regulations, and tabled its *Interim Report on the Fisheries Management Amendment (Advisory Bodies) Act 1996* in the Legislative Council on 10 April 1997. The House granted a request for an extension of the reporting date to 19 June 1997.

On 12 June 1997 the Committee received an expanded version of the draft *Advisory Council Regulations*. This necessitated another request for a short extension of the reporting date to 4 July 1997.