

ESL review – submission to draft report

Poole, Mr Daryl

SUBMISSION ON BOAT LEVY

The issue of a levy on recreational boat owners is based upon one anonymous submission which states;

"[I]t is apparently suitable for land-owners to pay through their rates, for a service which is highly-unlikely to be needed by the vast majority of WA citizens. Would it not be appropriate to extract a levy from every registered ocean-going vessel, to at least partly fund the VMRS, rather than expect land-owners to pay?"

As a yacht owner I am sick and tired of successive Labor Governments introducing thinly disguised frauds as some form of benefit for boat owners. Who could forget the 'Skippers ticket', theoretically designed to improve boating safety, but in reality a once-only fraud that did nothing for boating proficiency. Nowadays you only have to tell a Government Approved Agent you have owned a 'tinnie' for eight years, pay the fee and receive a 'ticket' for life. At the time this 'scheme' was being conceived by University academics, the real service providers (Volunteer Sea Rescue Groups) were running 8-10 week courses in boat handling. These courses covered both the theory (with an examination) and the practical. People, such as myself, who did the course, were not recognised under the laughable 'Skippers Ticket', though in my case I had sailed boats for some twenty years, at that time.

I was shocked to learn that a flat levy fee on vessels would depart from the 'principle of progressivity'. Presumably the committee was concerned that any levy would not be 'adjustable' at a later date. For instance, boat owners moored in Mangles Bay were told that fees would be kept in line with inflation, but have now increased by well over 400% and continue to increase. The services the Department of Marine provide are negligible.

Apparently the Committee is of the opinion that a vessel-based levy on either size of vessel or percentage of registration fee would introduce an element of 'progressivity'. It is a pity the Committee was not focused on marine safety rather than revenue-raising. The type of rescue work undertaken by Sea Rescue; the type of vessels/skippers rescued; the location of rescues; the reasons for the rescues and other pertinent questions have never been considered. The truth of the matter is that the committee is focused on revenue-raising for yet another incompetent Government.

My yacht has electric and manual bilge pumps; flares; marine radio; excellent stability; scuppers and many other properties important to marine safety. Importantly, it doesn't run out of fuel and I am able to read marine maps. These are important marine safety parameters which the committee should have considered, had they not been so focused on revenue-raising.

In the unlikely event of the current Minister being interested in marine safety, I would suggest the scrapping of the 'skippers ticket' and move support for Sea Rescue

Groups to conduct marine safety courses. Courses they have successfully run for decades, with minimal Government interference.

I formally register my opposition to any levy on boat-owners.