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December 13th 1990

The Rt.Hon.Ian Armstrong, MP.,
Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs
New South Wales Government
Parliament House
Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Your Ref:F.88/1036 (22455)

Dear Minister,

Re: Gordons Bay

I thank you very much for your letter of the 27th July, 1990, in which you inform me that your department is continuing to investigate the declaration of areas that are considered as valuable marine or estaurine areas.

I am also very pleased to hear that your Department will shortly be gazetting the Solitary Islands near Coffs Harbour as a marine reserve. This is indeed good news and I look forward to hearing of its gazettal.

In my letter to you in July, I raised the possibility of Gordons Bay being investigated for possible declaration as a marine reserve. This letter is to assure you of my continued interest in this happening.

It is also made more urgent now by the fact that, with the increasing number of diver usage, the blue groper and other marine animals in the area which are particularly docile and used to being hand fed by divers, are being put at risk. I was greatly distressed the other day to find a dead two foot blue groper. It had been speared by an unscrupulous diver, in the stomach, which made for the fish being able to escape but at the same time not to escape death.

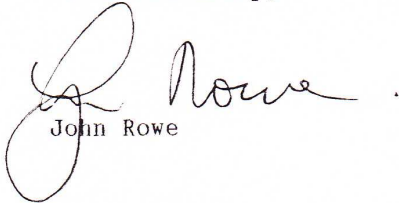
I understand under the Fisheries and Oyster Farm Act 1935, under Section 18 of the closures, that the taking of blue groper by spears, spear guns and similar devices, is not allowed and this ban was introduced on the 31st August 1979 and is in force until 1999. The actual spearing of this fish to my mind is the equivalent of someone hitting a tame kangaroo in a land park on the head with a hammer as it came up for a free handout of food.

It has also been reported to me that spear fishing is being carried out by scuba divers in this same area. I am under the impression that this also is illegal and that penalties for such activities is instant confiscation of the divers equipment.

In the immediate short term I hope it is possible that Fisheries Inspectors may increase their patrols of this area to help curb such illegal activities and in the long term that priority be given to declaring this area a marine reserve.

In the interim, with best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

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John Rowe

