PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 2008/ 2009.

To put it mildly, I have had a great time fly fishing over the past twelve months.

From the Snowy Mountains, to the Central Tablelands, the Shoalhaven, the South Coast, to New Zealand and everywhere in between, I have had the privilege to fish some beautiful places with some wonderful people.

The highlight this year was certainly New Zealand. When I last visited New Zealand I was a lot younger and the destination for my brother and I was the Southern Alps where we were to climb in the Mount Cook and Arthur's Pass areas. The onset of age has certainly put a dampener on mountaineering as a recreational activity, but the enthusiasm and passion to climb when I was younger has been tempered by the enthusiasm and passion to fly fish and to do so as often and in as many locations as I am able. Thank goodness I have an understanding wife who, whilst not fully comprehending the pastime, understands why I need to do what I need to do.

New Zealand offers the opportunity to experience fly fishing in a way which, to we Australians, is simply alien; there are big fish in big rivers, where the fishing is in clean, cold water of unbelievable clarity and located in some spectacular scenery, most of which is of picture postcard quality.

But the opportunity to fly fish in New Zealand and elsewhere has its roots in me becoming a member of Illawarra Fly Fishers Club (IFFC). Having completed a week long residential fly fishing course in Jindabyne in February 2003, I thought that there was only one way to increase my knowledge of and skill level in this fascinating pastime and that was to join a club.

Now joining a club for anything for which I had an interest had never been part of the way I did things - I bushwalked, climbed and mountaineered alone with my brother or a few other acquaintances and the fishing I did, I usually did by myself. Therefore the decision to join a club was made, admittedly, only after a good deal of soul searching.

Being a resident of the Sutherland Shire, I researched a number of clubs in the Sydney metropolitan area, but none gave me the inspiration that I found was necessary to compel me to become a member and so I looked further afield. After becoming aware of the existence of IFFC, I spoke with past-President Steve Chatterton one evening and knew immediately after our conversation that this was the club for me.

When taking up a new pastime, the journey to become proficient is more often than not, never an easy one and fly fishing is definitely no different. However the journey that I made to acquire new skills, whilst in the company of more skilled and knowledgeable members, certainly made the process considerably easier, quicker and less stressful than, I am sure, it would have otherwise been. Had it not been for the "spirit" within IFFC and the generosity of other members to give of their time and advice, I doubt whether I would have persisted with the sport or with the club.

With time, patience and practice came proficiency. I learned how to cast a fly line and learned other associated skills such as fly tying; consequently with proficiency came the need to do better……to cast tighter loops, cast further and more accurately and tie a better fly.

By joining in on club activities I began to get to know other members and this, in turn, led to invitations to attend other trips where I learned more about stream craft and the habits and habitats of all manner of fish species, all the while learning from those more experienced than I. Further, by joining in on club activities I met members of other fly fishing clubs with whom I now also fish and with members of IFFC, can count as firm friends.

And so a telephone call to Steve Chatterton almost seven years ago changed my outlook on the way I did things - I became a member, became proficient, became involved in the club's administration and have enjoyed the experience all the while. But more importantly, by becoming a member, I met people who share a common passion and the desire to be the best fly fisher they can and to fly fish in locations as many and as varied as the fish species that are targeted; it is with these people that ideas, plans and plots have been hatched and in some cases, implemented, such as my trip to New Zealand this past February and to Weipa in June of last year.

I simply would not have had the same experiences were it not for being a member of IFFC.

So, for the 2009/ 2010 club year, let the following be your mantra:

1. become proficient or more proficient with your casting - better casting equates to better results, more enjoyment and an arm that is not telling you that it has been overworked at the end of a long, hard day; and like all motor skills, practice, practice, practice - you only get out what you put in!

2. consider tying your own flies - you won't believe the self satisfaction gained by catching a fish on a fly you have tied yourself; yes, it is easier to buy them, but that's why God created the closed season, because that's fly tying time !

3. consider attending the monthly casting mornings - have a chat with other members, participate in some light hearted accuracy and distance casting competition, try someone else's rod, reel and line combination and increase your skill level - there's that notion of proficiency once again ! There are plenty of people who attend the club's casting days who are more than willing to assist you in the learning process or help you iron out your casting faults.

4. consider attending the monthly fly tying workshops - have a chat, a quiet drink and learn how to tie a fly or a better constructed fly.

5. consider attending a club day or weekend trip - come along to fish hard by day and laugh hard by night; you will meet some great people, eat, sleep and talk fly fishing and hopefully catch a fish in the process - I personally guarantee that you will have a great time and learn a lot in the process. \

   At least one day or weekend trip is usually programmed throughout the year with the exception of July, August and September, so there is always the opportunity to tag along and participate.

In last year's President's Report, my stated goals for the 2008/ 2009 club year were to:

1. see the club develop and grow;

2. promote fly fishing and Illawarra Fly Fishers' Club in the community at large and in particular, the fly fishing community;

3. ensure that the club's sound financial base is protected; and

4. ensure that members see the worth of being a member by providing an invigorating programme and friendly club atmosphere.

I am certain that the synopsis of the club's activities detailed in each of the following sections goes some way in confirming that these modest goals have, for the most part, been achieved.

Management Committee

August sees the commencement of a new club year and the election of new officers for each of the club's management committee positions.

I take this opportunity to thank those who have served on the management committee over the past twelve months, for it is the personal commitment of those members that continues to make IFFC the active and social club it is. In particular, I would like to thank Gordon McComb and Ray Ellis, who have stepped down from their positions on the committee after many years of service to the club.

I would also like to thank those members who made the effort to attend the Annual General Meeting to receive the various club reports and be part of the process of electing new committee members; it is certainly gratifying to see a high number of attendees for the third successive year.

Those elected to the 2009/ 2010 committee are:

President	Neil Nelson
Vice President	Chris Harding
Secretary	Leo Harding
Treasurer	Barry Gentle
Newsletter Editor	Julian Watson
Website Manager/ Public Officer	Gary Hickson
Librarian	Gary Batey
Club Shirt co-ordinator	Kerry Nicol
Fly Casting co-ordinator	Michael Parkinson
Fly Tying co-ordinator	Kim Prehn
Fly Tying workshop co-ordinator	Brendan Mannix
Guest Speaker co-ordinator	Chris Harding
Interclub Liaison	Neil Nelson
Largest Fish co-ordinator	Phil O'Brien
Meet & Greet Officer	Michael Parkinson
Name Badge Officer	Ben Campbell
Publicity	Gary Wade
Outings Co-ordinator	Jeff Randall
Raffle tickets	Ben Campbell
Council of Freshwater Anglers (CFA) Representative	Adam Kearns

You will no doubt recognise the familiar names of those people who have once again volunteered their services for another year and I acknowledge and thank them for doing so, for without volunteers, there is no club. However Ben Campbell's name is new, not only to the club, but to the committee as well.

Ben is in his early twenties and joined IFFC some six months ago after he decided to try fly fishing. Well before the AGM, Ben advised me that he would like to "become more involved" and

so volunteered to take up a committee position; indeed the club thanked Ben by electing him to two positions!

Not only is it tremendous to see a young fellow join the club, but I take my hat off to Ben for volunteering his time to serve the club after being a member for only a relatively short period of time. So if a tall, young chap offers you a name tag or taps you on the shoulder to purchase a raffle ticket, introduce yourself to Ben and make him feel welcome in his position(s).

Please remember that committee meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the Monday immediately preceding the club meeting and that they are open to all club members, not just committee members. Committee meetings are not a "closed shop" and the committee would welcome your attendance, input and participation.

Membership

As at August 2009, membership of the club stood at 78 members, four more than at the same time last year.

Over the 2008/ 2009 club year there were a number of members who did not renew their membership, but those who have joined, or rejoined, have replaced those who have left.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to those members who have joined the club over the past twelve months and do hope that you will become active within IFFC; welcome to:

Kevin Brown	Daniel Brunt	Ben Campbell	Silvio Corradini
Jorge D'Allasta	Des Dickson	Ray Gudgeon	Paul Hansen
David Kennedy	Bob LeFevre	Joe Nowakowski	Tim Olsen
Colin Sheedy	Brian Thompson	Rebecca Thompson	Mitchell Thornton
Robbie Thornton	Don Wilkinson		

Financial Report

Details of the Treasurer's Report can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. Suffice it to say, the club's financial position remains strong and the club is able to meet all its financial commitments as and when they fall due.

There remains an accrued commitment of $ 500.00 to Southern Bass for Bass fingerlings purchased to stock Lake Yarrunga as agreed by the membership well over twelve months ago; whilst the stocking has had one or two false starts, it is imminent, although the club has not been advised of the date of the next attempt and hence we are unable to determine with any degree of certainty when IFFC will need to pay for its commitment.

There has been no need to increase membership fees for the forthcoming year and these will remain at $ 25.00 for 2009/ 2010; should you not have renewed your membership, please consider doing so as quickly as you are able in order to assist the club's revenue stream and to avoid being deleted from the membership list.

Many thanks to Barry Gentle for taking on the responsibilities of Treasurer over 2008/ 2009.

Meetings & Guest Speakers

Due to the continued hard work and perseverance on the part of Chris Harding, ably assisted by Phil O'Brien, Chris has managed to once again entice guest speakers of significant note to Wollongong to give presentations to the club.

As mentioned earlier, one of my goals for this year was to “ensure that members see the worth of being a member by providing an invigorating programme”, a programme that is informative, instructive, practical and generally interesting and entertaining. From the reaction of members, Chris has certainly succeeded in providing another programme that was balanced and allowed us to be both entertained and informed.

Many thanks to Chris and Phil for their efforts over the past year - the guest speakers which Chris and Phil are attempting to programme for early 2010 are indeed exciting, but more news later as speakers confirm their availability.

Below is an overview of the programmes run over the past year:

August 2008	Annual General Meeting; Neil gave a presentation on a trip to Weipa that he and seven other IFFC members undertook in June (2008).
September	Steve Hoagland from Derek McKenzie Outdoors gave a presentation on “Great Bay” rods and North American fly fishing.
October	Alan Griffiths, the Proprietor of “The Tackle Shop” in Shellharbour and a sponsor of IFFC, gave a presentation on a recent trip to New Zealand.
November	Andrew Byrne from “ProAngler” spoke about the ProAngler range of products
December	December was the month for IFFC’s Christmas dinner and presentation.
	Mark **Tuesday, December 8**, in your diaries for this year’s dinner to celebrate the festive season and the accomplishments of IFFC and its members; the more who attend, the better social evening it is for all.
January 2009	No meeting
February	Danny Spelic from Canberra gave a presentation on fishing the Canberra Lakes and Canberra region.
March	Neil gave a presentation on his February trip to New Zealand with the guides from the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre.
April	A meet ‘n greet/ catch up night; Chris also demonstrated an indoor casting rod distributed by Peter Hayes.
May	A meet ‘n greet/ catch up night.
June	David Wilson, well renowned fly tier and member of Sydney Fly Rodders Club, gave a superlative demonstration on fly tying.
July	Peter Hayes spoke of his recent trip to America fishing in Montana and elsewhere, visiting the Sage and Winston factories and meeting fly fishing gurus such as Lefty Kreh and Lee Wulff.

“Chuck ‘n Duck” (Casting) Days

What a difference a venue makes !

Whilst attendance at the monthly casting days at the University Duck Ponds usually ranged from anywhere between five and eight members and everywhere in-between, the recent move to Stuart Park has seen a quantum leap in those attending. The September workshop saw eighteen members, one guest, three wives and one grand child attend, a number that I certainly haven’t

seen in my six years with IFFC. Michael Parkinson had his work cut out trying to organise everyone for the casting events and didn't stop all morning !

That said, the September casting day was held on Father's Day, so the high attendance may be attributable to dad being allowed out to "do his thing".

Casting days afford us the opportunity to learn to cast, become more proficient or iron out our faults. The change of venue has offered us the opportunity to cast over open water rather than a reed filled pond and grass and this has obvious advantages for learning or developing casting skills.

Casting commences at 10 a.m. on the Sunday following the club meeting and finishes around 12:00 p.m., just long enough to convince the "better half" that you were side tracked on your way back from buying the Sunday papers !

Many thanks to Michael Parkinson for organising the casting days and recording the competition results. May I also thank Paul Harvey for giving so much of his time teaching newcomers and offering advice to other members on how to correct their casting faults.

Fly Tying

Our monthly workshop is still not well patronised, with one, two or three members regularly attending each month; participation in the club meeting fly tie also appears to be dependent upon the difficulty of the tie for a given month, but it could not be described as being great.

As an integral part of fly fishing, fly tying is a fascinating pastime in its own right and I would think that a greater number of members tie their own flies than purchase them. Why then can't we collectively attract more members to participate ? I have no answer, but should you have a suggestion on how to increase the participation rate, Kim Prehn, our new fly tying co-ordinator (at monthly meetings) and Brendan Mannix, our new fly tying workshop co-ordinator, would be more than happy to have a discussion with you.

Workshops are held at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month, that is, the Wednesday of the week following our club meeting, at Collegians club.

As mentioned earlier in this report, Gordon McComb has stepped after many years acting in the role of fly tying co-ordinator and I thank Gordon for the time and effort he has put into that role.

Fishing & Other Outings

The outings programme which Jeff Randall co-ordinated over 2008/ 2009 saw a variety of trips to different and sometimes new areas where members chased both fresh and saltwater fish.

A trip to the Canberra lakes in January of this year was a first for the club and we fished for Carp and Redfin on an absolutely stifling hot Summer's day.

Left & right - Ray Ellis tight on a Canberra "Swamp Trout"

Other trips included :

September 2008	Thompsons Creek Dam (Trout)
October	Adaminaby/ Eucembene River area (Trout)
November	The planned ProAngler interclub competition at St.Georges Basin was unfortunately washed out
January 2009	Lake Burley Griffin - Carp and Redfin
February	Coolendel (Bass)
	Shoalhaven Heads - saltwater species (but wind blew us off the water rather early)
March	St.Georges Basin/ ProAngler competition - a beautiful day on the Basin, although the fish did not want to play the game
April	Jindabyne - fishing the Thredbo, Moonbah and Swampy Plains Rivers
May	Lake Woolumboola - cancelled due to lack of numbers, although gale force winds that day would have led to the trip's cancellation
June	Five members participated in Lakeside FFC's "President's Challenge", a morning of competition casting in the company of members from two other fly fishing clubs
July	Peter Hayes casting course

Above - Peter Hayes in action. Photo courtesy of Ray Gudgeon

Thanks Jeff for organising the club's trips and activities over 2008/ 2009.

Competitions

The results of the annual competitions are now to hand and congratulations to the winners in the following categories:

<u>Annual Competitions</u>

Fly Tying	1st	Barry Gentle (23 points)
	2nd	Peter Hansen (15 points)
	3rd	Gordon McComb (11 points)

Casting (Accuracy)	1st	Gordon McComb
	2nd	Neil Nelson
	3rd	Barry Gentle/ Michael Parkinson
Casting (Distance)	1st	Neil Nelson/ Barry Gentle
	3rd	Paul Harvey

Miscellaneous Awards

The "Moonbah Hut Award"	To the member who has the best, most understanding wife : Barry Gentle
The "(New) Sage Rod Award"	To the best, most understanding wife : Debbie Gentle
The "Best Job in the World Award"	For having the best job in the world : Leo Harding (sixth successive year)
The "I'll Shave Around There Myself Thankyou ! Award"	For negotiating a particularly tricky situation with male hospital staff: Barry Gentle
The "Victa Award"	To the luckiest club member who won a lawnmower (no, not a misprint) in a recent raffle at shooting club meet: Kim Prehn. There goes his weekends !

Largest Fish

The following competition results clearly show the variety of species that are able to be taken on fly. More heartening is the fact that most were returned to the water, such is the conservation ethic within the club – I think it was Lee Wulff who said that a "fish is too good a resource to catch once."

Thanks to Phil O'Brien for recording the largest fish of each species throughout the year.

SPECIES	ANGLER	Length (cm)	FLY	LOCATION
Australian Bass	Kerry Nicol	47	Kerry's White Foam Popper	Grady's
Atlantic Salmon	Phil O'Brien	58	Wooly Bugger	Creel Bay
Australian Salmon	Phil O'Brien	60	White Clouser	Botany Bay
Bonito	Adam Kearns	69	Chartreuse Clouser	Botany Bay
Bream	Leo Harding	32	BMS	Off Berkeley
Brook Trout	Mitch Thornton	43	Brown Beadhead Wooly Bugger	Jindabyne
Brown Trout	Steve Chatterton	72	Tom Jones	Jindabyne
Carp	Don Wilkinson	72	Bread Fly	Griffith

Estuary Perch	Barry Gentle	33	Green Crickroach	Broughton Creek
Flathead	Kerry Nicol	51	Clouser	Shoalhaven River
Frigate Mackeral	David Vale	35	Surf Candy	Sydney Harbour
Kingfish	Adam Kearns	95	Fatboy	Botany Bay
Luderick	Glen Martin	41.5	Weed Fly	Jervis Bay
Mullet	Kevin Mushett	35	Bread Fly	Macquarie Rivulet
Rainbow Trout	Kerry Nicol	64	Olive & Black Bead Head Wooly Bugger	Dumaresq Dam
Striped Tuna	Barry Gentle/ Chris Harding	61	White Bait/ Pink Surf Candy	Port Kembla
Tailor	Phil O'Brien	48	White Clouser	Botany Bay
Trevally	Ray Ellis	40	Polar Fibre Minnow	Coalcliff
Whiting	Leo Harding	37	Rays Epoxy fly	St.Georges Basin

Club Participant of the Year

The "Club Participant of the Year" award acknowledges the club member who actively participates in the activities of the club; the award is based on five criteria, namely :

a) attendance at club meetings;

b) participation in the monthly fly tying competition;

c) attendance at the monthly fly casting sessions;

d) attendance at the monthly fly tying workshops; and

e) attendance at club trips.

This year saw a dead heat for first place between Gordon McComb and Barry Gentle, both of whom accumulated 37 points; Neil Nelson placed third on 30 points.

Newsletter

Julian Watson continues to develop "Fly Lines" into an informative monthly newsletter which, through sections such as Club News, Events and Programme, Club Trips, Fly Ties and general articles, keeps all members abreast of what the club is doing and what it plans on doing.

In order to keep the newsletter fresh and relevant, Julian needs your input by way of articles, photographs, jokes and the like. Producing the newsletter is a difficult job in itself, but with our input, Julian's task can be made a whole lot easier. So if you happen to take a good photo or feel inspired to write of your latest trip away, please feel free to forward all material to Julian.

Contributors' rates remain the same as last year.

Many thanks to Jeff Randal, Kerry Nicol and Phil O'Brien for the articles they have written throughout the year and to Julian for being Editor.

Website

As with the newsletter, the website also needs your input to remain relevant, informative and the reference source that it has become.

Thanks to Gary Hickson for undertaking the Web Master duties and for also being the club's Public Officer.

Club Liaison

IFFC continues to have an active association with other fly fishing clubs such as Lakeside Fly Fishing Club and Sydney Fly Rodders Club, but maintains a particularly close relationship with Lakeside and its President, David Screen. I consider that liaising with other fly fishing clubs offers IFFC members the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences and in doing so, makes all clubs stronger, less insular and less inward looking.

The result of better liaison between clubs was evident over 2008/ 2009 when our sport was confronted with two incidents, both having the capacity to impact on the way that we, as fly fishers, participated in our pastime. First was the potential sale of the right-of-way known as Carter's Lane near Gaden Trout Hatchery and second was the potential sale of Gaden itself.

Whilst largely unknown, Carter's Lane provides access to the Thredbo River and the NSW Department of Lands had advertised locally that the right-of-way may be sold. Naturally any diminution of access was not considered to be palatable to the fishing community and a campaign was instigated by local Steve Williamson to stop the potential sale. I and a vast number of others wrote to the Department of Lands protesting at the sale and the campaign was made all the more effective by the fact that information and advice was quickly disseminated between fly fishing clubs; the fate of Carter's Lane remains "up in the air".

We are all aware of the Gaden saga and the absurd move by the NSW Government to sell the facility. I do not wish to be overly political, but I must say that the notion to sell such a unique establishment had my blood boiling, along with that of other members, fly fishers, towns folk, opposition politicians and tourist operators to name but a few.

It was through the highly unusual mobilisation of fly fishers and, I must say, many other fisher folk, that we were able to make our voices heard and Gaden, for all intent and purpose, was "saved", if "saved" means paying for the operation of the facility through the use of funds raised by licence fees. Once again the dissemination of information was quickly spread between fly fishing clubs in order that protest would be focussed, structured and presented in a manner which addressed facts and not emotion.

During the campaign to save Gaden, I thought that communication and interaction was made all the more easier due to the fact that members of different clubs were able to put a face to a name and this only came about by the interaction and liaison between clubs which had been undertaken prior to these events.

Other activities where IFFC liaised with other clubs included :

June 2008	LFFC's President's Challenge casting competition.
August 2008	LFFC'S Jindabyne polaroiding trip
October 2008	LFFC's season opening trip to the Eucembene

	IFFC's trip to the Eucembene
December 2008	LFFC & IFFC Christmas Dinners
March 2009	Sydney Fly Rodders presentation by Mick Hall
April 2009	Council of Freshwater Anglers Interclub meet at Wallerawang
June 2009	LFFC's President's Challenge casting competition. (in which Ray Ellis placed third overall)

Publicity

Publicity plays an important role in advising the community at large of the existence of IFFC, broadcasting the club's activities and recruiting new members.

We are indeed fortunate to have Gary Wade, the fishing reporter for the "Illawarra Mercury" as a member of the club and Gary's monthly reporting of the of the next club meeting is an facility to which very few fly fishing clubs have access.

Thanks to Gary Wade and the "Illawarra Mercury" for promoting IFFC over the past twelve months and for your continued support.

Donations

The club has indeed been extremely fortunate to be the beneficiary of a number of donations throughout the year, both from within the club and from club sponsors. We are all aware of the impacts which the Global Financial Crisis is having on business and hence it is humbling to say the least that our sponsors have seen fit, in their own way, to continue to support IFFC.

I have expressed my gratitude and that of members by way of personal correspondence to each of the following donors, so where that sponsor is a business, please consider supporting them for your next purchase.

On behalf of the club may I again express my thanks and gratitude to the following :

• Smith and Osborne P/L	Peter King	Substantial cash donations for the random badge draws and assistance with prizes for the 2008 Xmas party
• The Tackle Shop (Shellharbour)	Alan Griffiths	Gift Certificates
• High Country Outfitters	Murray Ogilivie	Gift Certificate
• Collegians Club	John Wilkins	$ 20.00 voucher each month for use in the bottle shop or restaurant
• Alpine Angler	Tom Baxter	Gift Certificates
• Kerry Nicol		Loomis fly rod for use at club casting days
• Phil O/Brien		Reel & line for use at club casting days
• Shane Rosengrave		Fly rod for the 2009 Christmas dinner raffle

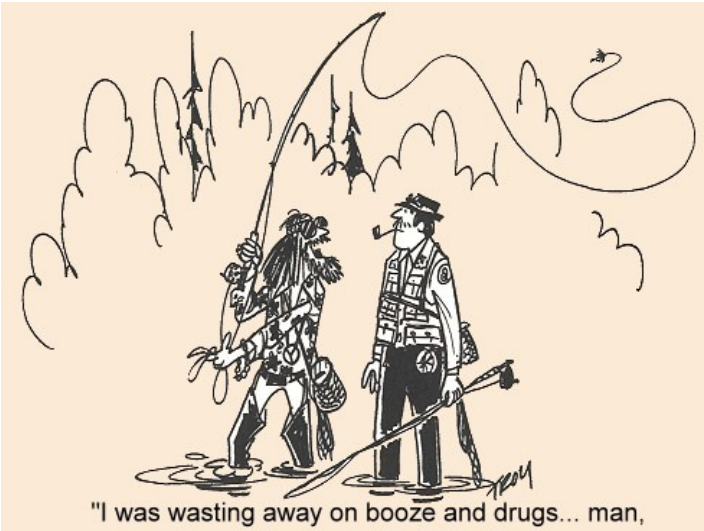
Wrap Up

Whether you are a seasoned member or only new to the club, I am of the view that IFFC offers something for everyone.

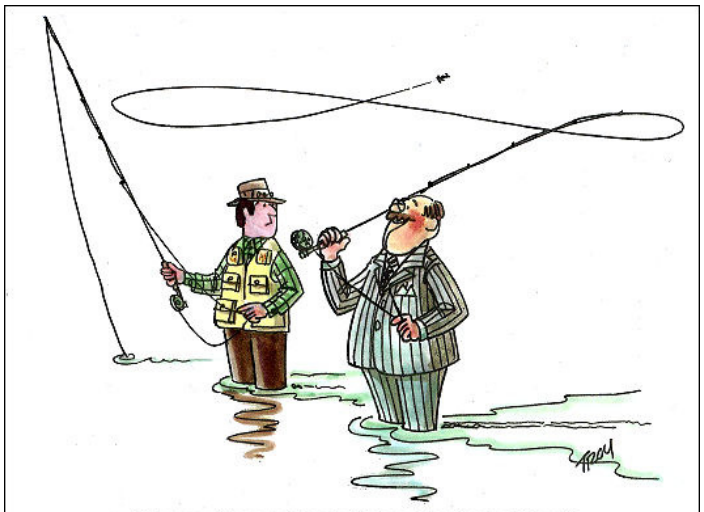
Whether it be learning to cast, learning to tie a fly, travelling to an exotic location or learning from an expert guest speaker, IFFC offers its members the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the sport and then participate in whatever capacity suits them.

The club comprises all levels of expertise, but there is one thing that is certain and that is, there is someone there who is willing to go out of their way to help you learn, improve and develop. For mine, that is the essence of Illawarra Fly Fishers' Club.

Neil Nelson
President
September 2009



"I was wasting away on booze and drugs... man, then I discovered fly fishing!"



"Every chance I get, I'm outta that office."