**Date**: Tuesday, April 28, 2026
**Time**: 11.00am AWST
**Location**: Online - Microsoft Teams Meeting

**Meeting: AFTA & WA Recreational Fishing Industry Meeting**

**Attendees**

**AFTA**: Hon.Bob Baldwin, Billy Parsons, Mitch Birt, Alicia Bolitho, Cameron Jackson, Jarrod Day, Heatha Nicholas

**Members**: Anaconda - Corey Childs, Geographe Fishing & Outdoors – Nigel Hoffman, Halco Tackle - Tim Carter, Kalbarri Sports & Dive – Steve Eley, Red Mullet Distributors - Tim Farnell, Tackle World Head Office – David Becker, Tangaroa Blue Foundation – Heidi & Brett Tait, Whitey's Tackle & Camping – Ben White

**Non Members:** Cockburn Pleasure Boat Storage – Jim McLarty, Diamond Networks – Malcolm, Dongara Sport & Tackle – Gary Kirwan-Ward, Sportsforce WA - Paul Willis, Squid Jigs Australia – Steve Coleman,

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**Meeting Purpose:** Gather on-the-ground feedback from WA tackle/industry stakeholders on impacts of current demersal fishing changes, misinformation in the market, and what support/advocacy is needed ahead of the planned September 2027 "recreational-only" arrangements.

**Meeting Summary:**

***1. Key themes raised by Western Australia stakeholders***

- **Misinformation and perception damage:** ongoing narrative that "fishing is shut down" is hurting participation and spending; need consistent messaging that fishing opportunities still exist (target alternative species/locations) and clarity on what is allowed.
- **Business and regional impacts:** reduced offshore/boat activity is shifting demand toward smaller terminal tackle and land-based options; impacts vary by region (e.g., cyclone impacts up north; different coastal towns are affected differently).
- **Lack of clarity/visibility for September 2027:** strong call for early, detailed information on future settings (spatial zones, duration of fishing access each year, exclusion zones, spawning closures) so retailers/wholesalers and tourism-dependent businesses can plan.
- **Communication gaps (Government / RecfishWest / Fisheries):** stakeholders reported limited practical guidance, little written material, and difficulty for locals/tourists to

interpret rules; desire for clearer, more prominent information in apps/websites and accessible brochures/handouts.

- **Support programs and marketing:** interest in expanding FAD programs and running engagement/education initiatives similar to SA programs (e.g., "tackle box" style spend-to-redeem initiative; campaigns on what can be fished for).
- **Compensation / vouchers:** frustration about proposed/rumoured angler vouchers (e.g., $50) being inadequate and/or not delivered in time to support key trading periods.
- **Species and fairness concerns:** concern that management focus is perceived as "jewfish-centric" while restrictions affect many other demersal and deep-drop fishers; spawning timing differs by species and by region.
- **Science and data confidence:** several participants questioned the adequacy/credibility of the data underpinning settings; others noted confusion between different studies and called for transparency in methodology and better ongoing data collection.
- **Other related issues:** shark depredation raised as compounding mortality/impact; suggestions to support research and mitigation measures.

***2. Specific requests / proposals raised***

- **Provide early written certainty on September 2027 arrangements:** publish the "goalposts" well ahead of time (months of access, spatial boundaries, expected closures, and how decisions will be communicated).
- **Improve practical communications now:** clear, central "what you can do" guidance (not just what you can't), including prominent app/website updates, boat-ramp signage plus downloadable/printable fact sheets for shops to hand out.
- **Consider risk-based access options ("innies/outies" concept):** explore whether some fishing could be permitted inshore (e.g., shallow water) and/or in deep-drop water (e.g., beyond ~90m) if the management objective is primarily to reduce pressure in mid-depth demersal/jewfish zones. (Raised as an idea to test feasibility; not a decision.)
- **Expand/continue participation programs:** expand FAD program; consider youth/participation initiatives (e.g., tackle box concept) and an education campaign similar to SA response programs.
- **Address salmon netting during peak recreation periods:** suggestion to restrict commercial salmon netting during school holidays/weekends to preserve accessible alternative fisheries and support regional tackle trade.
- **Data improvement options:** suggestion to improve recreational data capture (e.g., fisheries staff recording checks via an app; or an industry/voluntary angler logging solution). Discussion noted opposition to mandatory reporting but openness to voluntary tools.
- **Rule interpretation for visitors:** need for clearer guidance for interstate tourists on species rules, transport rules, and what is allowed shore-based vs boat-based.
- **Shark depredation:** acknowledged as a significant compounding issue; support for ongoing research and practical mitigation advice.

***3. Actions and commitments noted***

- **AFTA to compile feedback and send formal correspondence:** commitment to use notes from the session to write a direct letter to the Minister outlining industry concerns and requested actions; also flagged correspondence to opposition to address harmful rhetoric/misinformation.
- **Review and engage on communications:** intention to review what RecfishWest is currently distributing (e.g., website/newsletter/app visibility) and raise issues where information is hard to find or unclear.
- **Continue advocacy for WA program support:** AFTA referenced providing WA Government with KPI/outcomes evidence from South Australia programs to support future budget consideration (next noted opportunity: 2027 budget cycle).
- **Follow-up on voluntary data/competition app:** a participant (Brett) offered to send information about an angler logging/competition app and to connect AFTA with developers (noted for possible future use and beta testing).
- **Ongoing engagement:** interest expressed in more regular check-ins and potentially holding an in-person session when feasible.

***4. Follow up Tasks***

1. Confirm and prioritise the top 5 issues to escalate (transparency for Sept 2027; communications pack; support programs; consideration of access design options; data improvements).
2. Request WA Government/RecfishWest prepare a one-page retailer-ready fact sheet (current allowed activities + where to find authoritative rules) for distribution in stores and online.
3. Request from WA Government/RecfishWest a published timeline for September 2027 decisions (including planned consultation points and when maps/zone details will be released).
4. Assess the feasibility of the “innies/outies” access concept and document the pros/cons and enforcement considerations for discussion with the government.
5. Follow up with WA Government/RecfishWest regarding: RecfishWest app/content visibility, FAD program expansion, and any voucher/assistance program status updates.