

9 December 2024

AFTA Policy Submission on Recreational Fishing in WA

The Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) serves as the national peak body representing Australia's recreational fishing industry. Our membership encompasses all facets of recreational fishing, including manufacturers, wholesale distributors, retail stores, media outlets, and charter operations, thereby connecting us to every recreational fishing participant.

The Western Australian recreational fishing trade comprises 30 remaining independent tackle stores, 19 BCF stores, 12 Anaconda Stores, 14 wholesalers, agency representatives, numerous service station outlets, holiday parks selling bait and tackle, 39 KMART, and 17 Big W retail outlets, as well as 62 Fishing Charter operators.

In Western Australia, in 2017 approximately 25.8% of adults, equating to 529,400 individuals, (current 2024 estimate >750,000) engage in fishing at least once a year. This participation rate surpasses the Australian average of 21.4%. Fishing participation is higher than average among both men and women in WA, with 30.4% of men fishing compared to 25.3% nationwide and 21.9% of women fishing compared to 17.8% nationwide. Moreover, participation is elevated among residents of major cities (22.4% in WA versus 18.0% nationwide) and regional areas (38.3% in WA versus 29.9% nationwide).

These statistics underscore the robust recreational fishing culture in Western Australia and highlight higher female participation rates compared to other regions of Australia.¹

In 2018-19, there were 28.6 million fishing events in WA, with 93.9% of fishers engaging in saltwater fishing and 70.1% fishing in estuaries at least once annually. Freshwater fishing was less prevalent, with 46.9% participating compared to 63.1% nationally. Recreational fishing, including activities by both residents and visitors, contributed an estimated \$1.15 billion to the state economy in 2019-20 and supported 9,380 full-time equivalent jobs. This included \$709 million and 5,387 jobs in Perth and \$437 million and 3,993 jobs in regional WA.

Much of this economic activity stems from indirect contributions generated by fishing, such as spending on supplies, wages, and salaries of those directly employed in the sector. In WA, fishing directly created 4,513 jobs in 2019-20 in areas like charter fishing, equipment sales, and accommodations. Additionally, this direct activity spurred further economic contributions, generating another 4,867 jobs through demand for supplies and spending by employees.

Recreational fishing facilitates economic flows from urban centres to rural areas. Notably, 42.3% of the \$437 million economic activity in regional WA was generated by city residents, reflecting expenditures during fishing trips and underscoring fishing's role in stimulating regional economies.

While a significant portion of WA's recreational fishing economic impact comes from local residents, a considerable amount is due to interstate visitors and purchases from WA vendors. Overall, 72.5% of the economic contribution is from local fishers, with the remaining 27.5% from interstate visitors and out-of-state purchases.²

The recreational fishing sector, characterised by its diversity and dynamism, faces numerous challenges and opportunities, over the next four years, policy development must be guided by clear objectives, strategies, actions, and

¹ Source: FRDC Social & Economic Survey of Recreational Fishers 2018-21

² Source: FRDC Social & Economic Survey of Recreational Fishers 2018-21

inclusive, peer-reviewed science. Effective development plans require input from our community, industry partners, organisations, and tourism operators. A thriving recreational fishing sector depends on great fishing experiences, which are influenced by several policy settings and investment decisions.

Key factors include sound fisheries management practices, equitable resource sharing between recreational, indigenous, and commercial fishers, access to fishing grounds, infrastructure development, environmental protection, water resource governance, addressing the impacts of climate change and sufficient funding for community projects and inclusive activities.

Strategic planning has advanced significantly, with new creative and technological developments fostering greater participation and innovative, effective plans. Our community is prepared for these challenges, needing only support to enable an innovative and inclusive process that benefits our sector.

AFTA remains committed to collaborating with governments at all levels and the commercial sector to grow and develop our industry, not just in Western Australia but across all of Australia.

Even though AFTA has a different working model and membership base, AFTA unreservedly support the work of Recfishwest in Western Australia. We both aspire to increase fishing participation and opportunities; we would hope the next government shares these same aspirations.

A Minister for Outdoor Recreation & Lifestyle

The recreational fishing sector feel they are often overlooked within the Fisheries portfolio which is primarily focused on the commercial sector. This is not just a Western Australian issue, but an issue across most states. AFTA believe given the very nature of the industry and the \$1.15 billion contribution to the broader \$17.9 billion tourism economy in WA, a better fit would be to create a new portfolio such as Minister for Outdoor Recreation & Lifestyle, as a part of the all-encompassing Tourism Portfolio. There is precedence in other states; Victoria has a Minister for Outdoor Recreation Industry & Tourism, and in South Australia a Minister for Recreation. Whilst each state has a Fisheries/Primary Industries Department and Ministers, these Ministers can advocate directly at the cabinet table for our industry.

The recreational fishing sector in WA is very closely linked to the 4WD, Caravan & Camping, Boating and Prospecting sectors, with all sharing common issues. A ministerial portfolio champion would positively resonate across these sectors and demonstrate an understanding of our sector and applying the triple bottom line to any decisions impacting the sector.

1. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO FORMING A MINISTER FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION & LIFESTYLE PORTFOLIO?

Cost of Living Relief

With the current domestic cost of living pressures, AFTA support calls for a meaningful reduction in licence fees collected from the recreational fishing sector.

Western Australia is over regulated and a red tape nightmare with recreational fishing licences required for:

- Recreational Boat Fishing Licence: \$40.00
- Rock Lobster Licence: \$40.00
- Abalone Licence: \$50.00
- Marron License: \$50.00
- Freshwater Fishing License: \$50.00
- Net Fishing License: \$50

This could amount to as much as \$280 per annum per person and worst still for a family that fishes. In addition, the costs of boat registration are between \$154.85 and \$964.35. For many, this is just unaffordable as they seek to prioritise their budget just to get by.

Government must understand that people engage in recreational fishing not only as a pastime, but also as a means of gathering food, addressing mental health issues and for social engagement.

AFTA recommend a single fishing license to cover all types of recreational fishing. This would reduce the compliance and administration costs to government, help eliminate unlicensed sector fishing and if priced correctly reduce the cost of living to anglers. The triple bottom line, economic, environmental and social impact issues must be taken into consideration with fees and our sector not seen as a cash cow for government!

2. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO A RESTRUCTURING OF RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENCES AND REDUCE LICENCE FEES TO BRING DOWNWARD PRESSURE ON THE COSTS OF PARTICIPATION?

Management Advisory Committee (MAC) & Ministerial Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee (MRFAC)

The Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) recommends the establishment of a Management Advisory Committee (MAC) comprising members from the recreational, commercial, fishing tourism, and Indigenous sectors. These committees would be responsible for overseeing further implementation and a review of the Harvest Strategy and provide proactive input into any marine park plans. Robust management processes must ensure stakeholder engagement and include all sectors in fisheries resource governance structures and decision-making, this would include Recfishwest.

Effective and inclusive management is essential for the successful planning and implementation of policies across the fisheries sector. AFTA advocates for a more inclusive and impartial consultation process in the development of sound fisheries management policy.

The stringent eligibility criteria for participation and the lack of economic consultation within these working groups, such as those involving the tackle industry, have been significant concerns. These sectors have a vested interest in maintaining a sustainable fishery to remain viable. Furthermore, it is imperative that only valid and peer-reviewed scientific data be considered by working groups, rather than data that has been assumed, estimated, or merely presented for comment.

Further, AFTA recommends the establishment of a Ministerial Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee comprising solely of the recreational fishing sector to report directly to the Minister on specific issues related solely to the recreational fishing sector.

On this basis:

3. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO APPOINTING A FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE WITH MEMBERS FROM THE RECREATIONAL, COMMERCIAL, FISHING TOURISM, AND INDIGENOUS TRADITIONAL FISHING SECTORS TO OVERSEE THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL FISHERY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS AND HARVEST STRATEGIES?

4. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO ESTABLISHING A MINISTERIAL RECREATIONAL FISHING ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO REPORT DIRECTLY TO THE MINISTER ON SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATED TO THE RECREATIONAL FISHING SECTOR?

Harvest Strategies:

AFTA are concerned with the current levels of species resource allocation between the commercial, recreational and indigenous fishing sectors and that the best value proposition for use of the resource is not beneficially sought across several species.

AFTA accept the WA Harvest Strategies (pre-agreed decision-rules) established in 2015 are now in place together with the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource Harvest Strategy 2021-2025 Fisheries Management Paper No. 305.

AFTA notes as stated in Fisheries Management Paper No. 305:

“This harvest strategy sets out the ecological objectives for the West Coast Demersal Scalefish Resource and the performance indicators, reference levels and control rules to meet these objectives. The main ecological objective is to maintain spawning biomass of all retained species above maximum sustainable yield. (27 July 2021)

AFTA consider the maximum sustainable yield is questionable given the continuing fishing effort by the commercial sector at the expense of recreational fishers.

AFTA believe that a program of license buyouts on a fair and just means basis, funded in part by recreational licence fees, will assist in stock recovery, increase opportunity for recreational fishing participation and provide a greater economic, social and environmental benefit to the state.

AFTA's goal is to see more people out fishing on more days in sustainable ways.

5. WILL YOUR PARTY DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM OF LICENCE BUYOUTS AND REDUCE CLOSURES FOR RECREATIONAL FISHERS COMMENSURATE WITH THE STOCK LEVEL ACQUIRED BACK INTO THE SYSTEM?

Seasonal Species Closures:

The Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) has expressed concerns regarding the duration and timing of seasonal species closures across Western Australia.

Dhufish: In Western Australia the current Dhufish regulations are subject to seasonal closures in the West Coast Bioregion, which are in place to conserve demersal scalefish and ensure sustainable fish stocks:

- **Closed seasons:** Dhufish are closed to recreational fishing from February 1 to March 31, August 1 to September 15, and October 15 to December 15
- **Boat limits:** The boat limit for dhufish is four fish
- **Bag limits:** The bag limit for dhufish is two per person
- **Size limits:** There are no size limits for dhufish
- **Exemptions:** Land-based recreational line fishers are not subject to the closed seasons and can fish all year

Snapper: The snapper closures in place to support the recovery of snapper stocks, including:

- **Cockburn and Warnbro Sounds**
A five-month spawning closure for pink snapper that runs from August 1 to January 31. This closure is intended to protect the spawning aggregations of pink snapper.
- **Shark Bay inner gulfs**
Special fishing rules apply to pink snapper in the inner gulfs of Shark Bay. The inner gulf stocks are small and isolated, making them vulnerable to overfishing.

- **Northern Bernier Island**
A three-month spawning closure for pink snapper. The closure is intended to protect the spawning aggregations of pink snapper.

Additional species: Other fishing closures in Western Australia include:

- **Demersal scalefish:** A seasonal closure for boat-based recreational fishing for demersal scalefish between Kalbarri and Augusta.
- **Baldchin groper:** A closure at the Abrolhos Islands from October 1 to December 31.

All demersal scalefish caught during a closed season, must be returned to the water as soon as possible, however land-based recreational line fishers are not subject to the closed seasons for demersal scalefish.

AFTA note that commercial fishers are not allowed to fish for snapper during spawning season in Western Australia (WA):

- **Gascoyne**
Commercial and recreational fishers are not permitted to fish for pink snapper in the waters north of Bernier Island, including Koks Island, during the annual spawning period.
- **Cockburn and Warnbro Sounds**
Commercial fishers are not allowed to fish for pink snapper in the waters of Cockburn and Warnbro Sounds from August 1 to January 31.
- **GDSMF**
Licensed vessels are not permitted to fish in the waters of the Shark Bay Beach Seine and Mesh Net Managed Fishery, which includes the inner gulfs.
- **Point Maud to Tantabiddi Well**
All state-managed commercial fishing is prohibited in the waters of Point Maud to Tantabiddi Well.

The very purpose of spawning closures is to help demersal fish stocks recover, as the stress of capture can impact the success of spawning. However, having different closure periods for different participants in the same fishery is counter-intuitive not conducive to best management practice. AFTA as a minimum want peer reviewed scientific data that supports the reasons to implement the West Coast bio region spawning close.

The Department of Fisheries suggest the average maximum spawning time is between February & March, however the Minister, on the advice of his department has failed to recognise this and as such Commercial operators can access the fishery in February & March whilst the recreational sector is shut out.

How is this practice difference between commercial and recreational fishers supporting the “best road back” to a sustainable fishery? Considering these concerns, AFTA urgently requests:

6. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO CONDUCTING A DETAILED AND COMPREHENSIVE SCIENTIFIC STUDY, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE FISHERIES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (FRDC), ON THE AGGREGATION, BREEDING PATTERNS (TRIGGERS), AND LOCATIONS OF SNAPPER AND DHUFISH TO ENSURE THAT FUTURE DECISIONS ARE BASED ON SOUND SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE?

7. WILL YOUR PARTY REVIEW THE SPECIES CLOSURES WITH A VIEW TO INCREASING RECREATIONAL FISHING PARTICIPATION?

Netting Closures

The Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) urges the government to address the significant issue of mass stock depletion caused by climate change and drought in inland waters, such as the Peel Estuary System.

AFTA questions whether haul netting for species like Yellowfin Whiting in these vulnerable systems is considered best practice in 2024.

The South Coast River systems, from Denmark to Bremer Bay, experienced severe drought conditions in 2020-21, leading to mass fish kills. Observers have noted a lack of departmental monitoring systems for these delicate fisheries. Moreover, there are numerous examples across Western Australia where the impact of climate change, compounded by haul netting, has effectively removed any level of sustainability. It is concerning that some within the department appear to have limited awareness of these impacts.

AFTA considers that the immediate cessation of net fishing by both recreational and commercial fishers would have positively expedited the recovery of slow-growing species such as Black Bream. This straightforward action could have significantly benefited the recovery of crucial recreational fishing areas. Like oceans, sheltered waterways such as estuaries and rivers are fragile ecosystems affected by climate change. The continued indiscriminate haul netting has resulted in severe environmental degradation of these waterways, creating barren environments that may take decades to recover. Commercial netting captures all marine life in its path, with discarded bycatch either dead or consumed by birdlife.

The recommended solution is to fund the buyout of commercial net licenses in these regions. The government's role is to evaluate the best use of these limited and sensitive resources and adopt a commonsense approach through a triple bottom line assessment of the fishery.

8. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO THE FAIR AND JUST BUYOUT OF COMMERCIAL NET LICENSES FROM OUR SHELTERED RIVERS AND ESTUARIES?

9. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO INCREASING DEPARTMENTAL EFFORT IN ENGAGEMENT AND OBSERVATION TO SUPPORT RECOVERY OF THESE CLIMATE CHANGE — COMMERCIAL FISHERY IMPACTED REGIONS?

Fish Restocking

AFTA strongly supports and recommends the development of a fully funded program for the restocking of native species such as barramundi, yellowtail kingfish, pink snapper, trout, and marron. Beyond the \$12 million program called for by Recfishwest, AFTA believe that the government should invest in new hatcheries or partner for stock through existing hatcheries interstate.

With unpredictable and everchanging times related to climate change there will be a critical need for increased sustainability measure in areas where depletion occurs.

10. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO \$12 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR RESTOCKING?

11. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO ESTABLISHING NEW HATCHERIES?

Local Government Restrictions on Fishing Access

AFTA members are continually raising concerns in relation to Local Government Authorities (LGA's) restricting fishing access from beaches, jetties and other infrastructure.

AFTA's position is that LGA's should not be restricting the rights of access to publicly owned land or assets. This control, if to be implemented should be through the State government and not LGA's. Any restriction needs to be based on safety concerns and not presumptive green attitudes.

12. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO REMOVING ANY LGA RESTRICTIONS ON FISHING ACCESS AND PROTECT THE PUBLIC'S RIGHT TO ACCESS OUR WATERWAYS AND COAST?

Marine Parks

AFTA congratulate the work of Recfishwest in achieving a better outcome with the proposed South Coast Marine Parks. Recfishwest made 28 recommendations around marine parks zoning, of which 23 were adopted by Government in the final plans. This result reinforces Recfishwest's commitment to working with the Government in a balanced manner and ensures that South Coast fishers can continue to fish in locations that have been fished for generations that would have been closed under the original marine parks plans.

The original South Coast Marine Parks proposals put forward by government were both unnecessary, unduly restrictive and poorly thought out.

The industry now faces a new restrictive challenge. The Marmion Marine Park encompasses approximately 9,500 hectares, extending from Trigg Point in the south to Burns Beach in the north, spanning from the *high-water* mark to roughly 5km offshore. AFTA is aware that draft plans for the expansion of the Marmion Marine Park are expected to be released following the March election. The proposed expansion aims to extend the marine park boundary northward to Two Rocks and westward to the State waters limit, thereby increasing the size of the Marmion Marine Park to approximately 34,500 hectares. Furthermore, the proposed planning process will incorporate the review of existing zoning arrangements.

The West Coast Bioregion, spanning from Kalbarri to Augusta, is a temperate oceanic zone influenced by the Leeuwin Current, which brings warm tropical water southward. The IMCRA 2006 scheme divides this Bioregion into Abrolhos Islands, Central West Coast, and Leeuwin regions. The proposed marine park expansion lies in the Central West Coast region.

Due to its accessibility and proximity to the metropolitan area, the Central West Coast marine bioregion is utilised for various recreational activities, including recreational fishing³. It is notable that 75% of Western Australia's population resides in the Perth metropolitan area, with an estimated 750,000 recreational anglers in the state it is therefore reasonable to assume that a significant portion of these anglers are based in Perth. With five major marinas and boat ramps located between Fremantle and Two Rocks providing safe and convenient access to anglers, proposing seven sanctuary zones in this area requires thorough justification and consultation with all stakeholders, most importantly a real triple bottom line impact assessment needs to be undertaken.

For generations, families have fished these inshore waters for a variety of abundant species such as herring, whiting, squid, tailor, salmon, and skippy, in addition to pink snapper, dhufish, and western rock lobster.

Fishing families with limited budgets, who use small dinghies and runabouts, cannot venture further offshore due to safety concerns. Therefore, it is crucial for these inshore waters to remain accessible for future generations of anglers and their families. As an industry, we advocate for sustainability based on a triple bottom line assessment. However, closing off areas in these regions seems illogical, especially when most of the species caught are essential local species.

³ Smallwood et al. 2011

The tackle trade and marine industry have already faced substantial challenges due to the recent West Coast Demersal closure extensions. Consequently, several family-owned, independent tackle stores have been forced to close. Additional closures, particularly in areas popular among most anglers, will exacerbate the pressure on these businesses. Furthermore, the commercial rock lobster industry will also experience significant impacts from closures in these regions, affecting numerous operators who fish within these areas.

AFTA will work with Recfishwest at a local level to ensure the best outcome for recfishers. AFTA also suggest that proactive engagement through a Ministerial Advisory Committee and or Ministerial Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee would substantially mitigate the negative impacts before they were made public.

13. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH A MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND OR MINISTERIAL RECREATIONAL FISHING ADVISORY COMMITTEE?

14. AS A PART OF THE PROCESS WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO THE TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS?

Funding

AFTA support the Recfishwest election manifesto call for \$170m in new investment funding for recreational fishers over the next term of government as set out below:

Building resilient environments and abundant fish stocks \$70 million

- \$40 million to install eight new purpose-built reefs in consultation with the recreational fishing industry,
- \$7 million to establish a habitat enhancement program around jetties to boost productivity, biodiversity and fish abundance,
- \$3 million to support marron through a habitat restoration program to boost dam productivity
- \$12 million to expand the current stocking of pink snapper, yellowtail kingfish, marron, barramundi and trout
- \$5 million to invest in a research program building capacity to breed and stock other important species such as dhufish, flathead, abalone and native alternatives for trout.
- \$3 million to implement Recfishwest's shark bite-off plan in full

Enhancing access and fishing opportunities \$100 million

- \$60 million investment to build a new jetty every year
- \$15 million to maintain and upgrade existing jetties/fishing platforms
- Provide access to three more dams to create new fishing opportunities \$Y TBD
- Construct the Broome boat ramp \$ Y TBD
- \$2 million to double the Statewide FAD program to 80 FADs
- \$3 million to implement a statewide community stewardship program teaching kids the right way to fish
- \$20 million to establish a Fisheries Adjustment Scheme for fisheries impacted by climate change

AFTA fully support the Recfishwest manifesto proposals on:

Policy and funding to support fish, communities, and the environment

- Create clear government policy recognising and protecting the rights of fishers and the things upon which our fishing relies
- Ensure that all new coastal infrastructure and development activities consider fishing access and amenity
- Identification of all public easements and protect the public's right to access our waterways and coast

- End the marine sand mining operations in Cockburn Sound
- Phase out gillnets in all nearshore waters
- Allocate at least 30 per cent of licence fees to the Recreational Fishing Initiatives Fund to progress fishing priorities
- Support fishers by increasing funding to Recfishwest and Fishability
- Triple the funding to the Recreational Boating Facilities Scheme to improve amenity at boat ramps
- Take actions to reduce the cost of fishing including reforming licence and registration fees

Additionally, AFTA seeks genuine funding commitment for an educational and engagement program on Dhufish. The Dhufish Forever program is currently funded from part of the education allocation of the \$10 million demersal recovery package. The Dhufish Forever program comprises representatives from the Department, Recfishwest, the retail tackle trade, wholesalers, and media influencers.

The Dhufish Forever program endeavours to implement a best practice stewardship model around the capture of all demersal species.

Significant concerns *have been raised* that if the education arm of the department had applied best practice principles since *inception in* phase one of the West Coast demersal changes (14 years ago), the *exhaustive* time demands and efforts on the volunteers to build a program to mitigate the impact on recreational fishers would have been minimized.

This further supports the concept of establishing a Ministerial Advisory Committee and a Ministerial Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee, as the department currently lacks both the time and the relationship with recreational fishers in WA.

15. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO THE \$170M RECFISHWEST FUNDING PROPOSAL?

16. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO INCREASING, NOT ONLY DIRECT FUNDING TO THE DHUFISH FOREVER PROGRAM, BUT ADDITIONAL DEPARTMENTAL RESOURCES TO REDUCE THE DEMANDS ON VOLUNTEERS?

Biosecurity Issues: White Spot Disease

The impacts of White Spot disease can significantly harm the local marine environment. This disease has the potential to infect and decimate native crustacean populations on a large scale in both freshwater and saltwater ecosystems, as observed in other Australian states. White Spot infestations will dramatically impact both recreational and commercial fishing sectors.

AFTA acknowledges the current control measures on White Spot in Western Australia. AFTA has repeatedly urged the federal government to ban the importation of uncooked crustaceans as a strategy to prevent the introduction of White Spot disease into the country.

AFTA supports the Western Australian government's directive for recreational and commercial fishers to refrain from using seafood intended for human consumption as bait, and to dispose of all unwanted seafood in rubbish bins rather than in the ocean or waterways, however, a more comprehensive education program is necessary to mitigate the potential of infestation.

Nonetheless, the most effective solution would be to prohibit the sale of uncooked imported prawns in Western Australia.

17. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO PHASING OUT THE SALE OF UNCOOKED, IMPORTED CRUSTACEANS IN WA?

Shark Depredation

Shark depredation refers to the phenomenon where a shark partially or completely consumes a fish caught in fishing equipment before it can be landed. This issue is escalating rapidly in Western Australia, both offshore and onshore, as sharks develop learned behaviour patterns. This problem impacts both the commercial and recreational fishing sectors.

The reduction in commercial shark take has led to a notable increase in the population of large sharks that have adapted to access prey from fishers with ease. Reports from our members indicate that they often struggle to land even a single fish, making it extremely challenging to secure two fish whether from boat, jetty, or shore.

The incidence of shark predation has markedly increased following government regulations prohibiting the capture of sharks with an 'inter-dorsal fin' measurement exceeding 700 millimetres, measured from the front of the dorsal fin to the back of the smaller rear dorsal fin.

The Australian Fisheries Trade Association (AFTA) notes that the Government has extended restrictions to prohibit shark fishing in all nearshore waters of the Perth metropolitan area to address community concerns for public safety.

Current legislation prohibits fishing with wire trace within 800 metres from shore at all metropolitan beaches, the Swan-Canning Estuary, the Busselton Jetty and foreshore, and the Esperance Jetty. The Prohibition on Fishing (Wire Trace) Order 2024 includes:

- All Perth metropolitan beaches from Tim's Thicket Beach to 5 kilometres north of Two Rocks and all waters of the Swan-Canning Estuary.
- The Busselton Jetty and all nearshore waters (within 800 metres from shore) along the Busselton foreshore (between the Vasse Diversion Drain and the Georgette Street boat ramp).
- The Esperance Jetty and all nearshore waters (within 800 metres from shore) 200 metres either side of the jetty.

AFTA recommends either repealing the restriction on the use of wire leaders by recreational anglers or introducing a minimum wire trace length of 300mm to help reduce the number of smaller sharks and mitigate depredation. Further, AFTA suggests conducting targeted studies on specific shark species' stock levels and their learned behaviours, such as those of bull sharks, to develop strategies for their reduction.

The Fisheries Research & Development Corporation (FRDC) and the Queensland Government have recently released a report by Dr. Jonathan D. Mitchell from the Queensland Government's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, titled "[Discussion Paper for the Fisheries Research & Development Corporation National Workshop on Shark Interactions in Australian Fisheries.](#)" identifying the issue of shark predation. Agri-Science Queensland (part of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries) is now inviting stakeholders to participate in a national online survey as part of a research project aiming to reduce shark depredation. This 2.5-year project will also involve a series of stakeholder workshops at regional centres in Queensland, Western Australia, Northern Territory, and New South Wales—the main states and territories where shark depredation has been identified as a common issue.

Any organisation that takes on the management of an ecology, takes on the responsibility to manage all species in that ecology, including in this case Sharks. The recreational sector has identified Shark Depredation as a major contributor to the pressure on fish stocks we need a solution to ensure a sustainable future.

A strong solution in northern waters would greatly reduce overall fish mortality by more than 50%.

18. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO REVIEWING THE RESTRICTIONS ON WIRE TRACES?

19. WILL YOUR PARTY COMMIT TO REVIEWING AND INCREASING THE MAXIMUM AN 'INTER-DORSAL FIN' MEASUREMENT OF 700 MILLIMETRES?

Offshore Windfarms

AFTA acknowledges that the proposed offshore windfarm at Bunbury, between Dawesville and Cape Naturaliste is being established by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change and Energy in commonwealth waters.

AFTA have real concerns on the impacts to the marine environment, predominantly through disruptive effects of introduced electromagnetic radiation fields as against the naturally occurring electromagnetic fields.

On August 29th, 2023, the South Australian government rejected the proposal for offshore wind in South Australia citing the potential negative impacts to the marine environment.

Minister The Hon. Claire Scriven stated in Parliament:

... based on the evidence we have before us, the state government considers that the risk is too great to established industries in the South-East, as well as to biodiversity, ecosystems and wildlife within the region, particularly that which migrates through the region.

Our submission does express significant concerns of the potential impact to the state's southern zone rock lobster fishery. Over the last 10 years, on average, it has contributed \$187,500 million to the state's economy. Some of those significant concerns include the potential displacement of fishing effort and the disruption of biomass and juvenile recruitment of rock lobster. There are also potential impacts through noise and vibration which can potentially impact on the future of the fishery.

The submission also highlights concerns for biodiversity, ecosystems and migratory wildlife, marine animals and seabirds. The proposed declared area also directly overlaps with an area of what is of biological and oceanographic significance, not only at a national level but at an international level: namely, the area well known for the Bonney coast upwelling. Our government certainly supports renewable energy projects, particularly where they improve South Australia's energy security, but this proposal has risks for South Australia that the commonwealth needs to be aware of in addition to providing no benefit for South Australians.

The Western Australian government cannot ignore that it still has a significant role to play in approving the underwater transmitting lines through state waters to connect onshore to the grid.

20. *WILL YOUR PARTY REJECT THE APPLICATION FOR OFFSHORE WINDFARMS WHERE THE PASSAGE IS THROUGH STATE CONTROLLED WATERS/LANDS?*

This policy submission has been developed by Western Australian AFTA members for Western Australian Recreational Fishers:

- **Tim Farnell – Red Mullet,**
 - **Ash Ramm – Tackleworld Miami,**
 - **Brian Marshall – Compleat Angler Nedlands,**
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