

RECFISH
AUSTRALIA



PO Box 187
Grange Qld 4051
Phone/fax 07 3356 1111
Email ceo@recfish.com.au
ABN 87 547 561 663
www.recfish.com.au

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Media Release

Searching for a solution to MPAs

“There is a substantial amount of debate within the community, particularly in recreational fishing circles, over the somewhat contentious issue of marine planning and marine protected areas (MPA). Both the State and Commonwealth processes for MPAs are causing a great deal of angst, uncertainty and frustration as the future is somewhat unknown for areas that have historically been favoured fishing destinations” John Harrison, CEO of Recfish Australia, said today.

“In an effort to help the recreational fishing sector better understand and be better prepared to minimise the impact through the introduction of these MPAs Recfish Australia is holding a 2 day seminar/workshop in November. The objectives of the seminar are;

- 1. Understanding of the current and projected future status of MPAs (state and commonwealth)*
- 2. To define engagement and develop processes and guidelines for adequate and early engagement of the recreational sector in the MPA debate.*
- 3. To identify the effects (especially social and economic) of MPAs on recreational fishers and fisheries, and develop alternative access arrangements in lieu of ‘lockouts’*
- 4. To identify and articulate the gaps in knowledge and understanding of recreational fishing activity in MPAs and develop strategies and programs for Research, Development & Extension (R, D & E) to address them.*

5. *To identify and develop the best tools and methods for recreational fishers to use in presenting their case for the rational establishment and review of MPAs*

Senator Eric Abetz, Minister for Fisheries, will open the Seminar and the keynote address will be given by Professor Colin Buxton.

“The recreational sector is not opposed to the principle of MPAs or sanctuary zones. There is however more than one way to manage these areas. There are many options that should be considered before lockout, e.g. catch and release only, special bag limits, seasonal closed areas for protection of aggregating breeding stock, removal of commercial effort, no anchoring areas, etc. Simply expanding sanctuary zones for no apparent reason aggregates the effort and is likely to cause more problems.”

The event is being held on the weekend of 4 and 5 November to enable as many of the volunteer recreational fishing administrators and representatives to attend as well as the general angling public that are interested in the future of their fishing.

Registration for the Seminar can be found on the web site www.recfish.com.au
The seminar program will be available on the web site in the near future.

On the Saturday night we will be hosting a dinner for the Seminar for the inaugural *Recfishing* awards recognising the contribution of people towards recreational and sport fishing around Australia.

Ends

Media enquiries John Harrison 07 33561111 or Bruce Schumacher, Chair, 0418 499322