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## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Recfish Australia committed to sustainable recreational fishing**

Recfish Australia today reaffirmed their commitment to ensure that sustainable recreational fisheries continue in Commonwealth Waters. This follows two expert panel workshops to consider the conservation values for the East Marine Bioregion. The workshops, recently held in Cairns and Sydney involved a wide range of experts from a variety of community sectors including: commercial, recreational and charter fishing, marine tourism, shipping, state government, conservation NGOs and marine scientists. The meetings were the first step to discuss conservation values presented in the draft East Marine Bioregional Profile and to assess possible threats and existing threat mitigation measures. Public consultation will occur later in the process but all recreational fishers are encouraged to write to DEWHA with their comments about the draft profile.

Recfish does however, have significant concerns with the process, not least of which is the short time line for delivery with a draft plan for marine protected areas expected by mid 2010. "We are talking about an area of Commonwealth Waters (between 3 nautical miles and 200 nautical miles from the coast) that runs from near the tip of Cape York in far north Queensland to past Bateman's Bay on the south coast of New South Wales. There is not a lot of information about the ecology of the region and there is not a lot of time to collect information about the extent of recreational fishing in Commonwealth Waters." Said Len Olyott, CEO of Recfish Australia.

Participants at the Cairns workshop voiced grave concerns about the fisheries data presented in the draft profile which was considered outdated and in some cases, inaccurate. Regarding recreational data, Olyott had this to say "The Australian Government is relying on recreational fishing data from a national survey conducted nearly 10 years ago, a lot has changed since then and more people are accessing Commonwealth waters in private boats or through expert charter operations. Any closures that ban fishing will have huge negative impacts on regional economies and will result in large scale job losses. We believe that recreational fishing in these areas is sustainably managed. The problem is that we need time to collect the data to prove our case."

The biggest threat to recreational fishing remains the calls from extreme conservation groups such as the American- based Pew Environment Group that continues to lobby government to close extensive areas in the Coral Sea and off Southwest Australia. Recfish Australia encourages all recreational fishers to apply political pressure through their local federal MPs and senators to guarantee that all sectors have a chance to present their case and to guard against any secret deals. To find out more about how you can become involved, visit the Recfish Australia website: [www.recfish.com.au](http://www.recfish.com.au).

### **ENDS – Media Contact Len Olyott 0427073356 or Bruce Schumacher 0418499322**

Recfish Australia is the peak national body for recreational and sport fishing in Australia. Members: Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT (AFANT); Australian National Sportfishing Association (ANSA); Australian Underwater Federation – Spearfishing (AUF); New South Wales Advisory Council on Recreational Fishing (NSW ACoRF); Western Australian Recreational & Sportfishing Council Inc (Recfishwest); Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing (TARFish); Victoria's Recreational Fishing Peak Body (VRFish). Affiliate Member: Recreational Fishing Alliance of New South Wales (RFA)

**Our mission – One voice promoting sustainable fishing and representing recreational fishers at a national level**