

The National Recreational Fishing Policy

Our vast island continent, with its huge, diverse coastline and limited yet valuable freshwater resources, is one of the world's last great fishing frontiers.

We are a land of stark climatic contrasts blessed with a diversity of fishing opportunities in environments spanning thousands of kilometres. From the sultry tropics to the cool, temperate waters of the south, shore and boat fishers seek a multitude of species, in thousands of locations.

Fishing for food has been practised in Australia by Aboriginal people for thousands of years and since the earliest visits by explorers.

Foreword

Recreational fishing in Australia is a multi-billion dollar a year industry, and an important leisure activity for over 4.5 million Australians.

However, recreational fisheries around Australia are at the crossroads. The next decade could see the decline and destruction of many of our key recreational fisheries, or these valuable fish stocks and their environment could be conserved and restored for the next generation.

Our fish stocks and their habitats are under threat from many directions.

Increasing fishing pressure on inshore fish stocks from both recreational, subsistence and commercial fishers, environmental damage and aquatic habitat degradation from poor land management practices, and pollution from industrial and urban discharge are joining forces to push many fish stocks into decline. Existing land use and aquatic resource management strategies do not adequately address these issues at a national level.

How do we, as a nation, prevent the decline in fish stocks, and guarantee the future for recreational fishing as an integral part of the Australian lifestyle?

Management policies for recreational fishing should become an integral part of total ecosystem management Australia-wide. A national policy will help ensure the continuation of quality fishing and the maintenance and restoration of fish stocks, and improve coordination of management and funding strategies at all levels of government.

The urgent need for a national policy, which can be used as a guiding, conceptual document to be adopted and built upon by government, recreational fishers and the wider community, has been recognised by the Commonwealth and all State and Territory governments.

In 1991 the Australian and New Zealand Fisheries and Aquaculture Council (ANZFAC), which comprises Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers responsible for fisheries, put together a representative National Working Group to draft a national policy on recreational fishing for public discussion.

The Group compiled a draft national policy document in August 1992 and was then replaced by a Steering Committee, with fishing tackle and boating industry representatives, recreational fishers, and Commonwealth, State and Territory fisheries managers.

In December 1992 the Steering Committee circulated Australia-wide *Recreational Fishing in Australia* - a draft national policy for public discussion and a companion appendices document, and implemented a comprehensive public consultation program.

The draft policy espoused five primary goals and 17 key principles for the management of recreational fishing across Australia. These principles incorporated the essence of ecologically sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Report in 1987:

To meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Fishers and the recreational fishing and boating industries across the nation have provided comment on ways to refine and improve the principles set out in the draft policy.

The Steering Committee has taken full account of opinion expressed at 61 public meetings and views in 431 written submissions and 4,957 questionnaires from around Australia. There was strong public support for the key goals and principles set out in the draft. The next challenge is to make them work for the betterment of recreational fishing and aquatic environments throughout the country.

This is a two-way process, and fishers should ensure that they play their part by not only incorporating the goals of this policy in their fishing practices, but by ensuring that government agencies do the same.

It should be recognised that some of the broad strategic directions and actions outlined in the policy may require substantial funding. In the light of significant budgetary constraints facing all levels of government for the foreseeable future, each jurisdiction will determine its own priorities for implementation of actions following assessment of budgetary priorities.

This national policy has been endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture (MCFFA, which replaced ANZFAC on 1 January 1994) which espouses all the aims and ideals envisaged for recreational fishing at the start of this long consultative process. Accordingly, the principles and goals should at least be considered by all government agencies whose policies and operations directly or indirectly affect recreational fishing.

MCFFA urges Australia's legions of anglers, along with State, Territory and Commonwealth governments and the wider community, to embrace the policy so that recreational fishing can prosper and develop during this decade and beyond into the 21st century.

Goals

Five primary goals flow from the 16 guiding principles which form the basis for this national recreational fishing policy.

- To ensure quality fishing, and maintain or enhance fish stocks and their habitats, for present and future generations as part of the environmental endowment of all Australians.
- To develop partnerships between governments, the recreational fishing community, and associated industries to conserve, restore and enhance the values of recreational fisheries throughout Australia
- To allocate a fair and reasonable share of Australian fish resources to recreational fishers, taking into account the needs of other user groups.
- To establish an information base at national and regional levels to meet the needs of recreational fisheries management.
- To establish a funding base to effectively manage the nation's recreational fisheries.

Key Principles for Recreational Fishing

Sound recreational fisheries management and education of fishers toward responsible behaviour are designed to safeguard the pleasures of fishing for future generations.

1. Recreational fishing should be managed as part of the total fisheries resource to ensure quality fishing, and to maintain fish stocks and their habitats, for present and future generations of Australians.
2. Our aquatic habitats and ecosystems are part of the environmental endowment of all Australians, and are the key to a healthy fisheries resource which requires protection, restoration and enhancement.
3. Government, in its stewardship role, must encourage and assist the community to be involved in all aspects of fisheries management.
4. Recreational fishers and the recreational fishing industry should participate in the protection and management of their fishing heritage to ensure that it is available for future generations.
5. Community consultation at Federal, State/Territory and local levels should be a key component of recreational fisheries management programs.
6. Recreational fishers are entitled to a fair and reasonable share of Australian fish resources taking into account long term sustainable yields; the rights and entitlements of others; and the need to optimise community returns from available stocks.
7. Recreational fishers throughout Australia should be encouraged to adopt their own Codes of Practice consistent with the goals of this policy.
8. Preference should be given to recreational fishing methods in which the fisher is present and which aim to catch target species.
9. The catching of fish for sale or profit, including barter, by recreational fishers is unacceptable.

10. Programs, consistent with the goals of this policy, which seek to increase recreational fishing opportunities throughout Australia should be encouraged.
11. Reasonable physical access to recreational fishing areas should be provided for throughout Australia.
12. Community awareness, education and enforcement programs should focus on encouraging positive changes in community attitudes to develop a stronger conservation ethic.
13. The economic, educational, health and other social benefits of recreational fishing should be widely recognised and actively promoted.
14. Fisheries management decisions should be based on sound information including fish biology, fishing activity, catches, and the economic and social values of recreational fishing.
15. Adequate funding and support should be provided to manage recreational fishing as part of integrated resource and environmental management strategies.
16. Recreational fishers should continue to contribute to the cost of managing and developing recreational fishing.

Protecting the Resource

Principle 1: *Recreational fishing should be managed as part of the total fisheries resource to ensure quality fishing, and to maintain fish stocks and their habitats, for present and future generations of Australians.*

Co-ordinated management and conservation of our vast fisheries resource is paramount and central to this national policy.

Warnings are coming from fisheries managers, informed anglers and the wider community about the parlous state of some of our freshwater, estuarine and marine fish stocks and their habitats. This is particularly so in waters near many of our major cities.

The crux of these warnings is:

Quality fishing requires environmental quality

It is fundamental to this national policy for recreational fishing that it reflects the key principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD).

In its final report the ESD Working Group on Fisheries recommended that Australian fisheries management be undertaken within an ecosystem management framework. In other words, we must manage the entire ecosystem, with fishing activity a component in the overall management of the aquatic resource.

It follows naturally that management policies for recreational fishing should become an integral part of total environmental management Australia-wide. The essence of ESD, as defined by the Brundtland Report in 1987, is to:

Meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This definition is the heart of this national recreational fishing policy.

Habitat the key to a healthy fisheries resource

Principle 2: *Our aquatic habitats and ecosystems are part of the environmental endowment of all Australians, and are the key to a healthy fisheries resource which requires protection, restoration and enhancement.*

The quality of Australia's recreational fishing, both in the short and long term, is linked inextricably to the health of our aquatic habitat.

This policy supports a key recommendation of the Ecologically Sustainable Development Working Group on Fisheries:

That all levels of government should initiate urgent action to ensure the conservation of critical habitats for wild fish. Such action should include legislative protection for known spawning and nursery grounds; increased research on the ecological and economic functions and significance of these areas; and steps to restore habitats and ameliorate existing impacts.

Fisheries resources and their aquatic habitats are national assets which require protection by the general community as part of the environmental endowment of all Australians.

It is no longer sufficient to reduce or control habitat destruction. The aquatic habitat must be maintained, restored or improved to increase productivity, particularly in freshwater, estuaries, coastal wetlands, and inshore seagrass areas.

The community and government authorities must recognise the importance of a healthy, productive environment if recreational fishing is to prosper in the future. The success of any management is dependent on the environment being able to allow natural reproduction and recruitment for all except the few species in limited areas which can be supplemented through stocking.

However, stocking should not be seen as a substitute for loss of natural reproduction and recruitment caused by habitat degradation. Indeed, stocking of native or exotic species outside their normal range needs careful assessment to avoid any negative side-effects.

Fish should be allowed unimpeded migration throughout their natural ranges. Where man-made structures impede migration there needs to be adequate provision for the movement of fish.

This policy seeks responsible land use and farming practices, protection of shoreline and floodplain areas and wetlands, and careful use of chemicals and fertilisers which have an impact, direct or indirect, on aquatic habitats or fish stocks. Any adverse impacts should be met with appropriate penalties and restoration programs.

Most importantly, all Australians should recognise that catchments, estuaries and coastal wetlands are the very heart of some of our most popular and important recreational fisheries. They play a vital role in the life cycle of many aquatic species and exert an influence on our lives which extends far beyond fishing.

It is the responsibility of the entire community - not just fishers - to insist that water quality be maintained at an appropriate level, and if necessary improved, in all aquatic environments.

Long-term degradation of the aquatic environment will not only result in a reduced quality of recreational fishing, but will also affect many other water-based recreational pursuits. Our waterways are indicators of the health of adjacent environments and their catchments.



Pollution of urban waterways eventually finds its way into estuarine and ocean systems, affecting the whole complex ecological web. (Pic: N. Harrison)



Fishing line and plastic waste discarded by fishers can become deathtraps for wildlife. (Pic: N. Harrison)

The role of Government

Principle 3: *Government, in its stewardship role, must encourage and assist the community to be involved in all aspects of fisheries management.*

The key challenge facing the Commonwealth, State, Territory, and local governments and the recreational fishing community is to work together to protect, develop and enhance recreational fishing in Australia.

Fish are a common property resource that know no borders. Many migrate from one state water to another, and from State to Commonwealth waters. All species are dependent on a food chain which relies on the environmental quality of their habitats. Species in freshwater, estuaries and inshore areas are particularly vulnerable to the impact of development.

For these reasons, we must develop a co-ordinated strategy to manage our aquatic resources. Decisions can no longer be made in isolation.

As custodians of the resource, governments have a special responsibility to achieve ecologically sustainable fisheries. They must ensure prudent management which safeguards the aquatic resource and the environment.

At the same time management must allow for the balanced development of recreational and commercial fishing, and allocation of resource shares to maximise community benefits.

Government responsibility should include conserving, restoring and enhancing the aquatic resource, as well as ensuring that recreational fishing is integrated into the overall management of the fishery resource.

Up to now State, Territory and Commonwealth governments have shared responsibility for many fisheries. There are numerous Commonwealth and State/Territory authorities which have had direct or indirect responsibilities relating to recreational fisheries.

Overall there is a pressing need for improved co-ordination at all levels of government, and this policy is intended to provide an essential framework.

The Commonwealth has an important stewardship role in the implementation of this national recreational fishing policy. It can fulfil this role, where appropriate, through proper consultation with State and Territory governments and user groups and participation in programs of national significance.

There is an urgent need for government agencies to get a better understanding of the contribution of recreational fishing to tourism, the domestic and international economy, and in particular to regional development. This is a national database requirement.

The Commonwealth's stewardship should involve developing overall community goals and protecting and enhancing aquatic resources together with State and Territory governments. It also has specific responsibilities for managing recreational fishing which falls within its jurisdiction.

State and Territory governments have direct management control over recreational fishing in most areas within their boundaries. Their responsibilities include resource and habitat protection and enhancement; the preparation of regional development plans; decisions about sustainable yields; access sharing; interstate and intrastate controls on fish movements and diseases; and provision of facilities for recreational fishing. They are also principally responsible for coastal and catchment management.

Fisheries agencies may not have direct control of all these functions, but they, and fishers, should be consulted to ensure that the needs of the aquatic resource are met by management.

If a national recreational fishing policy is to be successful and workable, each State and Territory will need to co-operate with and consult other states and the Commonwealth Government. This is to ensure that fishing regulations are soundly based, equitable, enforceable and, where appropriate, consistent throughout Australia.

Management must also reflect the conservation needs of the aquatic environment and allow for non-exploitative uses, particularly in areas of high conservation value.



The lure of a delicious bag of Tasmanian brown trout can bring valuable tourist dollars to a local economy. (Pic: P. Cummins)

Community Involvement

Principle 4: *Recreational fishers and the recreational fishing industry should participate in the protection and management of their fishing heritage to ensure that it is available for future generations.*

Principle 5: *Community consultation at Federal, State/Territory and local levels should be a key component of recreational fisheries management programs.*

Improved planning and consultation for resource use has the capacity to alleviate much of the conflict between user groups that dominates public debate on aquatic resource use and fishing issues.

Such planning will not only clarify resource allocation issues, but will accommodate a range of recreational, commercial and conservation opportunities to meet social, resource and environmental needs.

Local economies are a major beneficiary of good fisheries management. Local governments also have a responsibility to provide facilities and opportunities for recreational fishing, and to ensure that planning and zoning processes under their control do not adversely affect the aquatic resource.

Recreational fishers should be encouraged to focus on the total fishing experience, not just the quantity of catch. This policy emphasises the need for a strong conservation ethic when fishing.

It is important for all recreational fishers to realise that they should contain their catches to immediate personal and family needs.

Similarly, it is essential that they co-operate with fisheries agencies to assist in curtailing illegal activities.

Members of the recreational fishing community have a major role to play in educating their fellow fishers, and assisting in management programs.

One of the fundamental aims of this policy is to give the nation's recreational fishers an equitable say in the management of our fisheries.

The opinion of peak fishing bodies, fishing clubs, the recreational fishing media, casual fishers, commercial fishermen, community groups and the general public should be actively sought on management plans or policies of interest to recreational fishers.

Management proposals need to be made readily available and all public authorities should ensure that fishers are given adequate time to comment on them.

The needs of recreational fishers should be recognised and considered. They should be consulted on commercial fisheries proposals and other Commonwealth, State, Territory and local government plans and developments which may affect recreational fisheries or the aquatic environment.

After consideration of all submissions in response to management proposals, reasons for implementation should be made available.

Governments should establish a consultative body on matters of recreational fishing policy. These bodies must have majority representation by recreational fishers, with some members nominated by recreational fishing advisory councils which exist at Commonwealth, State and Territory level.



Recreational anglers can help researchers by participating in their programs and using forums such as angling clubs and government committees to express views and remain informed.

Sharing the Resource

Principle 6: *Recreational fishers are entitled to a fair and reasonable share of Australian fish resources taking into account long-term sustainable yields; the rights and entitlements of others; and the need to optimise community returns from available stocks.*

This national recreational fishing policy recognises the right of members of the public to take fish from public waters for their private use. However, it must also ensure that catches remain within the limits of the resource's capacity to sustain total fishing effort - recreational and commercial.

It is important for fishers to realise that in many fisheries the recreational take is significant. In some it may be larger than the commercial component (examples are tailor, bream and most freshwater species). There are signs of overfishing and stock depletion in some fisheries, contributed to at least in part by recreational effort. This has certainly occurred in the case of tailor, some of the gropers, and Murray cod.

In the area of resource allocation, recreational fishers should be given a fair and reasonable share of the total fishery.

In fisheries where there is conflict between user groups, recreational fishers have the right to be consulted before a decision is made on allocation of the resource.

The respective social and economic benefits of recreational and commercial fishing, as well as the impact of other users, and the status of the resource should form the basis of resource allocation.

As recreational fishing continues to expand, especially in areas close to the major population centres, the allocation of resources between user groups will continue to be a major issue.

There is little doubt that in the future there will be resource re-allocation from commercial to recreational in some fisheries - particularly in inshore and estuarine waters of major recreational importance.

There will also be a shift in emphasis towards fishing techniques which offer maximum benefits to the wider fishing community.

Commercial licence buy-out is an option in fisheries where a change in resource share is seen as the best use of fish stocks from either a social or economic viewpoint.

The other side of the resource allocation coin is that recreational fishers will have to accept constraints in some fisheries to comply with long-term sustainable yields; the rights and entitlements of others; and the need to maximise community returns from available stocks.

Some commercial fisheries in Australia have already had to accept considerable restraints on their fishing activities, boat numbers and allowable gear to meet stock conservation and other management objectives.

All users of the resource, including recreational and commercial fishers, have a common interest - to ensure the maintenance of fish stocks and their habitats.

Rather than each blaming the other for taking too large a share of a diminishing resource, all sectors need to work together for its long-term well-being.

Management also needs to accommodate conservation and non-exploitative uses of the aquatic environment such as scientific research, marine education, underwater photography and fish observation.



Word of good fishing quickly spreads and holiday spots and commercial fishing grounds may overlap as fishing pressure increases. (Pic: B. Classon)

Acceptable recreational fishing practices

Principle 7: *Recreational fishers throughout Australia should be encouraged to adopt their own Codes of Practice consistent with the goals of this policy.*

Principle 8: *Preference should be given to recreational fishing methods in which the fisher is present and which aim to catch target species.*

Principle 9: *The catching of fish for sale or profit, including barter, by recreational fishers is unacceptable.*

Recreational fishers should be encouraged to develop codes of practice and fishing ethics which complement the established codes of organised recreational fishing groups.

As a starting point, codes of practice could include these guidelines:

- Observe bag and size limit rules and other fisheries regulations, and try to guide other fishers along the same path.
- Take no more than your immediate needs, even if this is less than the bag limit.
- Aim to release unwanted or excess fish unharmed wherever possible.
- Co-operate in recognized fish tagging programs for research purposes.
- Promote fishing ethics by killing fish quickly, using tackle appropriate to the fishing situation, and frequently attending gear.
- Respect the needs of fellow fishers, other resource users including commercial fishers, and especially the environment.
- Treat fishing locations with respect. Don't leave bait to foul rocks and beaches and plastic packaging or discarded nylon line to pollute the aquatic environment and possibly entrap birds and other aquatic creatures.
- Travel carefully, especially in 4WD vehicles in fragile conservation areas. Stick to gazetted roads and obvious tracks and resist the temptation to go "bush bashing" to create your own track.
- Respect the rights of owners when travelling through or camping on private property.
- Report pollution and degradation of the aquatic environment, especially as a result of irresponsible use of fertilisers and pesticides or thoughtless runoff of toxic waste.
- Report illegal fishing activities (such as fish selling by recreational fishers) as soon as they are noticed, and with as much information as is available.
- Work through recreational fishing bodies, the fishing media or government authorities, rather than trying to deal with such problems in isolation.

Recreational fishing methods where the fisher is actively involved, or which are selective in the species and quantity caught should be given preference over less discriminate methods such as unattended nets or setlines.

In addition, management planning for both commercial and recreational fisheries needs to minimise detrimental side-effects on other species or the environment.

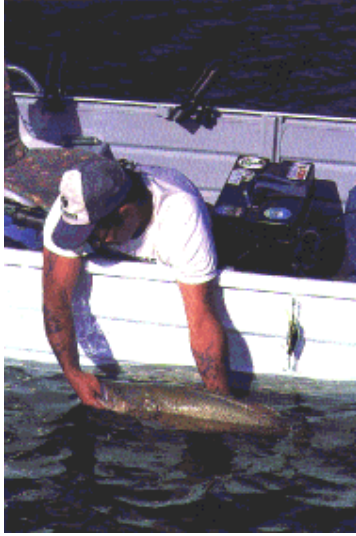
Side-effects which should be considered include: the incidental take of juvenile and non-target fish and invertebrates; the impact on species at the base of the aquatic food chain; and the effect on aquatic mammals, birds, reptiles, and seabed and benthic (bottom) communities.

This national policy emphasises that there must be recognition of a clear demarcation between recreational and commercial fishing. Recreational fishing is a sport or pastime carried out without financial gain, whereas commercial fishers rely on their catch for their livelihood.

Unfortunately there are some fishers throughout Australia who fail to see, or simply ignore, this distinction by acting as unlicensed commercial fishers.

Codes of practice among recreational fishers should make it clear that illegal buying or selling of fish is not acceptable, and such behaviour should attract severe financial and other penalties.

This national policy also supports a trend throughout Australia towards community based 'Fish Watch' systems, with 24-hour toll-free phone numbers, through which people can immediately report fisheries offences or other impacts on the aquatic environment to State and Territory fisheries enforcement agencies.



A Lake Eildon cod is released - catch and release competitions and observance of bag and size limits preserve breeding stocks. (Pic: B. Classon)

Opportunities for Recreational Fishing

Principle 10: Programs, consistent with the goals of this policy, which seek to increase recreational fishing opportunities throughout Australia should be encouraged.

Principle 11: Reasonable physical access to recreational fishing areas should be provided for throughout Australia.

Some of the programs which seek to increase recreational fishing opportunities are, for example, artificial reefs, stocking and restocking species in fresh and salt water, improved access to freshwater impoundments, and constructing or improving boat ramps and fish ladders.

This policy urges that recreational fishers be given fair and reasonable physical access to fishing areas.

Land and water management agencies, local government authorities and construction organisations should formally consult with recreational fishing representatives to determine fishing access needs when planning for national parks and aquatic conservation areas, or physical structures such as marinas, harbours, dams and bridges and similar facilities. These should also take into account the needs of disabled fishers. These agencies should present sound justification for any proposed reduction of access to fishing areas.

Unlike other countries in the world, Australians have relatively free access to inland and marine waters. This access should continue, however, these opportunities carry with them an obligation of responsible behaviour.

Education and Compliance

Principle 12: Community awareness, education and enforcement programs should focus on encouraging positive changes in community attitudes to develop a stronger conservation ethic.

Recreational fishing has significant value as an educational activity. It teaches personal skills such as self-reliance, confidence, and analytical skills, but, perhaps most importantly, it promotes the concept of responsibility for the fish stocks and the environment they inhabit and we depend upon.

Effective management of recreational fishing relies as much on the adoption of positive attitudes by the community as on legislation and enforcement.

Education programs should be aimed at bringing about changes in the attitude and behaviour of many fishers who still have no realisation of the cumulative impact of their activities.

Young fishers should also be key targets in a wide public awareness campaign to instil the need for responsible fishing practices. Such an approach can help to ensure that the next generation of adult fishers will be more aware of their responsibilities, and the need for conservative management.

Established fishing organisations have an important role to play in this education process.

Education and compliance should complement each other, since successful management of our recreational fisheries is largely dependent on the voluntary acceptance of fishing rules.

The community should be properly informed of the reasons for management decisions - for examples in relation to key issues such as bag limits and resource sharing - and given a clear lead on the values and attitudes which will assist in sustaining fish stocks.

Education programs should take advantage of all possible media coverage. In a multicultural society such as Australia there is also a need for specific programs to deal with identified ethnic groups.

Effective policing of our recreational fishing is not just about increasing fines and imposing further restrictions. It is about providing a visible presence which makes the would-be errant fisher think twice about the chances of being caught. This effect can be greatly enhanced if peer pressure becomes a major force as community values and attitudes towards recreational fishing change for the better.

Governments and fisheries authorities have an obligation to provide adequate staff to improve or increase compliance with recreational fishing regulations.

Fisheries offences affect all users of the resource, can have a significant collective impact on fish stocks, and should be considered a crime. Penalties should reflect the seriousness of offences.



Recreational fishing, in all its forms, is a sport and leisure pursuit for more than 4.5 million Australians every year.



Almost every part of the Australian coastline and river systems offers good fishing for a wide range of species - on Northern Territory shores mud crabs and barramundi provide a feast. (L. Pic: C. Roberts, R. Pic: B. Classon)

Building up a store of knowledge

Principle 13: The economic, educational, health and other social benefits of recreational fishing should be widely recognised and actively promoted.

Principle 14: Fisheries management decisions should be based on sound information including fish biology, fishing activity, catches, and the economic and social values of recreational fishing.

Recreational fishing in Australia has developed into a multi-billion dollar a year industry which contributes significantly to the health and social well-being of the nation.

It has direct economic benefits from the sale of tackle, bait, boats and recreational vehicles, and indirect benefits flowing from anglers who travel to fish and pay for air fares, boat charters, food, fuel and accommodation.

Fishing is often a shared family or group activity, contributing to community cohesion and development. It also provides benefits through its outdoor, physical nature and improved diets associated with increased fish consumption.

In 1990 it provided employment for about 80,000 Australians in the tackle, boating, tourism, charter and associated industries and was enjoyed by an estimated 4.5 million people who fished at some time during the year.

Out of this total more than 800,000 go fishing more than 20 days a year, and about 200,000 are members of fishing clubs.

State and national surveys have shown that fishing is a sport and leisure activity highly preferred by people of all ages. More than 25 per cent of most age groups participate in recreational fishing.

High quality recreational fishing opportunities are likely to lead to greater employment and benefits to the economy associated with domestic and international tourism. These often have significant flow-on impacts in regional areas.

Around 100,000 overseas tourists who visit Australia each year fish at some time during their stay.

It is likely that this number would increase considerably if the management of both tourism and recreational fishing were better co-ordinated, promoted and developed.

It is estimated that the annual wholesale turnover for the Australian fishing tackle and bait industry is about \$170m, while the value of the recreational boating industry, at least 60 per cent of which is fishing-related, is thought to be about \$500m per year.

A significant number of public submissions have questioned both participation and economic estimates. There is an urgent need to get accurate national information on the values of recreational fishing, and changes in these values over a period of time.

National surveys of expenditure and participation rates of recreational fishing should be undertaken on a five-yearly basis.

A national survey can obtain information on participation and expenditure by resident fishers and overseas tourists as well as basic demographic data and participation by fishery type.

Additionally, it can establish the role of fishing in choice of destination of overseas visitors, the species they most want to catch and how much they catch.

There is also a need to identify the attitudes of anglers towards their pastime and determine the reasons why people fish and the best means of incorporating these needs in management policies.

The results of all surveys should be available to the community on a national data base.

State research should be capable of providing specific data on habitat requirements and effects of degradation; species biology; stock structure; and recreational and commercial fishery participation, distribution, catch and effort.

Fishery specific and local surveys should be used to provide more detailed catch and effort data and additional information.

We need to know more about the biology of important species as well as recreational catch rates. The impact of recreational fishing is largely unknown, and all levels of government have inadequate information for managing many fish stocks of most importance to recreational fishing, and for making properly informed decisions about resource management and resource sharing.

The overall catch must be quantified in various fisheries so that resource impacts can be determined, and allocations made between users. This allocation should take into account economic and social benefits.

This policy urges fishers to fully co-operate with research and monitoring programs and surveys, either by way of catch censuses, boat ramp interviews or circulated questionnaires.



Research is needed to understand the biology, stock structures and habitat requirements of recreational fishing species such as marlin (above) and Australian bass (below). (Pics: R. Harrison)



Funding: the key to proper management

Principle 15: Adequate funding and support should be provided to manage recreational fishing as part of integrated resource and environmental management strategies.

Principle 16: Recreational fishers should continue to contribute to the cost of managing and developing recreational fishing.

The enormous socio-economic benefits of recreational fishing and its supportive industries are only now being recognised. However, the impact that recreational fishing has had, and can have, on the fish resource cannot be ignored. Quality recreational fishing is a catalyst for significant regional economic activity in the form of tourism and fishing-related expenditure. It also contributes revenue, as part of overall revenue-raising arrangements, to the Commonwealth in the form of federal taxes, levies and excise.

A higher economic return from recreational fishing may also be realised, for at least some fisheries, through a reallocation of a larger proportion of resources to the recreational sector, as the ESD Working Group stated in its final report.

Historically State and Territory governments have met the greatest proportion of the cost of recreational fishing management. This expenditure covers research, enforcement and management programs across a range of fisheries.

Governments and recreational fishers recognise that funds additional to the estimated \$23m spent by state fisheries management agencies in 1992 are needed to increase the benefits from recreational fishing and take into account the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

A broad estimate indicates that the total amount required for recreational fishing management is in the order of \$44m at 1993 prices. Priority areas for additional funding include research, policy development, community education, resource monitoring, enhancement, enforcement, recreational fisher representation and further development of recreational fishing opportunities.

In a number of states recreational fishers already contribute directly towards managing the fisheries in which they participate, in line with a 'user pays' principle. It seems inevitable that recreational fishers will continue to contribute, as in most other sports and pastimes.

In many instances recreational fishers have been reluctant to contribute further towards the cost of management because they feel that these funds would not be used solely to benefit recreational fishing. Fishers have indicated that they are only prepared to support any extension of a user-pays system on the condition that:

- All levels of government acknowledge the contribution of recreational fishing to the economy and should provide assistance in line with their stewardship responsibilities.
- All funds raised should go into trusts dedicated to recreational fishing expenditure which cannot be diverted into consolidated revenue.
- Recreational fishers have a say in the allocation of funds raised under any user-pays system.

All governments have stewardship responsibilities in fisheries resource management. As governments contribute to programs concerning the environment, sports, health, tourism and economic development generally, they should also contribute to programs of benefit to recreational fishing.

In the light of the significant budgetary constraints facing all levels of government for the foreseeable future, each jurisdiction will determine its own priorities for implementation of actions following assessment of budget priorities.

Information

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Mr Brenden Mooney (Secretary) Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries & Energy	