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**Australian Recreational and Sport Fishing Industry  
Confederation  
(Recfish Australia)**

Submission to Senate Inquiry:

Environment Protection and Biodiversity

Conservation Amendment (Bioregional

Plans) Bill 2011

24 March 2011

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); West Australian Recreational & Sportfishing Council Inc (Recfishwest); Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing (TARFish); Victoria's Recreational Fishing Peak Body (VRFish); Freshwater Fishing and Stocking Assn of QLD (FFSAQ); Recreational Fishing Alliance of New South Wales (RFA). Affiliate Member: Professional Fishing Instructors and Guides Association (PFIGA)

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## **Committee Secretary**

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600 ec.sen@aph.gov.au

**Re: Submission to Senate Inquiry: Environment Protection and Biodiversity  
Conservation Amendment (Bioregional Plans) Bill 2011**

Dear Senators

This submission is in response to the Senate inquiry into the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bioregional Plans) Bill 2011.

It outlines the position of Recfish Australia and our concerns in relation to the governance and management of the national Marine Bioregional Planning process.

The Bill before you seeks to provide Parliament the right and obligation to review the current decision making process. Your review and deliberations of the efficacy of this Bill will go a long way toward restoring public and industry faith in the democratic process.

Recfish Australia is the Peak representative body for recreational fishers at the national level. We represent the views of the millions of Australian citizens who participate in the iconic activity of recreational fishing.

We would like to provide advice on the effects of this Bill on the recreational fishing industry and appeal to you to evaluate the objectives of this Bill within a framework that ensures that decisions affecting a vast number of Australian citizens are managed in a balanced and informed manner.

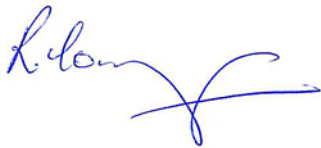
Recfish Australia asks that you also consider the social impacts, the health and wellbeing benefits of recreational fishing and the financial ramifications to the many small businesses that depend on the investment provided to their businesses by recreational fishers. Many regional and coastal towns are dependent on recreational

fishers for their financial existence.

Recfish Australia is prepared to work with any process that ensures appropriate scrutiny by our democratically elected representatives.

We request that you carefully examine the merits of this Bill and arrive at a deliberation based on the significant responsibility that is in the hands of our elected representatives.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Conway', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Russell Conway  
Chair  
Recfish Australia  
Marine House  
24 York Street  
South Melbourne  
Victoria 3205

## **SCOPE**

The scope of this submission will focus on the recreational fishing industry in Australia and the broader marine bioregional planning process.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this submission are to:

1. Respond to the Senate inquiry and outline the recreational fishing industry views on the bioregional planning process and its implications for recreational fishers;
2. Identify key issues resulting from the marine bioregional planning process, both short term and long term, that impact on the sustainable growth of recreational fishing;
3. Highlight important issues for recreational fishing and how they align with government priorities within Commonwealth waters.

## **BACKGROUND**

As the Bill's Explanatory Memorandum summarizes:

*The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Bioregional Plans) Bill 2011 seeks to remove the absolute power of the Minister with respect to bioregional plans and to provide Parliament the opportunity to oversight in the bioregional plan process.*

The delegation to any Minister of any matter is, broadly speaking, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government.

As the primary decision maker under the Act, key decisions made by the Environment Minister include:

- decisions relating to the assessment and approval of controlled actions;
- decisions relating to approval of strategic assessments and management plans;
- appointing members of advisory bodies established under the Act;
- listing threatened species and ecological communities;
- listing National Heritage and Commonwealth Heritage places; and
- approval of wildlife exports and associated management arrangements.

Ministerial decision making processes, especially in relation to the EPBC Act, have been criticized for a lack of effective public consultation.

There has been a historical perception that the decision making process utilised in the past has not been sufficiently transparent and has not effectively engaged with all stakeholders.

As recently as 2009, a Review of the EPBC Act Chaired by Dr Hawke concluded that transparency in decision making was lacking, vis:

*A key concern raised in public submissions was a perceived lack of transparency in decision making processes under the Act. (p230)*

Dr Hawke's Final Report contains 71 recommendations which are summarised into a reform package revolving around a nine point plan including:

*(8) Improve transparency in decision-making and provide greater access to the courts for public interest litigation (p III)*

Dr Hawke explains:

*Increasing awareness of environmental issues has meant that the public is more interested in environmental decision making and in having a say in protecting the environment. Environmental decisions generally affect the community in some way and therefore, including the public in the decision making process makes good sense and good governance. (p240)*

## THE RECREATIONAL FISHING INDUSTRY

Fishing benefits Australia in ways well beyond the value of commercial exports. Recreational Fishing deserves to be recognized for the societal benefits it provides - quality family time, healthy outdoor activities, lowering minor crimes and improving community health are some worth mentioning.

Recreational fishing is one of the few cross gender, cross-generational, cross cultural and cross-demographic activities enjoyed by Australians. All levels of family can participate together and all walks of life can enjoy this activity without fear or favour. It offers significant health and lifestyle advantages and is an iconic Australian pastime.

Recreational anglers place a far greater personal intrinsic value on fishing than the nominal value of the food caught. Research indicates that recreational anglers spend \$65 per kg on fish caught. Economists will understand that this represents a very high perceived value when compared with the same quantity of fish purchased as a retail commodity.

Recreational fishers understand that the sustainable management of our marine, coastal and estuarine environments should be developed with a focus on the ecosystem and its surrounding habitat.

However, recreational fishing is the only activity banned in all Marine Parks (sometimes also called Marine Protected Areas or Marine Reserves).

- *Boating is not banned or restricted*
- *Diving is not banned or restricted*
- *Snorkelling is not banned or restricted*
- *Human entry is not banned or restricted*
- *Walking on coral is not banned or restricted*



- *Anchoring on coral is not banned or restricted*
- *Commercial Shipping is not banned or restricted*
- *Oil tankers are not banned or restricted, in all marine parks.*

Recreational fishers are leaders in environmental stewardship. The reason for this is simple – the future health and sustainability of recreational fishing is contingent on clean, healthy and sustainable marine environments.

Recreational fishers have a wealth of knowledge and expertise on marine environments and management regimes across a range of diverse marine environments.

The scope of the recreational fishing industry includes:

- Many millions of recreational fishers in all Australian states and territories
- Fishing tackle retailers
- Fishing tackle producers / importers
- Bait providers
- Charter boat operators
- Accommodation suppliers
- Food and beverage suppliers
- Manufacturers of boats and components
- Suppliers of marine engines
- Marine tourism operators
- Clubs and user groups
- Educators, trainers and licensing providers
- Event managers and coordinators

Recreational fishers support sustainable and responsible policies and practices to ensure our marine environment remains a pristine and valuable asset for current and future generations to enjoy.

We have promoted the use of fish size and bag limits, coupled with limited fishing during breeding periods such as closed seasons to provide appropriate protection for our fish species and to ensure the continuation of sustainable recreational fishing for the future.

Unfortunately, some groups seem to hold the view that Australian families should be banned from responsibly interacting with our environment and that the traditional activity of recreational fishing should be outlawed.

Recfish Australia asks that you consider the social impacts and the health and wellbeing benefits of recreational fishing and also the financial ramifications to the many small businesses that depend on the investment provided by recreational fishers.

## **THE BENEFITS OF OPEN AND TRANSPARENT PLANNING PROCESSES**

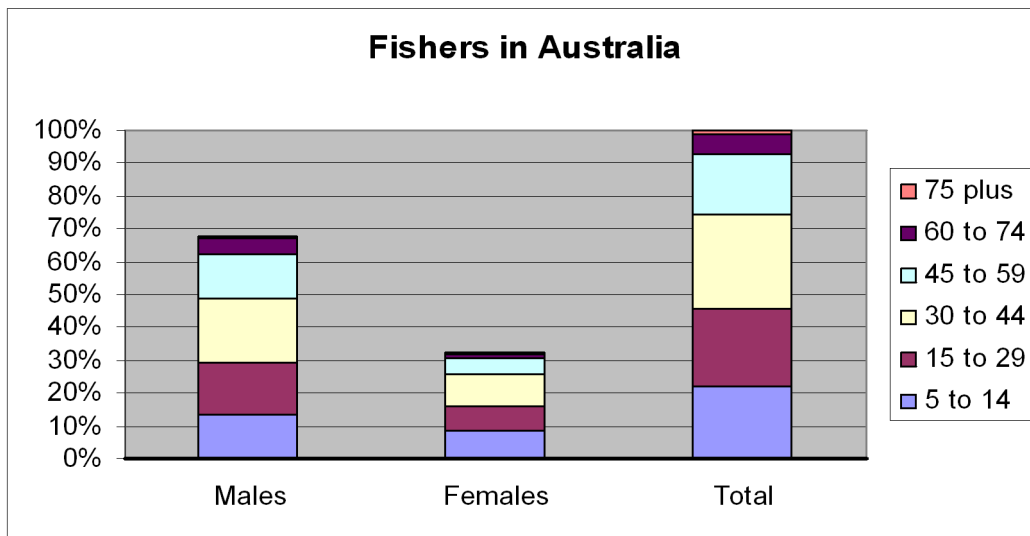
The benefits of an open, transparent and accountable process for the community include:

- Identification of compatible uses for development;
- Reduction of conflict among uses and users;
- Promotes efficient use of resources and space and reduces or eliminates impact on the environment;
- Establishes areas of importance or sensitivity and reduces risk of conflict with development;
- Enables biodiversity commitments to be at the heart of marine planning and management;
- Ensures space for biodiversity and nature conservation; and
- Provides context for an appropriate network of marine protected areas where a need and threats have been identified.

## Who goes fishing?

Recreational anglers are not just men over 45 - they are just 19% of all who go fishing.

- 20% of all Australians go fishing
- 32% of all anglers are Women
- 52% of all anglers are under 30.<sup>1</sup>

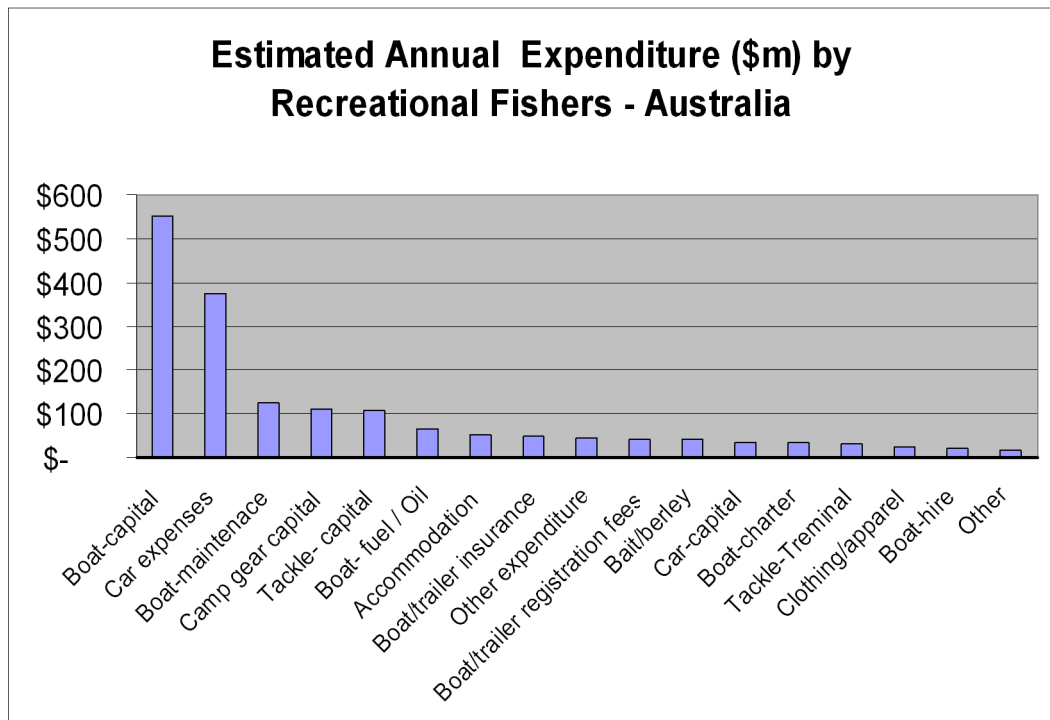


	<b>Males</b>	<b>% of pop</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>% of pop</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% of pop</b>
5 to 14	444,675	33.2%	289,026	22.8%	733,701	28.1%
15 to 29	547,232	27.0%	252,560	12.7%	799,792	19.9%
30 to 44	643,710	30.7%	319,824	14.9%	963,534	22.8%
45 to 59	448,380	25.9%	167,359	9.7%	615,739	17.8%
60 to 74	172,677	17.7%	46,628	4.5%	219,305	11.0%
75 plus	26,368	7.2%	4,549	0.9%	30,917	3.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,283,042</b>	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>1,079,946</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>3,362,988</b>	<b>19.5%</b>

Source: The National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey FRDC Project No. 99/158

## Why do people go fishing?





Source: The National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey FRDC Project No. 99/158