

DISCUSSION PAPER

Establishment of a Recreational Fishing Trust in Queensland

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Why?

Fish stocks and fish habitats are under considerable pressure in Queensland.

State controlled Commercial Fisheries in Queensland in 2004 comprised 1,669 commercial boats fishing 196,229 days taking 26,573 tonnes of wild fish with a value of about \$218m.

In addition about half of the active Commonwealth licensed tuna vessels on the east coast operate out of Queensland targeting yellow fin, big eye, swordfish, striped marlin and albacore.

Exotic pest fish and aquatic invaders, such as carp and tilapia are competing with native species.

Habitat destruction related to trawling, scalloping, dredging, coastal development and reclamation activities are causing destruction of mangroves, wetlands, mudflats, rocky reefs, marine vegetation, reed beds and aquatic plants (including seagrasses) and snags.

Water quality degradation, including agricultural run off with nutrient loads and pesticides, sewage outfalls, decreased water flows and obstruction to fish passage due to dam and barrage creation are posing serious treats to the marine ecology.

Environmental groups are seeking to lock up large parts of the marine environment from the public without considering alternatives such as recreational fishing havens where low impact recreational fishing could continue with improvements in the marine environment, useful information gathering and widespread community support.

Recreational fishers in Queensland number more than 700,000 taking about 8,500 tonnes of finfish, crabs and prawns per year.

With Queensland's population expected to rise from the current four million to six million by 2026, and to around seven to eight million by 2051, these pressures on our finite marine resources are likely to increase as time goes by.

Under medium series population projections by 2011 there will have been a doubling of population since 1976 and the population of QLD will have increased three fold by 2051. This population is likely to increasingly be concentrated on the coastal rather than inland portions of Queensland. By 2026 it is expected that 3.6 million people will live in S.E. Queensland alone.

How will this impact?

In the 2000 Recreational Survey for Queensland 24.7% of the population (0.79 million) over the age of 5 years fished at least once in the preceding year. In Queensland ,28.8% of households had at least one recreational fisher in them. In the twelve months prior to May 2001, there were a total of 4.65 million fisher days with each fisher fishing 5.78 days (5.77 million events or 25.48 million fishing hours).

Recreation fishers harvested:

- 12 million finfish
- 1.8 million small bait fish
- 1.2 million crabs and lobsters
- 24.4 million prawns and yabbies
- 61,000 squid, cuttlefish and octopus
- 1.1 million shellfish

Fishers spent an estimated \$320 million on fishing related equipment and activities – an average of \$407 per fisher.

45% of all fishing effort in Queensland was from a boat with over 160,000 boats being owned by recreational fishers.

With an increasing population in Queensland and with the bulk of this occurring in coastal regions it is not unreasonable to believe that there will be increasing pressure on Queensland's fisheries and fish habitats into the future.

We need to be planning as to how to cope with the needs of this population in respect to recreational Fishing and striving for an improvement in the fishing experiences and fishing opportunities available.

What is being done so far?

Queensland's DPI & Fisheries stated policy of following the principals of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) to manage the state's fisheries' resources has helped to bring about slow but much needed reforms particularly within parts of the commercial sector.

The ongoing development of management plans, amendments to existing regulations, development of fish stock monitoring and research as well as protection of fish habitat, marine plants and development of fishways are all significant goals to help achieve improved fishery management. Many would argue that we have not gone as far or as speedily as the situation requires.

Rationalisation of commercial trawl and line fish fisheries as well as changes in recreational size and bag limits have all been positive developments.

Why a Recreational Fishing Trust?

Recreational fishers aspire to more than just a declining percentage of a shrinking resource. Clearly given the history of decline in fisheries resources, recreational fishers wish to move to a situation in which there is recovery and improvement in recreational fishing opportunities, fish stocks and fish habitats. A recreational fishing trust would provide a funding vehicle to allow this to happen.

It provides a method whereby recreational fishers can pool resources to make a positive impact on their sport, their community and their environment.

What needs to be done?

Much needs to be done but a Recreational Fishing Trust would provide a funding source for

- Fish stocking and recovery programs
- Encouragement of fish tagging and release programs
- Development of recovery programs for benthic flora, sea bottom, coral and rocky reefs, seagrasses, while still maintaining low impact access for recreational fishers to these areas.
- Development of recreational fishing havens
- Development of artificial reefs
- Fish aggregating devices
- Communication and education programs including an 'only take what you need' program for table fish, and encouragement of a 'tag and release' ethos where it is appropriate.
- Grants program for specific programs
- Research activities
- Funding contributions for buy back of licenses from other sectors

What do Recreational Fishers pay already?

Recreational fishers already pay significant amounts in order to enjoy their sport.

The most direct of these is through the personal pleasure vessel levy which currently raises about \$3 million per year via a levy on private boat registrations.

The second is the Fresh water stock impoundment permits (currently one year \$35, concession \$31.50, or one week \$7.00).

Direct GST revenues to Government on Recreational Fishing activities and equipment such as tackle sales are estimated at \$32 million per year without factoring in multiplier effects within the economy.

There are significant tax imposts on the purchase of new pleasure boats as well as taxes on fuel, oil and other consumables.

In addition QLD anglers travelling to NSW and Victoria currently pay licence fees to fish in those states. This is particularly a problem for anglers in southern QLD border regions who have to pay a NSW fee to fish in their local area (a 50% concession applies in the tidal waters of the Tweed River). No such fees apply to interstate fisherman angling here.

Economic activity in Queensland related to recreational fishing has been estimated at around \$1 Billion dollars per year when factors such as accommodation, food, fishing related tourism and charters are included.

A policy which results in Improvements in fishing experiences through encouraging more robust fish stocks is likely to lead to increases in fishing activity and participation rates with subsequent flow on effects to the economy and subsequent increases in Government revenues. One only has to look to the success of the Northern Territories policy with regard to Barramundi sports fishing and the resulting tourism and other economic benefits that have flowed from that decision.

What are current Government Policies on Fisheries resource allocation?

The current Queensland policy document outlines 8 major principles, these are:

1. The ecological sustainability of fisheries resources and the ecosystems on which they depend is paramount.
2. Allocation decisions should be based on the best available ecological, economic and social information.
3. Any allocation changes should aim to maximise the benefits to the Queensland community. In doing this, the decision-making process needs to involve the community and seek wide ranging consultation in recognition of the fact that fisheries resources are owned by the community.
4. Allocation arrangements should be explicitly stated in terms of the sectors involved, the percentages of the total catch allocated to each and the allocation methods.
5. Allocations within a fishery sector should seek to avoid adverse changes to the relative positions of existing operations.
6. Where adjustments to fisheries resource access are required, market forces should be used to achieve this wherever practical. In practical terms the use of market forces could include the purchase of commercial catch quotas by other groups, recreational fishing fees, funding buy-out of commercial operators, or trade-offs between different user groups for access to specific areas, species or fishing methods.
7. If a fisheries resource is over-used and an overall reduction in access required to ensure sustainable either all extractive user groups should share equally in that reduction of access or a specific reallocation a proposal should be made.
8. Resource allocation adjustments should be open to scrutiny and should have a time frame sufficient for implantation of change.

What are the possible sources of funds for a Recreational Fishing Trust?

Since recreational fishers already contribute significant funds through GST, fuel taxes, PPV levies and a Freshwater stock impoundment fee to Government revenue, these are of course the first areas which should be examined as a source of funds.

However, given government's likely continuing tight budgeting constraints it is clear that these funds may not be made available by Government.

Possible additional sources of funds would include:

- An increase in the PPV levy
- Additional taxes on (?imported) fishing tackle sales
- The creation of a recreational fishing licence
- Private bequests and corporate funding

How would a Recreational Fishing Trust be set up?

A trust fund would be established which would be overseen by the Minister for Fisheries but controlled by a Recreational Fishing Trust Expenditure Committee. The membership of that committee would be largely recreational fishers whose nominations had been submitted to the Minister.

Money within the fund could only be expended for purposes authorised under legislation provided for under a section of the Fisheries Management Act to be enacted.

There would be paid into the Recreational Fishing Trust

- (a) All fees and charges as provided for by levies, licences, and charges provided for under the legislation
- (b) Any gift or bequest of money for the purposes of that fund
- (c) Any other monies appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of that fund or required by law to be paid into that fund.

There would be paid out of the fund, only:

- Costs of taking measures to enhance recreational fishing
- Costs of carrying out research into recreational fishing
- Costs of management and administration of recreational fishing
- Costs of consultative and educative arrangements for recreational fishing

Determination of budget and expenditure priorities would be provided by the panel of recreational fishers called the Recreational Fishing Trust Expenditure Committee.

There would be a report to Parliament annually on the application of monies in the trust and this would be included in the annual report of the department responsible to the Minister responsible for the administration of the Act.

Investment and auditing of funds would be the responsibility of the Minister, or as approved by the Treasurer.

The fund would be audited annually by the Auditor General.

If a recreational fishing licence were established what funds could be generated?

As an Example if annual fees were to be set at \$30 per year or \$10 for a one month short term licence, with a 25% discount for certain concession card holders, income might be expected to be

Full price	200,000 @	\$30
Concession	200,000 @	\$22.50
Short term	300,000 @	\$10
Total		\$13.5 million

Administration fees would be fixed to a maximum of 10% of monies received.

Distribution would be via registered agents (ie: tackle shops, chandlery, visitor bureaus) and online through Fishweb.

What is the experience in other states?

In NSW a Recreational Fishing trust has operated for a number of years. At its onset there was an interest free loan of \$20 million dollars from NSW treasury which allowed a significant buy back of commercial licences in areas that were seen to be important for recreational fishers. This loan is being progressively repaid by the trust.

Now when you're fishing in NSW waters, both freshwater and saltwater, you're required by law to pay the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee and have receipt for payment in your possession. This also applies when spear fishing, hand lining, hand gathering, trapping and bait collection and prawn netting or when in possession of fishing gear in, on or adjacent to waters. There are some [exemptions](#) listed below.

All money raised by the recreational fishing fee is placed into the Recreational Fishing Trusts and spent on [improving recreational fishing](#) in NSW.

You can pay the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee for three days (\$6), one month (\$12), a year (\$30) or three years (\$75) from:

- [fishing fee agents](#)
- [Online](#)
- By calling 1300 369 365
- [Touch Information Kiosks](#)

If you're planning to fish from a charter boat or go with a fishing guide, you may ask the operator if you're covered by their exemption certificate. If the operator has paid an annual fee, you may not need to pay your own fishing fee receipt. A 50 per cent concession applies to people who only fish in the tidal waters of the [Tweed River](#)

You need a NSW recreational fishing license to fish in fresh and salt water in NSW unless you are:

1. under the age of 18.
2. An adult assisting a person under the age of 18 to take a fish using a single rod or to take prawns using a single dip or scoop net.
3. A person fishing in a private dam with a surface area of two hectares or less.
4. An Aboriginal person fishing in freshwater; or, when fishing in saltwater, an Aboriginal person that is a party to a registered native title claim, or is taking part in a traditional cultural activity as a member of their local land council, or in the company of a member of the local land council.
5. The holder of:
 - current Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card issued by Centrelink
 - Current Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card issued by the Department of Veteran's Affairs.
 - Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Treatment Card endorsed "Totally and Permanently Incapacitated";
 - Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs Gold Treatment Card endorsed "Extreme Disablement Adjustment";
 - Letter from the Commonwealth Department of Veterans Affairs stating that the person receives a disability pension of 70 per cent or higher or an intermediate pension.

The NSW saltwater recreational fishing trust had income of around \$11.5 Million in 2005

These funds were used on

Coastal programs

- [Artificial Reefs](#)
- [Fisheries Officers](#)
- [Fish aggregating devices](#)
- [Recreational Fishing Havens](#)
- [Essential research](#)
- [Game fish tagging](#)
- [Communication and education](#)
- [Fishcare Volunteer Program](#)
- [Bondi Marine Discovery Centre](#)
- [Recreational fisheries management](#)
- [Fish habitat restoration](#)
- [Recreational fishing platform](#)
- [Small grants](#)
- [Committee Meeting Expenses](#)
- [Angel Rings](#)

Inland programs

- [Fisheries Officers](#)
- [Fish stocking](#)
- [Fish Stocking Fishery Management strategy](#)
- [Essential research](#)
- [Communication and education](#)
- [Fishcare Volunteer Program](#)
- [Fish habitat restoration](#)
- [Recreational fisheries management](#)
- [Cessation of the inland native fish commercial fishery](#)
- [Small grants](#)
- [Committee Meeting Expenses](#)

Shared Coastal and Inland programs

- [Recreational fishing fee administration](#)
- [Recreational Fishing Fisheries management strategy](#)
- [Recreational Fishing Workshops](#)