



FRASER COAST FISHING ALLIANCE

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MRAG

Attn Prof Glenn Hurry

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RE: Qld Fisheries Management Review

The Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance Incorporated would like to make a submission to the current Fisheries Management Review. The committee, and Minister, might already know that the Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance has taken keen interest in the management of fisheries in Qld and in particular the Fraser Coast region, and has for some years lobbied and made submissions on this subject.

A number of our members serve on other boards including Keep Australia Fishing (www.keeppaustraliafishing.com.au) and The Queensland Recreational Fishing Network where a wealth of other information on the issue affecting recreational fishing in our state can be found @ www.qrfn.org

The Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance thanks the current Fisheries Minister John McVeigh and commends him for been the first Agriculture, Fishery and Forestry Minister to initiate a full review of Queensland's Fisheries Management. The Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance believes this is of the utmost importance and applauds the actions to date concerning this matter.

The Fraser Coast is the second most important recreational fishing area in Queensland with Morton Bay deemed the most significant in the state.

The fabulous fishing found across the Fraser Coast has a lot to do with its geographic location, offering a truly unique variety of both warm and cool water species side by side. Having world heritage-listed Fraser Island on its door step is another one of its great assets. Stretching over 120 kilometres in length and 5 to 25 kilometres in width, Fraser Island is the world's largest sand island, and provides some of the best beach & rock fishing in our state.

Hervey Bay and the Great Sandy Straights offer some of the most diverse fishing opportunities in the country with more fish diversity than the Great Barrier Reef. The clear shallow sand flats along the Western side of Fraser Island truly offer world class fly and sport fishing opportunities. Nowhere else in the world can you sight fish to juvenile black marlin on the flats in only metres of pristine clear waters.



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The Mary River contains the southernmost strain of “wild” barramundi in the country. The Fraser Coast has the genuine potential of being a recreational fishing mecca if managed in favour of recreational fishing. Brisbane’s domestic and international airport is a comfortable 3 - 4 hour drive from the Fraser Coast which is also supported by regular interstate jet services to Hervey Bay from Australia’s capital cities.

Visitor Expenditure generated through Recreational Fishing in the Fraser Coast equates to approximately \$39 million per annum. It is important to note that this figure is based on visitors only, and it does not take into account the value generated by recreational fishing by keen fisherman who reside within the Fraser Coast - this figure would be significant.

The figure of \$39 million is compiled by the International Visitor Survey (IVS) and the National Visitor Survey (NVS) which is collated by Tourism Research Australia. This data is then distributed to the State Tourism Organisations and then distributed to the regional tourism organisations such as Fraser Coast opportunities.

Through the Fraser Coast Destination Tourism Plan, it is estimated that if the Fraser Coast is to increase its share of the Queensland Recreational Fishing Market by 8% by the year 2020, the value of visitor expenditure generated purely through recreational fishing would equate to approximately \$107 million per annum by the year 2020. Again this does not include local expenditure – purely visiting anglers.

For too long Fisheries Policy has been amended at the hands of personal interest with short term profit being the major driver, with a complete disregard for an effective and sustainable fishery. Immediate action is necessary for the sake of a successful future in tourism and diverse recreational fishing found across the Fraser Coast to be present for forth coming generations.

The information contained herein is compiled by the Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance representing the views of our members and associated recreational fishing public on the Fraser Coast. Although some content may be out of MRAGS official ‘Scope’ the following issues cannot be ignored as the issues must be considered **‘relevant to the review’**. MRAG supports marine park designations and their intended use and the Great Sandy Marine Park “anomaly” must be corrected as our natural asset is being unacceptably misused and in some instances distressed for the benefit of a few.

Priority recommendations of the Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance:

1. Removing commercial netting from all Yellow Conservation Park Zones in the Great Sandy Marine Park – How this is allowed to continue astonishes all recreational fishers and scientists



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who are aware of the situation. This practice is grossly detached from World's Best Practice and the intended use of such zones.

2. Create significant Recreational only Fishing Areas (ROFAs) or Net Free Areas should be introduced near population centres. These areas must be large enough for the major inshore species to complete their lifecycle free of commercial netting for the WHOLE lifecycle.
3. Coastal gill netting effort must be zoned to operate on a regional basis.
4. Mackerel to be line caught only.
5. Net endorsements to be further reduced beyond the current buy-back
6. Introduction of recreational fishing licences to be adopted with ALL funds from the licensing to be controlled by a 'Trust Fund'. Guidelines provided by QRFN (attached) are followed.
7. The netting of aggregations of pre-spawning, spawning and flood-affected fish should be prohibited.
8. Management decisions affecting recreational fishing should be based on sound scientific, ecological, social and economic information.
9. Compliance needs to be stepped up substantially and those many operators with a string of breaches should lose their permits permanently. Serial and serious non-compliance should NOT be tolerated.
10. Do not legislate for the commercial industry to prosper at the demise of recreational fishers. Recreational fishing is worth a significantly larger estimated value than the professional fishing sector when it comes to the Inshore Fishery (approximately 20 times the GVP of the commercial inshore net sector). The estimated value of recreational fishing on the Fraser Coast alone [as at December 2011] is: \$203,812,337 [made up of \$66,962,378 per year going fishing and visiting recreational fishers spending \$136,849,959 on accommodation] PLUS an additional \$177,965,336 of capital equipment.

Reference-

[Extrapolated using population and tourism growth from ABS 2011] Murphy I. 2001. *Hervey Bay and the Great Sandy Strait: Spending Habits of Recreational Fishermen and Their Contribution to the Economy. Survey in Hervey Bay and Great Sandy Strait region June 2000 – January 2000*

It is grossly unfair for the commercial sector to earn the vast majority of its gross income from the rest of the oceanic resources, whilst at the same time having priority use and the unfair advantage of apparatus and no catch restrictions that currently exist in the inshore fishery to the detriment of the major user, the recreational fishers.

11. Ensure recreational and traditional fishers have reasonable access to the resource.
12. M.S.C. Accreditation of commercially caught seafood to be Standard in QLD.
13. Coral Trout TACC to be reduced significantly.
14. Crab endorsements to be reduced significantly.
15. Trawled latency to be removed.
16. All latent Licences no longer transferable.
17. Phase out any hiring out or sub-contracting of net symbols or netting operations.



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18. An independent review should be undertaken of the landing and reporting systems for commercial catches and recommendations made for an improvement which would reduce the opportunities available to operate in a dishonest manner.
19. ANY commercial buyback MUST ensure that participants cannot re-enter the fishery, as has been possible and has happened in every such process to date.

Facts relating to The Great Sandy Marine Park:

1. The Fraser Coast contains more fish diversity than the entire Great Barrier Reef being a crossover zone between tropical and temperate waters. It is recognised as the most southern limit for Wild Barramundi on the East Coast of Australia.

Reference:

- Burnett Mary Regional Group for Natural Resource Management 2014. *The Great Sandy Biosphere*

2. The Great Sandy Marine Park is the ONLY marine park in Australia, possibly the world that allows unrestricted commercial gill-netting to take place in Conservation Zones.
3. Not only is this happening in a World Heritage listed area, it is also happening in a declared RAMSAR Site, a dugong protection area, a major turtle ecosystem, including the recent declaration in the Great Sandy Biosphere.
4. In the Fraser Coast region, catch rates for anglers have dropped from 7.8 fish landed per person per trip in 1986 to 0.81 fish per person per trip in 2003. This is the most current research but concerns are that this decline continues even further today.

Reference:

- Moore N. 1986 *Recreational fishing in Hervey Bay and Great Sandy Strait*. QDPI Information series
- Murphy I. 2003. *2003 Creel Survey. A 'Snapshot' of Recreational Fishers and Their Catches in the Hervey Bay Region, Queensland, between January and May, 2003.*

5. There are NO fish species commercially caught in the Great Sandy Strait that cannot be sourced outside of the conservation zones.
6. The Fraser Coast is the second most important recreational fishing area in QLD after Morton Bay and is located within a 4-hour drive of the whole South East Queensland region.

Reference:

- Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry 2010. *State Wide Recreational Fishing Survey.*

7. In 2009 the Great Sandy Region was awarded Biosphere Reserve status by UNESCO, the global organisation that also awards World Heritage Listings.

This decision gives worldwide recognition to both the Fraser Coast and Cooloola Regions, and the Wide Bay Burnett Coastline, putting us in the same class as the Galapagos Islands, the Central Amazon, the Everglades and Uluru.

The concept of the UNESCO's Biospheres program is to **PROTECT** natural resources while using them at the same time.

8. DPI&F data shows many local netting operations are not economically viable.



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Reference:

- Switala J. and Taylor Moore N. August 1999. *Queensland's Commercial Fishing Fleet. Licence Packages. Fleet Structure and Fishing Port Activities 1996-97.*

9. Only a small number of operators would be impacted with the removal of commercial gill netting in the Great Sandy Marine Park.

Reference:

- Switala J. and Taylor Moore N. August 1999. *Queensland's Commercial Fishing Fleet. Licence Packages. Fleet Structure and Fishing Port Activities 1996-97.*

10. The economic multiplier of improved recreational fishing participation will create many more jobs in the community – compared to the Professional Sector and would have less impact on fish stocks.

11. Anglers cannot compete with 600 metres of net. Therefore areas must be set aside for recreational fishing.

12. The introduction of a recreational fishing licence would be supported if the funds were to be controlled by a Trust Account and aid in sustainable fishing for future generations.

13. Species such as, but not limited to: Barramundi Permit (snub-nose dart), Bonefish, Golden Trevally, Herring, Queen Fish, Threadfin Salmon, Tarpon and Milk Fish should be recommended as recreational only species as these species have significant value to the recreational sector with little to no value within the commercial sector. (A third world country like Belize recognises their value and ability to attract international sports-fishers).

Reference:

- Fedler Anthony J. And Hayes Craig 2008 *Economic Impact of Recreational Fishing for Bonefish, Permit and Tarpon in Belize for 2007*

14. The total East QLD inshore commercial gill net catch value is less than 5% of QLD's recreational fishery value, and about 10% of the total commercial catch.

Reference:

- Qld Department of Employment Economic Development and Innovation 2011. *Review of commercial Fishing in the East Coast Inshore Finfish Fishery.*
- Department of Environment and Primary Industries. *Economic Study of Recreational Fishing in Victoria 2008-2009.*
- Murphy I. 2001. *Hervey Bay and the Great Sandy Strait: Spending Habits of Recreational Fishermen and Their Contribution to the Economy. Survey in Hervey Bay and Great Sandy Strait region June 2000 – January 2000*
- Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics [ABARE] 2013. *Australian Fisheries Statistics*

15. Low Tide Netting of inshore flats off Fraser Island and surrounding areas. The fish drain off into the channels and the nets block off the channels, the outcome is obvious. This practice of netting also results in prime sport-fish such as golden trevally, bonefish, and snub-nosed dart being caught as by-catch. The majority of this so-called 'by-catch' obtains the value of cat-food at the fish market yet has a significantly higher value to the recreational sector.

16. Recreational fishers and government should share the responsibility and costs of managing and enhancing recreational fishing.

17. Fish resource allocation should be based on providing an optimal range of social, economic and cultural benefits to the community.



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In closing, The Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance Incorporated believes that the core and fundamental quality that is missing from the fishery of Queensland is stock abundance. We believe that the virgin bio-masses of multiple commercial species and by catch species have been systematically depleted, some more severely than others. At very least acknowledgement must be made that serious depletion exists at regional locations, particularly areas close to commercial harbours.

We strongly believe that the great majority of the depletion must be attributed to over allocation of licences/endorsements and heavy commercial fishing practices over decades. To highlight that as factual we note that there has been multiple buy backs, investment warnings and TACC's implemented. These were driven by the fishing industry itself as a direct consequence of failing catch and failing economic returns.

We believe that this has caused serious social problems that have led to the reduced participation and interest of recreational fishers in Qld and the demise of most fishing clubs. We also believe that this depletion restricts recreational fishing tourism opportunities to the detriment of the regional operators, regional support industries and to the state itself.

The social importance of fisheries management must not be underestimated. It is imperative that modern fisheries management be operated under the over-riding mantra of 'environmentally sustainable, economically viable and socially acceptable'. The days of 'tonnes and taxes growth' management directions must, without question, be put behind us.

Clinton Osborne

Secretary

Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance