



Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC)
Submission to
Tasmanian Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy

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Email: recfishingstrategy@dpiwwe.tas.gov.au

About TSIC

The Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC) is the peak body for the Tasmanian seafood industry. TSIC represents the interests of approximately 500 individual wild catch fishers, 70 marine farm businesses and 60 seafood processing businesses. These members produce \$1.182 billion GVP value, \$1.150 GVA, directly employs 3,410 FTEs and indirectly employs 5,393 FTEs (8,803 total) and contributes \$597 million to household income¹.

A Shared Marine Resource

TSIC acknowledges that Tasmania's marine resources are shared between the commercial, recreational, and indigenous sectors.

TSIC acknowledges the importance of the recreational and indigenous fishing sectors to the Tasmanian culture and way of life. It is not TSICs objective to eliminate recreational fishing, but instead find an acceptable balance between commercial, recreational, and indigenous opportunity and contribution to Tasmania. To do this, it is important to understand how each sector currently contributions to Tasmania.

The Commercial Sector

Tasmanian commercial fishers and marine farmers (TSIC members) have statutory fishing/water rights, granted through licences and quotas, that entitle access to a community owned resource. In Tasmania, there are approximately 500 individuals with the appropriate licence to commercially fish, with many employing a deckhand to support fishing operations; 70 marine farm businesses who farm 166 marine farm leases; and 60 businesses with seafood processing licences. These commercial operators directly employ 3,410 FTEs and indirectly employ a further 5,393 FTEs (8,803 FTE total). These operators and their employees derive a livelihood from this access. From this livelihood, they support families and the regional communities they live in.

In broad terms, the Tasmanian commercial seafood sector provides three very important returns to the Tasmanian community.

1. Economic Return to Tasmania.

The Tasmanian commercial seafood sector contributes \$1 billion GVP; \$1.15 billion GVA; and \$597 million to household income in Tasmania². With majority of Tasmanian seafood being exported to mainland or international markets, this provides new export dollar income to the Tasmanian economy. It is this new export money that helps stimulate economic growth in Tasmania. This new export dollar has considerable reach into regional communities.

The Tasmanian commercial seafood industry also contributes to recirculated money within the Tasmanian community, which contributes to the local multiplier effect, especially in regional communities.

2. Employment

Fishing and aquaculture was responsible for the direct employment of around 2,987 FTEs and the processing sector created employment of around 423 FTEs state-wide. Flow-on business activity was estimated to generate a further 5,393 FTEs state-wide. The total employment contribution in TAS was estimated to be 8,803 fte jobs³.

¹Australian Fisheries and Aquaculture Industry 2017/18: Economic Contributions Estimates Report, BDO EconSearch

²Australian Fisheries and Aquaculture Industry 2017/18: Economic Contributions Estimates Report, BDO EconSearch

³ Australian Fisheries and Aquaculture Industry 2017/18: Economic Contributions Estimates Report, BDO EconSearch

3. Food on the Table

The commercial seafood sector provides food on the table for Tasmanian's and tourists alike. Without a commercial seafood sector, Tasmanian seafood would not be available in the wholesale, retail, or food service sectors, and instead, Tasmanian's and visitors to Tasmania would be reliant on imported seafood.

The Recreational Fishing Sector

The Tasmanian community have recreational access rights to fish, with a need for a licence for some high value species and gear types.

The most recent IMAS recreational fishing survey report shows that 106,000 Tasmanians, or 1 in 4 people aged 5 or over (1 in 5 total population), recreationally fished during 2017/18. To gain a better understanding of recreational fishing effort in Tasmania, it is important to break this figure down.

- 64% (almost 68,000 people) fished 5 times or less in the 12-month period
- 20% (21,000 people) accounted for 55% of all recreational fishing effort
- 10% (10,600 people) accounted for 34% of all recreational fishing effort
- Less than 10,000 people fished 15 or more days per year.

These figures show that a small number of avid fishers contribute disproportionately to total recreational fishing effort.

The Tasmanian recreational fishing sector also contributes provides an important contribution to Tasmania, but in a different way to the commercial sector.

1. Economic Return to Tasmania.

Recreational fishers have other forms of employment, hence do not rely on catching seafood for a livelihood, to support their families or to directly live and support the community they live in. The recreational fishing sector, however, does recirculate their income on fishing pursuits and activities. This provides important support to Tasmanian businesses and jobs, especially in regional communities. This recirculated spending, however, does not support economic growth for Tasmania.

2. Employment

Recreational fishing activities do not directly contribute to employment in Tasmania. However, redistribution of money spent through recreational fishing activities (i.e. fishing gear from Tasmanian shops (not online), fuel, accommodation, rates on shacks etc) provides significant support for employment, especially in regional communities.

3. Food on the Table

Recreational fishing activities provide food on the table for those who fish, and their broader family and friend network. Recreational fishing provides regular food on the table for a relatively small number of Tasmanian's (less than 10,000 Tasmanian's fished 15 or more days per year).

Indigenous Fishing Sector

The Tasmanian indigenous community have the right to take marine species for personal use under the rules and regulations of the recreational fishery, at no cost.

Indigenous peoples or organisations can also apply for a permit to take marine resources for cultural activities.

Both access rights provide important cultural links to the marine environment.

It is also important to acknowledge ongoing discussions about future indigenous access and what this might look like.

Tasmanian Recreational Fishing Strategy

In acknowledging indigenous access rights, this submission focuses on the recreational access and the discussion paper provided as part of the Tasmanian Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy. It is important to note that this strategy must also consider and acknowledge current and future indigenous access rights.

Recreational fishing contributes to the removal of marine resources, and in some instances, it plays a significant part in this extraction. Therefore, the government and recreational fishers have a responsibility to take ownership of the often-significant impact of their activities on marine resources, and be prepared to make a meaningful contribution to the long-term sustainability of Tasmania's marine resources.

TSIC does not advocate the Tasmanian Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy to generate a commercial seafood 'bashing' report. Furthermore, TSIC does not advocate the Tasmanian Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy as a mechanism to indiscriminately remove sustainable commercial fishing effort in the interest of increasing recreational fishing opportunity, as this would ultimately disadvantage the broader Tasmanian population, and specifically the regional communities which rely on the commercial seafood industry. Notably:

- Removal of commercial seafood effort would take new export money away from Tasmania's economy and regional communities, which would greatly impact Tasmania's economic growth.
- Removal of commercial seafood activities will reduce employment opportunity in regional communities. Seafood workers would need to retrain, and more than likely move out of regional communities to secure new employment.
- The removal of commercial seafood operations will reduce the amount of locally sourced seafood available for the 4 out of 5 Tasmanian's who do not recreationally fish; the 64% of recreational fishers who fish less than 5 times per year; and visitors (tourists) to Tasmania. Instead, there would be an increased reliance on imported seafood. This would have negative outcomes for Brand Tasmania and the clean, green, fresh produced and provenance branding of Tasmania.

As previously stated, a small number (less than 20,000 Tasmanian's) account for majority of recreational fishing effort, and less than 10,000 Tasmanian's recreationally fish more than 15 times per year. These avid fishers, however, are politically and socially very loud. It is disappointing that some of this component of the recreational fishing sector cannot see or understand the considerable benefits provided by the commercial seafood sector. It is even more disappointing that this small cohort is actively attempting to use the Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy as a commercial seafood 'bashing' opportunity, with the key objective to eliminate or greatly reduced commercial access in favour of recreational access.

TSIC hopes that the Tasmanian Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy can capture the majority recreational fisher perspective to drive future recreational fishing opportunity (i.e. those who fish for 5 or less days per year). And more importantly, TSIC hopes that the Tasmanian Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy can find the right evidence-based balance to provide long term sustainable seafood opportunity for the commercial and recreational fishing sectors.

Discussion paper responses

The following are specific TSIC comments related to the key outcomes and questions outlined in the Tasmanian Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy Report.

Outcome 1: Valuing recreational sea fishing

1. Recognising the social and economic importance of recreational fishing in management decisions

How should the social and economic values of recreational fishing be considered in overall fisheries management?

Social and economic values should be considered in the overall management of our marine resources. This must be completed in a balanced manner and include the social and economic values of the commercial seafood sector, as well as the social and economic values of the broader Tasmanian community (i.e. those who do not recreationally fish).

It is also important to note that comparisons of the social and economic value of recreational and commercial sectors is inherently difficult and has regularly resulted in an 'apples' vs 'pears' comparison. This is particularly the case when commercial economic value is reported as Gross Value of Production and social values are simply ignored; and recreational economic value includes an unrealistic \$ value being placed on wellbeing and fishing spend, amongst more.

It is important to acknowledge that the recreational and commercial sectors both make a very important (but different) contribution to the social and economic values of.

Any other comments about this initiative?

TSIC does not support the sole allocation of new species to the recreational fishing sector.

TSIC does not support the establishment of recreational only fishing areas as a foundational management tool for sustainability. TSIC is open to discussion on what recreational only areas may look like, the magnitude of areas, locations etc. This may come with a discussion around the establishment of commercial only fishing areas.

TSIC believes that the importance of recreational fishing is well considered when managing fish stocks and fishing areas, sometime to the detriment of the commercial fishing sector and fish stocks. For examples, in 2020-21 the commercial rock lobster sector bore a 15-tonne reduction in their cap allocation to compensate for recreational over-catch.

2. Research into the social and economic contributions of recreational fishers

What sort of recreational fishing information do you think we need over the next 10 years?

Collection of recreational fishing data needs to consider the ready availability of technology to collect and transfer catch information to government and science. TSIC supports the mandatory collection and transfer to the Government of catch data for all recreational catch. This could be achieved through a phone app.

Mandatory collection of recreational catch would provide the spatial and temporal data on recreational take to best manage Tasmania's marine resources. TSIC does not believe that this requirement would be overly intrusive to a recreational fishing activity and believe that majority of recreational fishers would support such a proposal.

If the Government goes down this data collection strategy it will be important to report back to the recreational fishing sector.

Outcome 2: Involving the community in fisheries management

1. Involving fishers more in managing fisheries, including taking responsibility to protect them

The Tasmanian recreational and commercial fishing community have equal opportunity to contribute to fisheries management– i.e. Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee; TARFish representation; direct representation to the Minister; public consultation processes etc.

As with the commercial fishing sector, just because you don't like, agree or understand a decision doesn't mean you did not have opportunity to be involved.

2. Involving fishers more in citizen science programs

Any data used from a citizen science program must be robust, and the methodologies peer reviewed.

Outcome 3: Making it easier for people to go fishing

1. Program support to make fishing more accessible

What programs would you like to see implemented to make fishing more accessible?

Any promotion or strategies to increase recreational fishing effort must acknowledge increased recreational take. With many recreational target species already needing attention, government must implement appropriate management to constrain any increased take because of increased participation / recreational fishing effort.

2. Making fishing easier by changing group fishing rules

TSIC does not support the inclusion of 'group fishing rules' for species such as scallops and rock lobster.

3. Targeted promotion of Tasmania as a fishing tourism destination, and charter fishing

What actions are needed to promote sea fishing to tourists?

Fishing tourism is best accommodated through controlled and regulated charter activities. TSIC recommends the establishment of a non-Tasmanian sea fishing licence for interstate / international tourists. This should be at a higher rate than local costs, on par with inland fisheries and National Parks fees.

What actions are needed to support the charter fishery?

TSIC has for some time advocated for a regulated fishing / seafood charter sector, as these businesses are financially benefiting from Tasmania's marine resources. TSIC recommends the following:

- Establishment of a Seafood Charter Licence, inclusive of renewal fee to increase contribution to the management of Tasmania's marine resources.
- Establishment of a Seafood Charter Management Plan to better regulate this growing sector. This would include separate (non-recreational) catch limits and controls on some fishing activities.
- Establishment of mandatory daily logbook / reporting requirements for this sector.

4. Enabling fishing access through providing and improving facilities

What types of facilities would improve access and where?

TSIC notes that MAST hold the jurisdiction for boat ramps, jetties and other fishing facilities in Tasmania and must be included in any discussions around this topic.

TSIC further notes that improved and or increased accessibility will bring increased recreational (and commercial) fishing effort.

What actions do you think should be undertaken in relation to FADs and artificial reefs?

TSIC supports the further exploration of artificial reefs as a habitat to promote and support fish nursery habitats.

Like FADS, any structure that promotes the aggregation of fish – and fishing effort – would need careful monitoring and potential fishing restrictions to reduce localised depletion / excess fishing effort.

Outcome 4: Promoting responsible recreational fishing

It is important that the recreational sector is aware of and abide by the recreational fishing rules. Recreational fishing rules are readily accessible online.

Compliance and enforcement of the rules is a different problem and requires consideration. Any increased recreational fishing effort will require increased resourcing for and on ground surveillance by Tasmania Police

Improved communication of all (commercial and recreational) measures taken to improve sustainability should also be communicated to the recreational sector. This would improve the general knowledge and understanding of the measures / contribution of the commercial sector to sustainability.

Outcome 5: Ensuring the long-term sustainability of fish stocks and habitats

TSIC supports the mandatory requirement for recreational fishers to log and report their catch to DPIPWE and Fisheries

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Harrington', with a long, sweeping underline.

Julian Harrington
Chief Executive