



MARINE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE

LICENSING RECREATIONAL FISHING

Why is the Productivity Commission recommending that all marine recreational fishers be licensed by state and territory governments?

Recreational fishing is a much-loved pastime for millions of Australians and generates significant social and economic benefits. It is important that these benefits be preserved for future generations.

Population growth and the rising sophistication and affordability of scanning technology and vessels have increased recreational fishers' ability to fish further offshore and more intensively. In some fisheries, the recreational catch of some species is estimated to rival or exceed commercial catch. For example, in Tasmania the recreational harvest of flathead has been estimated as almost six times the commercial take.

To ensure fishing is sustainable and controls over activity are proportionate (neither too loose to 'bite' or unnecessarily stringent), recreational fishing needs to be better counted. Currently, we do not know how participation in recreational fishing is changing, how much people are catching and how highly recreational fishing is valued — although in some coastal communities, recreational fishing is becoming more important than commercial fishing.

A major task for governments is to improve the recreational fishing knowledge base so that good management decisions can be made — including on how access to fisheries should be shared and what additional services or facilities should be provided for fishers.

A better system for managing recreational fishing starts with a well-designed licensing system. The Commission is recommending that licensing not be used to prevent the opportunity to fish but to ensure that recreational fishing is sustainable and counted in management decisions. While some states already have licensing systems in place, these could be improved to collect more information and better manage sustainability risks.

Features of good licensing arrangements

The Commission has proposed that state and territory governments put in place a licensing system that best meets their social, economic, and management goals for recreational fishing.

[MORE]



The Commission envisages the following.

- Licencing for all marine recreational fishing will be introduced within the next three years.
- Every recreational fisher will need a licence to fish in marine waters, but licences will be available at a low (nominal) cost for the vast majority of fishers. Licencing systems should have comprehensive coverage to primarily provide information for management, not raise revenue.
- Licences will be easy to obtain — available online and at local service centres (such as tackle stores).
- There will be a choice between different periods (and fees) for licences such as three day, weekly, monthly or annual licenses.
- State and territory governments, where practical, may use licences to limit catch in fisheries where a species is in danger of being over-fished – for example, through caps on the number of licenses issued or higher license fees. This will be an alternative to more stringent management controls, such as total area bans.
- Licensing will provide better data on the location and number of recreational fishers, which will support evidence-based management decisions and highlight areas for research.
- Licensing will provide a basis for better targeting new or enhanced services and facilities (such as boat ramps and cleaning tables) for recreational fishing.

To learn more and/or have a say

The Productivity Commission welcomes feedback on the draft report, *Marine Fisheries and Aquaculture*. The report is available on the inquiry website www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/fisheries-aquaculture#draft

You can make a written submission, preferably in electronic format, by 14 October 2016. Information on how to send a submission can be found on the inquiry website www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/fisheries-aquaculture/make-submission#lodge

If you prefer to provide a less formal response, you can tell the Commission what you think, via a brief comment on the inquiry website <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/fisheries-aquaculture/comment>

Public hearings will be held in early October. Information on hearing dates and locations will be available on the inquiry website. The final report will be prepared after public hearings and further submissions have been received, and will be provided to the Australian Government by the end of December 2016.

[END]