



Rationale for proposed management actions for Black bream (*Acanthopagrus butcheri*) in the Lakes and Coorong Fishery

Position

1. RecFish SA agrees that Black bream (*Acanthopagrus butcheri*) are overfished in the Coorong and that management actions which aim to reduce fishing pressure must be implemented to ensure that the Black bream stock biomass does not decline further and recovers to sustainable levels.
2. It is believed that the management options presented in the 'paper' are not adequate for the protection and recovery of the Black bream population in the Coorong.
3. The following actions are proposed for the Black bream fishery.
 - a. A closed season for Black bream be introduced in the Coorong. This should apply to both the recreational and commercial sectors, for the period September 1 to November 30.
 - b. The Black bream recreational bag limit be reduced from 10 to 2 until stocks recover. Once recovered to agreed levels, the bag limit should then be raised to 5.
 - c. Permanently remove the use of large mesh nets from fishing blocks 6, 7 and 8 of the Coorong to prevent targeted and untargeted capture of Black bream.
4. Additional measures
 - d. Remove Black bream from the commercial fishery permissible species list and allocate the species entirely to the recreational and indigenous sectors.
 - e. The minimum size limit for Mulloway in the Lakes and Coorong fishery be increased to 82 cm and that the commercial fishery adjust gear accordingly to prevent the bycatch of Black bream.

Rationale

5. The recreational sector does not dispute that the Black bream resource is overfished and we wish to play a role in its recovery by accepting a closed season for the capture of Black bream and an 80% reduction in recreational bag limit.
6. The stock status of Black bream requires that all sectors which exploit this resource play a role in aiding in its recovery and ultimately in achieving the objectives of the Fisheries Act (2007).
7. Management actions used over the term of the fishery have been ineffective in preventing the decline of this once prolific species.
8. It is agreed that freshwater flows play a critical role in the status of Black bream populations in the Coorong but that this is no reason for not taking affirmative action to address the issue of overfishing.
9. Previous high abundances of Black bream in the fishery (as evidenced by high commercial



catches) are closely associated with high flows in the River Murray. The failure of Black bream stocks to recover after high flows between 1989 and 1993, is a strong indicator that this species is recruitment overfished and that insufficient breeding stock remain to facilitate recovery of the fishery.

10. The equal shares (approx.) of the Black bream resource allocated to the commercial and recreational sectors require that management actions should achieve a proportional (equal) catch reduction in each of these sectors.
11. The use of large mesh nets to target mulloway (*Argyrosomus japonicus*) in block 8 of the Coorong appears to have the greatest impact on Black bream. Subsequently, measures must be implemented which effectively reduce the use of large mesh nets in this area.
12. The commercial value of the Black bream fishery is \$29,000 annually and comprises a very minor proportion of the fishery. This provides an opportunity for Black bream to be removed from the commercial permissible species list and allocated to the recreational sector and the environment. Compensation costs for these losses to the commercial sector are likely to be relatively minor.