



Making SA a Great Place to Fish Again



A Better Recreational Fishing Initiative

Background Paper
October 2017

Preface

Making South Australia a Great Place to Fish Again; presents a series of strategic initiatives that we believe will improve the quality of fishing for the 277,000 South Australians that fish every year and the many thousands of visitors that come to our great state to dangle a line. These initiatives have been formulated by RecFish SA in response to extensive contact with the states grassroots recreational fishers over many years who are demanding that government recognises the economic, social and wellbeing benefits of the recreational sector by doing more to improve fish stocks and the quality of fishing in SA. The suite of initiatives presented in this document also align to *A Better Future or Recreational Fishing in South Australia; Recreational Fishing Strategic Plan 2014-2018* released by RecFish SA in 2014.



Executive Summary

For many South Australians recreational fishing is a very important part of their quality of life and the existence of many towns and settlements located along the coast and inland waterways of SA depends primarily on the economic and social contribution made by recreational fishing; many of these towns would simply not survive without recreational fishing. It is therefore important that government adequately recognises the needs of the 16% of the public that make up the recreational fishing community and commits to initiatives that will protect, promote and develop sustainable, accessible, enjoyable and safe fishing for the benefit of the whole community.

South Australia is a good place to fish but it can be much better. Declining fish stocks and progressively less areas to fish mean it is becoming more difficult and more expensive for South Australia's 277,000 recreational anglers to catch a feed of fish. The thousands of jobs that are supported by recreational fishing and the lifestyles of hundreds of thousands of South Australians are at risk if we continue to ignore the great opportunities that are on offer to SA by investing in recreational fishing.

Making SA a Great Place to Fish Again presents a suite of issues and actions that government must take to improve recreational fishing in this state.

Better Fisheries for All

Actions

- Restructuring the Marine Scale and Lakes & Coorong Fisheries.
- Net Free GSV (Gulf St Vincent)
- Removing netting from Area A of the Coorong
- Implementing World's Best Practice fisheries management by implementing quota management in the Marine Scale and Lakes & Coorong fisheries.
- Removing the use of nets and long lines for popular recreational fishing species.
- Undertaking a comprehensive review of the allocation of key fish stocks between the recreational and commercial sectors.

Havens for Recreational Fishing

Actions

- A network of recreational fishing havens across SA.

More Great Places to Fish

Actions

- Improving Boat Ramps and Jetties.
- Opening More Reservoirs and Freshwater Fisheries.
- Developing Urban Fisheries.
- Supporting Put and Take Fisheries Through Long Term Commitments to Stocking Programs.



- More Fishing Reefs and Fish Attraction Devices (FAD's).

Recreational Fishers Working for the Environment

Actions

- Greater government and community support for fish habitat and flow restoration projects.
- Properly funded and supported Murray cod stocking program in the River Murray.

An Investment in SA

Actions

- A comprehensive and rigorous survey of recreational fishing in SA that measures the level of participation and the economic and social value it delivers to the state.
- Significant increases in government funding for managing and developing recreational fishing in SA.
- Greater funding support for RecFish SA as the Peak Body for recreational fishing in SA.

Recreational Fishing Grant Program

Actions

- Government Commitment to the Continuation of The Recreational Fishing Grants Program to Empower Communities in Improving Recreational Fishing in their Regions.

Making South Australia, A Great Place to Fish, means

- healthier and more sustainable fish stocks,
- the management and development of recreational fishing is community driven,
- increased economic development opportunities for regional small business,
- increased social and environmental benefits for SA,
- a greater diversity of high quality fishing opportunities for South Australians,
- greater investment in fishing locally rather than travelling interstate,
- greater interstate and international recognition of SA because of the quality of its fishing and,
- that the South Australian Government acknowledges and respects the wants and needs of the states 277,000 recreational fishers.



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Who are Recreational Fishers?

Recreational fishers are overwhelmingly represented amongst the many that call our great state home and those that visit once and get drawn back time after time. They are the families that might wander down to Grange Jetty on a beautiful summers evening to catch a Yellowfin whiting or a Blue crab or the couples spending a weekend together on KI. They are also the great mates that pack the 4WD and get away for a week-long adventure to the wilderness and seclusion of the states West Coast in the hope of catching that once in a lifetime monster mulloway. The old bloke with his dog, sitting in his tinny in the shade of a sprawling Red gum on the Murray, he's a recreational fisher as well. Tourists aboard the many houseboats; yatchies, caravaners, farmers, truckies, school kids, doctors, tradies and everyone in-between are all united by the love of fishing. There are no boundaries to their pursuits, it's enjoyed by new and old Australian's alike, all religions, all abilities, and all classes! They're your family, your mates and your work colleagues; they live across the road, stand next to you at the footy and pass you in the street.

All up, there are almost 300,000 South Australians that wet a line every year, spending hundreds of millions of dollars at the hotels, pubs, petrol stations, caravan parks, boat yards and tackle shops across the state. Perhaps no other group better represents the diversity and fabric of South Australian society.

Better Fisheries for All

Actions

- Restructuring the Marine Scale and Lakes & Coorong Fisheries.
- Net Free GSV (Gulf St Vincent)
- Removing netting from Area A of the Coorong
- Implementing World's Best Practice fisheries management by implementing quota management in the Marine Scale and Lakes & Coorong fisheries.
- Removing the use of nets and long lines for popular recreational fishing species.
- Undertaking a comprehensive review of the allocation of key fish stocks between the recreational and commercial sectors.

Recreational fishing is a great pastime for all South Australians to enjoy, and the social and economic value of a recreationally caught fish far outweighs the value of that same fish caught in a commercial net. Commercial netting and longlining leaves local areas depleted of fish thereby ruining the chances for families to enjoy a feed of fish. The amount of fish that can be caught in nets and on long lines by commercial fishers is uncapped, which has resulted in overfishing. Consequently, the populations of key recreational species such as King George whiting, Snapper, Mulloway, Squid and Garfish continue to decline. This can be addressed through a comprehensive restructure of the commercial Marine Scale Fishery and the Lakes and Coorong Fishery so that they deliver optimum benefit to the South Australian community. Restructuring these fisheries should aim to eliminate reduce latent and substantially reduce active effort. Latent effort poses a serious threat to fish stocks by allowing fishing effort to be activated at any time in response to economic factors such as higher market prices. Further reducing real effort and catch and implementing a quota management system in these fisheries means that those fishers that remain in the fishery will be more profitable and will continue to supply locally caught fish to consumers.

Restructuring these fisheries should also include the removal of nets and longlines for some species so that fish stocks will remain recover and local communities will not feel the impact of the localised depletion of fish stocks on their favourite fishing ground. Line fishing for King George whiting, Snapper and Squid will remain as commercial practices as they have less impact on recreational fishing and fish stocks while still supplying local demand for fresh high-quality seafood. Individually hooked fish caught by commercial fishers are preferred by consumers as they are handled better thus providing higher quality product to the market and non-target species are less likely to be captured or killed.

A comprehensive review of the shares of key fish stocks between the recreational and commercial sectors is necessary to ensure that recreational fishers have adequate access to popular recreational species and that fisheries resources are managed for the optimum benefit of the community. It is believed that the number of people that purchase fresh fish from local fisheries is similar to the number of recreational fishers in SA yet, the allocation of shares is greatly skewed towards commercial fishers. Supplying fresh fish to SA consumers is very important but it must not come at the expense of recreational fishing. While the overall health of fish stocks will remain the number one priority for recreational fishers, it is believed that the currently allocated shares of species such as Snapper, King George whiting, Garfish, Australian herring, Blue crab and Mulloway do not adequately reflect optimum use of the resource as required under the Objects of *South Australian Fisheries Management Act 2007*.

Net Free Gulf St. Vincent (GSV)

Because most people fish in the waters of Gulf St Vincent, a Net Free GSV is a priority Recreational Fishing Haven initiative that must be implemented. For many years South Australians have envied the progressive moves to remove high impact industrial commercial fishing practices from places across Australia like Port Philip Bay, Darwin Harbor, Sydney Harbor and now Moreton Bay, while the health and vitality of Gulf St Vincent as a recreational fishing location continues to decline.

Net Free GSV means no netting or long lining in the waters of Gulf St. Vincent and adequate protection of inshore waters from commercial crabbing. The phasing out of these commercial practices that impact on recreational fishing access and the health of fish stocks will significantly improve opportunities for local and visiting anglers and will bring SA in-line with the rest of the nation by prioritising recreational fishing and fish stocks in designated areas.

Coorong Recreational Fishing Haven

Like Net Free GSV, establishing a priority Recreational Fishing Haven in the Coorong between Goolwa and Long Point means more opportunities for South Australians and tourists. Already internationally recognised, the Coorong will become an even better place to visit and to fish by removing netting and allowing fish stocks like Mulloway and Black bream to recover and flourish. But this doesn't mean that consumers won't be able to still have a feed of the famous Coorong mullet which will continue to be supplied to the market from the south lagoon. It will also mean that fishing and tourist boats can safely navigate the confined waters of the Coorong instead of getting tangled in the myriad of nets that are often strewn through the area.

Upper Spencer Gulf

Over 50,000 people that live in Whyalla, Port Augusta and Port Pirie and surrounding areas go fishing regularly in the waters of the Upper Spencer Gulf but are seeing more area lost to fishing and less fish in their waters. The recent increase to the minimum size limit of King George whiting to 32 cms also

means that catching a feed of these favourite fish is fast becoming a thing of the past. Enhancing recreational fishing opportunities by establishing recreational fishing havens in this region makes good sense. Better fish stocks will mean greater economic and social benefits for the region and may even see the return of the famous Whyalla Snapper Championships which for decades attracted hundreds of anglers each year from all over Australia but which sadly has ceased due to poor catches. Returning Whyalla's status as the Snapper capital of Australia is crucial and establishing recreational fishing havens in the region will contribute to achieving this.

Havens for Recreational Fishing

Actions

- A network of recreational fishing havens across SA.

Recreational Fishing Havens provide better angling opportunities for recreational fishers by removing competition with certain commercial fishers and improving fish stocks. Because there are more fish available, recreational fishing havens also promote tourism and create employment in local areas because anglers know they can visit a location and catch a feed of fish. Properly implemented Recreational Fishing Havens provide a focus for investment in facilities and infrastructure to support recreational fishing which supports economic growth in regional areas.

Recreational Fishing Havens mean that high impact commercial fishing practices such as long-lining and netting for popular recreational species are removed but local markets are still supplied with fresh fish from other less intrusive methods like commercial hook fishing, which means better quality product for consumers and less impact on non-target species.

A network of recreational fishing havens across South Australia sends a strong message to the rest of Australia and the world that the South Australian government takes recreational fishing seriously and considers it to be vitally important to regional communities across the state.

More Great Places to Fish

Actions

- Improving Boat Ramps and Jetties.
- Opening More Reservoirs and Freshwater Fisheries.
- Developing Urban Fisheries.
- Supporting Put and Take Fisheries Through Long Term Commitments to Stocking Programs.
- More Fishing Reefs and Fish Attraction Devices (FAD's).

SA has many great places to fish, from the legendary Locks Well salmon beach on the Eyre Peninsula to Cooper Creek; Marion Bay to the Mighty Murray and from KI to the Glenelg River; but there is so much more we can do. Improving access to some of the state's best fishing spots will encourage participation and provide opportunities for fishers from all parts of society to experience some of the truly great places we have in SA.

Upgrading and maintaining boat ramps will mean safer and easier access to some of the best fishing areas in the state. Better ramps also mean that many thousands more interstate fishers will visit SA to sample our fishing, which is great for our state economy.

Opening more reservoirs to recreational fishing means more great places to fish and diversifies opportunities for local and visiting anglers. Reservoirs are great places to fish because they are accessible and safe for families, school kids, the elderly and those that are physiologically impaired. There are also great opportunities to develop more freshwater fisheries in the Mt Lofty Ranges, Mid-North and the South-East which will stimulate tourism and relieve some of the pressure on stressed marine fish stocks.

Developing urban fisheries in the many water bodies distributed across greater Adelaide creates an alternative for many children to experience an unstructured and healthy outdoor activity. Urban fisheries mean that South Australians who live locally can enjoy a day's fishing with their families in the safety and convenience of their home environment. Mawson Lakes, West Lakes, the Port, Onkaparinga and Torrens rivers and Thorndon Park Reservoir are just a few of the places that can be developed as urban fisheries. Developing small urban and freshwater fisheries requires that these places contain healthy stocks of fish that are attractive to fishers which can be caught and replenished; these are called Put and Take fisheries. Put and Take Fisheries have been developed in many countries and are particularly popular where there is high fishing pressure on wild stocks or where stocks are unable to sustain populations through natural breeding.

Dedicated recreational fishing reefs and appropriately managed Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) are great initiatives that help support the development and management of recreational fishing. Windara Reef near Rogues Point in SA and the NSW FADs program shows that establishing similar facilities across the state will receive popular support from recreational fishers.

Recreational Fishers Working for the Environment

Key Initiatives

- Greater government and community support for fish habitat and flow restoration projects.
- Properly funded and supported Murray cod stocking program in the River Murray.

South Australia's recreational fishers care about our fisheries and the environments that they rely upon and have been at the forefront of many successful aquatic natural resource management projects. Creating Windara Reef - Australia's largest native oyster reef at Rogues Point in Gulf St. Vincent and restocking the River Murray with the mighty Murray cod were ideas driven by recreational fishers and now we're working together to restore fish habitat in the Onkaparinga River and West Lakes. Recreational fishers believe in putting something back and support the principle of passing on an environment that can provide quality fishing experiences to our children. Therefore, we are calling on government to commit more resources to managing and restoring fish habitat in both the marine and freshwater environments so that we can improve fish stocks.

RecFish SA strongly supports initiatives to restore critical environmental flows and habitat in the River Murray to improve the health of native fish stocks and believe that recreational fishers have much to offer in this area. We will continue to work with organisations like The Nature Conservancy, OzFish



Unlimited, Natural Resource Management Boards and local government on environmental projects that mean better recreational fishing for South Australians.

Many South Australian recreational fishers travel to NSW and Victoria to catch a Murray cod where state governments strongly support Murray cod restocking programs and consider the fishery to be of immense environmental, social and economic benefit. Establishing a properly funded and implemented community program to stock Murray cod into the River Murray in SA is essential to restoring populations of this iconic species and creating a vibrant recreational fishery.

An Investment in SA

Actions

- A comprehensive and rigorous survey of recreational fishing in SA that measures the level of participation and the economic and social value it delivers to the state.
- Significant increases in government funding for managing and developing recreational fishing in SA.
- Greater funding support for RecFish SA as the Peak Body for recreational fishing in SA.

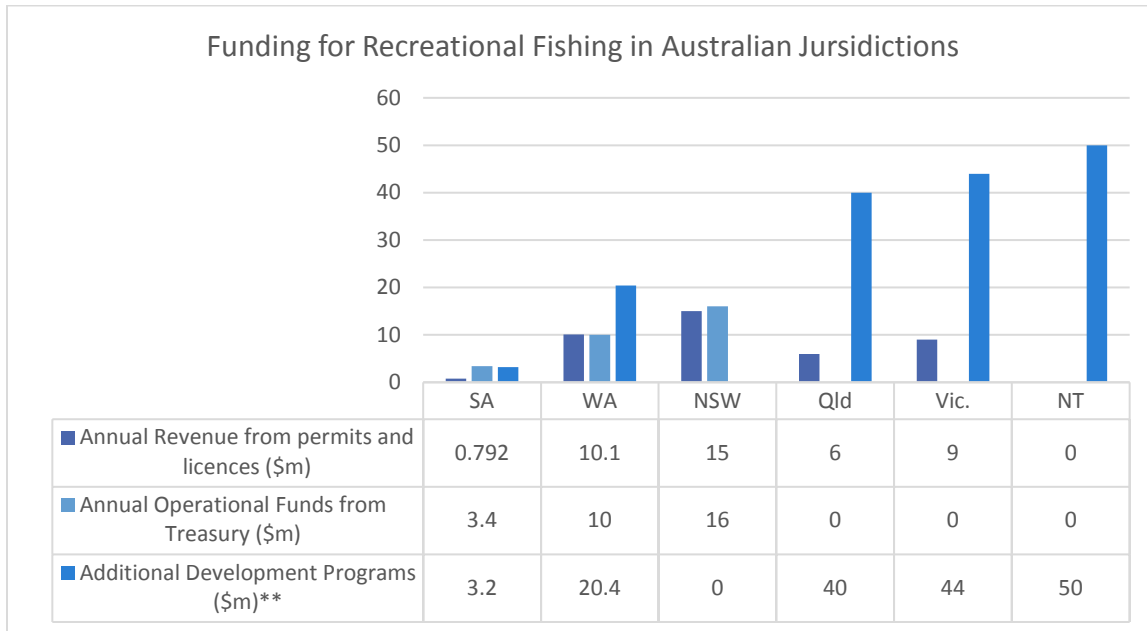
Making South Australia a Great Place to Fish, recognises that the responsible management of recreational fishing is vitally important to our health and wellbeing and while environmental sustainability concerns should be at the forefront of management decisions, the understanding of the amenity and social value of fishing is critical in developing robust management responses. RecFish SA believes there is insufficient recognition or promotion of the social and economic benefits of recreational fishing and more focus should be made to understand and articulate what recreational fishing means to the lifestyle of South Australians.

Recreational fishers invest heavily in SA through the taxes they pay on gear and supplies (>\$35 million annually) and directly through the investment they make through the purchase of recreational rock lobster pot licences (\$792,000 annually) and boat registrations (\$3.2 million annually). Yet, annual direct government funding for the management of recreational fishing in SA is only \$3.4 million. Clearly, this level of investment by government demonstrates that the value of recreational fishing to our economy is not recognised and funding is nowhere near adequate to support further development of the sector.

The last reliable survey of the value of recreational fishing estimated that South Australian anglers spent over \$350 million annually in their pursuit and had invested over \$1.2 billion in boats and other equipment for recreational fishing (Henry & Lyle, 2001). But this information is outdated and therefore it is critical that a comprehensive and rigorous survey is undertaken to better understand the current levels of participation in recreational fishing and the economic and social value it delivers to the state. Collecting this information means that governments and the community will recognise just how valuable recreational fishing is to the South Australian lifestyle and why it must be fostered and developed.

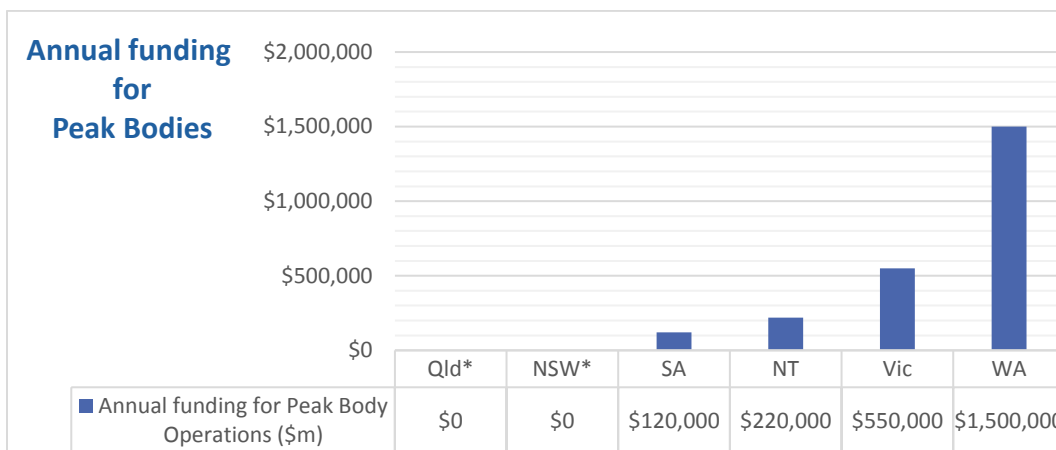


How does investment in recreational fishing in SA compare to other states of Australia?



0 = unknown, ** over 4 years. Note, does not include income from boat registrations or licences.

The exciting and productive initiatives that have been advocated in this document will of course cost money; no industry can grow without investment. It is clear by the significant ongoing investment in recreational fishing in other States and territories that the benefits of recreational fishing are well understood across the rest of Australia. The Peak community bodies which represent recreational fishers and play a leading role in developing recreational fishing are respected by government and substantially funded for the critical services they provide, unlike South Australia.



* unknown

Healthier fish stocks based on better habitat, fish stocking programs, better boat ramps, jetties and breakwaters and sensible fisheries management that acknowledges the immense value of recreational fishing, are all actions that can be delivered by government in achieving its mandate to invest in SA. Making SA a Great Place to Fish means that South Australia will be able to compete against other states



as the best place to fish in Australia and will become more widely recognised on the massive international fishing market.

Ultimately, the recreational fishing community in South Australia should play a vital part in guiding government on how the management and development of their sector can be funded. With appropriate government support, a Citizens Jury can be convened to deliberate the issue and compel government to implement the preferred means of funding recreational fishing.

Recreational Fishing Grant Program

Actions

- Government Commitment to the Continuation of The Recreational Fishing Grants Program to Empower Communities in Improving Recreational Fishing in their Regions.

The Recreational Fishing Grant Program (RFGP) is a great success story that has committed \$2 million to empowering local communities to undertake projects that improve recreational fishing in their local area. Thanks to the RFGP and in particular, the fantastic commitment of local communities...

- hundreds of children and families have been fishing for the first time;
- Warren and Bundaleer Reservoirs and the River Murray have been stocked with hundreds of thousands of native fish for the benefit of anglers;
- hundreds of thousands of Murray cod are being released into the River Murray;
- fishers can get shelter from the sun or the rain on the Elliston and Beachport jetties and;
- cleaning your days catch can be done in the safety and convenience of a dedicated fish cleaning station, plus much more.

Continuing the RFGP is critical to fostering collaboration between South Australian communities and the government in managing and developing recreational fishing at a local, regional and state level.

