

# **Australian Anglers Association WA Branch (AAAWA)**

**Application to the Minister in Response to the changes required  
in Fishing from Boats**



## FOREWORD

The Australian Anglers Association WA Branch (AAAWA) compliment the Minister on his effective stance and pro-active planning on working towards sustainability and good fishing practices within the West Coast Bioregion.

The AAWA works very closely as the governing body for the 28 Angling Clubs from Esperance to areas of the Pilbara that are members of the association; we ensure that a fishing code of conduct is maintained throughout our community.

We feel very proud that we have assisted in providing guidance to all its associated members, and have proactively encouraged fishing for the future programs.

We certainly have assisted the Fisheries Research team by providing access to all of our competitions and clubs, encouraging the clubs to provide the information that at times can be seen as being detrimental to the recreational fisherperson, but understand that the research is the only way forward, ensuring that the future of the communities resource is correctly managed

The AAWA has assured its members that you have our future in your hands and with our support will endeavor to make it a sustainable industry.

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### **REFERENCES**

Recommended Changes to recreational Fishing of Vulnerable Iconic Fish (Ministerial Position Paper)

Creel survey data, 2005/2006 (Neil Sumner)

Recfishwest

Mandurah Offshore Fishing and Sailing Club

Surf Casters & Angling Club

Offshore Angling Club Beach Branch

Fremantle Amateur Angling Club

Marmion Angling & Aquatic Club

Ocean Reef Sea Sports Club

Quinn's Rock Angling Club

Melville Amateur Angling Club

General Boating Public

FMP-228

Divers of West Coast Bioregion

Lancelin Angling and Aquatic Club

Offshore Angling Club Boating Branch

Hillary's Yacht Club

## Executive Summary of Australian Anglers Associations Position on Recommendations

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
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Licenses, for Anglers fishing from Boats
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Supported.

This will allow the real research to be formulated rather than taking the number of boats registered, and multiplying by an unknown figure and coming up with 630,000 odd anglers fishing for Demersal fish

<b>Recommendation 2</b>
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Competitions (Club and Open)
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Competitions run by Clubs for there members are supported and recommended as all clubs do provide rules and follow the AAA code of conduct.

<b>Recommendation 4</b>
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Boat Limits
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This is not supported by the AAAWA

<b>Recommendation 5</b>
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That a seasonal restriction that prohibits the take of Category 1 or High risk species
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AAAWA Supports all Demersal fish, not just Vulnerable Iconic, need to be part of the closure, and more research is needed, to confirm requirements.

<b>Recommendation 6</b>
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Increased Size Limits
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AAAWA Supports this so long as there is “good” scientific research to support the increases.

<b>Recommendation 7</b>
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Closed Seasons
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Not supported, in its current proposal.

<b>Recommendation 8</b>
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Area Closures
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AAAWA would not support the creation of any large scale closed areas

## Summary of Australian Anglers Associations Position on Recommendations clubs that gave written feedback

### **Recommendation 1**

Licenses, for Anglers fishing from Boats

Supported.

This will allow the real research to be formulated rather than taking the number of boats registered, and multiplying by an unknown figure and coming up with 630,000 odd anglers fishing for Demersal fish

### **Comments**

**MAAC** the MAAC agrees with this and feels all boat fisherman will require them.

**LAAC** Agree, but the definition of who needs a license needs to be defined. Just “fishing from boats” is too broad. Since the purpose of this whole debate is the protection of the 5 “Iconic” species then only those Anglers likely to catch same need to be licensed. E.g. I can go out to the Whiting patch with no chance of catching an iconic due to the rig being used but I am still fishing from a boat. How this idea is refined is up to the powers that be.

**ORSSC** Supported, subject to the following:

1. License revenue is for the sole purpose of Fisheries research, additional compliance and additional facilities.
2. The license fee is a nominal amount, largely for the purpose of measuring fishing effort.

Rationale: The recreational boat angler is already faced with significant costs, however there is benefit in a system that allows greater information on fishing effort, rather than the present method of using assumptions based on numbers of registered boats.

### **MOFSC**

**OSAC Boating** Agree with AAA comments/Supported. We believe that Licenses should be introduced for ALL fisher persons and not use simply ‘Boat registrations’ as a means to estimate number of Anglers. Licenses for Anglers should be introduced in the same manner as the ‘Skippers Recreational Ticket’ that is, a phased process over a reasonable period of education by the Government and at a NIL fee. Appointed persons from the Department of Infrastructure should be proactive to ensure that all Anglers are licensed to give a better balanced view to the number of anglers that fish from boats rather than a skewed reference at present as many individuals own more than one boat.

**QRFC** NOT SUPPORTED. We certainly pay enough in tax’s and with the purchases of wants over needs in various tackle creates a great tackle turnover. In the Nursery Industry we pay a pot levy of 8 cent per pot that goes to research and development. When we open our wallets now it already is full of required licenses for various needs in work and recreational.

**HYC** Licenses for Anglers fishing from boats. NOT SUPPORTED

In principal, no we do not support. (Unanimous). Questions raised were, - how could it be realistically policed? How much is a license going to cost? What will be the penalties for non compliance? What about during the kid’s holidays, or when visitors are over, when Dad’s take the kids out or the visitors, are they going to have to apply for a license, will there be a short term license etc.? If there are 8 people on a boat and its checked, and there are say eight rods and only four licenses on board, how is it ascertained that 4 onboard have not been fishing?

Are the objectives of this proposal realistic?

<b>Recommendation 2</b>
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Competitions (Club and Open)
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Competitions run by Clubs for their members are supported and recommended as all clubs do provide rules and follow the AAA code of conduct.

Events run by Clubs for the Public need to be assessed

**Comments**

**MAAC** the MAAC is presently reviewing their Bluewater classic comp. we have had one meeting with the minister and are proceeding with this year's event, but subsequent comps will more than likely have a revised format or the comp may even be cancelled depending on outcomes of meetings to be held after this year's event.

**LAAC** Strongly agree. (try THEIR members; you know me).

**ORSSC** ORSSC has been operating a sustainable species based fishing competition for their members for over 20 years, in recognition of the need to fish for the future. This method only allows 1 of each species to be weighed. ORSSC supports the view that these styles of competitions, whether for club members or the public, have a minimal impact on fish stocks, as they promote variety rather than quantity or weight.

Rationale: The recreational impact to high risk species of fishing competitions is minimal. There is merit in ensuring that large public events are spread evenly over the calendar year, but avoiding January which is believed to be the peak spawning period for vulnerable species. Note, at this stage there are no public events during this period.

**MOFSC**

**OSAC Boating** Agree with AAA comments. Open events run by Clubs need to follow current best practices/codes of conduct ie strictly a species based fishing competitions and on a self regulated basis.

**QRFC** Supported, Clubs are very important to help educate catch care, release, companionship for safety etc.

**HYC** Competitions .....Supported. (Unanimous)

<b>Recommendation 3</b>
Further Cuts to Fishing limits

Not Supported

**Comments**

**MAAC** not supported. The MAAC is still advocating for the high risk species to be given there own category and the bag limit being increased to 4 high risk and 3 category one species.

**LAAC** Agree also. It should be pointed out that recreational anglers have been reduced from 8 Dhufish down to the current limit of 2 over the years. The same goes for other species. All this whilst the Professional sector had open slather.

**ORSSC** Not Supported.

Rationale: The recreational bag limits have already been significantly reduced, to the point where even the unlikely event of an angler achieving the bag limit, the total catch could not be deemed excessive. This current bag limit, if caught by an angler once a month (which might be average for a keen angler), would only barely sustain a typical family. Any further reduction will make recreational fishing unsustainable, with the flow on negative effects to the economy (tackle shops, boat dealers etc).

**MOFSC**

**OSAC Boating** Agree with AAA comments. Further cuts NOT supported. WA already has one of the most controlled practices across Australia.

**QRFC** Not supported. There is a strong possibility that there will then be unnecessary fish sacrifices and less care factor. We have seen an increase in species like Pink Snapper since the professionals have had their restrictions put on them

**HYC** Further Cuts to Fishing Limits.....NOT SUPPORTED (unanimous) The members were interested to know what the further cuts might be.

<b>Recommendation 4</b>
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Boat Limits
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This is not supported by the AAAWA as members have social events and have large boats to take out those members not physically capable or financially capable, of having their own vessel, and do enjoy the camaraderie, of like minded members of clubs, also some members have purchased larger boats to allow the friendship to flow on to all members when more are able to enjoy the thrills of fishing from comfortable vessels.

**Comments**

**MAAC** not supported. we believe there should be 3 people bag limits per vessel for various reasons.

**LAAC** Agree. Such a provision only adds another layer of complexity and for the vast majority of Anglers it is almost irrelevant.

**ORSSC** Not Supported.

Rationale: This rule is having the reverse impact than was desired. Many boats put to sea with 3 or 4 anglers. What is occurring now is that more boats are putting to sea, with only 2 anglers each, which is increasing the fishing effort.

Statistics from the ORSSC support this, given that boats with two anglers almost always out fish boats with greater than 2 anglers. In addition, whereas it was common for boats to have a junior with 2 adults, this is now rarely occurring, which is limiting the opportunities for juniors to participate in a healthy activity. This rule is not having the desired effect, and is negatively impacting the social and recreational value of fishing.

**MOFSC**

**OSAC Boating** Agree with AAA comments. Boat Limits NOT supported. Current Boat limits are very discriminatory against persons who wish to fish from their own boat. Individuals who have purchased a boat generally have worked very hard to afford and upkeep as a personal reward for their effort.

**QRFC** Not supported. Anglers won't take out friends and fellow club people and so there will be an increase in boats and anglers. They will try to encourage boat owners that don't normally fish to go due to the increase in people looking for a berth if not able to buy their own boat.

**HYC** Boat Limits. .... NOT SUPPORTED (unanimous)

## **Recommendation 5**

That a seasonal restriction that prohibits the take of Category 1 or High risk species

AAAWA Supports all Demersal fish, not just Vulnerable Iconic, need to be part of the closure, majority of clubs recommends this.

AAAWA accept that seasonal closures are a useful and necessary tool for protecting these fish species without truly addressing the issue of sustainability. Seasonal closures should incorporate two important points, namely restricting access when the fish are most vulnerable (in this case, the peak spawning periods) and reducing access when angling activity is at its peak. Particularly for Dhufish, January is a period of aggregation for spawning and when they are most vulnerable and are easily targeted. Any seasonal restriction should have maximum efficiency and its sole consideration should be the protection of the fish, not the protection of people's ability to fish over a holiday period.

AAAWA does not agree that the proposed general closed season should apply to shore based fishers. Dhufish can be caught from the shore in the vicinity of the S-Bend, pink snapper are taken from a variety of shore based locations in the West coast bioregion, and blue groper are sometimes caught from rocks in the south west. Such catches are insignificant, mostly incidental and are no threat to the sustainability of the vulnerable species of fish, but are a significant achievement and bonus for shore based fishermen.

Any perceived compliance issues could be covered by allowing a shore based combined daily limit of 1 or 2 of these specific highest risk category 1 Demersal fish.

Pink snapper spawning closures in Cockburn Sound could still exclude land based catches because the reasons and benefits are obvious.

AAAWA Recommends another option to allow fishing on weekends and public holidays only during the seasonal restrictions.

### **Comments**

**MAAC** Not supported.

**LAAC** Nothing I can add to what has been proposed.

**ORSSC** Not Supported.

Rationale: ORSSC would rather support closures of known spawning aggregation (ie Cockburn Sound for Pink Snapper, Wedge for Dhufish). There is no evidence in our Club to suggest that catches of high risk species are any greater or less during spawning periods.

**MOFSC**

**OSAC Boating** Agree in principal to most points raised however as a 'Boat fishing Club' we believe it would be unfair and discriminatory against Boat anglers for shore based Anglers not to be included in the seasonal closures for any of the high risk Iconic fish species. One rule for all should apply for ALL Anglers. More scientific evidence needed to support closures for spawning grounds and proven times in the year as has established with the closures for Pink Snapper in the Shark Bay region and Cockburn Sound areas. No such evidence can be said that exists for WA Dhufish, Baldchin Groper, Blue Groper, Breaksea Cod etc

**QRFC** As above (AAA W.A recommendations)

**HYC** The members agreed that seasonal closures are necessary.

The members also agreed that the general closed season should not apply to shore based anglers, but there should be a strict compliance limit for the high risk category fish for shore based anglers, and they all agreed that Cockburn Sound should still exclude shore based anglers during the closed season.

The AAWA recommendation for the option to allow fishing on weekends and public holidays only during the seasonal restrictions was supported by a show of hands of 13 out of the 20 members present.

<b>Recommendation 6</b>
Increased Size Limits

**Comments**

**MAAC** The MAAC has no problem with increased size limits.

**LAAC** Nothing I can add to what has been proposed.

**ORSSC** Supported, subject to scientific analysis of the benefit of an increased size limit.

Rationale: Future focused clubs, like ORSSC, have already put in place size limits greater than the regulations, where warranted. This has been occurring for almost 20 years. This has only occurred for species where there is anecdotal evidence of a high survival rate of released fish. In addition, the current bag limits and our club rules already discourage excessive fishing of a particular species. Increasing the size limit will result in increased fishing effort.

**MOFSC**

**OSAC Boating** Increased size limits NOT supported. As a Club we would not like to see another size limit increase. Current increased size limit should be sufficient to allow normal /best practices breeding for all species however this position would be reviewed should sufficient factual scientific evidence be proven to the contrary and made Public.

**QRFC** We feel the current Minimum size limits are more than adequate and no further adjustments are required. Some species don't go back and the depth of water is also a factor.

**HYC** Increased Size Limits ..... NOT SUPPORTED

<b>Recommendation 7</b>
Closed Seasons

**Comments**

**MAAC** not supported.

**LAAC** Nothing I can add to what has been proposed.

**ORSSC** Same as 5. Not Supported.

Rationale: ORSSC would rather support closures of known spawning aggregation (ie Cockburn Sound for Pink Snapper, Wedge for Dhufish). There is no evidence in our Club to suggest that catches of high risk species are any greater or less during spawning periods.

**MOFSC**

**OSAC Boating** Closed seasons NOT supported. Unlike scientific evidence and research for Pink Snapper, to our knowledge NO scientific evidence exists (or has been made public), to support closed seasons for specific spawning times for the high risk iconic fish species.

**QRFC** We feel stronger about closed areas as opposed to seasons, There are known areas for eg. Dhufish spawning to protect these areas during the breeding season.

**HYC** Closed seasons.

The general consensus was that the present closed season restrictions are sufficient.  
Refer comments re recommendation 5.

## **Recommendation 8**

### **Area Closures**

AAAWA would not support the creation of any large scale closed areas at this time as this will simply place increased pressure on stocks outside of these reserves seriously contributing to the localized depletion inferred in Recommendation 7. Funds would be more efficiently spent buying out effort from the West Coast Demersal Scalefish fishery in the short term and more accurate monitoring of catches to assess the true health of the fishery from year to year.

Further research, which should cover the biology and location of spawning areas for species such as Dhufish - which we believe EVERYONE should fully support as essential.

The part which is that IF some areas are found which are very important for spawning success, AAAWA supports that CONSIDERATION be given to closed areas to protect these spawning fish.

Such areas might not need to be closed permanently (example Cockburn Sound Pink Snapper spawning areas,) but if the proper fisheries research showed that there were real benefits for the fish stock and breeding success by closing some areas then recreational fishermen should SUPPORT such closures which were properly explained and justified in time, place and duration.

Improved breeding success would give improved fishing and/or could reduce the need for other restrictions on fishing.

This current situation and need for drastic measures has come about through lack of research and lack of information. Proper research should be high on the list of things to do.

#### **Comments**

*MAAC* not supported

*LAAC* Nothing I can add to what has been proposed.

*ORSSC* Supported, subject to scientific analysis of the benefit of a closed area to minimize impact on spawning aggregations.

Rationale: Only in areas of high aggregations of spawning fish are they more vulnerable (i.e. Pink Snapper in Cockburn Sound and Dhufish close in at Wedge Island). In deeper water, there is no evidence that the fish are more prolific or vulnerable.

*MOFSC*

*OSAC Boating* Agree with AAA comments. Large scale area closures NOT supported.

*QRFC* Limited exclusion area closure for selected breeding season only.

*HYC* Area Closures.

Members would NOT SUPPORT (unanimous) further area closures at this moment in time.

They would fully support seasonal closures of any proven newly found spawning areas.

Members would also support closures of areas that fisheries research would firmly show that there would be real future benefits for fish stock and breeding, but it would need to be clearly explained, indicating the area, the timing and duration, and the clear objectives of these closures that would prove to be of benefit to the recreational angler.

<b>Recommendation 9</b>
Anything else that you may wish to offer

## ***Further Comments***

*Compulsory carrying of release weight, as recommended by all fisherpersons who have used the item successfully.*

*AAAWA believes that the benefit of using the release weight has been demonstrated.*

*Therefore AAAWA recommends that any boat which is required to carry and EPIRB and has fishing gear on board, should also be required to carry a device capable of being used as a release weight.*

*We also believe that all commercial boats with Wetfish entitlements in the West Coast bioregion should be able to access at all times while fishing a line rigged with a release weight in order to reduce post-release mortalities as recognized as a problem by WAFIC.*

*Extra resources are required for compliance, education and research and more.*

*There have been inadequate resources for recreational fishing compliance for many years.*

*There is lack of current up to date and comprehensive fisheries research information on many issues of great importance to recreational anglers, for example the lack which has led to this critical situation with Demersal fish.*

*Many recreational fishermen are not aware of things they need to know about the rules and the state of WA's fisheries. The changes to recreational fishing rules will require considerable extra education.*

### **ORSSC**

1. Support the compulsory carrying of release weights on all boats over 5 metres carrying fishing gear.
2. Compulsory log book records for all vulnerable species.
3. Consideration given to maximum sizes and protection of females.

**OSAC Boat** As a Club we believe that a great deal more scientific research information needs to be done that is shared with the Angling community as a whole. The veil of secrecy that currently exists between the Fishing Department Scientists/Research Officers, Government and Public is clearly not good enough. Given that proper and thorough evidence is collected and shared with the Angling community, then ALL aspects for better control measures for safeguarding fishing for the future should and can prevail.

**QRFC** – *More awareness of the tagging program similar to the gamefishing assn do. A few members who are doing this for the Demersal species are seeing with the aid and non aid of release weights that the survival rate is encouraging and should be supported, sponsored by the fisheries dept for future information.*

### **HYC Further Comments**

*Boat owners present at the meeting agreed that a release weight should be carried.*

*Members also agreed that commercial fishermen should carry release weights.*

*There is an urgent requirement for further education and useful information for recreational anglers.*