

Recreational Fishing in Australia

2010 and Beyond

Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee
Discussion Paper (March 2010)



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Foreword

The 2000 National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey provided the first detailed depiction of the size of recreational fishing in Australia in terms of fisher numbers, catches and expenditure Australia-wide. This representation highlighted the many assessments which showed the impact recreational fishing has on Australia's fish stocks. It also confirmed the \$2.2 billion magnitude of the recreational fishing industry.

In October 2008 the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Tony Burke MP, announced the formation of a National Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee to review the 1994 National Recreational Fishing Policy and to advise on a Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy. This was a central element of the Australian Government's 3-year, \$2 million recreational fishing strategy. The members chosen for this committee are recreational fishers or work in the recreational fishing industry.

Formed in February 2009, the committee met initially on four occasions to draft this discussion paper to inform development of a new National Recreational Fishing Policy and raise options for the implementation of the Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy.

This discussion paper is intended to prompt discussion on the vision, principles, goals and proposed actions developed by the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee as part of developing its advice to Minister Burke.

Between May and September 2009, committee members visited major centres in all states and territories, meeting with fisher representatives, industry, government and other stakeholders to seek their input on matters that should be addressed in a national policy and industry development strategy. Key points from these meetings have been incorporated into the initial summary to complete this discussion paper which is now presented to stakeholders for comment.

If it is to be regarded as truly national, the 2010 policy will have to be formally acknowledged and adopted by all major recreational fisher and industry bodies and the governments of all states, territories and the Commonwealth. It is therefore important that all of these participants, as well as other stakeholders, take this opportunity to have their say on the discussion paper.

We look forward to the constructive feedback in the hope that recreational fishing will remain sustainable and healthy well into the future.

Chris Natt

Chair

Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

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Introduction

In October 2008 the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Tony Burke, announced the formation of the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee. This announcement was a central element of the Australian Government's 3-year, \$2 million Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy, including a review of the 1994 National Recreational Fishing Policy.

The Minister recognised many changes have occurred and new challenges have emerged to confront recreational fishing since 1994. The 2000 National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey provided the first detailed picture of the size of recreational fishing in terms of fisher numbers, catches and expenditure. This picture highlighted the many assessments which show the impact of recreational fishing on Australia's fish stocks. It also confirmed the \$2.2 billion magnitude of the recreational fishing industry.

Aims

When completed, the purpose of the 2010 policy will be to guide and coordinate the actions of the recreational fishing sector—fishers and the industry—along with government, researchers and other stakeholders, in realising the opportunities and meeting the challenges that face recreational fishing in the next decade. Together, they will form the audience and 'owners' of the policy and strategy and will share responsibility for its implementation. The industry development strategy sets out actions that are intended to lead the implementation of the policy.

The policy, strategy and implementation roles are intended to extend to:

- state, territory and Commonwealth governments and their agencies
- recreational fishers at the level of peak bodies, associations, clubs and individuals
- recreational fishing tackle, boating, tourism, media and other industry members
- researchers, investors and other stakeholders.

As well as working with the community to finalise its advice on the policy and strategy, the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee is advising the Minister on the best options for the strategic investment of the \$2 million funding initiative during the next 18 months. The proposed areas for investment will be targeted at improving the ability of recreational fishers to influence decisions that affect them.

This investment will help to address key concerns raised increasingly by recreational fisher groups in recent years. The concerns raised include access, representation, resource allocation and effective engagement in planning processes. The investment will help to position the recreational sector to take a lead role in implementing the Recreational Fishing Industry Development Strategy.

Context of the 2010 policy

The 1994 policy was initiated by the heads of state and Commonwealth departments responsible for fisheries management. The steering committee responsible for developing the policy comprised 11 departmental and four recreational fishing sector members. After adopting the policy, all governments proceeded to implement it in their own ways. The 2000 National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey and—in some states—recreational licensing, representative bodies and comanagement arrangements can be attributed in some ways to the 1994 policy.

Today, there is general agreement that the goals and principles set out in the 1994 policy are, in the main, still as relevant as they were 15 years ago. The main criticism of that policy relates to its apparent low level of uptake and implementation, hence Minister Burke's initiative matching the 2010 policy with an implementation strategy.

Most of the challenges noted in 1994 remain and others have become apparent over the following years.

At a conference in 2008, organised by national peak recreational fisher body Recfish Australia, recreational fishers worked with government, industry and other stakeholders to review the 1994 policy and identify the key issues likely to affect recreational fishing in the next decade. They reinforced longstanding and intensifying concerns about:

- funding of recreational fisheries programs, representation, research and development
- sustainability of recreational (and other) fishing
- habitat protection and environmental interactions with fisheries
- communication within the sector and with government agencies and other interests.

Among issues to emerge as major concerns, they identified:

- access increasingly impacted by Marine Protected Areas, shrinking freshwater resources, biodiversity protection measures and increased fishing regulations
- ineffectual engagement in fisheries, Marine Protected Area and other planning processes
- decisions informed by sound scientific, social and economic data
- climate change impacts and the environmental footprint of recreational fishing
- changing community attitudes towards recreational fishing in terms of ethical conduct and humane treatment of fish.

Addressing these challenges and engaging with the multitude of agencies and non-government organisations concerned with or about recreational fishing places huge demands on the bodies representing the interests of recreational fishers. The need for skilled professional representation has never been greater while the most pressing issue identified at the time of the 1994 policy—adequate funding—continues.

These themes are examined in sections that follow.



A vision for Australia's recreational fisheries

All Australians have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of a sustainable, healthy and diverse recreational fishing experience.

Key principles for recreational fisheries

1. Recreational fishing is a legitimate activity that contributes to Australians' health and well-being at individual, family and community levels.
2. Healthy environments are fundamental to sustainable recreational fishing and fish resources.
3. Recreational fishers share in the stewardship of fish resources through partnerships in decision-making processes affecting recreational fishing.
4. The recreational fishing sector has the capacity to play a greater role in addressing current and future issues affecting the industry.
5. Management decisions affecting recreational fishing should be based on sound scientific ecological, social and economic information.
6. Recreational fishers and government should share the responsibility and costs of managing and enhancing recreational fishing.
7. Fish resource allocation should be based on providing optimal benefits to the community.
8. Recreational fishers are encouraged to use best practices in all aspects of their fishing activities.
9. Recreational fishers and government should work in partnership to play a positive role in dealing with climate change.
10. Australian communities benefit by improving the range and quality of recreational fishing opportunities.
11. Responsible participation in recreational fishing provides valuable social and economic benefits and should be actively encouraged.
12. Recreational fishing can be a valuable addition to schools and other education programs on environmental studies, sustainable resource use, social responsibility and community health and well-being.

Goals

Consistent with the guiding principles, the following six goals form the basis for this national recreational fishing policy and its supporting framework of strategies and actions.

1. Recreational fishing is acknowledged as an important activity that contributes to the health and well-being of Australian society.

2. Recreational fishers are respected partners with government, Indigenous Australians and the broader community in the stewardship of Australia's aquatic environment.

3. Recreational fishers have access to a fair and reasonable share of Australia's fish resources.

4. An information base is available at national, state and regional levels on recreational fishing to meet the needs of government and the community.

5. Stewardship of fish and their environment ensures quality and sustainable recreational fishing opportunities into the future.

6. The recreational fishing industry is attractive, vibrant and adaptive, encouraging investment and participation.

Benefiting the community

Goal 1: Recreational fishing is acknowledged as an important activity that contributes to the health and well-being of Australian society.

While the economic value of recreational fishing can be quantified and expressed in \$billions, its value to the nation in terms of social benefits is harder to define. This contributes to the lack of recognition by governments of the importance of supporting and encouraging participation in recreational fishing.

The health and well-being benefits from recreational fishing act at individual, family and community levels. For individuals, fishing offers relaxation, stress-relief, contemplation, exercise and an avenue for building social contacts. At the family level benefits of relationship-building, passing on values and skills, and motivation for healthy outdoor activity together across generations can also be added. Fishing shares close links with allied outdoor leisure activities including camping, bushwalking and water sports.

Perhaps the greatest government recognition of the social benefits of recreational fishing has been in the area of the community benefits it brings and its potential to address a range of society's problems. In recent years, there has been increasing investment in programs aimed at:

- fishing clinics for single-parent families
- recuperation of breast cancer patients
- increased recreational opportunities for people with disabilities
- rehabilitation of socially isolated (e.g. non-English speaking elderly) adults
- intervention in drug, alcohol and youth violence related problems.

Recreational fishing takes forms that range from meditative wilderness experiences to intensely strenuous and competitive activities. In all forms it provides the opportunity to catch fresh healthy seafood. Within many schools, recreational fishing is being used as a medium for stimulating interest in mainstream subjects as well as an alternative outdoor educational activity.

Increased government recognition and support is needed to help reach the full potential of these social benefits and to offset falling participation rates in some states. Increasing time, financial and family pressures add to the difficulties imposed by ever-growing distances to healthy waterways for families in many urban and rural regions.

Overseas, recreational fishing is being challenged as a legitimate and ethical activity. Here in Australia, recreational fishing is often misrepresented as a threat to sustainability and the environment. The recreational fishing sector perceives factors such as other human activities, urban development or climate change pose greater threats to the environment. It is important that the recreational fishing sector is able to engage constructively to demonstrate its environmental credentials, while continuing to address areas where there is room for improvement.

Strategy 1

Understand and promote the health and well-being benefits of recreational fishing to Australian society.

Strategy 2

Understand and promote the benefits of recreational fishing to disadvantaged groups in Australian society.

Strategy 3

Understand and promote the benefits of recreational fishing to children, the elderly and families.

Strategy 4

Engage with community health, sport and recreational bodies about the benefits of recreational fishing and eating fish.

Strategy 5

Engage communities to raise understanding and acknowledge recreational fishing as providing a valuable contribution to the health and well-being of Australian society.

Actions to address above strategies

- 1 Collate existing studies on the health and well-being benefits of recreational fishing and similar outdoor and sporting activities.
 - Review current programs to demonstrate the benefits of recreational fishing in reducing drug taking and anti-social behaviour.
 - Review current programs to understand the benefits of recreational fishing for children, the elderly and families.
 - Review and demonstrate the educational benefits provided by fishing-in-schools programs.
- 2 Commission research to identify the health and well-being benefits of recreational fishing.
- 3 Communicate and promote the health and well-being benefits of recreational fishing in government and community programs.
 - Develop products and program templates to promote participation in recreational fishing, incorporating the health and well-being benefits in key messages.
 - Develop strategic alliances with health, sporting and tourism agencies to promote positive aspects of recreational fishing.
 - Expand fishing-in-schools programs to promote participation and responsible conduct in fishing.
- 4 Identify, target communications and partner with organisations for the extension of recreational fishing programs for women, children, elderly, families and disadvantaged groups.



Partners in caring for the environment

Goal 2: Recreational fishers are respected partners with government, Indigenous Australians and the broader community in the stewardship of Australia's aquatic environment.

A major challenge for recreational fishers today is influencing decision processes that affect recreational fishing, particularly those processes affecting fishing access. Continuous and ongoing engagement between recreational fishers, resource managers, Indigenous Australians and the community is essential if this is to occur. The time is well past for fishers to be set aside from these decision processes until draft proposals are announced. A more inclusive approach will help alleviate much of the past conflict and disillusionment with planning and management decision processes affecting recreational fishing.

Groups representing recreational fishers have a growing record of working with fisheries agencies to achieve necessary changes; co-management arrangements developed in the fisheries area have greatly improved avenues for fisher engagement and consultation. In other natural resource fields, greater effort is required on the part of both fisher representative bodies and management agencies. Recognising this, in the contentious area of marine conservation and bioregional planning, Recfish Australia brought fisher and planning agency representatives together in a 2006 workshop to develop a 'toolbox' for use in building effective fisher participation in these processes.

The recreational fishing sector recognises that building the capacity of its representatives to engage fully in planning processes is an urgent priority. Essential parts of this capacity building include the appropriate selection and training of their advocates, collection and presentation of factual information and, where necessary, engagement of specialist professional assistance.

Attracting and increasing the involvement of young people and women in leadership roles is a particular challenge. Increasingly, building strategic alliances with other interest groups, including commercial fishers and conservation groups, is seen as vital to resolving differences constructively and achieving balanced results in areas such as resource sharing. Development of strategic partnerships with tourism, public health and other industry and community bodies is a promising but largely under-developed field.

In many areas, it has taken until recently for recreational fisher representative bodies to realise the benefits of working closely together, on an ongoing basis, with the fishing tackle, boating, charter, guide, media and other associated industry groups. This maturity is also increasingly apparent in recreational fishers' respectful acknowledgement of the role Indigenous Australians play in conserving fish resources and protecting the environment.

The Australian Government's high level of interest in and commitment to the future of the recreational fishing sector points to the need for a national advisory body comprising the various industry as well as fisher interests. Separate from national representational and advocacy bodies, such a body could advise the Commonwealth Minister for Fisheries on progress with implementation of the policy and industry development strategy. Models for such advisory bodies can be found in some states.

Strategy 1

Improve opportunities for engagement of recreational fishers in the management of fisheries and environment.

Strategy 2

Ensure that recreational fishers are recognised and engaged as key stakeholders in policy development for national fisheries and environmental programs, e.g. Commonwealth fisheries, Marine Bioregional Planning and Caring for our Country.

Actions to address strategies 1 and 2

- 1 Demonstrate organisational structures that effectively engage recreational fishers in fisheries management, for example effective working examples of:
 - recreational fishers working with government to deal with fisheries management and environmental issues
 - joint habitat improvement projects with community groups
 - recreational fishers engaged in fisheries monitoring, research and assessment.
- 2 Develop an ongoing national advisory committee to ensure delivery of the recreational fishing industry development strategy.
- 3 Develop a national recreational fishing conservation council to promote eco-friendly activities with specific terms of reference to engage environmental groups.
- 4 Hold an annual national conference to discuss issues in recreational fishing including education, conservation, sustainability, climate change and access.

Strategy 3

Invest in developing capabilities of industry leaders, advocates and representatives.

Actions to address strategy 3

- 1 Develop, promote and implement a future leaders' program template throughout Australia, e.g. young leaders programs.
- 2 Provide scholarships for recreational fishers to participate in a national leadership program within the people development program of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).
- 3 Develop training programs and resources to improve advocacy skills of recreational fishers.
- 4 Develop and promote mentoring programs.

Strategy 4

Build partnerships between fishing industry, conservation, Indigenous and other stakeholder organisations.

Actions to address strategy 4

- 1 Investigate how other groups have partnered with stakeholder organisations to demonstrate successful formation of strategic alliances.

- 2 Encourage recreational fishing groups to become involved with programs of shared interest operated by conservation, Indigenous and other organisations, e.g. wetlands and mangrove protection.
 - Identify partnerships and pathways to encourage interaction and collaboration between all groups.

Strategy 5

Be involved in and develop fisheries-specific environmental clean up programs.

Actions to address strategy 5

- 1 Increase the involvement of recreational fishers in *Clean Up Australia* campaigns.
- 2 Improved facilities and programs for collecting and recycling discarded fishing line.

Access and sharing

Goal 3: Recreational fishers have access to a fair and reasonable share of Australia's fish resources.

The issue of greatest concern to recreational fishers today is access to fishing opportunities. This issue has been uppermost in responses to the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee's discussions with representative groups and was top of the concerns identified by fisher representatives at the Recfish Australia 2008 national conference.

Fishers face incremental reductions in their access to saltwater fishing resulting from closure of access tracks, privatisation of port facilities, increased security exclusion zones and proclamation of marine sanctuaries and protected areas. Inland, fishers face increasing access and camping restrictions, exclusion from impoundments and waterways depleted by drought and competing urban, agriculture and industry interests. Across much of northern Australia, fishers wishing to access remote coastal areas need to seek permission of traditional land owners and pastoral land holders.

Recreational fishers see the increasing loss of access as evidence of the erosion of their right to fish. They advocate area-based marine conservation planning decisions based on open and transparent processes and comprehensive biological, social and economic data. Rather than blanket no-take fishing closures they recommend risk assessment and management approaches that meet clear conservation objectives while allowing benign fishing activities to continue.

Recreational fishers also see their diminishing rights in the allocation of fish resources between commercial and recreational fishing sectors. The issue is not just about the allocation of shares in terms of tonnages or percentages of allowable catches. It is also about managing competition between the sectors, minimising direct conflicts on the water and supporting the businesses and regional economies that service recreational fishing. As with access decisions, recreational fishers advocate resource allocations based on sound data, objective processes and the optimum benefit to the community from the use of that resource.

The statutory fishing rights assigned to commercial operators in many fisheries has previously attracted direct compensation when access is reduced significantly. Wherever possible, recreational fishers look for compensation through fishing enhancement initiatives such as artificial reefs, fish aggregating devices and fish stocking programs. They acknowledge the trend towards reallocation of some inshore, estuary and inland fisheries in favour of recreational fishing. They also acknowledge the obligations that accompany their rights to fish. Since 1995, these obligations have been codified and in 2008 Recfish Australia released the revised *National Code of Practice for Recreational and Sport Fishing*.

Strategy 1

Advocate resource sharing arrangements that maximise social and economic benefits to the community

Actions to address strategy 1

- 1 Improve data on social and economic benefits of recreational fishing.
- 2 Review current legislation to determine how recreational fishing is recognised:
 - to clarify the status of recreational fishing within legislation

- explore the need and scope for improvements to legislation.
- 3 Explore existing models for resource sharing.
 - 4 Promote the optimum social and economic community benefits of resource use in forums that allocate resources.
 - 5 Ensure that the recreational fishing sector receives allocations equivalent to its historical share where allocations are not based on optimum community benefit.

Strategy 2

Seek offsetting benefits for any loss of access to fish resources through resource management actions by improving fishing opportunities.

Actions to address strategy 2

- 1 Agencies undertaking planning processes that impact on recreational fishers should provide improved fishing opportunities to recreational fishers where they lose access to fish resources.
- 2 Agencies and recreational fishers should work together to introduce offset measures to compensate for the loss of fishing opportunities through management actions, for example artificial reefs and/or allowing some forms of non-destructive fishing.

A sound knowledge base

Goal 4: An information base is available at national, state and regional levels on recreational fishing to meet the needs of government and the community.

Fundamental to fishing access and resource allocation processes is the matter of adequate and appropriate data. The 2000 *National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey* highlighted the value of national fishing, social and economic data. It also showed the limitations of national survey approaches and the need for alternative approaches to help provide national recreational fishing data requirements in future.

Since 2000, several states and some fisher representative and industry bodies have proceeded with regional, state-wide or national surveys to meet their own continuing needs. With many inshore and estuary fisheries being largely or wholly allocated to the recreational sector, fish stock assessments and management performance measures are becoming increasingly reliant on detailed and ongoing recreational catch and effort monitoring.

Fisher and community groups have demonstrated the value of information they can provide for essential assessment purposes. As a result, fisheries researchers are increasingly choosing to incorporate or depend upon data collected systematically by fishers. Collaborative research among state agencies is refining and comparing strengths and limitations of survey methodologies and developing tools for analysing large survey data sets.

The recreational fishing industry is taking an increasingly active role on fisheries and related management issues. Industry is also working with fisher representative bodies to address declining participation rates in some states, to promote the community benefits of recreational fishing and to advocate greater government investment to support recreational fishing. These activities generate significant needs for information on the social and economic benefits of recreational fishing as well as the impacts on fish stocks

Recfish Australia, FRDC, Recfishing Research and the Australian Fisheries Management Forum have agreed on the need for a national recreational fisheries data plan to meet the separate and collective recreational sector and government information needs. A recent FRDC-funded study 'Development of a strategy to address national needs for recreational fishing data for fisheries management and development' recommends steps towards a national data plan and should be used to assist delivery of strategies and actions to achieve this goal.

Strategy 1

Promote the use of a national approach to statistics on recreational fishing where jurisdictions will benefit in combining resources, particularly in relation to social and economic data.

Actions to address strategy 1

- 1 Develop an options paper of costed plans for collecting national economic and social data on recreational fishing.
 - Choose and implement a plan.

- 2 Combine existing state and territory recreational catch and effort data into a national information system.
 - Determine gaps in this information
 - Collect information to fill the gaps.

Strategy 2

Develop a national sampling framework that could be used for undertaking surveys of recreational fishing and fisheries.

Action to address strategy 2

- 1 Review the options for a national sampling framework.



Fishers taking responsibility

Goal 5: Stewardship of fish and their environment ensures quality and sustainable recreational fishing opportunities into the future.

Recreational fishers have long appreciated the importance of protecting fish habitat and the wider environment as the basis of healthy fisheries. They have come a long way from advocating protection of fish habitats such as seagrass beds, mangroves and in-stream structures. Today, fishers play a lead role in important habitat rehabilitation and stock enhancement projects aimed specifically at improving fishing, as well as taking an active part in Landcare, clean-up and similar community-based programs. In addition, recreational fishers have been pivotal to the rehabilitation of threatened species such as Macquarie perch and trout cod.

In recent years, recreational fishers have come a long way in their understanding that, collectively, their impact on fish stocks can be significant and it is not uncommon for fishers to advocate tighter regulatory controls of their own catches. They have embraced improved knowledge of unsustainable targeting (e.g. some shark species) and fishing practices (e.g. spearing blue groper), leading to substantial changes in their attitudes and behaviour. Recreational fishers have worked closely with fisheries researchers in recent studies of the best and most humane capture, handling and release techniques for maximising the survival of released fish. These are examples of the great changes that have occurred in the collective mind-set of recreational fishers, resulting in a growing sense of personal responsibility, environmental stewardship and respect for fish.

The industry is working with fishers in developing and promoting the use of more environment-friendly products such as biodegradable line, sinkers and bait bags. Collaboration with fishing tournament and competition organisers has led to a national 5-star assessment standard based on the environmental, social and economic performance of fishing events. Fishers are actively involved in schools-based fishing and environmental education programs in most states and increasingly, with industry, in fishing clinics for children, families and groups in the community who have specific needs.

However, there is little community appreciation of fishers' contribution to fish and environmental stewardship. As a result, recreational fishers believe they continue to face negative community and media perceptions. There is much to be done in building on the environmental credentials of recreational fishing. This includes increasing fishers' participation in environmental improvement, education and training programs as well as raising community awareness and appreciation of fishers' true contribution.

Strategy 1

Encourage recreational fishers to be involved in research, community monitoring and habitat enhancement programs.

Actions to address strategy 1

- 1 Raise recreational fishing organisations' awareness of and involvement in catchment management and habitat enhancement programs.
- 2 Involve recreational fishers in research and monitoring.

- 3 Publicise participation and achievements of recreational fishers in these activities.

Strategy 2

Encourage recreational fishers to use best practices in all aspects of their fishing activities.

Actions to address strategy 2

- 1 Target communication of fishing best practice messages at recreational fishers and school children.
- 2 Promote and monitor the adoption of best practices and their outcomes by recreational fishers.
- 3 Communicate the message that fishers actively use best practice techniques.
- 4 Provide a national program to promote participation in recreational fishing incorporating best practices in key messages.
- 5 Continue promotion of development and use of codes of practice in recreational fishing.
- 6 In conjunction with the tackle trade promote the use of environment-friendly fishing tackle, e.g. alternatives to lead sinkers, biodegradable fishing line, biodegradable bait bags etc.
- 7 Promote best practice activities when running fishing competitions.



A thriving industry

Goal 6: The recreational fishing industry is attractive, vibrant and adaptive, encouraging investment and participation.

Despite the challenges facing recreational fishing—finite fish resources, access, environmental pressures and climate change—there is considerable scope for recreational fishing to enhance the lives of more Australians and to underpin a thriving industry.

The factors affecting participation rates have become clearer—family and work pressures, increased costs and distances involved, competing interests, lack of time and declining interest of fishing partners are some of the reasons. New entrants may face additional obstacles such as remoteness from fishing locations and the lack of equipment, skills and experienced instructors. Misinformation about fishing ethics, sustainability and safety may also deter people from taking up a healthy activity they would find fulfilling. All of these obstacles can be broken down and addressed, making it easier for all individuals and families to take up, or resume, recreational fishing.

Throughout Australia, fisher groups, industry and fisheries agencies are working together to remove barriers and to create welcoming, instructive and accessible fishing opportunities. With industry and volunteer fisher support, school education programs foster environmental awareness, best practice fishing conduct and the practical 'how to' aspects of fishing. School programs also point to the vocational opportunities in the recreational fishing industry.

City and regional fishing and outdoor shows bring the latest advances in fishing and associated technology to fishers and demonstrate the breadth of 'the industry', including fishing tackle and electronics, boating, charter and guide services, camping, tourism, media and insurance.

Fishing clinics target remote regional communities, urban families, single parent families, underprivileged people, people with disabilities, and youths with behavioural or substance abuse problems.

Recreational fishing media are playing an important role in raising awareness of fishing opportunities, offering simple instructions and communicating research results and emerging issues.

Fishing groups are working with local councils and developers to build new fishing opportunities into landscaping and stormwater control works associated with new urban housing developments.

However, some of these initiatives are limited in their outreach or are intermittent. They may rely on small groups with limited funding and other resources or on the drive of individual fishers and teachers who are passionate about fishing and its benefits. There is great scope for expanding and establishing such programs on a more regular footing.

Strategy 1

Develop new and innovative fishing opportunities, particularly in urban and regional areas.

Actions to address strategy 1

- 1 Encourage the use of urban and regional ponds for the development of fishing opportunities, e.g. for families and disadvantaged groups.
- 2 Communicate the advantages of creating partnerships between business and local government when developing urban fishing opportunities.
- 3 Communicate to local government the advantages of creating fish habitats when developing urban landscapes and planning new developments.

Strategy 2

Promote recreational fishing as a family friendly activity.

Actions to address strategy 2

- 1 Implement a national program to promote family participation in recreational fishing, for example
 - Aligning and co-ordinating existing state programs
 - Establishing a national recreational fishing day.
- 2 Promote the national uptake of fishing education programs, e.g. 'Get Hooked Its fun to fish'.

Strategy 3

Develop ways for recreational fishers to respond positively to climate change and promote reduction in carbon emissions from fishing activities.

Actions to address strategy 3

- 1 Determine the carbon footprint of recreational fishing activities and actions that can be taken to reduce it.
- 2 Develop research projects that examine the impact of climate change on recreational fishing and demonstrate how to adapt to or mitigate change.

Strategy 4

Improve safety in recreational fishing.

Actions to address strategy 4

- 1 Continue to promote safety in fishing, especially in those areas where it is considered most dangerous.
- 2 Roll out a national 'Angel Rings' program to enhance safety of rock and other shore-based fishers.
- 3 Implement the recommendations from the 'Recreational Fishing and Safety in Australia' report April 2008.

Strategy 5

Promote the role and opportunities for women, children and families in recreational fishing.


Actions to address strategy 5

- 1 Provide opportunities for women, children and families to play a greater role in all aspects of fishing, e.g. 'Kids come try fishing' days.
- 2 Promote positive images of women in recreational fishing.

Strategy 6

Promote the cultural heritage value of recreational fishing in Australia.

Actions to address strategy 6

- 1 Hold a national fishing day (see action 2.1)
 - 2 Include information about the culture and heritage aspects of recreational fishing in education and awareness strategies.
 - 3 Demonstrate how innovations have improved recreational fishing in Australia over time.
 - 4 Encourage marine and fresh water discovery centres to include information on cultural and historical aspects of recreational fishing.
 - 5 Develop an interactive web-based exhibition with information on the culture and heritage of recreational fishing.
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Conclusion

Working together, recreational fishers and the industry have taken responsibility for many of the activities and programs that will shape the future of recreational fishing in Australia. Together with fisheries agencies and researchers they are part of monitoring, assessment and management processes that underpin sustainable fishing and wider social and economic benefits enjoyed by the Australian community.

While recreational fishing will continue to compete with many other activities for resources and community support, it is an important component of the continued health and well being of Australian society. Although funding continues to constrain development of the sector, fishers constitute a potent volunteer resource and are committed to working with governments and the community to ensure a healthy future for recreational fishing.

What is needed is a strategic national framework to harness the sector's resources and guide its development. When completed, it is envisaged that the national policy will guide that development and be a catalyst for the actions to meet the challenges for the future.

