



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources

Commonwealth Fisheries Policy Statement



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Foreword

Australians love to fish and Australians love to eat seafood.

Our love of fishing and seafood is at the very heart of our nation and this policy statement.

Approximately 3.4 million Australians are regular fishers, and on average, every one of us eats 140 serves of seafood every year.

In stating our fisheries policy, the Turnbull Government is making sure Australians are able to catch and eat seafood—today and in the future.

Our fisheries are an important resource that must be carefully and sustainably managed for future generations. We must base our decisions on the best available evidence and scientific data.

Our fisheries are owned by all Australians and shared between numerous stakeholders. Commercial and recreational fishing generates billions of dollars for our economy, especially for regional communities. We must explore all opportunities to sustainably grow the economic return from our fisheries.

Australians delight in our safe, high-quality seafood and they expect it to be harvested in an environmentally responsible manner. We must ensure a healthy marine environment. We must ensure no overfishing occurs. We must ensure everyone is committed to sustainability. We must continue to drive innovation and adoption of new technologies, in the effort to maintain healthy fish stocks and look after the marine environment.

This statement confirms the Turnbull Government's commitment—our aspirations for Australia's fishing and aquaculture sector; our support for the right of every Australian to go fishing; and our dedication to an effective legislative and regulatory framework to ensure our fisheries remain sustainable and profitable into the future.



Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston
Assistant Minister for Agriculture
and Water Resources

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anne Ruston'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'A' and 'R'.

Senator Anne Ruston
Assistant Minister for Agriculture
and Water Resources

Principles

The Australian Government's approach to management of Commonwealth fisheries is based on the right of Australians today and in the future, to fish and have access to safe, high-quality seafood, sourced from our sustainably managed fisheries.

The government's position is guided by these principles:

- **Sustainability**—our fisheries are managed in a manner consistent with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development, with no overfishing and the recovery of overfished stocks.
- **Science-based decision-making**—fisheries management decisions are based on the best available science.
- **Resource sharing**—equitable access among professional, recreational and Indigenous fishers to our shared marine resources.
- **Rights-based fisheries management**—through the use of statutory fishing rights, with a preference for individual transferable quotas, and fisheries managed using output controls.
- **Maximising utilisation and productivity**—we develop our fisheries and aquaculture to maximise the net economic return to the Australian community.
- **Regulatory effectiveness and cost recovery**—regulatory and cost recovery requirements that are fit for purpose.
- **Transparency in decision-making**—decisions are made in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.
- **Meeting our international obligations**—our fisheries are managed in a manner that is consistent with Australia's international obligations, emphasising cooperation in the management of highly migratory and shared fish stocks.
- **Stamping out illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing**—we will continue to fight and prosecute illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and implement international agreements that help close loopholes exploited by those who threaten our fish stocks.



Themes

This policy framework draws on a number of themes.

Fishing is part of our culture

- Commonwealth fisheries generally extend from three nautical miles to the 200 nautical mile limit of Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone.
- Approximately 300 boats operate in Commonwealth fisheries, with more than 14,000 people directly employed by the commercial fishing and aquaculture sectors. Many of these jobs are based in regional areas.
- Australia has approximately 3.4 million recreational fishers, who predominantly fish within state and territory marine boundaries.
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, fish often have a cultural significance.

Our fisheries belong to all Australians

- Our shared marine resources belong to all Australians and are managed for the benefit of current and future generations.
- The Australian Government works cooperatively with all stakeholders.
- Australia engages internationally to promote our world class fisheries management practices.
- Commonwealth fisheries share fish stocks with the states and the Northern Territory—catches are managed cooperatively to assure sustainability.

Australian seafood is safe and healthy

- Seafood is an important source of protein.
- Australian seafood is healthy, safe and sourced from a clean environment.
- All seafood sold in Australian retail outlets (packaged and unpackaged) is labelled with the country of origin.
- The Australian Government engages internationally to identify and manage exotic disease threats.
- The Australian Government facilitates trade in marine species and their products.
- Australia engages internationally to ensure marine animal health standards are practical and based on sound science.



Australian seafood is sustainably managed

- Our ecosystem-based fisheries management takes account of the cumulative effect of all human users of marine resources, including professional, recreational and Indigenous fishers.
- The *Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy and Guidelines* provides a framework for the science-based approach to setting harvest levels.
- The *Commonwealth Fisheries Bycatch Policy and Guidelines* outline how to manage the risk of fishing-related impacts on bycatch species.

Best available science for good fisheries management

- Science is the foundation of effective Commonwealth fisheries management.
- Science-based stock assessments allow for the setting of quantitative catch limits.
- Research investment should realise improved fisheries management and policies.
- Status of Australian Fish Stocks reports assess the biological sustainability of key wild-caught fish stocks in all Australian jurisdictions.
- No stocks managed solely by the Australian Government are subject to overfishing.
- The *National Fishing and Aquaculture Research Development and Extension Strategy 2015* provides a framework for research, development and extension support.
- The *National Marine Science Plan* outlines the research, infrastructure, skills, partnerships and investment required to maximise the economic return from our marine resources.

Fishing rights provide certainty and security

- Commonwealth fisheries management has moved predominantly to output controls, such as total allowable catch limits.
- Statutory fishing rights provide professional operators with long-term, secure, tradeable access rights to the resource.
- This system promotes the most efficient and cost-effective use of fisheries as a resource.

Australian fisheries are sustainably managed to maximise net economic return

- Australia's wild capture fisheries and aquaculture industries directly contribute \$2.8 billion per year to the national economy (notwithstanding the additional economic benefits generated beyond the wharf).
- Our Commonwealth fisheries contribute \$348 million per year.
- Australia exports approximately \$1.3 billion of sustainably caught, high-quality seafood per year.



- The Australian Government works with industry to maximise the net economic return to the community from our fisheries, including under-utilised species.
- Australia engages internationally to develop markets and reduce tariff barriers to trade in seafood and seafood products.

Engagement with stakeholders

- The Australian Government consults regularly with a wide array of stakeholders with interests in the management of Commonwealth fisheries.
- Stakeholders in our Commonwealth fisheries include professional and recreational fishers, aquaculture operators, Indigenous fishers, scientists and retailers (including processors and exporters).
- Seafood Industry Australia is the peak industry body providing a united voice to government, with expertise in wild-catch, aquaculture and post-harvest sectors.
- The Australian Fisheries Management Authority administers a number of fisheries-based advisory committees that allow key stakeholders to participate in the planning process.

Effective regulation

- Strong compliance programs are integral to ensure sustainability and protect the integrity of fishing rights.
- Domestic fisheries management costs are recovered from commercial fisheries through transparent arrangements.
- The Australian Government continually reviews its regulations, consults on levies and improves access to online resources, applications, reporting and payment systems—to reduce red tape and compliance costs.
- Offshore Constitutional Settlement arrangements are used to jointly manage fisheries with the states and the Northern Territory.

Australia—a regional leader in best practice

- Australia engages in international fishing forums to secure the interests of our domestic fishing industry.
- Australia is a party to six treaties and agreements establishing regional fisheries management organisations to improve regional fisheries management standards.
- Australia seeks to ensure responsible and sustainable fishing by other countries—particularly of stocks important to our own domestic fishing industry.
- Australia deploys various agencies and engages internationally to ensure Australian sovereignty over the Australian Fishing Zone and to protect it from illegal fishing.





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