



Position Statement #4 An end to Net Free Zones

1. Introduction

The net free zones (NFZs) is a policy that was never developed on sustainability or scientific grounds but was a political sweetener from government to recreational fishing groups in Queensland under the perception of anti-commercial fishing actions is a top priority for voters. The policy needs to end to reinstatement hundreds of tonnes of fresh local fish for the domestic, interstate and international markets.

The Association is seeking the Removal of Net Free Zones (NFZs) as government policy.

2. Rationale

Resource access has also been curtailed through the existence of the NFZs. The policy was initially introduced not as reform but pure resource reallocation to a non-food production sector based on political motives.

The policy has not been abolished but to some degree limited by the introduction of a resource reallocation policy by the Queensland Government. To date the policy remains untested or at least there has been no public announcement by the Queensland Government that a group is seeking to remove even more commercial fishing access using the policy. While the use of petitions and social media polls remains, a tool recognised by government, the policy remains dormant and easily activated.

The NFZs in Cairns, Rockhampton and Mackay¹:

- 224.3 tonnes / year of fresh local fish has been removed from public consumption.
- Thanks to anti-commercial fishing State ALP government over the 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 financial years the NFZs have denied Queenslanders and visitors (national and international) a total of 897.2 tonnes of fresh local fish as a direct result of the zones.
- In terms of 150g serves of fish what has been lost? Some 897,200 * 150g serves / year of fresh local fish has gone unharvested over the 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 financial years thanks to NFZs.
- Altogether there has been a staggering loss of almost 3.6 million * 150g serves of fresh local fish between 2014-15 and 2017-18.

Recent calls from The Boyne Tannum Hookup, a recreational fishing group has led to another consideration for industry, the introduction of recreational only fishing areas (ROFAs). The

¹ The data used to determine loss of fish in the NFZs is based on QFish, a public commercial fisheries catch database, see: [What has the public lost thanks to the NFZs?](#)

NFZs are a direct threat to commercial fishing and are contrary to enhancing or growing commercial fisheries and production of associated food opportunities industry in Queensland.

3. Conclusion

3.1. Course of Action

Seek a commitment from all parties in the Queensland Parliament to oppose the NFZs policy and to eliminate it as a fisheries management tool.

3.2. Solution

Removal of the NFZs policy in Queensland.

4. Authorisation

The Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) is the peak industry body representing the Queensland seafood industry. Our members include professional fishers, seafood processors, marketers, retailers and other business associated with the seafood industry. Our representation to members and the community at large is to promote the consumption of wild caught Queensland seafood.

Approved and Endorsed by: QSIA Board
November 2019

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