

Queensland SEAFOOD

2024 NUMBER 3

- State election policies skinny on details
- Muddy “dead zones” feared in Moreton Bay
- GBRMPA celebrates rezoning anniversary

THE CONFOUNDING GREAT BARRIER REEF

Warming seas, bleaching events,
but best-ever coral cover ...

Workhorses at Sea

TMQ's Commercial Autopilots



Our products work as hard as you do

Call us for your marine electronic requirements

Pictured: AP4 and AP9 Autopilots



Conveniently located at Rivergate Refit Complex

Rivergate Place, Murarrie, QLD, 4172 | Call us: 07 3640 5600

Email: tmq@tmq.com.au | Web: www.tmq.com.au

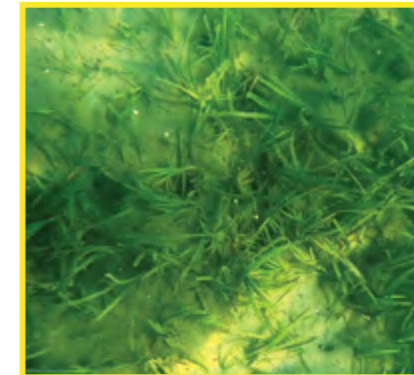


VOLUME 42, No. 3 2024 Queensland SEAFOOD

PRESIDENT ON THE LINE 4
 FROM THE CEO 5
 "SHOW US THE SCIENCE," SAYS LNP ON NET BANS 6
 LABOR THREAT TO BAN NETS IN MARY RIVER 7
 KAP'S NICK DAMETTO SLAMS "PATHETIC" NQ NET BAN 8
 MINNS LABOR GOVT FUNDS NSW PEAK INDUSTRY BODY 9
 POLITICS: NEW FEDERAL MINISTER, UNESCO CRITICISM 10
 GBR OUTLOOK: AN ECOSYSTEM UNDER PRESSURE 12
 MACKAY MEETINGS WITH POLITICIANS OVER NET BANS 13
 NATIONAL SEAFOOD AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED 14
 RESEARCH: SHARK DEPREDATION, FNQ DUGONGS 15
 "MUDDY DEAD ZONE" FEARED IN MORETON BAY 16
 GBRMPA CELEBRATES 2004 RAP REZONING ANNIVERSARY 18
 THE CONFOUNDING GBR: ANOTHER RECORD FOR CORAL COVER ... 22
 HEAT, BLEACHING BUT BEST-EVER CORAL COVER: WHY IS IT SO? 23
 IN MEMORIAM: 50 YEARS SINCE CYCLONE TRACY STRUCK DARWIN 27
 JOHN OLSEN SCULPTS WORKS OF ART IN WOOD, STONE, STEEL 28
 THE GULL 30



LNP: wants "science" on net bans. Page 6.



Moreton Bay muddy "dead zone". Page 16.



GBRMPA celebrates rezoning. Page 18.



Cyclone Tracy remembered. Page 27.

In this edition ...

AFTER nine years in office, the approach of the Queensland Labor Government to management of commercial fishing is well understood but – with a smallest-possible-target, offend-as-few-peoples-as-possible lack of broader policies – it has been difficult to know what the LNP might do in government. Well, recently LNP fisheries spokesman Tony Perrett was a little more forthcoming in an interview with *Queensland Country Life*. To read the interview, turn to page 6.

While sitting Government MP for Maryborough Bruce Saunders has drawn an angry response from QSIA for his promise to ban nets from the fragment of the Mary River where they are still permitted after the recent Great Sandy Strait Marine Park rezoning (page 7), the Katter's Australian Party continues to attack the ban on gillnets, with spokesman Nick Dametto recently labelling them as "pathetic" (page 8).

It is interesting to see the Minns Labor Government has provided seed funding for three years for a wild-catch fishing industry representative body in New South Wales. Details are on page 9.

In research news on page 15, studies are underway into the impact of sharks stealing reef fish catches and the latest survey in

Far North Queensland has found a thriving population of dugong.

Alarming research shows floods have deposited mud across 98 per cent of Moreton Bay, compromising its remaining areas of clean sand and hastening growth of a muddy "dead zone". See page 16.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has celebrated the 20th anniversary of its 2004 RAP rezoning of the GBR Marine Park. It is also a reminder of the devastation caused to fishing, seafood and related businesses by massive closures that saw all fishing banned in a third of the 344,000-square-kilometre park and commercial fishing of one sort or another begins on page 18.

How can the Great Barrier Reef suffer warming seas and repeated bleaching events and yet still produce its best-ever coral cover (during close to 40 years of surveys)? While this apparent contradiction may confound most people, scientists are warning the world's coral reefs face serious threats, even the world's largest coral reef. See articles beginning on page 22.

This year marks a sad anniversary in Darwin: it is 50 years this coming Christmas Eve since Cyclone Tracy struck the city, killing at least 17 professional fishers (from a total death toll of more than 70 people). We revisit that event on page 27

Front cover: A brilliant barramundi captured in stainless steel is just one of many works of art crafted by retired professional fisherman and former QSIA President John Olsen in his Bundaberg studio. To see more, turn to page 28.

Queensland Seafood is the official journal of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association Inc, the peak body representing the State's seafood industry.

Mailing Address:
PO Box 8411
Woolloongabba 4102

Mob: 0417 631 353
E-mail: eo@qsia.com.au
Website: www.qsia.com.au

Chief Executive Officer:
David Bobbermen
Tel: 0417 631 353
eo@qsia.com.au

Advertising:
E-mail: mobo2@live.com
Postal:
PO Box 8411
Woolloongabba 4102

PRESIDENT ON THE LINE

Let's hope for change at 1 William Street

HELLO all. I hope you are managing with your fishing operation in these difficult times.

With the State now in caretaker mode, there is a gap in policies. With the political parties, there has been a commitment by the LNP and KAP towards the commercial industry, while the ALP has shown a favourable commitment to the rec sector and the pond food producers, with the Premier committing to more closures if elected.

This is beyond a joke: we have had a fishery shut down, with unfinished business in the way of compensation pay outs and the ALP is committing to more?

One can only hope common sense prevails and there is a change at No 1 William Street.

The Seafood Directions conference recently held in Tasmania was attended by QSIA members. The feedback was

conclusive that Australia is an island nation with an abundance of seafood resources and we need a wild-caught seafood sector.

We have our AGM approaching and it has been refreshing to see the expression of interest from membership for a position on the board. Ballot papers are out and I urge you to cast your vote.

There has been lobbying to re-open the scallop fishery. A meeting was held recently in Townsville. There will be more on this from the trawl working group.

The temporary NX fishery, which has independent data validation, has hundreds of fishing shots recorded. There have been interactions recorded, however all have been released alive, with no mortalities.

This raises the question: where is Fisheries Queensland (FQ) supporting

industry by informing the public we are not killing these creatures as portrayed by the green groups? Radio silence.

Based on this evidence, there is no case to answer why this sustainable fishery should not continue past 2027.

The northern Spanish mackerel fishery is underway, and it is grossly undersubscribed due to the availability and pricing of quota, plus operators unable to obtain a filleting permit. I know of long-term operators who were forced to remain in port while FQ were processing their application. Now, with the first three-week closure in place, they remain in port for a further three weeks.

It was depressing to see only two boats operating on our traditional fishing grounds before the closure. Sadly, our mosquito fleet of mackerel boats is almost extinct. Let's hope the review of this fishery can turn this around before it is too late.

You may have seen the submission QSIA tendered re the Suspension and Cancellation of Licences. It is my view that this another example of the broadening of powers of the Fisheries Queensland CEO role, as defined in the harvest strategy.

An issue of concern is, if you are served with an infringement notice, you have the **right to ask for an independent review**. FQ have failed in the past in records of interview to advise affected fishers of the process; in fact, I have been told verbally that Queensland Boating & Fisheries Patrol officers have been frowned upon for suggesting this option

Conclusion

Industry has been battered in this term of government with the help of the green bureaucracy that has infiltrated Government departments. Looking at the policies and electioneering handouts being issued by Colgate Miles, they are hoping to continue with the nonsense,

Let's all hope that Queenslanders who are seafood consumers, who deserve to eat seafood of their choice, show this lot the door. In the meantime, stay safe and good fishing.

See you at the AGM. Allan

Allan Bobbermen
President

FROM THE CEO

Decks cleared for State election

G'DAY Members. As I write this message, the Queensland Government has just entered caretaker mode in the lead-up to the 26th of October 2024 State election. Already, there are some very divergent views from political parties on how they see our industry during the next term of government.

The ALP, via its green-tinged Premier, is clearly backing recreational fishing and aquaculture. I have written about their appalling disregard for due process. The ALP announcement to close the Mary River to gill netting is frankly wrong.

They say that they want to preserve the Queensland way of life! The announcement absolutely disregards the livelihoods of those remaining fishers, as well as the local seafood shops who are unable to provide quality local fresh seafood to their consumers.

The Futures of Seafood project that is currently being undertaken by Seafood Industry Australia has already identified that the cumulative effects of what would appear, in isolation, to be small issues have compounded into a massive reduction in availability of fresh Australian wild-caught seafood.

The conservative political parties – namely the LNP, KAP and One Nation – appear to be, to varying degrees, supporters of our industry. It's great to see the positive support from the KAP and the dedication of One Nation's leader Pauline Hanson and some of her candidates to take time out and go fishing with a commercial fisher to better understand our industry.

Just think how much improved decision-making could be if politicians and bureaucrats actually followed Miss Hanson's lead and went out on the water to understand what actually occurs rather than what they believe to occur based on textbooks or social media. There is an open invitation for these decision-makers to undertake fishing trips and expand their knowledge.

Net buyback, scallops

It is sad that we still have not had any clarity around the abolition of caps on the buyback of gill nets. I do not

know what the issue is, given strong indications by the department that this would occur as well as support for the change by environmental groups.

Additionally, it is discouraging that news has broken of deferring the scallop survey in the southern region. I'm disappointed about this, given that there are several reports of significant discards and no scallop survey was done last year.

Even if scallops were able to be taken as a by-product and not targeted in the coming years, this would have a significant financial benefit to industry. Yes, it has to be done sustainably and cautiously to ensure the stocks are allowed to continue to build but, given a maximum four-year life cycle, it defies logic that mature scallops that are about to succumb to natural mortality cannot be harvested.

Seafood Directions

It was a pleasure to attend the 2024 Seafood Directions conference in

Hobart recently. A significant number of fishing businesses from around Australia were present, with Queensland being very well represented.

The key takeaways for me from attending are: there definitely is a need for commercial fishing, as the demand for seafood around the world cannot be met by farming alone; and there is significant discussion around potential additional nutritional benefits of wild-caught seafood over farmed seafood.

Yes, there are many challenges, but that's no different to a lot of other industries and we have to ensure that we are prepared as best we can for those challenges as they arise.

AGM in Mooloolaba

Later this month, QSIA's AGM will be held in Mooloolaba. I want to take this opportunity to thank the current board for their support and guidance.

There is a possibility, after the AGM, a full board will be in place, representing very divergent views, skills and experience. I look forward to opportunities this will bring for QSIA.

David Bobbermen
CEO

STOP PRESS

Miles threatens Moreton Bay bans

PREMIER Steven Miles has threatened more net-fishing bans in Moreton Bay if his Government is re-elected.

In a statement on Sunday, October 6, Mr Miles said: "The combination of net-free fishing zones in Moreton Bay to be implemented after community consultation, alongside the recently announced net-free zone in the Mary River and removal of gillnets from the Great Barrier Reef by 2027, will give recreational fishers access to a bigger, better supply of fish.

In his media release, Mr Miles recalled that the LNP had voted against net free-fishing zones in Cairns, Mackay and Rockhampton.

In a media release headed "What about the consumer?", QSIA CEO David Bobbermen said net-free zones harmed commercial fishers and took product away from seafood consumers.

"Already, commercial fishers have been excluded from large areas of Moreton Bay and they do not fish on weekends. What they do is supply fresh, local, nutritious seafood to the South-East Queensland community. This is seafood with low carbon miles and sustainable in every interpretation of the word."

David added: "This is a very disappointing, but perhaps not unexpected, announcement from the State ALP. Yet again, they have vilified Queensland's commercial fishers for perceived political gain. The risk to charismatic megafauna in Moreton Bay is not commercial fishing. It is mud from floods smothering seagrass. It is development and the loss of habitat. It is pollution."

Note: To read the Premier's full statement, go to: <https://www.stevenmiles2024.com/post/miles-doing-what-matters-boatingcampingfishingplan> The QSIA media release has already been distributed to QSIA members. For further information, call David on 0417 631 353.

LAW essentials

FREE LEGAL ADVICE FOR FIRST CONSULTATION

Court Appearances - Anywhere in Queensland - If visited by Fisheries, call us 7 days a week for a free chat. We can appear in any Court in Queensland remotely.

As well as assisting the fishing industry with * Share Fishing Agreements * Buy/Sell or Leasing - Boat/Licence/Quota, our firm can also assist with:-

- Conveyancing
- Family Law
- Wills/Estates,
- Business Law

UPDATES

MORETON BAY - WHITE SPOT DISEASE CLASS ACTION - the claim is still powering along. Big litigation like this takes time as it is complex. The current target to complete is by the end of 2025.

GLADSTONE PORT DREDGING CLASS ACTION - much more complex than the White Spot case, however this is likely to complete around end of 2025 as well.

GET ADVICE from someone who understands the fishing industry.

2000 - Trawl Plan	2009 - Moreton Island Oil/Container Spill
2004 - GBRMP RAP	2012 - CWTH Adjustment Assistance
2006 - Fishing Future Package	2015 - Net Free Zones Compensation
2006 - CRFF quota allocations	2017 - Qantas Toxic Spill Compensation
2008 - Latent Effort Symbol Removal	Current - Gladstone Dredging Class Action
2008 - Moreton Bay Buyback	Current - White Spot Disease Class Action
2024 - Fisheries Structural Adjustment Package	

Contact **Chris Thompson** on (p) 4197 5600 | (m) 0409 517 587
79 Torquay Road, Hervey Bay Q 4655, PO Box 3358, Hervey Bay Q 4655
chris@lawessentials.net.au | www.lawessentials.net.au

www.lawessentials.net.au

“Show us the science” says LNP on net bans

LNP fisheries spokesman Tony Perrett has told the *Queensland Country Life* newspaper that his party would only support scientifically-backed changes to fishing zones.

IN an interview with Mr Perrett published on September 18, *Queensland Country Life* (QCL) senior journalist Sally Gall said: “Peer-reviewed science is what the LNP says it will base its decision-making on when it comes to the future of Queensland’s gillnet fishers, if it should attain government after the October 26 state election.”

She said Katter’s Australian Party moved to disallow the government’s attempt to ban gillnet fishing in the Gulf of Carpentaria in Parliament’s last sitting week, saying it would force the government and the LNP to put on public record if they support the fishing industry “or if they want to be led by the ear from the environmental extremists at UNESCO”.

Last year, on June 5, World Environment Day, the state’s fishing fraternity found out via a joint government media release that gillnet fishing would be banned in waters off the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

That resulted in a rally outside Parliament House in August, then in October it was discovered that the bans would extend to gillnet fishers in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The 57th Parliament was dissolved before KAP’s motion was debated, but Opposition fisheries spokesperson Tony Perrett said in the interview that the LNP would only support scientifically backed changes to fishing zones.

“We don’t get access to any of the information the Government apparently made its decisions on,” Mr Perrett said.

“I’m very cautious. Commercial and recreational fishers alike, and charter boat operators, think the Government has made decisions based on an ideological point of view.

“They’re telling me there’s a loss of confidence in the fisheries department, linked back to Government policies.

“We won’t be making a decision based on ideology but on peer-reviewed science.”

Sally Gall wrote in the QCL story that, according to KAP leader Robbie Katter, his party, “unlike the Brisbane major parties”, are fierce advocates for Queensland’s fishing industry.

“We will not stand by, letting UNESCO run Queensland, decimating vital industries on a whim,” he said.

“The department and the Minister themselves admit that there is no scientific evidence backing the bans in the Gulf. In fact, the only data they collect is from the law-abiding, hard-working fishers that are looking down the barrel of financial decimation.”

Mr Perrett said a Government he was a part of would require regulatory impact statements to accompany any major decisions going forward, saying the current Government had denied any need for them.

Compensation payouts

He also said a Crisafulli Government would ensure fishers were fairly compensated for any changes to their livelihoods.

“After failing to be upfront with industry with the changes to fishing zone regulations, Labor is now refusing to say whether these small business operators have received compensation for the impact to their livelihoods,” he said.

“There must be fair compensation for fishers who will lose their businesses because of Labor’s fisheries regulatory changes.

“The industry deserves transparency, not more uncertainty.”

The QCL article said Mr Perrett questioned Fisheries Minister Mark Furner during Estimates hearings earlier this year, asking how much of the \$125 million compensation promised



had been paid to fishers impacted by the decision to phase out gillnets in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the rezoning of the Great Sandy Marine Park.

At the time, Mr Furner said the Queensland Rural & Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) had received 1,330 applications and \$51.1 million had been provided.

The latest figures from his office show that on Monday, September 16, more than \$71 million has been approved for 1,382 application parts, with more than \$61 million of this paid out.

Some 263 application parts have been declined that did not meet eligibility criteria, and 1,936 application parts have been received in total.

There are 291 being processed or awaiting approval.

Stages 1 and 2 of the process have closed, and stage 3, for supply chain business diversification, the surrender of fishing nets, and the refit of boats used in large mesh gillnet fishing, closes on January 30, 2025.

Mr Furner said that, as of July 19, QRIDA had received 36 applications for stage 3.

“We acknowledge the impacts of changes to gillnet fishing rules on the industry and the contribution of commercial fishers who have already taken up the opportunity to apply for structural adjustment payments,” he said.

“The Government is committed to a sustainable seafood industry in Queensland and to protect the World

Continued on page 7.

Angry reaction to Labor Government’s Mary River net ban threat

A THREAT by the State Government to impose yet another netting ban in the Great Sandy Strait region – this time without any consultation or impact assessment – has drawn an angry reaction from the QSIA.

State Government MP for Maryborough Bruce Saunders in late September issued a media release promising to close the area at the mouth of the Mary River to net fishing if the Labor Party won the October election.

In response, QSIA Executive Officer David Bobbermen said: “This is the sort of ill-considered one-sided pre-election perceived vote-grabber that makes the general public so cynical about politicians.

“QSIA is aware of secretive negotiations between the Member, the Premier and members of the recreational fishing community in the lead-up to this announcement,” David said in a media statement.

“At no point were other stakeholders, nor department staff, consulted about this election promise.

“The area in question was widely discussed as part of the consultation process for the new zoning plan for the Great Sandy Strait Marine Park, put into effect by the Queensland State Government just a few months ago (May 2024).

“This was the end of an extensive consultation period, a draft Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS), more consultation and the final RIS. This process went on for several years.

“As the proposed net free area is just outside the Great Sandy Strait Marine Park, the State Government had the ability to make it a net free area in May

Continued from page 6.

Heritage status of the Great Barrier Reef.

Taking a dig at the Opposition, Mr Furner added that when last in government, David Crisafulli had

– similar to the Net Free Zones in the Gulf of Carpentaria.”

David said the issue is not just about resource reallocation but about procedural fairness when such an extensive piece of work has just been completed. It is an issue that should concern all Queenslanders.

“Politicians wonder why the community is cynical, when years of work can be destroyed by a political party’s decision to gain points in the lead-up to an election. This sets a very dangerous precedent for all Queenslanders.

“Queensland has only one House of Parliament, which may not be an issue if all the checks and balances put in place are adhered to. Unfortunately, come election time, it appears that these can be forgotten about.

“‘Policy’ is the golden key. So, every election, Queenslanders hold their breath wondering what changes will be announced, destroying the often great work done in the prior terms of Government.

He added: “Premier Miles wants to protect the Queensland way of life, which is a very noble thing, but this cannot be done unilaterally, particularly with a public resource like fish. Where is the voice of the seafood consuming public – those who love our fish, but rely on their local fishmonger to buy it from?”

Saunders statement

In a media release headed “Net-free Mary River to benefit Maryborough recreational fishers”, Mr Saunders said a re-elected Miles Government will remove gillnets from the Mary River.

“The move would boost stocks of fish that are favourites among local

“sat around the LNP cabinet table and helped cut 28 per cent of jobs at Fisheries Queensland”, the article concluded.

Further information: <https://www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au/>



anglers, such as barramundi, bass, mangrove jack and golden perch,” Mr Saunders said. (See “Note” below)

“Under this plan, the Queensland Rural & Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) would be directed to manage a scheme to compensate commercial fishers impacted by the proposed closure, as they did with the Great Sandy Strait Structural Adjustment Scheme.

“Line trawl and crab nets would still be permitted within the gillnet-free zone.”

He added that the Miles Government has already restricted gillnet fishing on the Great Barrier Reef, introducing a plan late last year, and that gillnet fishing in the GBR World Heritage Area will be phased out by mid-2027.

Speaking about his promised net ban, Mr Saunders said: “This is something that I’ve been fighting to deliver for Maryborough residents, who want the nets out of the Mary River, ensuring local fishers can benefit from the fantastic fish population in our river.

“Only a Labor Government will give Mary River communities the chance to cash in on the tourism bonanza that comes with well-managed net-free zones in key locations.”

“This is just another way that I’m putting the Maryborough electorate first. Only Labor will deliver for recreational fishers.”

Note: Golden perch are a wholly freshwater fish that occur naturally only in Murray-Darling waterways and the Fitzroy River in Central Queensland, and there are relatively few bass in the Mary River system, except for where, like golden perch, they may have been artificially stocked in impoundments.

Nick Dametto slams pathetic NQ net ban

KATTER'S Australian Party Deputy Leader Nick Dametto has attacked the State and Federal Labor Governments for "their ill-conceived gillnet ban", calling it "a pathetic attempt to score international political points rather than a genuine effort to protect threatened species".

The Hinchinbrook MP's comments follow the release of a James Cook University report that revealed the dugong population in Far North Queensland is "thriving".

"Labor's gillnet bans are nothing but a farce," Mr Dametto said in a statement in August. "They made a big song and dance about protecting dugongs and other species on the east coast but now we're hearing from

marine experts that dugong populations are actually doing very well, and that's before the nets are even completely out of the water.

"Eight months of reduced gillnetting is hardly going to make the dugong population magically spring back to life and, if the Government tries to suggest that, then I would call that absurd.

"Banning gillnets across the east coast and up in the Gulf of Carpentaria in order to protect threatened and endangered species is clearly unnecessary.

"It's very clear that gillnetting, especially in creeks and rivers, doesn't harm dugongs or other threatened species. They've cooked up a solution to a problem that doesn't even exist, all in the name of satisfying UNESCO and the WWF.

"Meanwhile, they're destroying a good, honest Australian industry that



provides our nation with fresh, wild-caught seafood.

"As small family businesses collapse and local fish and chip shops struggle for fresh local produce, the evidence is mounting to show the east coast has a healthy marine environment, and the holes in UNESCO and our Government's agenda are becoming shamefully obvious."

combined with school holidays) and a timeframe for a policy post-implementation review and, beyond that, periodic reviews.

QSIA would like a policy post-implementation review, 12 months from the policy being published, and then every second year thereafter.

QSIA is critical of the consultation process. We believe input from the public who are responding from an ideological position rather than an informed one (an understanding of the complex legislative environment of commercial fishing licencing) is likely to provide a biased outcome. Furthermore, the leading nature of the questions in the online survey is very disappointing. No direct effort was made in the questions to seek guidance on what would be considered the "core workings" of the policy.

Finally, QSIA urges Fisheries Queensland to re-engage with key stakeholders after all submissions are considered, but before the policy is published, to ensure the content of the submissions has been understood and considered. Additionally, at that point, the communication to, and education of, Licence Holders regarding the policy will need to be agreed.

Note: A copy of the full submission is available from QSIA (and has already been emailed to QSIA Members).

QSIA submission on licence cancellation

QSIA has lodged a submission with Fisheries Queensland (FQ) on FQ's draft policy for compliance-related suspension or cancellation of a licence by the FQ chief executive.

In summary, QSIA has said we are supportive of any reforms that are derived from robust, broad consultation, and have a clear need and objective. However, in the case of this draft policy, we struggle to understand either the need for or the objective of this policy.

As drafted currently, the policy raises more questions than it answers. It lacks clarity around the triggers for the policy (such as "exhibit behaviour of an unwillingness or a lack of the necessary skills, knowledge, or experience to comply with fisheries legislation"), with no guidance to the FQ chief executive on whether these subjective triggers have been met equitably or consistently. Many terms in the policy require more definition or a clear framework for their determination.

The consensus is that the policy, as currently drafted, sets a potentially impossible high standard for commercial and charter fishers to meet, in an environment where micro-analysis of activity is either already in place or planned to be implemented, via independent onboard monitoring.

Significant concern exists that the policy is deliberately drafted the way it is to "set us up to fail".

QSIA recommends that Fisheries Queensland adopt a "Guidance Note" system, as used in other industries, to inform industry and Queensland Boating & Fisheries Patrol (QBFP) officers, ensuring a more consistent interpretation and application of rules.

Protection for owners of a leased licence also appears to be lacking. The Act does provide some protection, but the lack of information flowing back to a licence-owner (the lessor), does make them an innocent party to this policy.

The Primary Commercial Fishing Licence is described by FQ as having property-type characteristics, and care must be exercised to ensure that these are maintained.

FQ does not appear to have a framework for Policy Implementation.

QSIA has drawn upon the Australian Government Guide to Policy Impact Analysis for guidance on what a successful framework might entail. The major limitations identified are the short consultation period (60 days is considered more appropriate when small businesses are involved,

NEWS

Minns Government funds NSW peak industry body

THE Minns Government has delivered on an election commitment by providing \$1,050,000 towards establishment of a peak body for the commercial fishing industry in New South Wales.

In a statement in August, Minister for Agriculture Tara Moriarty said the aim of the funding was to deliver an effective advocate to work with Government in promoting a viable commercial fishing sector.

"The commercial fishing industry is a powerhouse in the New South Wales economy, contributing \$170 million annually and directly employing more than 1,600 people." Ms Moriarty said.

"It is a vital industry on the NSW coast and one that the NSW Government is committed to supporting.

"The NSW Government made an

election commitment to establish a single united commercial fishing peak body, and over the last 10 months worked with the fishers and their businesses to foster the setting up of the new peak body, which has been named the NSW Wild Harvest Fishers' Association Incorporated (WHFA)."

She has previously said the new body would focus on industry representation, advocacy, building the industry's capacity to participate in shared decision-making as well as consultation and communication with commercial fishers.

In her August statement, the Minister said the WHFA will receive \$350,000 per year for three years to assist it actively engage with the State's commercial fishers and allow the industry to speak with one voice.

The seed funding will assist the WHFA to become a self-sustaining peak body for the industry that can effectively represent and advocate for the sector.


She said the WHFA has been developed through an industry-



NSW Premier Chris Minns.

facilitated process, involving consultation between two standing industry organisations to establish a single united peak industry body.


The WHFA appointed John Wilson as the inaugural independent Chair. Mr Wilson's previous roles include Company Secretary of the Seafood Co-operative Centre Company, Director at the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, and General Manager Business and Chief Financial Officer at the Fisheries Research & Development Corporation (FRDC).



MARINE PROPULSION AND MARINE POWER GENERATION


PROPULSION

Isuzu Japan Factory
Marinised Up to
730hp and 15.6 Litre



6W61TCX-730hp


Isuzu Marinised
by Zenith Up to
174hp bobtail or
with transmission



4LE1-53hp

GENSETS


Zenith units 6KVA to 90KVA
Optional Sound Cabinet's
available to suit all models



4J62-30 KVA

Available with heat exchange or keel cooling

The Yard Brisbane, Shed 42, 50 Barku Court, Hemmant, Brisbane, Qld 4174
P 07 3369 4599 F 07 3369 0459
E info@zenith.net.au www.zenith.net.au www.isuzumarine.com.au



FOR DIESEL ENGINES, RELIABILITY IS EVERYTHING ISUZU

From previous page

The peak body is now operational, with a constitution, and is in the process of engaging a Chief Executive Officer.

Discussions and stakeholder meetings at the industry level have been ongoing throughout the year to bring commercial fishers from the two separate industry bodies together, adopt a constitution, and determine how the body can assist industry, she said.

“The NSW Government wants to ensure we have a viable, productive and sustainable commercial fisheries sector now and for future generations,” Ms Moriarty said.

“We recognise the challenges facing the industry, and that’s why it’s important to have a united peak body, to advocate and work with Government to sustainably grow the sector, which plays a major role in many of our coastal communities.

“The NSW Wild Harvest Fishers’ Association will be engaging with commercial fishers across NSW to build its membership and will also undertake elections to replace the interim board.”

Chair John Wilson said he welcomes the NSW Government’s funding towards the newly established peak fishing industry body for three years as being crucial.

“The board is very grateful to the Minister for honouring the Government’s election commitment to contribute funding for the peak industry body.

“We are looking forward to working closely with the Minister and her Department to make a positive difference for NSW wild harvest fishers and the NSW economy.”

The NSW Government is also moving to establish a peak body to represent the recreational fishing sector.

Note: Although this new body has been referred to as the first single peak body for the industry in New South Wales, the then Commercial Fishing Advisory Council (CFAC) performed the same role prior to the election of the Carr Government in 1995.

APPOINTMENTS

Julie Collins is new Minister

TASMANIAN MP Julie Collins is the new federal Fisheries Minister, replacing Murray Watt in the portfolio in a ministerial reshuffle in July.

Ms Collins is now Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry and also retains her role as Minister for Small Business.

Senator Watt is now Minister for Employment & Workplace Relations.

Ms Collins represents the seat of Franklin, which includes the Huon



Valley, and its industries are listed as including apples, pears, small fruits, aquaculture, fishing, beef cattle, sheep, forestry, cottage industry, vineyards and tourism.

Susan McDonald criticises Govt UNESCO decision

SHADOW Minister for Northern Australia, Senator Susan McDonald, has criticised the Federal Government’s net-fishing bans because of pressure from the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

In a speech at the Developing Northern Australia Conference in Karratha, Western Australia, Senator McDonald outlined a future Coalition Government’s approach to the portfolio.

“The Government needs to stop doing deals with UNESCO over the Great Barrier Reef, putting at risk fishing businesses, and tourism and Indigenous communities,” she said.

She described the Federal Government’s “Northern Australia Action Plan 2024-2029” as a “no action plan” that offers little hope for generational change in the region.

“This Government has done nothing to further the development of Northern Australia,” she said. “Their only agenda has been to tinker with programs and initiatives of the previous Coalition government.

Senator McDonald said the Government claimed it wants to develop water resources as one of six pillars – “but the first thing Labor did



after the election was cancel funding for the Cairns Water Supply, Hells Gate Dam, Urannah Dam, the Bowen Pipeline, the Richmond Irrigation Scheme and the Hughenden Irrigation Project”.

“Instead of Production Tax Credits – still not designed, still not explained, still not implemented – we need to urgently consider reformation of the zonal tax offset for Northern Australia.

“We need to invest in important infrastructure, such as the Outback Way.

“Increased competition among airlines is essential to foster tourism, economic development and population growth.

“We need to invest in roads, transport, housing, access to health and emergency services, communication connectivity, education, job creation, and community safety.

Greg Dyer leaves SFM CEO role

THE Sydney Fish Market has announced the resignation of Greg Dyer as Chief Executive Officer, effective, 16 September 2024.

An SFM spokesperson said that, during his five-year tenure at the helm, “Mr Dyer has been responsible for driving significant transformation at Sydney Fish Market, including preparing the Market to relocate to a world-class facility that is destined to be Sydney’s most significant harbourside building since the Opera House.

“I joined Sydney Fish Market at a pivotal moment in its history and in five years, much has been achieved,” Mr Dyer said.

“It’s now time for me to step back to focus on the next chapter of my career, which includes non-executive roles but also spending more time with my beautiful family.

“I look forward to celebrating the opening of the new Sydney Fish Market in 2025, and cheering on from the sidelines,” he said.

Sydney Fish Market Chair, Craig Davison said: “Greg has contributed

significantly to Sydney Fish Market and has been an invaluable strength in guiding the organisation through what is set to be one of the most iconic periods in its history. The organisation is grateful for his contributions and wishes him the best in his future endeavours.”

The spokesperson said a search to secure a new Chief Executive Officer has commenced.

“In the interim Stephen Groom, Chief Financial Officer, will assume the day-to-day responsibilities for the Market’s operations and Michael Guilday, General Counsel and Head of Property, will assume responsibility for the transition to the new Sydney Fish Market,” they said.

“Sydney Fish Market is committed to a seamless leadership transition and maintaining its focus on the move to the world class new Sydney Fish Market on Blackwattle Bay in 2025.

“Sydney Fish Market is the lifeblood of the seafood industry in Australia and the largest fish market in the southern hemisphere. Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd is owned equally by the harvest and post-harvest sectors of the New South Wales seafood industry – The Catchers Trust of NSW and the Sydney Fish Market Tenants & Merchants.



Greg Dyer (right), who recently resigned as CEO of the Sydney Fish Market (here with former SFM Chair Grahame Turk [left] and Nationals federal parliamentary leader David Littleproud at an event in Canberra in 2022).

Reef HQ aquarium rebuild thrown \$100M lifeline

THE Reef HQ aquarium in Townsville has been thrown a \$100-million lifeline.

The ABC has reported that the Reef HQ complex has been mothballed since the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) began a refurbishment in 2021 but the Townsville City Council has reallocated \$100 million from a new concert hall to fund the aquarium project.

The Reef HQ project was initially expected to cost \$80 million and was set to include a new facade and roof, among other works, but 18 months later the GBRMPA announced grander plans, including a proposal to demolish and rebuild the aquarium tank.

A Senate Estimates hearing in May revealed that the GBRMPA never had the extra funding needed to commence the extra work.

The ABC reported that “Reef HQ became a political football after the delivery of this year’s federal budget, in which no extra money was allocated to the project”.

At a Special Council Meeting recently, nine Townsville City Councillors “reluctantly” voted to reallocate \$100 million in federal funding originally allocated to build a new concert hall.

The councillors who voted in favour of the motion still aired their frustrations towards the Federal Government for not stumping up extra cash for the aquarium.

Earlier this year, the GBRMPA, which is leading the aquarium rebuild, said it was still developing the designs for the facility. The rebuild was originally scheduled to open in 2026, but it is now unclear when it will be completed, the ABC reported.

Meanwhile, Shadow Environment Minister Jonno Duniham claims the Federal Government has been caught claiming Coalition funding for the GBR again. This included \$80.1 million that the Coalition committed towards the GBRMPA to refurbish Reef HQ and a shifting of \$100 million that was earmarked for the Townsville Concert Hall by the former Coalition Government.

GBR '24 outlook: an ecosystem under pressure

A REPORT released recently by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) has concluded the overall outlook for the Reef “remains one of future deterioration due largely to climate change”.

“This is despite some habitats and species improving over the past five years thanks to windows of low disturbance, and decades of protection and management,” GBRMPA says.

A GBRMPA media release says the 2024 Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report is the fourth in a series of comprehensive five-year reports on the Reef’s health, pressures, management and potential future.

“It found climate-driven threats such as warming oceans and severe cyclones have been compounding other impacts from crown-of-thorns star-

fish outbreaks, poor water quality and some fishing activities.

“Some ecosystems, such as coral habitats and seagrass meadows, have improved over the reporting period, indicating the Reef retains natural resilience. However, the Reef’s capacity to tolerate and recover will be compromised by a rapidly changing climate.

“World-leading management initiatives – such as work to control the coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish and increased ranger patrols to ensure people are doing the right thing – are helping protect biodiversity and supporting the Reef’s resilience.”

Recently-reappointed GBRMPA CEO Josh Thomas said the Great Barrier Reef is a vast and spectacular ecosystem and one of the most complex natural systems on Earth.

“... Ecosystems across the world are facing urgent and present threats from a warming climate. Global, national, and local action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is vital,” Mr Thomas said.

“We will continue to work with Traditional Owners, partners, and communities to build ecosystem resilience to support the Reef’s future. (Our) Great Barrier Reef Blueprint for Climate Resilience & Adaptation describes key actions we are taking and those needed to address the challenge of climate change impacts on the Reef.”

Note: Although GBRMPA acknowledges most commercial fisheries in the GBR Marine Park are sustainable, it does continue to highlight in discussion of Marine Park seafood stocks the view that pink snapper and pearl perch stocks are depleted, despite the fact the great bulk of catches of those two species are landed south of the Marine Park.

To read the section of the report on fishing, go to: <https://outlookreport.gbrmpa.gov.au/effects-human-use/5-commercial-and-non-commercial-use/54-fishing/541-current-condition-and-trends-fishing>

To read the full report, go to: <https://outlookreport.gbrmpa.gov.au/>

Mackay meetings with politicians over net issues

INDUSTRY members have been meeting with State and Federal politicians and candidates in the Mackay region to discuss a range of issues.

As shown in the photo below, QSIA Patron Keith Payne VC and Director David Caracciolo have met with LNP candidate for the State seat of Mackay Nigel Dalton (left) and federal MP for Dawson, Andrew Willcox (right).

Mr Payne, a retired net fisher, said – like everyone in the seafood industry – he failed to understand any reason for the bans on net fishing along the Great Barrier Reef coast and in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

In a separate meeting, industry representatives raised the issue of seafood businesses closing down because of lack of supply, the inshore net closure and possible changes to NX licence that David said could “at least make it workable for some”.

Attending the second meeting were (from left) State MP for Whitsunday Amanda Camm, David Caracciolo, Paul Vickers, Nigel Dalton and Debbie Ahern from Debbie’s Seafood.



IT'S SUPER WITH ALL THE TACKLE.



At Australian Food Super, we pride ourselves on providing solid investment returns, competitive insurance products and most importantly, the help and support our members need to get the most from their super.

And we've been doing it for over 35 years.

So if you're looking for a super fund

that understands you and the industry you work in, have a look at Australian Food Super.

To find out how Australian Food Super can help you plan for the future, call Daniel Musson on (02) 9230 1100 or visit ausfoodsuper.com.au for more information.



Australian FOOD SUPER

FEED YOUR FUTURE

Australian Food Super products issued by Australian Meat Industry Superannuation Pty Ltd (ABN 25 002 981 919, AFSL No. 238929) as Trustee for the Australian Meat Industry Superannuation Trust (ABN 28 342 064 803). PDS and TMD available at ausfoodsuper.com.au

SEAFOOD CONFERENCE

Successful Seafood Directions event draws record numbers

THE biennial Seafood Directions conference and exhibition in Hobart in September has drawn a record 580 delegates.

Delegates were reminded of the importance of seafood to Hobart, with the event held at the Grand Chancellor Hotel, directly opposite fishing boat berths in the heart of the city.

It ran from Tuesday to Thursday, September 12 to 14, with a series of industry meetings conducted ahead of the conference.

Award winners

Winners of the National Seafood Industry Awards and the Hall of Fame inductees were announced at the conference dinner on September 12.

Award winners were:

- Business Large: Tassal Group

- Business Small: Melshell Sea Farms
- Primary Producer: Troy Billin – Yamba Fisheries
- Health and Safety: Brett McCallum (WA)
- Research Development: Professional Fishers’ knowledge to inform research and management of sawfish and river sharks
- Environment: OceanWatch Australia
- People and Development: Austral Fisheries
- Promotion: The Fish Girl
- Take Away Fish and Chips: Hooked on Middleton Beach
- Restaurant: Hursey Seafoods
- Seafood Experience: Coorong Wild Seafood
- Young Achiever: Sophie Sharland
- Industry Ambassador: Katherine Winchester.

The Hall of Fame inductees were:



Hall of Fame inductee Brian Jeffriess.

- Noel Gogerly
- Anne Whalley
- Jill Briggs
- Angus Callander
- Mark Ryan
- Brian Jeffriess
- Rob Fish.

Note: There will be an extended feature article about Seafood Directions published in the next edition of *Queensland Seafood*.



A record 580 delegates attended the 2024 Seafood Directions Conference in Hobart in September.



Appropriately, Seafood Directions was held opposite fishing vessel docks in the heart of the city.

RESEARCH NEWS

DAF tackling shark depredation

THE Miles Government is leading research into ways to reduce shark depredation affecting fishers off the State’s coastline.

Fisheries Minister Mark Furner said in a statement that shark depredation – when a fish caught in fishing apparatus is completely or partially consumed by a shark before it can be brought aboard – can have negative socio-economic impacts on fishers in certain fishing sectors due to the loss of target catch and fishing gear.

“Researchers from Queensland’s Department of Agriculture & Fisheries (DAF) are leading the project, which is co-funded by the Australian Government through the Fisheries Research & Development Corporation (FRDC).” Mr Furner said the project, running from March 2024 to October 2026, involves three phases.

Phase 1 is the identification of potential solutions from measures currently or previously trialed round the world, utilising information from scientific papers, technical reports and fishers. Stakeholders in Indigenous, commercial, recreational and charter fisheries will be invited to participate in a national online survey to gather additional information about potentially suitable solutions.

Phase 2 is a series of stakeholder workshops that will be conducted at regional centres in Queensland, Western Australia, Northern Territory and New South Wales (where shark depredation has been identified as a common issue).

The workshops will involve fishers, fishery managers, researchers, Indigenous representatives and other stakeholders, and explore the impacts of shark depredation on fishing, and what mitigation measures have been or are currently being tested or used.

The workshops will develop a robust experimental design for testing potential mitigation solutions in a quantitative and comparable way.

Everyone interested in taking part in the workshops should email jonathan.mitchell@daf.qld.gov.au

In phase 3, if promising mitigation solutions are identified, trials will be considered in different States and under different fishing scenarios to assess their effectiveness.

Other partners in this project include WA’s Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development, the NT’s Department of Tourism, Industry & Trade, Bond University, James Cook University and Flinders University.

Queensland fishers have already been supporting the collection of data to try to quantify depredation through DAF’s Boat Ramp Survey program.

There are more options for fishers to submit depredation data with the latest reporting enhancements available in the recently updated Qld Fishing 2.0 app, which is [free to download from your favourite app store](#).

The Queensland Government also invests in other projects to learn more about the behaviour and species of sharks that live in our waterways, and how we interact with them. You can find more information [here](#).

“We’ve listened to commercial, recreational and charter fishers who’ve nominated shark depredation as a major concern,” Mr Furner said. “Nobody likes their catch being taken by a shark, so developing effective mitigation methods to reduce shark depredation is a ‘win-win’ for all.

“It will allow for better co-existence between fishers and sharks, while ensuring our world-class fisheries continue to thrive.

“I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this important research, and the positive impacts it will have for fishers and industry.”

Crispian Ashby, FRDC General Manager Research & Development Investment, added that shark depredation has been reported as a significant issue in several jurisdictions around Australia.

“FRDC is pleased that this research will build on previous workshops and studies undertaken to identify whether potential solutions exist.”

Dugong survey finds “thriving” FNQ population

AN aerial survey has found a “thriving” population of dugong in Far North Queensland, with a report from James Cook University (JCU) saying the coast from Mission Beach to Cape York is home to about 7,000 dugong.

Released in August, the JCU report, *2023 Dugong Aerial Survey: Mission Beach to Cape York*, completes the Queensland coastal surveys, with the Mission Beach to Moreton Bay report released last year.

Over 17 years, the dugong population in the far northern Queensland area has grown at approximately 2 per cent per year.

Chris Cleguer, JCU’s lead dugong researcher, said: “Our results show dugong populations in the far north are thriving overall. This is great news and we hope this trend will continue in future monitoring surveys.”

To read the full report, go to: <https://www.tropwater.com/post/dugong-survey-reveals-thriving-population-in-far-north-queensland>

Govt puts \$15M into aquaculture

THE State Government has earmarked another \$15 million for development of aquaculture in Queensland.

In a statement on September 13, Fisheries Minister Mark Furner said the Miles Government will invest \$15 million into the continued growth of Queensland’s booming aquaculture industry.

It coincides with the launch of *The Queensland Aquaculture Strategy 2024–2034*.

Mr Furner said this investment is a further boost to the \$7.5 million committed to aquaculture in March 2023.

The *Queensland Aquaculture Strategy 2024–2034* is available at: <https://www.daf.qld.gov.au/business-priorities/fisheries/industry/aquaculture/strategy>

Studies reveal habitat risk from pollution of Moreton Bay Scientist's warning of a muddy "dead zone"

Two separate reports have highlighted the risk to the marine environment in Moreton Bay from increasing runoff of mud and nutrients, threatening both fisheries productivity and the habitat of species like dugong and turtles.

IN the first report, published earlier this year, the University of Queensland (UQ) says that sampling during and after the February 2022 Brisbane River flood has sounded a warning about the future of Moreton Bay with climate change predicted to bring more extreme weather.

Alistair Grinham from the School of Civil Engineering said recent floods deposited mud across 98 per cent of the Bay, compromising its remaining areas of clean sand and hastening the growth of a muddy "dead zone".

"In 1970, Moreton Bay had about 400 square kilometres of clean sand and now it has just 30 square kilometres," Dr Grinham said.

"Clean sand is defined as having less than one per cent of mud content, so some areas may look lovely and white,

but the flood sediment is insidiously changing the nature of the seabed and affecting water chemistry.

"While sand is inert, flood sediment contains clay, organic matter and nutrients from rural and suburban areas which microbes break down to release nitrogen.

"This process is a background stressor across the whole of Moreton Bay, contributing more and more nutrients to the water."

Dr Grinham said the levels of nitrogen measured in the water during the study indicated Moreton Bay already has a big problem.

"We estimate the amount of ammonium the sediment is contributing to the Bay's water to be equivalent to

180 years of sewage plant discharges," he said.

"When you load a system with nutrients and mud like this, phytoplankton thrive and block sunlight reaching the seabed, which is already being smothered by mud, and these factors change what can live there.

"It is a process already underway in Moreton Bay."

The survey captured images of flood sediment settling as mud around seagrass areas near Manly.

The study collected and analysed sediment from 47 sites around Moreton Bay three days after the flood peak and then at more than 200 sites throughout 2022.

Core samples of mud pulled from



The survey captured images of flood sediment settling as mud around seagrass areas near Manly.



Dr Alistair Grinham

the seabed across the Bay were also collected and the results compared with previous studies done in 1970, 2015 and 2019.

"Over the past 50 years, 300 million cubic metres of mud has been washed into Moreton Bay – that's enough to fill 300 Suncorp stadiums," Dr Grinham said.

"A lot of the mud has collected in the central Bay, where the water is deeper, and wind and tidal currents can't disperse it.

"This is where a big mud zone is growing and puts at risk the great habitat wealth of Moreton Bay.

"With climate change meaning we will see more extreme weather events and floods in the future, we desperately need restoration work along the Brisbane River catchment and especially in the Lockyer Valley and Bremer River sub-catchments that flow into the Bay.

"Without restoration work, eventually Moreton Bay will not be able to bounce back from a flood event," Dr Grinham said.

The research is part of a long-term collaboration between UQ, Urban Utilities and the Port of Brisbane.

The research found no evidence to suggest there was a health risk associated with swimming in the waters of Moreton Bay when an algal bloom was not present.

The [research paper](#) is published in *Science of the Total Environment*.

Further information: <https://stories.uq.edu.au/news/2024/study-reveals-flood-mud-burden-on-moreton-bay/index.html>

2000-2018 study

The second report examines changes in water quality in Moreton Bay and its major estuaries over the years 2000 to 2018. The authors are affiliated with three universities, State Government departments and other institutions.

The authors say the catchment of Moreton Bay has been significantly modified since European settlement began in the 1820s, and these changes have not only changed the type of pollutants (nutrients and sediments) and the loading rates delivered to Moreton Bay but also impacted on marine food webs and life cycles.

The authors analysed long-term water quality monitoring data and mud samples to determine the impact of catchment land-use changes

and management efforts to reduce pollution over this almost two-decade period.

While improvements in water quality have been observed in some parts of the Bay in response to management actions, water quality trends indicate that population growth and land development across the catchment is having a significant impact.

Specifically, sediment and nitrogen loads threaten the health of Moreton Bay into the future and management of these pollutants is critical.

The authors concluded that, to maintain the improvements in water quality (nitrogen and phosphorus) that have been achieved over the past 20 years, it is critical that:

- ❑ management actions that reduce diffuse sediment loads are prioritised and funded; and
- ❑ innovations in nitrogen management from both rural and urban landscapes and sought out and invested in.

"Despite the dramatic reductions in dissolved nutrients discharged from the region's waste-water treatment plants two decades ago, water quality in most estuaries continues to be higher than the Queensland Government Water Quality Objectives," they say.

"Water quality in the Bay indicates that the 800,000 additional people (approximately 50 per cent increase in population) residing in the region in the past two decades has added additional nutrient loads to the catchments of Moreton Bay – replacing some of the nutrient load reductions achieved through upgrading wastewater treatment facilities.

"Changes in catchment land use that have occurred, and continue to occur, in the catchment are driving increases in mud and sediments across Moreton Bay. These increases are a cause of concern for water quality and ecosystem processes in the Bay.

"Catchment-scale action is critical if we are to protect the habitats of Moreton Bay and their resilience into the future."

Further information: <https://moretonbayfoundation.org/articles/water-quality-in-moreton-bay-and-its-catchment-change-over-20-years/>

GBR MANAGEMENT

GBRMPA celebrates 20 years since 2004 Reef rezoning

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has held a workshop in Townsville to mark 20 years since the rezoning of the Marine Park that took green zones from 5 per cent to 33 per cent of its waters and banned commercial fishing of one form or another from some 70 per cent of its 344,000-square-kilometre area.

SIGNIFICANT gains in fish numbers and improved resilience for the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) are some of the benefits claimed by GBR Marine Park Authority CEO Josh Thomas from what he characterised as a “courageous” zoning plan introduced 20 years ago.

“July 2024 marks 20 years since the introduction of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan,” Mr Thomas said in a statement coinciding with the Townsville workshop.

“The zoning plan immediately resulted in far greater protection for the world heritage listed area – increasing the no-take area from five to 33 per cent.

“At the time, the zoning plan was widely acclaimed as the global

benchmark for the conservation of marine ecosystems and provided a model for other large-scale marine protected areas around the world.”

Mr Thomas claimed there was strong evidence of the zoning plan’s effectiveness in protecting biodiversity and building resilience for the Reef.

“No-take marine zones – or green zones as they are more commonly known – have shown to be more resistant to impacts, enabling faster recovery for fish and coral communities that have been impacted by disturbances,” he said.

“The science is undeniably clear, and it is heartening to see the vision and foresight of our predecessors come to bear, while we continue to

strengthen our wider Reef protection and management practises.”



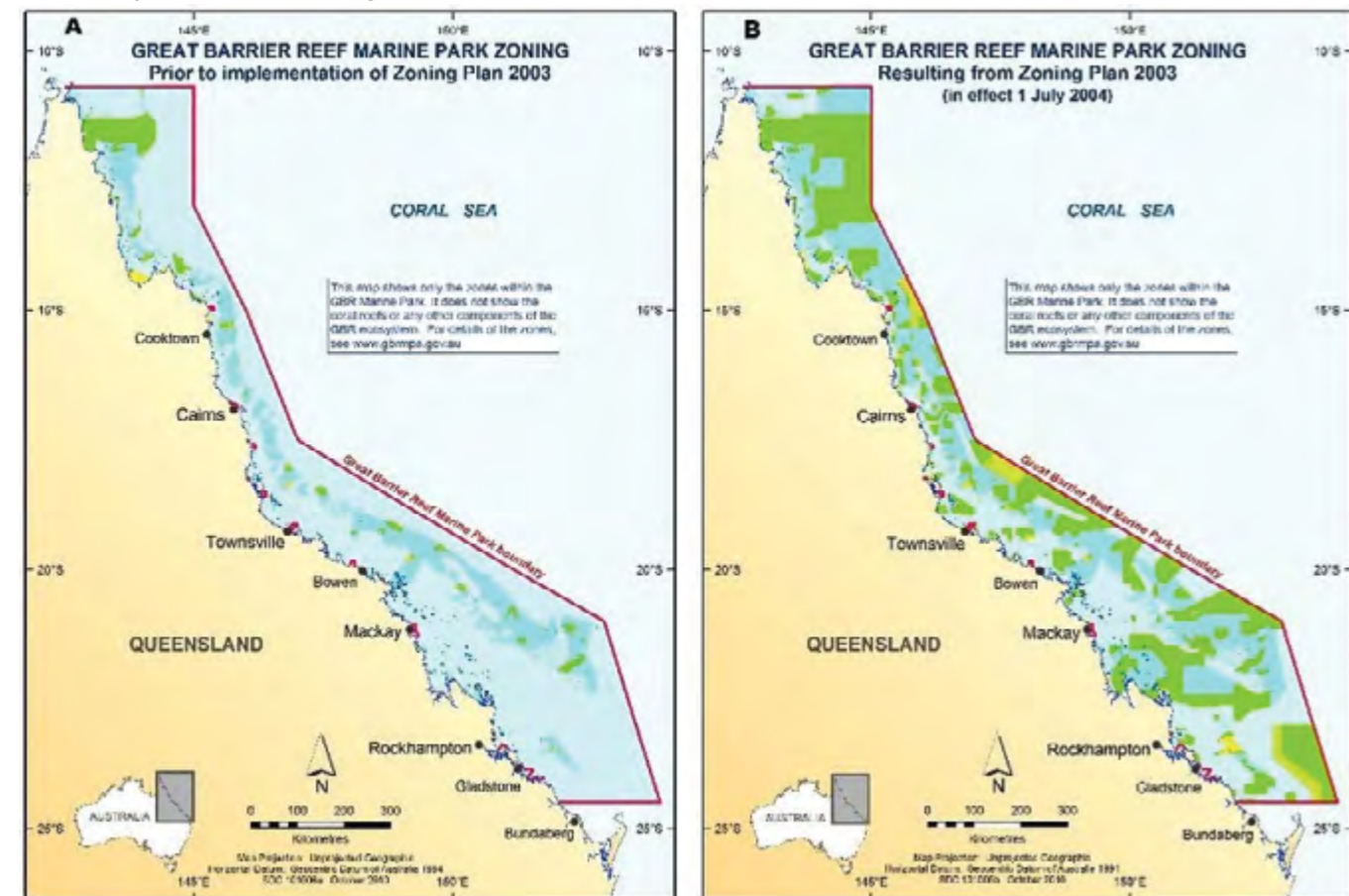
GBRMPA CEO Josh Thomas.

strengthen our wider Reef protection and management practises.”

GBRMPA’s Chief Scientist, Roger Beeden, said the GBR Marine Park is a multi-use area that supports a range of commercial and recreational activities, and attracts millions of visitors each year.

“Balancing conservation and sustainable use is critical to protect the Reef’s health and the values it provides to the community.

“The zoning plan helps manage these activities, from recreational to



GBR Marine Park zoning before and after imposition of the 2004 rezoning. (Green areas are closed to all fishing and the darker blue areas are closed to trawling.)

Study showed promised GBR catch recovery failed to materialise

AN independent scientific study showed promised benefits from fishing bans in the 2004 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park rezoning failed to materialise.

The results of the study by four independent scientists were published in the journal *Ecological Applications* in July 2015.

In the summary of their paper, the researchers said: “A rare opportunity to test hypotheses about potential fishery benefits of large-scale closures was initiated in July 2004 when an additional 28.4 per cent of the 348,000-square-kilometre Great Barrier Reef (GBR) region of Queensland, Australia was closed to all fishing.

“Advice to the Australian and Queensland Governments that supported this initiative predicted these additional closures would generate minimal (10 per cent) initial reductions in both catch and landed value within the GBR area,

commercial use, as well as research opportunities on the Reef,” Dr Beeden said

“The Reef is one of the most complex ecosystems on Earth and, while it is unmatched worldwide in terms of its unique environments and vibrant ecology, it is under pressure from climate change.

“The benefits of zoning have never been more important, given the stress the Reef is under.”

The statement said the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan was officially introduced into Commonwealth legislation on 2 December 2003, creating history at the time by establishing the Great Barrier Reef as the largest protected sea area in the world. The zoning plan then officially came into operation in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park on 1 July 2004.

The zoning plan is enforced by the GRRMPA on a day-to-day basis through the Reef Joint Field Management Program, which is conducted in collaboration with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

with recovery of catches becoming apparent after three years.

“To test these predictions, commercial fisheries data from the GBR area and from the two adjacent (non-GBR) areas of Queensland were compared for the periods immediately before and after the closures were implemented.

“The observed means for total annual catch and value within the GBR declined from pre-closure (2000-2003) levels of 12,780 tonnes and A\$160 million to initial post-closure (2005-2008) levels of 8,143 tonnes and \$102 million: decreases of 35 per cent and 36 per cent respectively.

“Because the reference areas in the non-GBR had minimal changes in catch and value, the beyond-BACI (before, after, control, impact) analyses estimated initial net reductions within the GBR of 35 per cent for both total catch and value.

“There was no evidence of recovery

in total catch levels or any comparative improvement in catch rates within the GBR nine years after implementation.

“These results are not consistent with the advice to governments that the closures would have minimal initial impacts and rapidly generate benefits to fisheries in the GBR through increased juvenile recruitment and adult spillovers.

“Instead, the absence of evidence of recovery in catches to date currently supports an alternative hypothesis that, where there is already effective fisheries management, the closing of areas to all fishing will generate reductions in overall catches similar to the percentage of the fished area that is closed.”

The journal article, “Large-scale expansion of no-take closures within the Great Barrier Reef has not enhanced fishery production”, was authored by W. J. Fletcher, R. E. Kearney, B. S. Wise and W. J. Nash, and published in *Ecological Applications*, Volume 25, Number 5, July 2015.

Further information: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i24431975>

Workshop participants

Participants in the GBRMPA workshop included:

- Cr Jeff Baines, Chair, Reef Guardian Councils Executive Committee;
- Dr Roger Beeden, GBRMPA Chief Scientist;
- David Bobbermen, CEO, Queensland Seafood Industry Association;
- Neil Cambourn, Executive Director, Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service (QPWS);
- Anthony Contarino, Regional Director Great Barrier Reef, QPWS;
- Jon Day, James Cook University;
- Daniel Gschwind, tourism representative;
- Belinda Jago, Branch Head, International Environment, Reef & Ocean Division, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment & Water;
- Elissa Keenan, CEO, Ecotourism Australia;
- Helene Marsh, a professor of

environmental science at James Cook University;

- Kim Martin, recreational fishing representative;
- Bob Muir, traditional owner representative;
- Robert Muir Jr, traditional owner representative;
- Dave Orgill, QPWS Regional Director;
- Gareth Phillips, CEO, Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators;
- Richard Quincey, GBRMPA General Manager of Marine Park Operations;
- John Tanzer, a former GBRMPA CEO and longtime international WWF official;
- John Tapim, National Indigenous Australians Agency;
- Di Tarte, Director, Marine Ecosystem Policy Advisors and a founding force behind the Australian Marine Conservation Society;
- Josh Thomas, GBRMPA CEO; and
- Imogen Zethoven, environmental non-government organisations representative.

Government review of GBRMPA rezoning: lack of transparency, perceptions of bias

Following implementation of the zoning plan for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in 2004, the Federal Government ordered a review of the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*, widely seen at the time as a review of the performance of the GBR Marine Park Authority itself. Amongst other findings, the review reported a lack of transparency and perceptions of bias in the rezoning process.

IN 2005, then Environment & Heritage Minister Ian Campbell appointed a panel to review the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*. The Review Panel, comprising the heads of three Federal Government Departments – Environment & Heritage, Prime Minister & Cabinet and Finance & Administration – presented a 204-page report in April, 2006.

In their summary, the review panel said in part: “The 2003 Zoning Plan covers the entire Marine Park. Its development and implementation was an undertaking of considerable scale and scope with the potential to affect many local and regional communities and stakeholders. Indeed, nearly 32,000 submissions were made over the course of the development of the Plan.

“The final 2003 Zoning Plan drew both accolades and severe criticism in regard to the process and outcome.”

The Panel said: “The 2003 Zoning Plan has resulted in short-term adjustment pressures that have been locally quite intense, particularly as its introduction came at a time when businesses were also being impacted by a number of State fisheries management changes, State coastal marine park zoning changes and external market factors.”

Review findings

In their findings and recommendations, the review panel said in part: “The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan 2003 came into force in July 2004 and implemented the Representative Areas Programme.”

The Review Panel said: “The cumulative regional, social and economic impacts of the State zoning and fisheries management plan changes, that occurred over the same period as the 2003 Zoning Plan, were not assessed, nor were other factors impacting on the viability of business (such as fuel prices and high exchange rates).

“In relation to recreational fishing, there was insufficient attention paid to the effects of restrictions on access for recreational fishing, and in particular the effect on associated businesses.

“There were two alternative views expressed by stakeholders regarding the Representative Areas Programme.

“Many viewed the Programme as a significant conservation achievement, supported the scientific underpinning and considered the Authority had handled the rezoning process well. This stakeholder group included the tourism industry, shipping and maritime safety interests, the scientific community, conservation groups, the diving industry, sailboat operators and some local community groups.

“Other stakeholders expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the process, questioned the scientific basis and considered that the Authority was biased against them.

“The stakeholder group expressing such dissatisfaction did so largely in relation to recreational and commercial fishing, and the associated impacts on land-based businesses such as boatyards, bait and tackle suppliers and land-based fish processing and marketing enterprises. The key elements of their representations were:

- ❑ perceptions that the objectives and intent of the Representative Areas Programme were not clearly communicated;
- ❑ unmanaged expectations about the process and achievable outcomes;
- ❑ inadequate consideration of socio-economic factors at a regional and local level, in particular given recent fisheries management changes;
- ❑ a lack of transparency about the weighting of factors used in decision-making;
- ❑ disagreement with the scientific basis for the Representative Areas Programme, and for specific zoning decisions;



- ❑ inadequate arrangements for consultation in some cases and too-short timelines for making submissions;
- ❑ perceptions that the Authority failed to provide adequate explanatory feedback in cases where specific zoning suggestions were not able to be accommodated;
- ❑ perceptions that there had been inconsistent application of ground rules, lack of natural justice and, in some cases, political interference; and
- ❑ perceptions that the information that was provided in submissions to the process was used to close favourite fishing areas.

The concerns expressed by some stakeholders in regard to the Representative Areas Programme point to an underlying need for the zoning plan development process to have a higher degree of transparency and accountability, such that:

- ❑ stakeholders are appropriately informed of the overarching objectives and rationale for the proposals;
- ❑ there is sufficient time in relation to the complexity of the proposals for stakeholders to prepare comment;
- ❑ the basis for decisions on alternate use is clear and in the public domain; and
- ❑ the social and economic impacts at a local and regional level and how they interact with State and local government initiatives are understood.

The lengthy, comprehensive report – “Review of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975” – can be found at: <https://elibrary.gbrmpa.gov.au/jspui/bitstream/11017/3273/1/Great-Barrier-Reef-Marine-Park-Act-Review-2006.pdf>

Continued on opposite page.

MPs were told rezoning cost to be “no more than \$2.6M”

THE Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority told Federal Parliamentarians the impact of the 2003 rezoning plan on the seafood industry would be as little as \$500,000 and no more than \$2.59 million a year.

In November, 2003 – just a month before Parliament was presented with the Authority’s Representative Areas Programme (RAP) rezoning plan – GBRMPA submitted a report to Federal Parliamentarians telling them: “The principal economic cost of the Zoning Plan – the value of foregone fishing activity – is estimated at between \$0.52 and \$2.59 million per annum, including downstream impacts on fish processors.”

At the time, then QSIA President John Olsen wrote to the Federal

Environment Minister of the day, Dr David Kemp, saying: “... based on the evidence of fishers, the impact of GBRMPA’s proposed new closures will be very severe.

“I am concerned that the seafood industry and the Commonwealth Government will be presented with bills to pay that are far in excess of anything either of us envisaged when the GBRMPA RAP proposals were first discussed or in fact at any point right up to the release of the draft rezoning maps.

“QSIA is doing what we can within our limited resources to test GBRMPA’s claims and to accurately assess the impact on seafood operators, in economic and human terms,” John continued.

Government MPs welcomed review recommendations

SEVERAL federal Coalition Government Members of Parliament welcomed the findings and recommendations of the Review Panel.

For example, De-Anne Kelly, the then Member for the Mackay-based seat of Dawson, said at the time she anticipated increased accountability from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, which she described as a “rogue statutory body”.

“The recommendations go some way towards making the rogue statutory body accountable but we will all be watching carefully to see if there can be sustainable, scientifically-based management that enables the reef and the communities along it to co-exist together and flourish,” Ms Kelly said.

“The review of GBRMPA released today will see more accountability for GBRMPA and decisions based on transparent, scientific and socio-economic analyses rather than the ‘reef doctoring’ which underpinned the recent Representative Areas Program.

“Queenslanders have a genuine interest in protecting the Great Barrier Reef but, as the review stated, in the future the Reef’s management must



be undertaken in a more robust, transparent and accountable way.

“GBRMPA’s poor processes of engagement with all stakeholders, according to the review, have undermined confidence in its accountability.

“There are obvious failures in the Authority’s ability to interact with the entire range of community groups using the reef and this improved accountability will hopefully restore confidence in the processes.”

Ms Kelly said the recommendations should ensure everyone who lived alongside the Reef had accurate information about the state of the Reef and eliminate the scaremongering that was contributing to negative perceptions by some tourists of the Reef as a holiday destination.

“I would also respectfully ask that you seek to independently verify GBRMPA’s advice to you on the costs and benefits of their proposals.”

The QSIA commissioned a study from the University of Queensland’s then Environmental Management Centre (EMC) in 2004, which demonstrated that conservative estimates of the cost of the marine park would be around \$38 million.

These estimates did not take into consideration the need to buy back commercial fishing licences or the impacts on recreational fishing tourism.

An EMC spokesman at the time said the GBRMPA had dismissed the study undertaken by the University of Queensland in favour of a report funded by the Authority itself, which claimed there would be minimum economic impacts on commercial fishing and recreational fishing tourism.

“In the GBRMPA report, submitted to Federal Parliament, they claimed the total economic impact of the fishing closures in their zoning plan would be as little as half a million dollars and no more than \$2.6 million,” he said.

“That report, commissioned by GBRMPA, has now proved embarrassingly wrong, with taxpayers footing the bill for the Authority’s mistakes or misguidance.”

He said that the GBRMPA also had “blatantly ignored” the human costs of their rezoning, “being too preoccupied with using the latest computer technology to draw coloured lines on maps”.

“It’s all about ‘polygons’ and ‘algorithms’ to the Marine Park Authority, not about the hundreds of families who still face uncertain futures as a result of huge closures to commercial fishing and recreational fishing tourism.

“As we predicted, these closures have also had severe flow on economic impacts to related land based businesses such as seafood processors, bait and tackle stores and ships chandlery.”

The eventual total paid to fishers, vessel-owners and onshore businesses to compensate for GBRMPA’s RAP rezoning impacts was more than \$200 million.

THE CONFOUNDING GREAT BARRIER REEF

Record coral cover despite bleaching events

The Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) has released a report showing record coral on the Great Barrier Reef – despite bleaching events in 2016, 2017, 2020 and 2022 – but rushed to caution that recent bleaching may have a significant, yet-to-be-quantified impact.

THE latest survey of coral cover on the Great Barrier Reef has reported record coral cover, exceeding the previous record coverage observed in 2022.

An AIMS media release published in early August says coral cover has increased in all three regions on the Great Barrier Reef and is at regional highs in two of the three regions, but says the results “come with a note of caution”.

“Most of the underwater surveys contributing to these findings ... were conducted before and during the recent mass bleaching event, one of the most extensive and serious on record, and have not yet captured how many corals survived or died following the bleaching,” the release says.

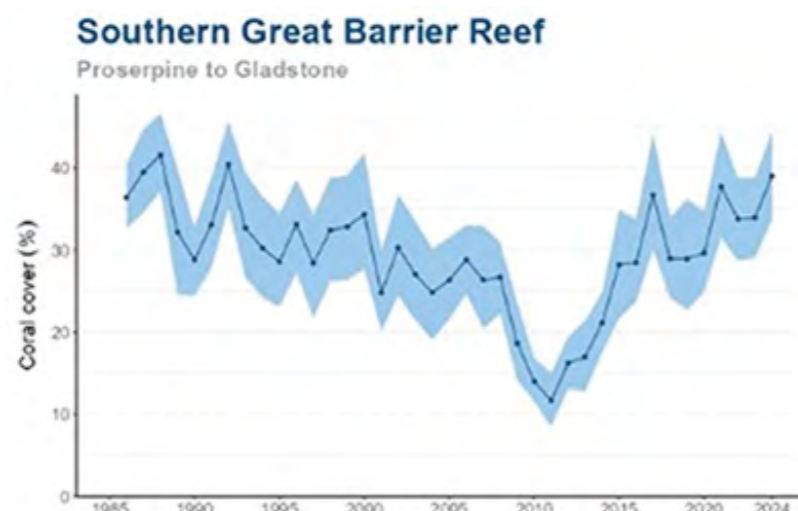
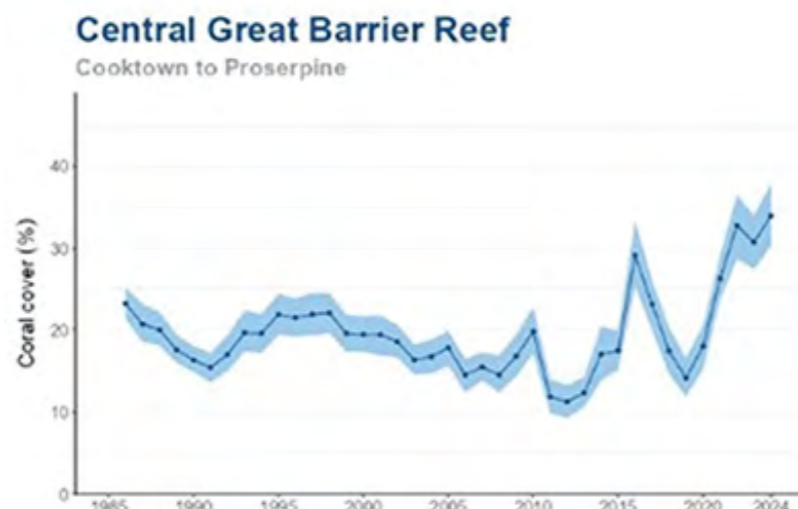
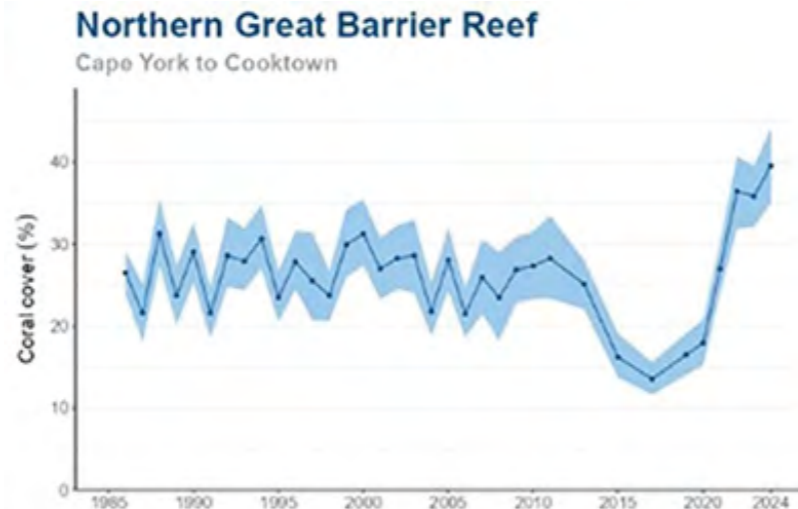
Also, surveys in the central region were completed before the passage of Tropical Cyclone Jasper in December 2023.

AIMS’ Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) leader Mike Emslie said coral cover increases were a positive sign but did not reflect the potentially destructive consequences of the 2024 mass bleaching event.

“We saw evidence of early onset mortality, particularly in the southern region, but the full picture of mortality was not yet apparent during this year’s surveys,” Dr Emslie said.

“While bleached corals are very stressed, they are still alive and are recorded as live coral on our surveys.

“Some types of corals can remain bleached for months, remaining on a knife edge between survival and death. This is why returning and repeating surveys of the reefs in this vast, complex and dynamic system is so important. This year’s results serve as a very important reference against which to measure the impacts of the summer’s events.



“The next LTMP survey season recommences in September and will capture impacts on coral cover from this summer’s mass bleaching event and the cyclones, with a full assessment complete by mid-2025.

“Climate change remains the greatest threat to the Reef because it drives these mass bleaching events. This most recent one was the fifth such event since 2016. These more frequent and extensive marine heatwaves will lead to shortened ‘windows’ for coral recovery. Recent gains, while encouraging, can be lost in a short amount of time,” Dr Emslie said.

Surveys were conducted at 94 Reefs spread through the Northern, Central and Southern Great Barrier Reef between August 2023 and June 2024.

The Report recorded the following average hard-coral coverage:

- Northern region (north of Cooktown) – 39.5 per cent, up from 35.8 per cent last year;
- Central region (Cooktown to Proserpine) – 34 per cent, up from 30.7 per cent;
- Southern region (south of Proserpine) – 39.1 per cent, up from 34 per cent.

The graphs at right show the regional trends in the percentage of hard coral cover on the Northern, Central and Southern Great barrier Reef from manta tow surveys by the AIMS Long-term Monitoring program up to the 2023-24 survey year.

The AIMS report finds that small rises in coral cover this year bring the northern and central regions to their highest levels in 38 years of monitoring.

The surveys also found that crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks have persisted on some reefs in the southern region.

The long-term monitoring team surveyed reefs off Townsville after the passage of tropical Cyclone Kirrily in late January, finding evidence of storm damage and declines in hard coral cover ranging from 6 per cent to 10 per cent at Kelso, John Brewer, Helix and Chicken Reefs. Other reefs appear to have escaped with little impact.

AIMS Research Program Director David Wachenfeld said the regional increases in coral cover are

encouraging, showing the Reef’s capacity for recovery after reaching their lowest levels within the last 15 years.

“However, climate change and other disturbances mean this recovery is fragile and Reef resilience is not limitless,” Dr Wachenfeld said.

“In many ways, the Reef has had some lucky escapes in recent years. The 2020 and 2022 mass bleaching events had levels of heat stress that were not as intense as the 2016 and 2017 events or the 2024 event. Coupled with very few other events causing widespread coral death, that has led to the levels of coral cover increase we have seen.

“But the frequency and intensity of bleaching events is unprecedented, and that is only forecast to escalate under climate change, alongside the persistent threat of crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks and tropical cyclones”.

Aerial surveys undertaken by AIMS and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority in February and March found bleached corals in the shallows of 73 per cent of reefs surveyed across all three regions.

In recent weeks, AIMS scientists in separate monitoring programs observed substantial mortality in reefs that were particularly hard hit by the 2024 event.

“We are only one large scale disturbance event away from a reversal of the recent recovery. The 2024 bleaching event could be that event – almost half of the 3,000 or so reefs that make up the marine park experienced more heat stress than ever recorded.

“We still don’t know how much mortality this event has caused. Our monitoring over the next 12 months will help us to understand how this bleaching event stacks up against the others in the last decade.”

Further information: <https://www.aims.gov.au/monitoring-great-barrier-reef/gbr-condition-summary-2023-24>

To listen to Dr Wachenfeld explain the record coral cover, go to an ABC Radio National interview at: <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/radionational-breakfast/gbr-report-shows-growth-in-coral-cover-but-more-study-needed/104192232>

Explaining record coral cover on the Great Barrier Reef

Reef researcher Zoe Richards explains why record coral cover doesn’t necessarily mean the Great Barrier Reef is in good health.

IN what seems like excellent news, coral cover in parts of the Great Barrier Reef is at a record high, according to new data from the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS). But this doesn’t necessarily mean our beloved Reef is in good health.

In the north of the Reef, coral cover usually fluctuates between 20 per cent and 30 per cent. Currently, it’s at 36 per cent, the highest level recorded since monitoring began more than three decades ago.

This level of coral cover comes hot off the back of a disturbing decade that saw the Reef endure six mass coral bleaching events, four severe tropical cyclones, active outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish, and water quality impacts following floods. So what’s going on?

High coral cover findings can be deceptive because they can result from only a few dominant species that grow rapidly after disturbance (such as mass bleaching). These same corals, however, are extremely susceptible to disturbance and are likely to die out within a few years.

The Great Barrier Reef spans 2,300 kilometres, comprising more than 3,000 individual reefs. It is an exceptionally diverse ecosystem that features more than 12,000 animal species, plus many thousand more species of plankton and marine flora.

The Reef has been teetering on the edge of receiving an “in-danger” listing from the World Heritage Committee. And it was recently described in the State of the Environment Report as being in a poor and deteriorating state.

To protect the Great Barrier Reef, we need to routinely monitor and report on its condition. The AIMSscience’s long-term monitoring program has

Continued over page.

been collating and delivering this information since 1985.

Its approach involves surveying a selection of reefs that represent different habitat types (inshore, midshelf, offshore) and management zones. The [latest report](#) provides a robust and valuable synopsis of how coral cover has changed at 87 reefs across three sectors (north, central and south) over the past 36 years.

The results

Overall, the long-term monitoring team found coral cover has increased on most reefs. The level of coral cover on reefs near Cape Grenville and Princess Charlotte Bay in the northern sector has bounced back from bleaching, with two reefs having [more than 75 per cent cover](#).

In the central sector, where coral cover has historically been lower than in the north and south, coral cover is now at a region-wide high, at 33 per cent.

The southern sector has a dynamic coral cover record. In the late 1980s coral cover surpassed 40 per cent, before dropping to a region-wide low of 12 per cent in 2011 after Cyclone Hamish.

The region is currently experiencing outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish. And yet, coral cover in this area is still relatively high at 34 per cent.

Based on this robust data set, which shows increases in coral cover indicative of region-wide recovery, things must be looking up for the Great Barrier Reef – right?

Are we being catfished by coral cover?

In the Australian Institute of Marine Science's report, reef recovery relates solely to an increase in coral cover, so let's unpack this term.

Coral cover is a broad proxy metric that indicates habitat condition. It's relatively easy data to collect and report on, and is the most widely used monitoring metric on coral Reefs.

The finding of high coral cover may signify a reef in good condition, and an increase in coral cover after disturbance may signify a recovering reef.



2018: A bare patch of reef at Jiigurru, Lizard Island in 2018 after most of the corals died in the 2016-2017 coral bleaching event. (Photo: Andy Lewis)



2022: By 2022, the same patch of reef was covered by a vibrant array of plating Acropora corals. (Photo: Andy Lewis)

But in this instance, it's more likely the reef is being dominated by only few species, as the report states that branching and plating *Acropora* species have driven the recovery of coral cover.

Acropora coral are renowned for a "boom and bust" life cycle. After disturbances such as a cyclone, *Acropora* species function as pioneers. They quickly recruit and colonise bare space, and the laterally growing plate-like species can rapidly cover large areas.

Fast-growing *Acropora* corals tend to dominate during the early phase of recovery after disturbances such as the recent series of mass bleaching events. However, these same corals are often susceptible to wave damage, disease or coral bleaching and tend to go bust within a few years.

Inferring that a reef has recovered by a person being towed behind a boat to obtain a rapid visual estimate of coral cover is like flying in a helicopter and saying a bushfire-hit forest has

recovered because the canopy has grown back.

It provides no information about diversity, or the abundance and health of other animals and plants that live in and among the trees, or coral.

Cautious optimism

My [study](#), published last year, examined 44 years of coral distribution records around Jiigurru, Lizard Island, at the northern end of the Great Barrier Reef.

It suggested that 28 of 368 species of hard coral recorded at that location haven't been seen for at least a decade, and are at risk of local extinction.

Lizard Island is one location where coral cover has rapidly increased since the devastating 2016-17 bleaching event. Yet, there is still a real risk local extinctions of coral species have occurred.

While there's no data to prove or disprove it, it's also probable that extinctions or local declines of coral-affiliated marine life, such as coral-eating fishes, crustaceans and molluscs have also occurred.

Without more information at the level of individual species, it is impossible to understand how much of the Great Barrier Reef has been lost, or recovered, since the last mass bleaching event.

Based on the coral cover data, it's tempting to be optimistic. But, given more frequent and severe heatwaves and cyclones are predicted in the future, it's wise to be cautious about the Reef's perceived recovery or resilience.

Note: This article was written by Zoe Richards, Senior Research Fellow at Curtin University, and was published on 5 August 2024 in *The Conversation*. It is republished here under Creative Commons licence.

To read the original article, go to: <https://theconversation.com/record-coral-cover-doesnt-necessarily-mean-the-great-barrier-reef-is-in-good-health-despite-what-you-may-have-heard-188233>

Scientists find land runoff impacting GBR

THE latest five-yearly assessment of water quality on the Great Barrier Reef has concluded more work is needed to reduce harm from catchment runoff.

The assessment by a large panel of scientists – referred to as *The 2022 Scientific Consensus Statement* – was released in August, bringing together the latest research to understand how activities on the land influence water quality and how water quality affects Reef health.

Although it is called the "2022" statement, it was prepared between 2022 and 2024.

According to the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment & Water (DCCEEW), the statement:

- ❑ involved more than 200 experts, including 147 authors and reviewers from Australia and overseas;
- ❑ is based on evidence from over 4,000 publications; and
- ❑ confirms that the science underpinning the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan remains valid.

It says key findings include:

- ❑ human induced climate change is the primary threat to the Great Barrier Reef;
- ❑ poor water quality continues to have a detrimental impact on the Reef;
- ❑ improving water quality is essential for a resilient Reef that can recover from disturbances such as extreme weather and mass coral bleaching events; and
- ❑ poor water quality can exacerbate climate-related impacts.

"The Statement is another piece of important evidence that will support our Reef policies and plans," DCCEEW says.

"It will inform the next Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan, which will be delivered in 2025."

The Statement is funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments.



Overarching conclusions

There are eight overarching conclusions in the statement.

Pollutant loads from the catchment area to the GBR have increased from pre-development loads by 1.4 to 5 times for fine sediments, and 1.5 to 3 times for dissolved inorganic nitrogen (with variations depending on basins).

Historical and continuing land management and catchment modification impair GBR water quality by extensive vegetation degradation, changed hydrology, increased erosion, and expansion of fertilised land uses, urban centres and coastal developments.

Poor water quality, particularly elevated levels of fine sediments, nutrients and pesticides, continues to have detrimental impacts on Great Barrier Reef ecosystems. The greatest impacts are on freshwater, estuarine, coastal and inshore marine ecosystems.

Human-induced climate change is the primary threat to the Great Barrier Reef and poor water quality can exacerbate climate-related impacts. Good water quality is critical for healthy and resilient ecosystems and supports recovery from disturbances such as mass bleaching and extreme weather events. Meeting water quality improvement targets within the next 10 years is imperative.

While several land management practices and remediation actions are proven to be cost-effective in improving water quality, translating these into more substantial pollutant reductions will require significant scaling up of the adoption of these actions, prioritisation of pollutant hotspots, and greater knowledge of the costs and potential co-benefits of practice adoption.

Greater focus on locally effective management can encourage fast-

er adoption, especially when designed and delivered using collaborative approaches involving landholders, Indigenous communities, the broader community, policy makers and scientists.

World-leading monitoring, modelling and reporting programs underpin the GBR ecosystems and provide essential knowledge to inform water quality improvement strategies. These programs could be strengthened and refined by increasing their spatial and temporal coverage to capture regional and local differences, provide more balanced coverage across land uses and ecosystems, improve trend analysis and quantify uncertainties.

Expanded research effort and more consistent methods are urgently needed to adequately assess:

- ❑ the co-benefits and efficiency (including costs) of management solutions across different landscape and climate conditions;
- ❑ the effectiveness of water quality improvement programs and instruments including assessment beyond the life of programs; and
- ❑ ecosystem risks from a wider range of pollutants.

The 2025 targets defined in the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement [currently under review] require a 25 per cent reduction in the 2009 anthropogenic end-of-catchment fine sediment loads, 20 per cent reduction of particulate nutrients, and a 60 per cent reduction of dissolved inorganic nitrogen loads. The target for pesticides is to protect at least 99 per cent of aquatic species at end-of-catchments by 2025.

Further information:
<https://reefwqconsensus.com.au/>
https://www.reefwqconsensus.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2022-Scientific-Consensus-Statement-Summary_FINAL.pdf

UQ warns Great Barrier Reef faces “catastrophic damage”

RESEARCHERS believe sea surface temperatures around the Great Barrier Reef are the hottest in 400 years.

This has led to the University of Queensland (UQ) issuing a media release headed “Great Barrier Reef facing catastrophic damage”.

“Leading scientists have found that sea surface temperatures on the Great Barrier Reef have reached a 400-year critical level, with human-induced climate change to blame,” the UQ release says.

“In a collaborative research project, involving The University of Queensland’s Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg and led by University of Wollongong and University of Melbourne researcher Dr Benjamin Henley, scientists confirmed human-induced climate change was responsible for rapid ocean warming in recent decades.

“The team reconstructed centuries’ sea surface temperatures in the Coral Sea for the January-March period and found the hottest temperature in 400 years was recorded in 2024, followed by 2017 and 2020.

It quoted Prof. Hoegh-Guldberg as saying the findings confirm that extreme ocean warming has led to mass coral bleaching and mortality on the Great Barrier Reef.

“The recent mass coral bleaching events coincide with five of the six

hottest years in the new 400-year-long record,” he said.

“The world’s largest coral reef is under critical pressure, with warming sea temperatures and mass coral bleaching and mortality threatening to destroy its critically important ecology and biodiversity and its value to culture, business and communities.

“This paper provides several new lines of evidence which together demonstrate that mass coral bleaching will likely devastate the ecological function of the Great Barrier Reef in the coming decades.

“This finding shows we must double down on reducing greenhouse gas emissions as an absolute necessity.”

The research team used climate modelling to assess how human influence had impacted ocean temperatures.

“When assessing natural trends without human impacts, the ocean temperature would have warmed by less than 0.01 degree Celsius per decade,” he said.

“However, when considering human impacts, we found the ocean warmed by more than one degree Celsius. This confirms human impacts on the climate are the primary driver of this longer-term warming in the Coral Sea.”

The study also highlighted that even if the world were to limit global warming to the Paris Agreement’s target of 1.5

degrees Celsius, 70 to 90 per cent of corals on reefs would still be lost.

“Without urgent intervention, our iconic Great Barrier Reef is at risk of experiencing temperatures conducive to near-annual coral bleaching, which would have catastrophic consequences for coral reef ecosystems.

“This research has profound implications for marine ecosystems globally with similar sensitivities to rising sea temperatures.

“Almost every part of the ocean, from kelp forests to the deep sea, is changing in response to thermal stress and mass mortalities, highlighting the serious link between the long-term trajectory of extreme ocean temperatures and the ecological health and biodiversity of the Ocean.

“We must take action now before it is too late”, he said.

Note: The University says Ove Hoegh-Guldberg is one of the world’s most-cited science authors on climate change and that he has raised more than \$150 million for research and infrastructure.

GBR “already dealt death blow”

RADIO New Zealand is reporting an Australian climate scientist has told a conference it’s likely Australia’s Great Barrier Reef has already been dealt its death blow.

“Leading climate scientist Joëlle Gergis of the University of Melbourne told the Climate Change & Business Conference in Auckland in September that 80 per cent of the reef was bleached in April, the first time damage had extended so far along the reef.

“Scientists know... it’s likely that the extensive reef wide bleaching of this year has dealt the largest living structure on this planet its death blow,” she said. “It’s just not possible for some ecosystems to adapt to climate change and it’s dangerous to pretend that they can.”

Further information: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/527469/great-barrier-reef-already-been-dealt-its-death-blow-scientist>



Bleached coral off the reef slope at The University of Queensland’s research station on Heron Island, March 2024. (Photo: Prof. Ove Hoegh-Guldberg.)

IN MEMORIAM

50 years since Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin

IT will be 50 years this Christmas since Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin, taking the lives of at least 17 professional fishers.

The magazine *Australian Fisheries* reported at the time that after the cyclone hit Darwin on Christmas Eve, 1974, 16 fishing vessel crew were posted as “missing” and one body was washed ashore.

“Two Darwin-based joint Australian-Japanese companies – Gollin Kyokuyo Pty Ltd and Northern Research Pty Ltd – between them lost six large (20 to 23-metre) prawn trawlers and another eight were damaged,” the magazine reported.

“Gollin Kyokuyo lost four of its fleet of six trawlers: *Frigate Bird*, *Flood Bird*, *Bell Bird*, and *Blue Bird*. Six crew are missing, two from *Frigate Bird* and four from *Flood Bird* which put to sea on Christmas Eve to ride out the cyclone.

“*Frigate Bird* was blown ashore. Two crew members, skipper Bob Joss and crewman Barry Dowman, being rescued. They spent some hours trapped in an air pocket inside the submerged hull and escaped through a port hole.

“*Flood Bird* disappeared in the cyclone and four men aboard are missing. They include one of the company’s Japanese skippers, Shigemori Odawarra, aged 32, who was due to return to Japan on Christmas Eve but volunteered to take the trawler out to sea when the cyclone warning was broadcast.

“The body of cadet engineer Dennis Halten was washed up on the shore near Darwin.

“It is reported that of the 25 vessels of all types that put to sea to ride out the cyclone, only eight returned. Sixteen persons aboard them have been posted missing. (Of the boats that remained in Darwin Harbour, none escaped damage.)

“Consideration is being given to salvaging *Frigate Bird* but *Bell Bird* and *Blue Bird* are total losses at this stage.



The 23-metre trawler NR Liverpool lying on its side after being blown off a cradle at the small ships slipway in Darwin during Cyclone Tracy. (Photo: Royal Australian Navy.)

They were undergoing refit at Darwin when the cyclone hit and were driven from their moorings and sank.

“The remaining Gollin Kyokuyo trawlers, *Clipper Bird* and *Cat Bird*, were driven ashore and damaged. They are being repaired. The company hopes to have them back fishing soon.

“Northern Research lost two trawlers – NR *Dieman* and NR *Kendall* – and six others were damaged: NR *Liverpool*, NR *Anson*, NR *Buckingham*, NR *Castlereagh*, NR *Essington* and NR *Harris*.

“The company’s Japanese managing director, Koji Yoshida, was drowned during the cyclone.

“Two Western Australian prawn trawlers in Darwin when Cyclone Tracy struck were lost. They were *Jenny Wright* and *Medusa*. Still missing with five persons aboard is the fishing supply vessel *Booya*.”

To view the original (and longer) *Australian Fisheries* article, go to: <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-744299078/view?partId=nla.obj-744313705#page/n35/mode/lup>

Fibreglass Materials
and
Polyurethane Foam
Insulation for Ice Boxes, Deck Boxes, Freezer Holds etc.
COMPETITIVE PRICES
COLDESIGN PTY LTD
20/115 DOLLIS STREET ROCKLEA 4106
Phone (07) 3274 4308
Fax (07) 3274 5140

LICENCES
BOUGHT SOLD LEASED
Specialising in
Licences
and **Quota**
All Inquiries Welcome
Maurie and Val Ahchay
NAUTILUS BOAT BROKERAGE
Ph: 07 4954 6200 Fax: 07 4954 8359
Mobile: 0438 - 546 200
Email: vahchay@cqnet.com.au
43 Shepherd Road, Eimeo, Q 4740

WORKS OF ART

John Olsen capturing fish with wood, steel and stone

Veteran fisherman John Olsen captures most of his fish these days in a studio at his home in Bundaberg, stunning fluid works of art sculpted from wood, steel or stone.

TO step into John Olsen's studios – a pair of work sheds in his backyard – is a delight. You are immediately surrounded by eye-catching creatures, most of them fish, fashioned from mostly steel or stone and in some cases richly-patterned wood.

Fish that he has seen countless times in a lifetime of professional fishing that has included ocean-beach netting, line fishing and trawling are captured in an artistic interpretation of real life.

John's works of art are sometime whimsical but always striking. And they are in demand.

"I've always had an interest in carving wood," John told me. "Even as a kid, it was something I got to be good at.

"I started seriously wood carving in the late 1980s, and from there moved to stone and steel in the 1990s. I love it."

John combined his part-time sculpting with fulltime fishing, mostly based in Bundaberg, and also industry representation. His roles as an industry representative culminated with five years as QSIA President in the early 2000s, a tumultuous time that included introduction of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Representative Areas Program rezoning in 2004.

As an antidote to the pressures and demands of industry advocacy on State and federal issues, John could always relax with his art.

Looking at his collection today, and works in progress, most can be accommodated comfortably in a home or office – but others are truly monumental.

For example, there is a five-metre-long ceratodus – or Queensland lungfish – that was purchased for public display adjacent to a Bundaberg business.

The lungfish is native to the freshwater sections of the Burnett River, which flows through Bundaberg, so it is a local icon. In real life, it grows to a maximum size of around 1.8 metres, though most are probably half that size, so John's steel re-creation is around three times life size.

Another monumental sculpture is a three-metre-high *Tyrannosaurus rex*, also purchased for public display in Bundaberg.

Fishermen will recognise barramundi, trevally, tuna, marlin, reef fish and other species caught in a frozen moment in John's display studio.

John included plough discs and



John Olsen is surrounded by eye-catching sea creatures in his backyard studio.

other recycled parts from cane-farming equipment in his ceratodus, and a number of the fish include other recycled metal implements.

And there can be a combination of metals, including conventional steel, stainless steel and titanium.

John will often use annealing – the application of heat – to lend the stainless steel surfaces a striking colour and sheen. You can see examples of that effect on the fish on the front cover and others in the photos on these pages.

The price on individual pieces varies, depending on material, size and intricacy. The wooden pieces generally range from hundreds of dollars to a few thousand dollars, while most stainless steel pieces range from \$1,000 to \$3,000, and the stone pieces (marble or granite) from \$3,000 to \$6,000 each.

For more details, give John a call on 0408 183 845 or email john.olsen6@bigpond.com

Martin Bowerman



THE GULL



Celebrations ...

"HISTORY is written by the victors" is an old saying applied to the recording of wars and other conflicts, and it is interesting to see the version of history presented by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority about its 2004 rezoning of the GBR Marine Park.

Closing two-thirds or more of the Marine Park to one or more forms of commercial fishing was all pretty wonderful, apparently, and the invitation list of those folk recently reunited to indulge in a day of self-congratulation clearly did not include any commercial fishers who were fishing in the Marine Park at the time.

For the seafood industry, the rezoning was a disaster. And the Federal Government ended up paying out more than \$200 million at the time in compensation for fishers and a wide variety of onshore business operators to try to rebuild their lives.

Some of the GBRMPA representatives telling us their version of what happened 20 years ago were nowhere near the action at the time, while other attendees at the recent celebration would have moved on to close all of the Australian waters in the Coral Sea outside the GBR Marine Park to all forms of fishing, given the chance. (To recall that Coral Sea battle, led by an overseas multi-national corporation, just go to this link: <https://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/peg/publications/report/an20australian20coral20sea20heritage20parkpdf.pdf>)

GBRMPA's celebration of the 20th anniversary of the rezoning requires balancing commentary – despite risking renewed heartache and mourning for industry members who endured the original events – by recalling some of what was said and done at the time. It's good to see that presented in this edition of our magazine.

Fractures healed?

I FOUND the following article in a 2007 edition of our magazine.

On May 3, this item was broadcast on ABC Radio News: "The Great Barrier

Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) is confident it can repair the fractured relationship with the commercial fishing industry, after criticism of its communication style in last year's review of the organisation.

"The Federal Government review found the Authority needed to improve the way it interacted with stakeholders, after concerns were raised during the process of rezoning that led to some fishing bans.

"GBRMPA Executive Director John Tanzer says the authority has employed a number of regional consultation officers whose role is to foster grassroots relationships with Reef stakeholders.

"The Government and the Minister has made it quite clear he expects GBRMPA to work cooperatively with the commercial fishing industry and to make sure there is a process there that's ongoing of rebuilding and of course that's a high priority for us," Mr Tanzer said.

I wonder how GBRMPA reckons those fracture repairs have progressed?

Chronic ...

INTERESTING to see a GBRMPA media piece published in September – about the 2004 Marine Park rezoning and the recently-released outlook report – with the following statement attributed to GBRMPA Chief Scientist Dr Roger Beeden: "The Outlook Report 2024 has shown us that the impacts of Climate Change remain the main concern for the Reef, and are only compounding the cumulative effects of other chronic impacts like unsustainable fishing, pollution and sedimentation."

I have to ask: What unsustainable fishing is that?

Sad, really ...

THE Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) – a national recreational representative body – once took a big-picture, strategic view of fisheries issues, for example working closely with the commercial fishing industry in 2012-13 and again in 2016 to ensure massive areas right round the country were not locked up as "no fishing" green zones – including the entirety of the Coral Sea.

Unfortunately, then President John Dunphy has passed away and CEO Allan Hansard has moved on, and we find the current hierarchy focussed on

lowest-common-denominator issues like banning net-fishing from those last fragments of the Great Sandy region where they are still permitted.

AFTA's position is eloquently summed up in this statement to political parties ahead of the October State election (talking about saddle tail snapper in this case): "AFTA will support any management changes to fisheries and rules that do not limit or impact on recreational participation."

For more: <https://afta.net.au/afta-queensland-policy-manifest-update/>

Dead zone

WORRYING to read scientists' warnings of a "muddy dead zone" in Moreton Bay, caused by silt running off, amongst other things, real estate developments round the bay.

There is a real chance of this affecting fisheries productivity – as well as dugong and turtle numbers – in years to come.

Trouble is, the problem is probably unfixable any time soon, and we all know polities focus on the fixable, and want to be seen to be doing something to create the perception they're protecting the environment, so I wonder where their focus will be in Moreton Bay in future?

Petition counts?

THERE seems to be some confusion about how many people truly support banning net fishing in the Mary River. Maryborough MP Bruce Saunders was recently reported in the *Queensland Country Life* newspaper as saying that 25,000 people had signed a petition supporting the removal of gillnets in the region, saying it hadn't been presented because it was judged to be non-conforming.

Obviously, it's a different petition but, on the Queensland Parliament website, there is a record of a petition presented in August about shutting the Mary River to nets – organised by the Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance Inc. and sponsored by Mr Saunders – that in six months (February-July 2024) attracted a total of just 1,137 signatories. Not exactly a massive show of support.

For more: <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-the-Assembly/Petitions/Petition-Details?id=402>

Avoid that sinking feeling.

Pick the right marine surveyor.



The wrong surveyor could cost you more than a new boat.

Getting out on the water is a favourite Aussie past-time and we want to help you make sure that the boat you purchase is suitable for you and what you want it to do.

Engaging a Certified Commercial Marine Surveyor™ to help you buy a boat with a quality condition survey is the best investment that you will make as part of the buying process.

So how do you choose a surveyor that is right for you?

There are no Government controls that regulate the minimum qualifications or experience required by a marine surveyor in the recreational boating industry.

Check your marine surveyor's qualifications yourself or talk to us before you purchase a boat or engage a marine surveyor.

Getting it right the first time may just save your life.

It's our profession, not our part time job.

To become a Certified member of the AIMS, surveyors must provide evidence of their qualifications and experience that support the areas of specialisation they advertise.

AIMS Surveyors also commit and adhere to the AIMS Code of Professional Practice giving you, the boat owner, greater peace of mind.

To find a qualified surveyor visit: www.aimsurveyors.com.au/ Find-a-Surveyor

Become a marine surveyor

Diploma courses start from just AU\$544 per unit

In the Australasian region, private commercial marine surveyors work across the entire spectrum of shipping, encompassing all categories of surveys from cargo, insurance, salvage and towing, domestic working vessels to recreational vessel insurance and pre-purchase surveys. Units delivered by distance learning. Online study, including prescheduled tutorial webinars, and 1:1 sessions with assessors and industry experts. You may also be required to undertake practical survey tasks. If you are working in the industry, we can tailor practical tasks to suit your workplace environment, however you must organise your own access to a vessel.



Scan the QR or visit: www.aimsurveyors.com.au/Diploma-Courses
Email us on training@aimsurveyors.com.au
or Call us on 02 6232 6555



Now operational at the Urangan Boat Harbour (Qld)

300 tonne Shiplift

Complete
repair &
maintenance
facilities
available
on site...



- 300 tonne, 12m beam Travel Lift
- 40 tonne, 5m beam Travel Lift
- 60 x 20 x 15m high Covered Workshop
- Sand Blasting & Spray Painting
- Wash Down & Work Areas
- Engineering & Welding
- Diesel Fitters & Mechanics
- 24V/240V Electricians
- Marine Electronics
- Shipwrights
- Fibre Glassing & Upholstery
- Long & Short Term Storage



- 130 Berth Marina (all with power & water)
- 9m berths up to 24m
- Mens, Ladies, Disabled & Unisex Showers / Toilets



- Coin Operated Washing Machines & Dryers
- Electronic Security Keys
- Long & Short Term Vehicle Parking

*A new addition to Hervey Bay's
Fishermans Wharf Marina*

**Murphy
Shiplifts**
Fishermans Wharf Marina Hervey Bay

**Fishermans Wharf**
MARINA & SHIP LIFTS - HERVEY BAY

Haul Out enquiries 07 4128 9744

Marina enquiries 07 4128 9119

www.fishermanswharfmarinaherveybay.com.au
864 Boat Harbour Dr Urangan, Qld 4655