



PO Box 34, NORTH BEACH WA 6920  
Tel: 08 9246 3366 Fax: 08 9246 5955  
Email: [recfish@recfishwest.org.au](mailto:recfish@recfishwest.org.au)  
Website: <http://www.recfishwest.org.au>

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Recfishwest

# Election Policy 2008

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*On Behalf of the Recreational  
Fishing Community of Western  
Australia*

# Recfishwest Election Policy

*On behalf of the recreational fishing community of Western Australia 2008*

## **Preamble**

Recreational fishing is one of the most significant recreational activities in Western Australia. An estimated 643,000 people go fishing at least once a year and contribute more than \$700 million per annum to the economy of Western Australia. This represents thousands of jobs, many of which are in coastal towns and rural areas.

The responsible management of recreational fishing is vitally important to the continuance of this important contributor to the West Australian economy. A failure to be adaptive in management of recreational fisheries can require drastic management reforms that impact heavily on the amenity of recreational fishing. The recent changes to the management of West Coast demersal scalefish have seen the amenity of recreational fishing significantly impacted upon due to the need to better manage the recreational sector.

While sustainability concerns should be at the forefront of management decisions, the impact on the amenity and social value of fishing should be considered in management responses. We have supported the concept of closed seasons to achieve this, but believe that any closure longer than two months needs careful assessment of the impact on catches and angler behavior. If justified, as happened with Cockburn Sound snapper, the closed seasons could be modified to ensure sustainability. Commercial fisheries management would also need to be re-examined.

Recreational fishers have an enviable record of proactive species and environmental management. Recreational fishers have been at the forefront of aquatic natural resource management and have often voluntarily undergone tighter management reforms in the interest of sound fisheries management.

Recreational fishers support the principle to fish today for tomorrow and to pass on an environment that is capable of providing a quality fishing experience to our children.

Recreational fishing is an important recreational activity for West Australians and forms a large part of the social fabric for many coastal communities. It is therefore important that government adequately services the needs of the recreational fishing public. Recfishwest believes there is an insufficient recognition or promotion of the social benefits of recreational fishing from a personal or community health or tourism perspective.

In this election policy, Recfishwest identifies the issues which we see as fundamental for the next term of government and is seeking the support of political parties. These initiatives represent significant challenges and potential issues for recreational fishing over the next four years. It is important that political parties give definitive commitments against which the recreational fishing voters can make their decisions.

Overall, Recfishwest believes that the issues raised and requests made in the election policy are reasonable in the context of an industry of the magnitude of recreational fishing in this state.

We thank you for your assistance in working towards ensuring that we can pass a legacy of quality recreational fishing onto future generations of West Australians. We will faithfully report the responses to this policy through our web site and other avenues.

## **Recfishwest Election Policy**

*The following statements by Recfishwest has been prepared for the coming Western Australian State election to advise parties and candidates in that election on the policies and aspirations of that large proportion of the Western Australian community that go fishing for sport and recreation. These have been split into Key Issues, State Wide Issues and Bioregional Issues.*

### **Key Issues**

Listed below is a brief description of some major issues which Recfishwest regards are of primary importance for recreational fishers in the future. Under each of the headings there are specific points requiring definitive commitments that we believe should be addressed for the benefit of present and future recreational fishing in Western Australia.

#### ***Recreational Consultative Structures***

Recfishwest sees a resolution on the review of Recreational Fisheries Consultative Structures a major priority for the next term of government. The recreational fishing public deserves a clear direction on what role Recfishwest and the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee plays in delivery of recreational fishing outcomes to the community. The Recfishwest Board has identified a need for the organisation to increase its regional representation as the peak recreational fishing body in this state. However, we require input on what role recreational consultative structures play in the larger fisheries consultative process before developing strategies further. An increased regional representation will come at an increased operating cost to the organisation.

Recfishwest requests support for;

- *Review all Fisheries Consultative Structures including recognition and resourcing of Recfishwest in regional aquatic resource management.*

#### ***Recreational Fishing Research***

The use of recreational fishers as robust collectors of data is increasing in importance as traditional methods of relying on commercial catch returns as a data source diminishes as the resource shifts to the recreational sector.

Currently recreational fishers are being underutilized as collectors of data and are lacking the resources for the coordination of a recreational fishing research program.

The highly successful "Samson Science" research program highlighted how valuable recreational fishers can be in fisheries research.

Recent management decisions and the introduction of Integrated Fisheries Management in Western Australia have seen the recreational sector granted a greater allocation of the fish resources and an increased sense of ownership. With this ownership comes responsibility and an onus on the recreational sector to ensure the management requirements, such as research is met.

With the recent introduction of a recreational only metropolitan management zone for West Coast demersal fin fish, Recfishwest has a direct responsibility in developing and supporting finfish research to effectively manage this area.

Recfishwest requests support for;

- *Resourcing for the establishment of a Recfishing Research Coordinator at Recfishwest, in conjunction with Murdoch University and the Department of Fisheries, as an important interface between recreational fishers and fisheries research providers. One project would be establishing a recreational fish tagging program at a cost of approximately \$60,000 (including on-costs) per year.*
- *Implement a formal assessment of recreational catches and behaviours through a recreational log book program.*
- *Increased transparency of recreational fisheries research priority development.*
- *Recognition of recreational fishers as funders of relevant research programs and evaluation of cost effectiveness.*
- *Look to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Fisheries Research and Development Corporation or other bodies on recreational fisheries research.*

### ***Integrated Fisheries Management***

Recfishwest have been staunch supporters of the Department of Fisheries adopting an Integrated Fisheries Management (IFM) model on which to base future management and allocation decisions for Western Australian fisheries.

Recfishwest have played an important role in the development of formal allocations for western rock lobsters and abalone and are committed to undergoing an IFM process with West Coast and Gascoyne scalefish. In a number of cases, the recreational allocation has been insufficient to meet current and future needs and this may require a re-allocation of the resource. The re-allocation process as each sector begins to fish to their allocation presents a significant challenge in the years to come and requires an examination of recreational fishing property rights. Recfishwest will play an important role in any resource re-allocation processes.

As part of on-going management and consultative requirements, Recfishwest supports a move towards a bio-regional management approach.

Recfishwest requests support for;

- *Adequate servicing of recreational fishing needs under IFM policy.*
- *In conjunction with Recfishwest and other stakeholders develop a Ministerial Policy Guideline for the principles and administration of bio-regional fisheries management.*
- *Fund review process to establish the principles for the definition of recreational property rights, and consequences of resource re-allocation.*
- *Commitment of funds to Recfishwest as peak recreational fishing body to deal with IFM issues.*

## ***Recreational Fishing Extension Programs***

Recreational fishing is an important healthy outdoor activity and can be a valuable avenue in addressing youth, drug and social issues in communities. Since January 2005, Recfishwest's award winning and highly successful Fishing Clinic Program has contacted directly over 8,000 children and indirectly 160,000 people including both metropolitan and regional communities. These clinics convey the sustainable fishing message as well as the healthy benefits of fishing to our society in a fun and exciting delivery. Our Northern and Southern Fishing Tours are a highlight for a number of regional towns. With the conclusion of the Commonwealth Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme, Recfishwest is seeking funds for the continuation of this important recreational fishing extension activity.

The recreational fishing industry is facing a shortage of people willing and able to assume positions in advocacy and representation for the increasingly complex environment for which the recreational fishing industry impacts and is impacted upon. In 2008 Recfishwest conducted its first Young Future Leaders Program to encourage young recreational fishers to take on advocacy roles in recreational fishing. The program has developed 14 high quality graduates and the high demand for the inaugural program suggest another course is needed.

Recfishwest requests support for;

- *A commitment to fund Recfishwest fishing clinics at a cost of approximately \$75,000 per year. Recfishwest will work with the VFLO program and Department to ensure consistency of messages on sustainability.*
- *Ongoing funding commitment for Recfishwest Young Future Leaders Program to be run every second year at a cost of \$45,000.*
- *Continued commitment from Department of Sport and Recreation to fund the participation and development of recreational fishing and provision of specific recreational amenities such as canoe ramps, walking tracks to beaches etc.*

## **Recreational Fishing Infrastructure**

The lack of boat ramps with direct access to the ocean at Fremantle is a major impediment to thousands of small boat owners wishing to gain efficient access to oceanic waters. The lack of launching facilities is placing significant stress on the already over-crowded boat launching facilities in the Swan River (Leeuwin Boat Ramp, East Fremantle).

Jetties are highly valued by recreational fishers and without access to them many children, families, the elderly and the disabled would not be able to participate in recreational angling. Larger jetties often form an extremely important part of the culture, heritage and identity of many regional communities such as Busselton, Carnarvon and Esperance.

Recfishwest is very concerned at the increasing tendency of local and state authorities to remove jetties based on cost and/or safety grounds. The limited jetties remaining in Western Australia are highly valued by our constituency, local stakeholders and tourists alike.

Recfishwest requests support for;

- *Immediate action on developing major coastal recreational boat launching facility between Fremantle and Hillarys and as appropriate in regional areas.*
- *Ensure matching funding for maintenance of culturally important jetties that are used for recreational fishing to approximately \$1 million per year for the next four years e.g. Carnarvon and Esperance jetties.*
- *Review and revise recreational fishing access in port developments eg. Guarantee access to Broome Jetty.*

### ***Marine Park Planning***

Recfishwest have been actively involved in representing the interests of recreational fishers in Marine Park Planning in Western Australia. As one of the major users of the aquatic environment it is important that needs of recreational fishers are suitably considered in the Marine Park Planning process.

Recfishwest believes the Marine Policy Peak Stakeholders Group (PSG) provides the necessary stakeholder representation to provide an objective assessment of the risks and values to the aquatic environment. Established Marine Parks in Western Australian do not have performance measures based upon addressing these risks to review their success.

Recfishwest have been supporters of large scale Wilderness Fishing Areas as a preferred option to establishment of Marine Parks. They provide wide scale protection of wilderness areas by allowing only low impact fishing.

Recfishwest requests support for;

- *The Marine Policy Peak Stakeholders Group (PSG) to become the primary consultative mechanism for Marine Park Planning.*
- *Marine Park Planning and Management be assessed using a risk assessment basis and reviews against objective performance measures.*
- *Implement Wilderness Fishing Areas e.g. Abrolhos Islands, Kimberley, Eastern side of Exmouth Gulf.*

### **State Wide Issues**

There are a number of other important issues that Recfishwest requests definition of a position of political parties seeking the support of the recreational fishing community.

Recfishwest requests support for;

- Department of Fisheries to retain primacy for fisheries and aquatic natural resource management.
- Review of license structure/fee administration involving adequate recreational fishing stakeholder representation.
- Reinvigoration of the Volunteer Fisheries Liaison Officer (VFLO) program – including using VFLO's as source of regional contact with angler's in the field
- Review of charter fishery to remove latent effort.
- Improve accountability and ensure appropriate resourcing for delivery of recreational compliance programs.
- Maintain and enhance access to recreational fishing locations through explicit policy applying to state and local governments.
- Explicitly permit overnight fishing stays for land based recreational fishing e.g. adjacent to vehicle while beach fishing.
- An independent assessment of recreational stock enhancement opportunities such as artificial reefs or restocking.
- Determine social and economic benefits of recreational fishing to state and local economies.
- Establish joint publications and communications committee to ensure that Departmental publications are timely, cost effective and meet community needs.
- Development of strategies to reduce incidental barotrauma mortalities for the commercial sector and all users in regional WA.
- Implement 20c per fish levy on sale of all aquarium fish to be placed in dedicated pest fish eradication fund.
- Removal of all recreational netting except throw or cast netting.
- Work with Commonwealth Government to re-establish Recreational Fishing Community Grants Programme.

## **Bioregional Issues**

Recfishwest recognizes that there a number of issues of significant importance to regional areas which require specific recognition. As recreational fishing is one of the most important activities in regional areas, many of these issues will be discussed in the upcoming state election.

Recfishwest requires feedback on these proposals so that we can better inform the wider recreational fishing community of the relevant policy positions.

### **West Coast**

- Fund an independent review of Recreational Metropolitan Abalone fishery to return amenity and meet agreed Integrated Fisheries Management (IFM) principles.
- Re-open Cockburn Sound to recreational fishing for blue swimmer crabs.
- Determine recruitment drivers for WA dhufish stocks and develop predictive models for future recruitment for all demersal finfish species.
- Australian herring to be made recreational only species on the West Coast with limited prescribed incidental commercial catch permitted.

- Ensure recreational fishing access to freshwater supply dams, develop code of practice with significant penalties for inappropriate behavior. Re-open Logue Brook Dam.
- Understand behavioral response of recreational fishers to West Coast recreational management package. Specifically change opening date from 26 December to 16 December.
- Ensure managements targets with prescribed responses for vulnerable West Coast demersal species are developed in conjunction with recreational fishers and require same action for commercial fishers.
- Commitment to black bream stocking in the Blackwood River.
- Future Rottneest marine planning to not include new sanctuary zones until such time as efficacy of existing sanctuary zones are independently determined.
- Undertake specific research into benefits of Jurien Bay scientific reference zones as finfish refuges.
- Determine social and economic impact on recreational fishing and associated industries resulting from West Coast demersal fish management package.
- Resource a voluntary resource sharing scheme eg as in Barramundi Accord for Peel/Harvey Estuary.
- Implement tagging program and assess importance of black bream in West Coast estuaries.
- Assess habitat enhancement strategies for Swan River and other estuaries.
- Ensure recreational fishing access to Fremantle Outer Harbour Development and any new coastal/marina development on West Coast.
- Ensure direct and measurable trade-offs for any loss of amenity to recreational access and/or habitat resulting from developments eg Cockburn Sound.
- Review commercial demersal gillnet fishery and impact on sustainability of vulnerable demersal species.
- Make use of release weights compulsory e.g. any boat which is required to carry and EPIRB and has fishing gear onboard, should also be required to carry a device capable of being used as a release weight, including all commercial fishing boats with wetline entitlements.
- Ensure Rottneest trench does not become a sanctuary zone under Commonwealth bio-regional planning.
- Fish and crustaceans have been severely impacted upon by acid sulphate run-off in places like the Swan River and Murray – Serpentine systems. Recfishwest therefore requests statutory controls to ensure no new urban developments on acid sulphate soil profiles and explicit penalties should any impact result.

### **Kimberley/Pilbara**

- Commence building of Ord River Fishway during next term of government at an estimated cost of \$6 million against a benefit of \$8 million per annum to tourism and infrastructure in the area.
- Immediate implementation of Barramundi Accord (2007) (agreement between commercial, recreational and charter industries).
- Barramundi and giant threadfin salmon to become recreational only species south of Roebuck Bay.
- Implementation of aboriginal fishing policy and establishment of aboriginal liaison compliance program within Department of Fisheries.

- Establishment and development of a wilderness fishing program for the Kimberley. Ensure that fisheries management issues are not ignored in any Kimberley marine park planning process.
- Establish resolution mechanism for resource allocations between trap, line and trawl fisheries and recreational fishers especially in Pilbara with particular reference to size limits for red emperor and cod species.
- Ensure recognition of value of recreational fishing issues in any LNG Hub site selection and fund direct and indirect offsets resulting from this development.
- Pilbara Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park plans be deferred indefinitely and realistic trade offs be negotiated with conservation sector for loss of turtle habitat at Barrow Island.

### **Gascoyne**

- Provision of specific government funding for the restoration and maintenance of WA heritage jetties such as Carnarvon.
- Government commitment to no salt mining in Exmouth Gulf. Establish Eastern side of Exmouth Gulf as a wilderness fishing area.
- Undertake research to determine the importance of recruitment and management strategies for the oceanic pink snapper stock south of Steep Point.
- Ensure World Heritage assessment ensures adequate community input from recreational fishing sector.
- Revocation of Commonwealth fishing restrictions in Ningaloo Marine Park – ensure consistency in management between state and Commonwealth and within WA agencies.
- Guaranteed continued access to a similar standard for Steep Point and ensure that recreational fishers as major users of the area form the basis of management committees.

### **South Coast**

- Revocation of all recreational netting in South Coast estuaries.
- Review commercial and recreational resource sharing arrangements in South Coast estuaries e.g. make Pallinup Estuary recreational fishing only – consistent with the much higher importance of recreational fishing.
- No commercial demersal gill netting within 3NM of shore and review blue groper management including mortality by this fishery.
- Review Australian Salmon and Australian herring management and allocations from an IFM perspective.
- Commonwealth South Coast Bio-regional Marine Planning to integrate with State Marine Planning processes.
- Guarantee continuation of consistent pink snapper size limit in Wilson Inlet.
- Review cobbler management arrangements for South Coast.
- Totally protect lampreys and implement legislative reforms to protect ammocoete larval habitat.
- Develop estuarine management regulations that take into account biological and wider social impacts of artificially breaching estuarine bars.

Recfishwest will publish all responses from political parties on our website for the recreational fishing public. While we would appreciate your fishing policy we would not anticipate it containing specific details such as included in this Recfishwest policy. Therefore we would appreciate a direct response to all of these items.