

# **Submission on Focus on the Future: The Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy: Consultation Draft**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comment on the above consultation draft.

Recfishwest is the peak body for recreational fishing in Western Australia. It represents the interests of more than 600,000 Western Australians who go fishing and is recognised by the Government of Western Australia, Fisheries WA and other government departments and authorities.

Given our charter, we have a significant interest in the principles of sustainability and the practical application of initiatives aimed at achieving sustainability in Western Australia's fisheries. As such our comments pertain to Section 5. Sustainable use of natural resources - Sustainable fisheries and aquaculture.

## **Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture**

### **Proposed Actions**

#### **Proposed Action 3.11**

Recfishwest agrees that the development of a new marine planning strategy is required and believe that this action must be given the highest priority. We fully support that such a strategy must include a cross agency framework for integrated marine planning to ensure that marine and estuarine resources are adequately protected and managed across all habitats within a bioregional framework. Recfishwest has addressed this issue in a paper on marine conservation recently forwarded to the Minister for Fisheries and to the Minister for the Environment (copy attached). This Recfishwest paper is also directly relevant to your proposed action 3.13

#### **Proposed Action 3.13**

Recfishwest strongly disagrees with your proposed action to continue to implement the Wilson Report recommendations.

As stated above, Western Australia needs a new approach to marine conservation. Pursuit of the Wilson Report would concentrate virtually all the resources available for marine conservation on a relatively small proportion of the marine and estuarine area ignoring the values, threats and management needs of the rest. Experience so far has also demonstrated that the process is hopelessly slow and it has elicited divisive attitudes from stakeholders, including those who might be expected to philosophically support further marine conservation.

Recfishwest believes that the Wilson Report recommendations should be revised in the light of experience. It should be replaced with the Marine Planning Strategy recommended in 3.11. This is clearly stated in the opening box where the Environmental Alliance is quoted as pointing out the absence of an overarching planning system integrating a marine reserve system, fisheries management and the Commonwealth Oceans Policy. Recfishwest further

has commented on the inadequacy of the Wilson Report in its submission to the current review of the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority by Alex Errington (copy attached).

The approach detailed in the attached Recfishwest paper is to look at all the State's marine area on a regional basis and use a combination of tools including traditional fishery management as well as marine protected areas to achieve the objectives. In general terms this is the approach used by the Commonwealth (see [www.oceans.gov.au](http://www.oceans.gov.au)).

### **Proposed Action 3.12**

Recfishwest believes that it is not sensible or, indeed, possible to try to rehabilitate the freshwater ecosystems of the South West. The declining rainfall and the various impacts of human settlement, including dry-land salinisation, will prevent the achievement of widespread rehabilitation. A more sensible action would be to establish and manage a "safe refuge system" to try to conserve the biodiversity of the South West freshwater fish stocks.

### **Proposed Action 3.14**

The comments made by Recfishwest in respect to proposed action 3.13 also apply to this proposed.

### **Indicators and targets**

We believe that an additional dot point indicator or target should be the number of Western Australian fisheries that have demonstrated sustainable exploitation via the adoption of appropriate management arrangements.

We have concern that second dot point suggests that the increase in number and size of marine reserves have a direct relationship to the attainment of fisheries sustainability. Sustainability may be achieved in many regions through appropriate fisheries management without any marine reserves being implemented. We believe that this statement needs to be qualified to ensure that it does not give the impression that marine reserves are the only tool that can achieve sustainability or that the absence or minimal size of reserves must indicate failure.

Please do not hesitate contact me at the Recfishwest office should further clarification or information in respect to the issues we have raised be required.