

Media Release

Recreational fishers welcome National Survey Results but want recognition

Recreational fishers today welcomed the release of the national recreational fishing survey which showed that the recreational fishing industry was worth \$1,860 million dollars to the Australian economy.

The report also highlighted that the recreational fishing sector had released around 60 million fish or one out of every three fish caught. With very high survival rates of many fish, recreational fishers are making a clear and conscious decision to put fish back to ensure their angling future.

President of Recfish Australia Frank Prokop said that the report highlighted a number of issues which need to be addressed.

“This report highlights the total lack of recognition of one of Australia’s largest industries by commonwealth, state and local government. The report shows that recreational fishers spend approximately \$62 per kilogram for their fish and this does not include economic multipliers.”

“To demonstrate the importance of the recreational fishery to the economy, recreational fishers caught around 30,000 tonnes of fish in the entire country for a return of \$1,860 million. During the same year, the commonwealth managed South-east trawl fishery caught around 29,000 tonnes of fish for a return of only \$72 million. The recreational fishery returned more than 25 times the economic activity for the same quantity of catch yet gets almost no consideration or funding from the commonwealth government.” Mr Prokop said.

The report also said only 4% of international tourists went fishing. With decent recognition and promotion, Australia could benefit from an increase in high expenditure, low impact international fishing tourism. However, with the exception of the Northern Territory, almost nothing had been done to promote recreational fishing by tourism bodies.

Mr Prokop believed that it was outrageous for some commentators to allege that recreational fisheries were a threat to sustainability. “There has been a revolution in recreational fishing attitudes which is clearly brought out by this report. Anglers are spending around \$550 each for the privilege of releasing 1/3 of their catch while generating more than 25 times the economic input for the same catch compared to commercial fisheries. Recreational fishing relies on large numbers of fish as part of the overall experience and recreational fishers had been shown to be leaders in conservative management around the country.”

“It is time that all levels of government recognised the importance of recreational fishing and made appropriate catch share allocations, particularly of estuarine and inshore species to the recreational fishing sector.” Mr Prokop said.

“It is also time for the commonwealth to recognise the importance of recreational fishing, which also includes health and social benefits. I have asked Senator Macdonald if he knows of any other industry in Australia which is worth as much that is as patently under-serviced as recreational fishing.”

Mr Prokop welcomed the planning for the next survey which could be improved. Mr Prokop was confident that the next national recreational fishing survey would show that more fish were being released by recreational fishers and that the economic benefit had continued to increase relative to the catch. He hoped that governments would have finally recognised the importance of recreational fishing and started to provide management and infrastructure support.

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